



Positive Parenting Strategies

It is not uncommon for behavioral difficulties to develop in children following sexual abuse. Fortunately, there are strategies for decreasing negative behaviors and increasing positive behaviors in children and teenagers.

- ❖ Catch your child “being good.” Children and teenagers desire attention from their caregivers. The more consistently you praise appropriate behavior the more likely it is to occur in the future.
- ❖ If your child or teen is behaving appropriately make sure to point it out to them. For example, “You’re picking up your toys” or “You’re doing your homework.”
- ❖ Providing labeled praise is also helpful. In other words, you are telling your child or teen exactly what you like about their behavior. For example, “I like the way you are sharing with your sister” or “I appreciate you turning off your phone during dinner.”
- ❖ Use positive opposites. Identify the most inappropriate behaviors you see in your child or teen. Then praise them for engaging in the opposite behavior. For example, if a child yells frequently you might say “You are doing a great job speaking with an inside voice.”
- ❖ Use selective ignoring. Ignore undesirable behavior and pay attention to desirable behavior. For example, if a child is having a temper tantrum ignore the behavior until the engage in an appropriate one. It is important to remember we should NEVER ignore dangerous or destructive behavior!
- ❖ Avoid corporal punishment like spanking and utilize time out with young children. A general rule of thumb is to give the child one minute of time out per each year of age. For example, a five year old should be place in time out for five minutes. Time out can be done in public places but should not be used more than five times a day. However, in order for time out to work you must also have daily “time in” where you play with your child, don’t give commands, ask questions, or criticize them.
- ❖ Give your child or teen choices. Present them with a choice between two appropriate behaviors. Doing this will support their development of autonomy and decision-making ability.
- ❖ Give good commands. Make commands direct, positive, and specific. Also try to only make one command at a time.