

POSITIVE PARENTING MANUAL

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TALKING BACK



Disciplining children without
the use of corporal punishment

unicef 

for every child

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POSITIVE PARENTING MANUAL

TALKING BACK

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In this manual, the term “mother/father/parent” is used for convenience. It applies to all those with a caring role, including grandparents and extended family members, foster carers, etc.

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Positive Parenting manual booklets

1. Talking Back
2. Fighting with Siblings
3. Neglecting Schoolwork
4. Household Chores and Responsibilities
5. Returning Home Late
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7. Fussy Eaters
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9. Relationships
10. Staying Awake Past Bedtime
11. Substance Abuse
12. Gender

The icons in this book depicts the following to its readers



Think a Minute



Point To Remember



Important Lesson



Practical Advice



Question



Write Your Thoughts

INTRODUCTION TO POSITIVE PARENTING

What is Positive Parenting?

Positive Parenting is not restricted to a method, a set of rules, or a style; it is a belief, a way of living. Children should be treated with respect, free from fear of violence and shame, and guided with loving encouragement. The very first step to become a positive parent is to adjust one's thinking, by improving your own knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and skills. To achieve this, parents must be willing to reflect on themselves and their role as parents, do their best to complete all the activities; and use the new information in their daily interactions with their children. Parents will learn that communication is a crucial way to ensure an ongoing relationship with their children.

Positive Parenting Manual

This manual allows us to begin thinking about how we can bring up a child without inflicting/causing physical harm. This method is known as positive parenting.

This manual focuses on specific tools such as:

- How to establish goals for you and your child
- How to spend quality time with your children
- How to express yourself and enable your child to express their feelings in a safe environment
- How to use praise and reward
- How to give instructions and establish household rules
- How to redirect and ignore negative behaviours
- How to use consequences and establish cool down times
- How to resolve conflicts

By repeatedly referring to this manual, you will gain a sound understanding of the different methods available to discipline your child.



**What positive parenting is:**

- Positive parenting is about long-term solutions that develop children's self-discipline.
- Positive parenting is clear communication of expectations, rules and limits.
- Positive parenting is about building a mutually respectful relationship with your children.
- Positive parenting is about teaching children life-long skills.
- Positive parenting is about increasing children's competence and confidence to handle challenging situations.
- Positive parenting is about teaching courtesy, non-violence, empathy, self-respect, human rights and respect for others.

What positive parenting is not:

- Positive parenting is not permissive parenting.
- Positive parenting is not letting children do whatever they want.
- Positive parenting is not about having no rules, limits or expectations.
- Positive parenting is not about short-term reactions or alternative punishments to slapping and hitting.



A common complaint among parents is that their children are not obedient.

“This child is very disobedient. S/he never listens to anything we say.” “S/he always does what we ask her/him not to do. Not in the least bit obedient.” Are statements like these made in your family? Do you feel that your children are disobedient?

In your opinion, what characteristics are typical of a child who is obedient? A child who is inclined to be disobedient?

List them separately.

Disobedient	Obedient

Compare your column on obedience with that of another parent’s column on obedience. Have a discussion on this. You most probably will see both similarities and differences between the two lists.

Reflect on your own parenting style and consider how you contribute to this behavior.



The differences highlight that what we consider as obedience/disobedience is a relative factor. This just means that the way you think of it is different to the way someone else thinks about it.

Once you have a clear understanding of the key behaviours you want to see or change, try out the strategies below to address these behaviours and support your child to think and act independently.



- 1.** Make a list of what is considered good and bad behaviour at home, the boundaries of these behaviours as well as the consequences of not adhering to the boundaries. Depending on the age of your child/children, do this together with them. Display this list at home in a place where everyone can see.
- 2.** Appreciate and praise the child every time s/he displays good behaviour. The love you show towards your child must be unconditional and positive.
- 3.** Also note, we should disapprove and dislike the wrongful behaviour of the child, not the child himself.

At times, parenting can be difficult! So, it is important to keep in mind that these positive parenting techniques take time and patience to be successful. It cannot be achieved in one day. If they don't work today, remember to try again tomorrow. It is important to be consistent in your parenting approach and being consistent is the only way your child may be able to understand what you are trying to communicate.

References

National Parenting Taskforce, (2013), The Art of Parenting: Summary Guide, Parenting Guide_Summary Guide.pdf (sharepoint.com)

Parenting for Lifelong Health: Handbook for Adolescents





TALKING BACK



Talking back is an issue faced by many parents. It can make you feel angry and frustrated and could be one of the reasons as to why parents resort to physical punishment. It is important to understand why your child may talk back and how to keep calm and effectively deal with this.

Who do children talk back to? Why do they talk back to adults?

There are times we have heard a parent or an adult say to a child:

*"Don't talk back to me!
You're too much!"*

*"Don't use that tone on me!
I will not tell you again!"*

We can see that the adult or parent in this conversation is very angry. In such instances 'talking back' means that the child says something that a parent doesn't like, or what the child says makes the adult feel angry.



As a parent or adult, take a moment to think, what do you mean when you say 'talking back'. Write your answer in the box below:

Now let's see what talking back means

Simply put, it means when we ask something from a child or tell him/her something, s/he responds by objecting to it in a disrespectful manner. An adult feels that the child is 'talking back' when s/he feels that the child places no value on what was told and does not respect authority. This feeling can at times lead to anger, frustration and disappointment in parents.

Who do children talk back to?

A child can challenge, raise an objection to or even mock their mother, father, grandma, grandpa, uncle, aunt, elder brother or elder sister. They can also talk back in school to a teacher or in any other setting to an adult or person of authority.

A Short Story

Pawan is 11 years old. He comes back from school, throws his school bag on a chair and runs

to the kitchen. His mother and grandmother were having a discussion in the kitchen. When Pawan lifted the lid to look inside the pot of rice, his mother said,

“Don’t touch the rice pot! You always come running home, looking to eat. Don’t you know that you must wash your hands and feet before eating?”

Pawan turns towards his mother, makes a face and says, “Wash your hands and feet before you eat” mockingly repeating what his mother just said.

“Pawan stop making fun and mocking me. Get lost! No food for you if you don’t do as I say”

Pawan immediately responds saying “I will wash my hands, but not my feet because I don’t eat with my feet!” and serves his food after washing only his hands. Mother hears the sound of Pawan closing the lid of the curry pot very hard, and yells;

“Why do you have to close the lid so hard?! Are you trying to break it?”

Giggling away, Pawan quips, “Mother also clangs loudly like this lid.” She looks at him in annoyance.

Pawan takes his plate in one hand, and a glass of water in the other. While he carries them both and walks, some water spills on the floor.

Pawan’s grandmother who saw this started scolding him, “Look at what you’ve done! Are you too weak to hold it properly? Now what if someone slips and falls....”

“You are the one who is old and weak – if anyone, you’ll slip and fall” Pawan retorted. His tone made his mother even angrier.

“Now you’ve learnt to talk back to your grandmother as well?! Shut up and eat your food!”

Pawan starts laughing “How can I eat rice with my mouth shut?”

“Pawan..... You’re too much! Finish eating soon and go to the store” said the mother.

“I can’t go to the store. You go – since you anyway spend your time there gossiping.”

“What did you say?! Gossiping?! I work all day cooking, cleaning and doing all the housework..... I have to slave away doing everything on my own.....”

While mother continued complaining, Pawan interrupted her saying “As a mother these are your responsibilities!”

This was the last straw. She yells in anger.

“Is that the way to speak to your mother? I will break your jaw! Go to the market without arousing the devil in me. Before Pawan could finish his sentence, Amma lands a few slaps on his back. The plate on Pawan’s hand fell off and shattered all over the kitchen floor.



Let's look at Pawan's story.



What are your thoughts on what Pawan did and how he behaved? Write them down.

A large, light yellow rectangular area with a thin orange border, designed for writing. It has a small red pencil icon in the top right corner and a wavy line indicating a fold or tear at the bottom.

Was the reason for his mother's response, her anger and finally resorting to hitting Pawan, a result of his own behaviour?

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List out Pawan's behaviour and statements that led his mother to lose patience and become frustrated.

Pay attention to the following statements as well.

Inappropriate behaviour and or statement	Example
Talking back when reminded of good habits	Talking back when his mother asked Pawan to wash his hands before eating
Sarcastically imitating what parents say	Making faces, rolling his eyes, mimicking and mocking
Doing exactly the opposite of what was told	When instructed to eat quietly, pointing out that you cannot eat with your mouth closed
Disrespecting and ignoring his mother as well as his grandmother	Saying that the mother gossips/ reminding the mother of her responsibilities
Making fun of serious advice	His response when he was told that the water will make the floor slippery
Arguing	
Ignoring the warnings given by his mother	Ignoring statements such as 'don't talk back to me', 'don't arouse the devil in me'

What we have stated above are scenarios that might make an adult feel frustrated and may lead to hitting the child.



Let's now look at what makes a child talk back

There are a number of reasons as to why a child may talk back.



- A child may be trying to express a **feeling or a need** by talking back

A child has not yet developed the skill to express all her/his thoughts, feelings and needs. When a child does not receive a favourable response for her/his feelings from us, or when s/he feels that their emotions are misunderstood, s/he could be talking back to gain attention. On the other hand, the child could also be expressing their fear, pain, disappointment, anger, dislike or even displeasure through it.

E.g. A child may refuse to go to bed. The mother may force the child to go to bed at which point the child may talk back and refuse.

Although, the parent may feel the child is simply being difficult, the child maybe scared of the dark or of nightmares.

- **Imitating** could be another reason why children talk back

E.g. A child could be imitating a certain behaviour because a family member or a character in a television programme do so.

- Another reason maybe **peer pressure**, they see their friends talking back, and are simply testing their limits and boundaries.
- A child may also opt to talk back to **avoid doing a task assigned to them**. The child may talk back when s/he is asked to do something, simply because they do not feel up to it, feels lazy to do it or has something else in mind.

E.g. When he came home after school, it is likely that Pawan wanted to play as soon as he finished eating. If he thinks that going to the store is a hindrance to his playtime, he may say or do certain things to express his displeasure (because he knows that stating his preference would not make a difference).

ADOLESCENT AGE GROUP

During adolescence, children may talk in a manner that is aggressive, impolite or disrespectful. Should we ignore this behaviour since it is common among most adolescents?

Pickhardt (2020) in his article has highlighted the “Age of Adolescence” as the stage of more questioning, complaining, and arguing with parents than any other stage. There is a possibility that this behaviour might portray the adolescent as stubborn and impolite. When children who are a little older respond by talking back (making faces and showing rude gestures) by using specific words or by doing things like slamming doors, kicking things or by saying hurtful words, it can be shocking and hurtful to adults. It is sometimes a challenge to manage situations like this. But it is possible!

A few examples of what an adolescent may say are:

“I don’t need to listen to anyone”

“That’s not fair”

“I don’t need anyone’s advice”

It is our responsibility as parents to understand that this behaviour helps the child express their feelings in more appropriate manner.



How should we react when a child talks back or talks in a sarcastic or disrespectful manner, or in a way that trivializes what we say?

Of course, when a child talks back, it's hard not to respond angrily. But a wiser course of action is to try to find out what's bothering your child, then teach him/her to express his/her difficult emotions in a more acceptable way.

1. **It is important that you explain** and let the child know what is okay and what is not okay to say. So, if using certain rude words or expressions is not acceptable, or if you don't like your child using a sarcastic tone, let them know that you do not approve of that behaviour.

Eg: "It looks disrespectful when I talk to you and you roll your eyes. Please don't do that."

2. **Keep your composure.** Do not try to escalate the situation further by either raising your tone or responding angrily to what the child has said. **The best way to teach your child to speak respectfully is to do so yourself. Tell him/her, "I think you can find a better way to say that."**

3. **Know when to keep silent.** If a child is continuously talking back, responding or trying to negotiate may encourage the child to continue.

- In addition, give her/him time to adjust the behavior. You can say "I am going to stop talking about this now. If you agree, I would like us to resume this conversation in an hour when you are calmer. Otherwise I am going to be hurt/upset/sad by the things you say."

What do you do if the child talks back to you in the presence of outsider or in a public place?

When faced with talking back in public, do not panic or be intimidated. Explain calmly to the child that being rude – no matter where or when – is not appropriate. Find a quiet spot and tell him/her that if he/she does it again, there will be a consequence, like missing a favorite TV show or canceling a play date with a friend. Showing your child that you respect yourself too much to be treated this way will both model respect and earn it.

Subsequently, when an appropriate time and opportunity arises, talk about it. Explain to the child why her/his behaviour was not appropriate.





Tips to manage Talk Back

- 1. Discuss with your child what it means to respect their elders and talk to others in a pleasant and acceptable manner**

Explain to the child in a kind manner, behaviour that is acceptable and unacceptable.

- 2. Discuss the consequences of talking back with your child**
- 3. Help the child understand the importance of respecting the opinion(s) of others when communicating with them**
- 4. Encourage the child to voice their wants and needs**

Create an opportunity for this. Give them an attentive ear. Help them understand how they can talk in an acceptable manner to accomplish what they want.

- 5. Explain to the child the disadvantage and the grief that can be caused by using words that are hurtful**

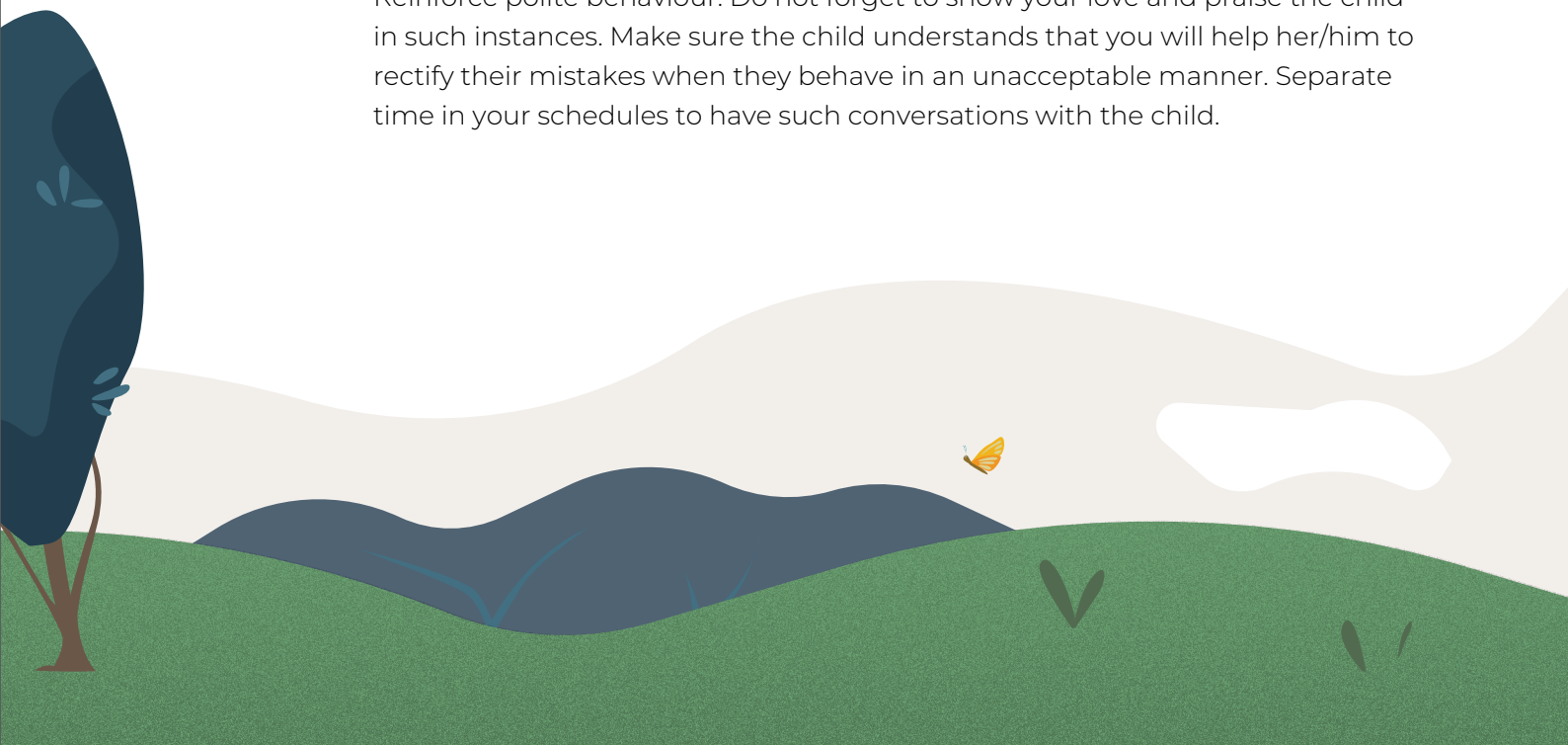
Teach the children more polite words that can be used in conversation, which will win the hearts of others.

Eg. I am sorry, thank you, please listen to me, you are very kind, can I do it a bit later?, you are the best mother!, I shouldn't have spoken like that, can I play now?, how can I correct my mistake?, can you tell me how?, what can I do for you?

If we use these words often when we talk with the child, s/he will pick them up and learn to use them in their speech.

- 6. Praise and encourage the child when s/he behaves in a manner that is acceptable and does not retort by talking back**

Reinforce polite behaviour. Do not forget to show your love and praise the child in such instances. Make sure the child understands that you will help her/him to rectify their mistakes when they behave in an unacceptable manner. Separate time in your schedules to have such conversations with the child.



7. Pay attention to the child

Find time to connect. If you think your child feels pushed around at school or pushed aside at home, it may be that all he/she needs is a little extra one-on-one time with you. Offset your child's negative energy with some attention: Go for a walk, read to him/her, or talk together while you share a snack.

8. As an adult, stop talking back

Some parents tend to think "Since we are adults we have the right to say anything we like to the child. The child has to only listen and follow orders." When we think like this, it is likely that we feel the child is talking back to us, when they respond to us.

9. Follow up with consequences

If s/he ignores your advice and goes ahead with what s/he was asked not to do, follow through with reducing her/his privileges. It is also possible to give the child an added responsibility that suits the age.

Eg. Sweeping and cleaning her/his room, house or garden.

10. Take steps to change your behaviour if you realize, or if the child tells you, that your mannerisms are not acceptable

The child can feel that it is unfair to be asked to do certain tasks when s/he is engaged in doing something that they like or feel is more important.

Eg. Delegating some work when the child is watching their favourite TV show or starting to do some schoolwork.

This may cause a child to talk back in response. If s/he mentions such reasoning, respect her/his opinion and change your approach. Otherwise, the child might feel the treatment is unfair.

Eg. "You can only see me when you want to get something done! Am I the only one in this house?"

Listen to the child's side of the story and find a solution to the problem. If not, the child may feel that there is no point in trying to explain things to her/his parents. This may cause a rift between you and your child.

References

McCready, A. (2021), *Positive Parenting Solutions*. Retrieved from Why do kids talk back?: <https://www.positiveparentingsolutions.com/parenting/why-do-kids-talk-back>

Pickhardt, C. E. (2020), Adolescence and the Age of More "Talking Back". *Psychology Today*.



Notes



for every child

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