



PROGRAM SUMMARY

This program asserts that some people think becoming a parent automatically makes you know how to manage a child, but this is rarely the case! Being an effective parent requires knowledge of a set of workable “rules” or actions, and how to put them into practice. The use of several useful “rules” are illustrated in the video.

MAJOR MESSAGE

Parents find that the first few months of a baby’s life are difficult, but not **nearly** so difficult as dealing with an exploring, exploding toddler (or teen) who loves to say “No!” From toddlerhood on, “child management” becomes a full-time chore, and requires constant concern and loads of patience as parents help shape children’s behavior.

Numerous tips on ways to help children develop appropriate behavior are illustrated in the video. Parents who wish to use the tips must sometimes discipline **themselves** before they can succeed in disciplining **their child!** This takes planning, practice, and constant dedication to being effective as a parent.

WHILE VIEWING

You will see two methods of regulating behavior, “negative consequences” and “positive reinforcement.” Listen to the description of each one, and be ready to state how they are **different**.

KEY POINTS

Many **children** try out ways to control **parents**. One way is by determined, non-stop whining; another is by putting things off with excuses. In the video, one child whines repeatedly for a popsicle before dinner: Mom caves in. Another child puts off the task of setting out the garbage with the excuse, “I’ll do it later!” and Dad waffles, saying, “Oh well...Okay! In both situations, the **child** is “in control”! The program narrator shows a better way to handle both these actions (“whining” and “making excuses”) in which:

- (1) rules are set,
- (2) the consequences (of not following the rules) are defined, and
- (3) the consequences are **consistently** and **quickly applied** by the parent.

Employing the “negative consequence” method (reviewed above) is useful, but “positive reinforcement” is also effective, and it too might be worth trying.

These steps are featured in the method called “positive reinforcement”:

- (1) Decide on one (or a few) desirable behaviors to work on (such as, say, “doing homework from 7:15 to 8:00-depending on age-without fussing”). The behavior **the parent wants** is called a “**target behavior**.”
- (2) Figure out a reasonable **reward** that the child likes and wants (talk with the child before making a decision on “the reward”—it might be something like “a 5-minute phone call to an out-of-town friend or relative, a popsicle before bed, or what -have-you”).
- (3) Provide the reward immediately upon completion of the behavior.
- (4) Be sure that it’s possible for the child to perform the behavior.
- (5) Be sure the rewards are desirable. Vary them when needed.
- (6) Be patient, calm, determined, and consistent in operating this “method.”

As a child gets older and used to “positive reinforcement” (and to the “negative consequences” method also, if you’re using both of these approaches), you may want to add a “token system” for long-term effectiveness. To set up a workable “token system,” these steps are needed:

- (1) Hold a family conference, including the child or children concerned.
- (2) Decide on one or more long-term, more valuable rewards for each child involved (meal at a special restaurant? Special outing? Ticket to special event?).
- (3) Discuss and establish a **value** for the “token.”
- (4) Design the “tokens.” They might be small purchased “stick-ons” that a parent signs with special ink.



TURN OVER →

REFLECTIONS

By yourself or with friends, discuss using positive reinforcement for a second grader who hits others. Try to identify four or five simple, inexpensive rewards that might appeal to a 7 or 8 year old. First, describe what might be done, and how, then list a few potential “rewards.”

- (5) Make charts with calendar squares. Child can stick tokens on the squares and claim the reward when enough are collected.
- (6) Never punish a child by taking away tokens. (By doing so, you would be mixing two methods and confusing the child).
- (7) Always provide verbal approval and appreciation of the child's effort before giving a token.

Whatever approach a parent uses to try to assure that a child behaves well, it should be carefully thought out and calmly and consistently used. Both approaches reviewed in this program have been proven effective, if well administered.

Parents should be aware that if no consistent, consciously-applied system of behavior management is used from a young age (even as young as two or three), it will be just about impossible to install a method if you wait until the teen years. It's best to start such interactions early and maintain them in some form from the early years to the late teens (and beyond!).

All the suggestions in this program are hard to do. At first, nothing may work. With patient, continuing attempts, miracles sometimes happen.

When severe, serious behavior problems occur the "A-B-C" method may help:

- A** = "Antecedent" (the **cause**)
- B** = "Behavior" (the **actions**)
- C** = "Consequences" (the **results** that are occurring)

The ABC Method can help parents analyze major behavioral problems, such as a grade average of "B" dropping to "D" or "F." Try to pin down the **reason behind** the new behavior (the "antecedent")-might it be divorce? Sibling rivalry? A learning disability? Low self-esteem? Depression...**what?**

Take these steps:

- (1) Confront child with the specific "behavior(s)." State the specifics clearly.
- (2) Ask good questions to get at the **underlying** problem.
- (3) Discuss what might be done.
- (4) Volunteer facts a child might have overlooked.
- (5) Encourage the child to make a plan to change.
- (6) Talk about things that might take place if things **don't** change (the "consequences" of continuing the behavior). (See #1 above).
- (7) Try to get appropriate outside help (school counselor?)

Parents are their children's first and best guide through the initial decades of life. While being a guide is a long-term challenge, it is also the greatest opportunity that exists to enhance the lives of those you guide and, thereby, your own life.

