

Building Positive Relationships: A Guide

What is it?

Each child has an emotional tank that needs filled. When the child's emotional tank is full, they are easier to discipline and easier to teach. One child may be a prius; another, a diesel truck. The mileage of the emotional tank is very different for each child.*

Learning ways to fill your child's tank takes intention and is a skill you can learn to apply well and all the time!

Why should I use it?

When you, as the parent, have built a positive relationship with your child, you will see that some challenging behaviors fall by the wayside naturally.

You may also experience an increase in the child's compliance.

Further, research has found that children will behave in ways to get even more positive attention.

In short, when a relationship is positive, both parent and child experience less stress and more happiness.

When should I use it?

Building a positive relationship with your child is a skill that you want to apply continually and non-contingently.

How do I practice the skill?

There are so many ways! Here are some ideas:

1. A good place to begin is to praise, or otherwise show affection, four times to every one time that you must correct the child. This will help ensure that the child's emotional tank is full and will help the child from stalling out. As mentioned above, some children are more sensitive to criticism or correction and you may need to increase the ratio to five to one or more.
2. Catch your child being good. Each child does something good in a day. While the child is being good, point it out to them. For instance, if your youngest child dropped her bottle and your older child picked it up and handed it back

to her, you could say, "You picked up Sarah's bottle and gave it back to her. You are very considerate." When you catch your child being good, describe what you saw him doing.

3. Think of ways to have fun together. Maybe your child's deep interest is the weather. You could sit and look at the weather forecast together every morning and talk about what you find out. Resist the temptation to teach or embed skill development during this time. This is the time for no or low demands and is child led.
4. If your child can communicate to you, listen to what s/he has to say. It's hard to pay attention sometimes when a child rattles off all the names of Pokémon they know, but Pokémon is important to him. As humans, we want a loved one to listen to us when we talk about things that are important.
5. If your child has limited to no communication, make communication training a priority. Work with your facilitator and other professionals to help your child develop language in the home, school, and community.
6. Ask your child for his/her preference. Depending on their skill level and/or age, sometimes posing a choice between two items is helpful. For example, "would you like to wear the stripped shirt or the green shirt today?" or "this book or that book?" Other children may be able to answer open ended questions such as "what do you want to wear today?"
7. Consider limiting screen time. Screens are very captivating for children and if they are focused on the iPad or T.V., they are not engaging in activities with you and building a relationship.



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*The Five Love Languages of Children