

JACKSON COUNSELLING and FAMILY THERAPY

Family, Couples, Individual & Adolescent Counsellor

Helpful Articles by Jenny Jackson



Tips for Managing Childrens Behaviour

We can change our children's behaviour by the way we give them attention. If children get a good response after a particular behaviour they're likely to do it again. If they get an unpleasant response after a behaviour they're less likely to repeat that behaviour. Our children really like our attention so how we take notice of them will make a difference to how they behave. We can do this in three ways:

1. Positive Attention

- is when we take notice of a child with specific praise eg "thanks for helping me carry in the groceries", rather than just saying "good boy".
- It is good to let them know how we feel eg "I like it when you help cook dinner".
- There are heaps of non-verbal ways like a smile, a hug, a wink, sitting close together, a touch, or joining in a game or a chore.
- We need to be watching for good behaviour so that we can mention it as soon as we see it and before our children behave badly.
- We need to acknowledge improvements and not wait for perfection.
- Be really careful not to tack on a criticism eg "You set the table well tonight – about time!"
- When we try and change the way we take notice of our children we need to notice as much positive behaviour as we can. Catch them being good. We can ease off down the track when we've established a pattern.

2. Negative Attention

is taking notice of children with an angry voice, telling them off or smacking and has almost the same effect as positive attention because it encourages the behaviour. Children would rather have any attention than none at all.

3. Withdrawal of Attention:

- **Planned ignoring** is a way to decrease unwanted behaviour like whining, grizzling and demanding by not paying attention to our children when they do it. Once our children know that these behaviours don't work anymore they'll find more appropriate ways to behave.
- Ignore immediately and obviously by turning away, walking away, being busy doing something else or talking to someone else. Don't make eye contact or answer questions.
- Be consistent – children will usually try even harder to get our attention so keep it up. If their behaviour gets beyond what you can ignore eg hitting or damaging property then switch to time out.
- When the bad behaviour stops wait briefly then give positive attention for good behaviour.

4. Time Out (see separate article)

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