PRAISE PLUS ACTIVE IGNORING

Attention is very rewarding to your child—even when it is negative. For example, if your child whines and you respond by yelling, your child has gained your *negative* attention and is likely to repeat that behavior. Yelling may *seem* effective because it stops children from misbehaving for the moment, but it doesn’t stop children from repeating the behavior in the future.

Think about it. You probably yell at or lecture your child about the same behaviors over and over again. This suggests that the *yelling is not working*.

To decrease your child’s negative behaviors you can learn to *actively ignore* the mild negative behaviors (e.g., whining) while *praising* the positive behaviors you would like to see instead (e.g., asking nicely or accepting a “no” response).

Active ignoring can be very effective when responding to mild annoying behavior problems such as whining, tantruming, complaining, and the like. However, active ignoring should not be used with behaviors that may cause harm to the child or someone else if they continue or increase (e.g., hitting).

**HOMEWORK**

1. Identify one mild problem behavior that you will actively ignore each time it occurs.
2. Identify a positive behavior that is the opposite of the problem behavior.
3. Each time the positive behavior occurs, respond with immediate, specific, purely positive praise.
4. As you begin to ignore the mild, negative behavior, expect it to increase somewhat initially, but continue to ignore it until it subsides.
5. It is hard work to actively ignore a problem behavior, so congratulate yourself when you do.
6. **Remember:** Active ignoring doesn’t work alone. Be sure to look for and praise the positive behavior you want to see instead.