

Parents have three main options for supporting positive behavior and preventing problem behavior. Each of these options supports your child's wellbeing and development in different ways.

Positive Behavior Support

This is a great first strategy to try when your child has demonstrated that they are on the way to learning a new skill or understanding a rule or a limit. Praising your child's cooperation and success helps them know when they're on the right track.

- Catch your child being good. This is a great first step toward supporting positive behavior—noticing and responding with encouragement, praise, or an incentive when your child behaves well.
- Positive behavior support includes everything from a smile, to a high-five, to extra time with friends, to very detailed narration about what your child did well and why you appreciate them.
- Positive behavior support also includes noticing your child's unique strengths, such as “You're so patient” and “Your kindness really made a difference there” and “Thank you for being so responsible about completing your homework.”

Communication and Family Meetings

Talking about family changes, challenges, or rules that aren't working well is a useful strategy to help everyone in the family better understand the situation.

- Communicating about family values, routines, expectations, rules, fun activities, thoughts, and feelings is essential.
- Communicating effectively (such as using neutral problem statements and a calm tone of voice) sets the stage for increased understanding and problem solving.
- Inviting input from everyone involved can generate new options and provide information about incentives and limits.

Setting Limits

Believe it or not, setting limits is an important way to let your children know you care about them.

- Monitor and supervise your child so that you have information about what they are doing at home and with peers.
- Create clear rules so that parents and children know what is expected.
- Use praise and support when rules are followed, and use predictable consequences when rules are broken.

If you are facing a challenging situation or behavior and you have tried all of the above, or if none of the above strategies seem to fit, please consider reaching out to a supportive friend or a professional for more ideas and guidance.