



## Responding to Children's Behavior

Effective praise and encouragement are two terms used when referring to the positive comments adults give to encourage appropriate and desired behaviors. The goal of praise is for children to be self-motivated and able to monitor their own behavior. These are several guidelines that can be used for delivering praise and encouragement consistently.

- *Be specific rather than general.* Let children know precisely what they are being praised for.
- *Individualize to each child.* Select things that are unique to the child when giving praise. Avoid using phrases such as "Good job" or "Good work." Again, be specific.
- *Point out and use natural reinforcers* whenever possible. For example, "You put your toys away so you will not miss any outside time."
- *Be enthusiastic and sincere.* Make eye contact with the child and show enthusiasm in your praise and encouragement. Children know when adults are not sincere in their comments so make sure you let the child know what they are doing is valuable.
- *Initiate praise and encouragement* whenever possible rather than waiting for the child to request it. Adult initiated praise is much more effective than child initiated praise. For example, it is much more effective to give the child praise for the child's artwork rather than waiting until the child brings the picture to you for a response.
- *Focus on improvement and effort* rather than the outcome or product. For example, say "You must have worked really hard to use all those colors," rather than "That is a beautiful picture you made."
- *Avoid competition and comparison among children.* Sometimes we are unaware of the subtle ways children compare themselves to the other children.
- *Help children develop an appreciation of their own behavior.* Comments such as "You did that all by yourself. I bet that feels good," helps children recognize their own positive behavior.
- *Give corrective feedback* as soon after the appropriate behavior's occurrence as possible. This will help the child associate the inappropriate behavior with the corrective feedback.
- *Gain the child's attention before delivering the feedback.* It is important to have the child's attention in order for the feedback to be effective. Make eye contact with the child to ensure you have their attention.
- *Acknowledge and express respect for the child's feelings.* Children need to know that their feelings are valid and need to have their feelings acknowledged.
- *Feedback should be specific and clear.* Young children think in a concrete manner and do not always draw conclusions in the same way as adults. Children need information to be specific and in clear terms.
- *The feedback should provide whatever assistance the child needs* to perform the appropriate behavior. The child may need more guidance to be able to succeed in finishing the task.
- *Always end on a positive note* after giving verbal feedback and assistance. Make sure the child feels good about what they did.

**Child Care  
Connections of  
Burke County**

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### Special Points of Interest:

© Adapted from Tom Udell and Gary Glasenapp. *Managing Challenging Behaviors: Adult Communication as a Prevention and Teaching Tool.* Childcare Exchange: Beginnings Workshop/ Positive Behavior Strategies. August 2005.

### Training dates for Region 11:

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| Child Care Provider's Almanac | July 15, 08<br>Mit/Yancey Partnership<br>6:00-8:00 |
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| Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse | Aug 5, 08 CCC (Burke)<br>6:00-8:00 |
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| Supervision and How it Relates to Behaviors | Aug. 28, 08<br>EC Resource Center (McDowell)<br>6:30-8:00 |
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| Preventing Challenging Behaviors | Sept. 30, 08<br>Mayland College-Avery Campus<br>6:00-8:00 |
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