

Handout
Behavior Record

Behaviors I want to see less of:

(e.g., yelling)

**Positive opposite behavior I
want to see more of:**

(e.g., polite voice)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Brainstorm



Behaviors such as pouting, sulking, screaming, swearing, and arguing are good candidates for ignoring. These behaviors are annoying, but they never really seem to hurt anyone, and the behaviors will disappear if they are systematically ignored. The ignoring technique should not be used, however, with behaviors that could lead to physical injury, property damage, or intolerable disruption of an ongoing activity.

Parents often have trouble controlling their anger when dealing with misbehavior, and find it hard not to criticize the child. This emotional involvement can make it difficult to ignore your child's arguments or to praise compliance when it finally does occur. However, ignoring is one of the most effective strategies you can use.

Child Behaviors I Will Ignore

e.g., eye rolling

sarcastic remarks



Goal: I will commit to ignoring _____

behavior whenever it occurs. I will praise _____

behavior, the positive opposite of the behavior I am ignoring.

Learning Self-Control

Many family members find that in stressful situations they cannot maintain their self-control. Others report they suffer from chronic anger, anxiety or depression, and they are easily set off by the slightest event. However, when parents allow themselves to become so overwhelmed that they overreact, the consequences can be unfortunate. Parents may say or do something they will regret. After they calm down, they may feel guilty and avoid dealing with the child for fear of repeating the episode. It is frightening and anxiety-provoking for a child to see a parent lose control. Also, the child learns to imitate these aggressive behaviors in other situations. These cycles of parental overreaction and avoidance make it difficult to deal with the child in a consistent manner. The best approach is to achieve a middle ground—not be so overwhelmed that you can't respond or so upset that you overreact.

Upsetting Thoughts

- "That child is a monster. This is getting ridiculous. He'll never change."
- "I'm sick of being her maid. Things are going to change or else!"
- "He's just like his father."
- "I can't handle it when she's angry."

Calming Thoughts

- "This child is testing to see if she can have her own way. My job is to stay calm and help her learn better ways to behave."
- "I need to talk to Michael about his clothes lying around. If we discuss this calmly, we should reach a good solution."
- "I can handle this. I am in control. She has just learned some powerful ways to get control. I will teach her more appropriate ways to behave."

Thought Control

Researchers have demonstrated that there is a relationship between how we think and how we behave. For example, if you view the child in hostile terms ("He is misbehaving because he hates me — he likes to get me upset"), you are likely to become very angry. On the other hand, if your thoughts emphasize your ability to cope ("I'm going to have to help him learn to control himself"), this will help to bring about rational and effective responses. One of the first steps for improving the way you think about your child is to replace upsetting thoughts and negative self-statements with calming thoughts.

Using Selective Attention

Sometimes, children will show positive and negative behaviors during the same activity. For example, a child might follow directions (positive behavior) while whining or rolling their eyes (negative attitude). *Selective attention* is the technique where a parent praises or rewards the part of the behavior that is positive while ignoring the negative behavior. For example, a parent might praise the child for following directions, and pay no attention to the whining or negative attitude. This way, the child learns that she will receive positive attention for some behaviors, but will not receive attention for other behavior (e.g., arguing).

Brainstorm

Think about some situations where this kind of selective attention could be effective.



When Would Selective Attention be Effective?

e.g., when child is following directions but giving me "attitude" at the same time, I will praise his compliance and ignore his attitude.

Goal: I will commit to praising _____
behavior while ignoring _____
behavior.

Putting it All Together

1. Identify and label your emotions when they first occur. Pay attention to how your body feels (for example, tenseness, fidgeting, anger, headaches).
2. Decide what events make you feel frustrated.
3. Choose the most effective way to control yourself, and do it.

Non-Constructive Thoughts

"John never helps. All I get is work, work, work. I fix the food, take care of the house, the kids, everything. Boy, would I like to throw this at him!"

"After working 10 hours, I'm tired and frustrated. When I get home, all I get are hassles. The kids interrupt and yell, and Joan criticizes me. This place is a mess. What does she do all day? I feel like screaming or walking out of here."

Constructive Thoughts

"I'd better watch it and calm down before I do something I'll regret. What I need is help. Maybe if I ask John in a nice way, he'll give me some help. That's the best way. Then maybe I can have a relaxing bath."

"Take it easy now. Take a few breaths. What I really need is a few minutes of peace to relax and read the paper. Maybe if I ask Joan nicely to play with the kids while I read, then I could give her a break and play with the kids later. She needs a rest too. That's the most helpful way. I can already feel myself relaxing."

"I can handle this. I can stay in control. She's just testing the limits. My job is to stay calm and help her learn better ways."

Record Sheet Ignore and Praise

Behavior Ignored	Child's Response
<i>e.g. Yelling</i>	
Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	
Saturday	
Sunday	
Behavior Praised	Child's Response
<i>e.g. Talking Nicely</i>	
Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	
Saturday	
Sunday	