

## Behavior Improvement Strategies

### Reinforcement Schedule

1. Non-Verbal Feedback (wink, nod, thumbs up)
2. Praise/Specific Feedback
3. Tangible (sticker, small treat, dessert)
4. Reward (trip somewhere, new toy, treasure box)

### General Musts

1. Direct Teaching and practice
2. No threats, follow through immediately or don't say it at all
3. Be consistent (over a period of time, usually at least 2-3 weeks to make change)
4. You're the parent! **Do not argue or negotiate on rules**
5. Specific Immediate Praise
6. Use non-verbal and verbal praise **before tangibles and rewards**
7. Do not over satiate with material items
8. Do not allow rewards, even TV time without the behavior
9. Social Stories + Practice= Generalization, not just social stories alone
10. Reward on a daily basis with small things/Weekly basis for bigger things

### Disruptive (impulsive, interruptions, attention seeking)

- **Direct Teaching of Desired Behavior:** During a time of compliance or in a pre-teaching moment teach the child exactly what you want them to do in a home situation out of context. Practice repeatedly through role play and give specific feedback and praise. In context when they know what you expect. Praise immediately and specifically when they do it correctly in context.
- **Stop Sign:** Use a visual signal or cue, like a "waiting hand" or "stop sign" to immediately stop the interruption. This will remind the child to stop the interruption and wait without engaging in conversation. Pre-teach what the sign means and what to do when the child sees it then practice using it with pre-set up phone calls and conversations with others.
- **Ignoring:** Planned ignoring is appropriate at home or in a safe environment (not at a store or outside where safety may not be optimal). When the child engages in an inappropriate behavior (fake crying, whining, yelling, tantrums) for attention, at all costs avoid verbal and physical response. Your response will only reward the behavior.
- **"Catch them being GOOD":** Verbally praise/compliment the child for desired behavior as much and as specific as possible. Describe exactly what you like and give it immediately after you see the desired behavior, **ex: Jonny cleans up his trash after eating his snack, you say immediately "Wow, thanks Jonny for throwing away your wrappers after you ate. I really like how you are taking good care of our house."**

### Oppositional (non-compliant, hard to control, tantrums, talking back)

- **Direct Teaching of Desired Behavior:** During a time of compliance or in a pre-teaching moment teach the child exactly what you want them to do in a home situation out of context. Practice repeatedly through role play and give specific feedback and praise. In context when they know what you expect. Praise immediately and specifically when they do it correctly in context.
- **“Catch them being GOOD”:** Verbally praise/compliment the child for desired behavior as much and as specific as possible. Describe exactly what you like and give it immediately after you see the desired behavior, **ex: Jonny cleans up his trash after eating his snack, you say immediately “Wow, thanks Jonny for throwing away your wrappers after you ate. I really like how you are taking good care of our house.”**
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- **“Stop, Look, Listen”:** Immediately stop the use of bad language, back talk, verbally abusive language, or violence. You show the “stop hand sign” and gain eye contact. Then say “No hitting, no swearing, no biting, etc” in a low tone, but stern voice. Do not yell, this will only scare and not gain attention to your words. Be firm about the behavior and make it clear that it is a “No:” without too much other language. Do not engage in arguing or banter, make your position clear and then end the conversation.
- **Behavior Chart/Token Reward System:** Use a visual chart for the child to monitor/track their behavior at home and work for a reward. Use it daily and only give minimal reminders for the desired behavior. Too many reminders turns into not following through. The child should work for big things (special trips, new toys) on a weekly basis, and small things (snack, tv time, dessert) on a daily basis. Never use threats and always follow through. The child should physically move him/herself up or down on the chart for reinforcement.

**Aggressive (harmful to toys, mean/bad language, threats, harmful play with objects or others, hoarding, playing roughly with toys)**

- **Never ignore inappropriate aggressions and do not get drawn into a power struggle with the aggressor.**
- **Direct Teaching of Desired Behavior:** During a time of compliance or in a pre-teaching moment teach the child exactly what you want them to do in a home situation out of context. Practice repeatedly through role play and give specific feedback and praise. In context when they know what you expect. Praise immediately and specifically when they do it correctly in context. Deal one to one with the aggressor and devise a plan for him/her to take control of their own behavior.
- **“Stop, Look, Listen”:** Immediately stop the use of bad language, back talk, verbally abusive language, or violence. You show the “stop hand sign” and gain eye contact. Then say “No hitting, no swearing, no biting, etc” in a low tone, but stern voice. Do not yell, this will only scare and not gain attention to your words. Be firm about the

behavior and make it clear that it is a “No:” without too much other language. Do not engage in arguing or banter, make your position clear and then end the conversation.

- **“Catch them being GOOD”:** Verbally praise/compliment the child for desired behavior as much and as specific as possible. Describe exactly what you like and give it immediately after you see the desired behavior. Catch the aggressor behaving well and provide immediate, positive feedback. In time, you will see that the aggressive behaviors will start to diminish.
- **Behavior Chart/Token Reward System:** Use a visual chart for the child to monitor/track their behavior at home and work for a reward. Use it daily and only give minimal reminders for the desired behavior. Too many reminders turns into not following through. The child should work for big things (special trips, new toys) on a weekly basis, and small things (snack, tv time, dessert) on a daily basis. Never use threats and always follow through. The child should physically move him/herself up or down on the chart for reinforcement.
- **“Broken Toy Box”:** Find a large tub/box and label it “broken toys” and place it in the child’s play area. Teach the child that this is the box where the toys will be stored when they are played with too aggressively. Once the toys are in the box they cannot be taken out again until overall play behavior is more appropriate. If aggressive play behavior continues go to “10 toy box” strategy or use in conjunction with one another.
- **“10 Toy Box”:** Choose a clear, large box/bin and write the child’s name on it. Then place it in the play area or room where the child plays. Tell the child that because he/she is playing to rough with his/her toys or using them in inappropriate ways you will be only allowing the child to play with 10 toys until they can play more respectfully with them. Have the child choose then place 10 toys of his/her choice into the bin and **remove all others!** Store the extras in the garage or out of sight and reach of the child. After each appropriate play session the child may select one more toy from the stored ones to add back into the toy box.
- **At Home Jobs:** Give your child weekly jobs/responsibilities at home, like making the bed, cleaning the toilet, drying the dishes, taking out the trash. Pre-teach the task, practice the task, then reward on a chart or with an allowance at the end of the week for their management of the job. This should be rewarded at the end of the week for a job that needs to occur a few times or daily during the week. If using a behavior chart then move the child up for the job on a daily basis. Praise daily for a job well done to motivate responsibility.
- **Social Stories:** Read them aloud at bed time and talk about how situations could/should be handled. Ask the child to think about a time when that happened to them then discuss new ways to behave/think. Remind the child of the steps when in context. Visit [www.cindysautisticsupport.com](http://www.cindysautisticsupport.com) pre-made social stories and links to other social story websites.
- **“Bad Mouth Chart”** Make a chart with 10 pictures of mouths/lips on it. Line them up next to each other with the child’s name on top of the chart. Start on Monday and pull off/remove a mouth every time the child uses bad language. On Sunday, count how many mouths are left. If there are 5 or more mouths left reward the child with a tangible, if there are 5 or less then remind the child of desired language for the next

week and put all the mouths back on. Adjust the numbers as the behavior decreases/increases.

### **Violent (biting, hitting others/themselves, kicking, stealing, purposely breaking toys/things)**

- **Direct Teaching of Desired Behavior:** During a time of compliance or in a pre-teaching moment teach the child exactly what you want them to do in a home situation out of context. Practice repeatedly through role play and give specific feedback and praise. In context when they know what you expect. Praise immediately and specifically when they do it correctly in context.
- **“Catch them being GOOD”:** Verbally praise/compliment the child for desired behavior as much and as specific as possible. Describe exactly what you like and give it immediately after you see the desired behavior, **ex: Jonny cleans up his trash after eating his snack, you say immediately “Wow, thanks Jonny for throwing away your wrappers after you ate. I really like how you are taking good care of our house.”**
- **Time out:** Immediately stop any violent behavior and remove the child to an isolated area for a set amount of time (usually the amount of minutes the correlate to their age). The area should be pre-selected and shown to the child before hand. Tell the child that that is where they will have to sit when they are violent for .....amount of minutes every time. If the child gets up, don’t have any conversation, physically put them back in that spot until the time is up. Physically moving a child back to the time out spot may have to happen several times initially until the child understands that they **MUST** sit there. When the time out is over, then discuss the behavior and ask for an apology. Explain what you want to see next time. Must follow through every time for a time-out to work.
- **“Stop, Look, Listen”:** Immediately stop the use of bad language, back talk, verbally abusive language, or violence. You show the “stop hand sign” and gain eye contact. Then say “No hitting, no swearing, no biting, etc” in a low tone, but stern voice. Do not yell, this will only scare and not gain attention to your words. Be firm about the behavior and make it clear that it is a “No:” without too much other language. Do not engage in arguing or banter, make your position clear and then end the conversation. Minimal conversation, be firm and direct.
- **Social Stories:** Read them aloud at bed time and talk about how situations could/should be handled. Ask the child to think about a time when that happened to them then discuss new ways to behave/think. Remind the child of the steps when in context.
- **“10 Toy Box”:** Choose a clear, large box/bin and write the child’s name on it. Then place it in the play area or room where the child plays. Tell the child that because he/she is playing to rough with his/her toys or using them in inappropriate ways you will be only allowing the child to play with 10 toys until they can play more respectfully with them. Have the child choose then place 10 toys of his/her choice into the bin and **remove all others!** Store the extras in the garage or out of sight and reach of the child. After each appropriate play session the child may select one more toy from the stored ones to add back into the toy box. **Use with the next strategy!**

- **“Broken Toy Box”:** Find a large tub/box and label it “broken toys” and place it in the child’s play area. Teach the child that this is the box where the toys will be stored when they are played with too aggressively. Once the toys are in the box they cannot be taken out again until overall play behavior is more appropriate.
- **Behavior Chart/Token Reward System:** Use a visual chart for the child to monitor/track their behavior at home and work for a reward. Use it daily and only give minimal reminders for the desired behavior. Too many reminders turns into not following through. The child should work for big things (special trips, new toys) on a weekly basis, and small things (snack, tv time, dessert) on a daily basis. Never use threats and always follow through. The child should physically move him/herself up or down on the chart for reinforcement.
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