



BLOG: POSITIVE ATTENTION

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Very often I speak to parents who tell me that their child

"doesn't listen"

"always seems to be doing something that he knows he shouldn't be doing",

Or they may say something along the lines of:

"as soon as I've told him to stop doing something he just moves on to do something else that he shouldn't be doing".

"If I ask her to do something she usually replies with a "No" whatever it is I'm asking her to do".

"I've tried everything, the naughty step, taking her toys off her, not letting her have sweets but nothing seems to work".

Sound familiar?

Many of these parents find themselves in a state of high alert, where they're just waiting for the next things to happen that they'll need to tell their child off for.

It becomes the norm.

What we need to remember ALWAYS is that the behaviour we get most of is the one we give most attention to.

Children love attention, and when they're very small they often don't mind whether is positive attention or negative attention – it's attention.

So, if your child knows that by climbing on the table, you'll turn your attention to him and he'll become the focus, to him, climbing on the table is a good thing.

Example:

1. Child thinks "I want Mum's attention"
2. Child climbs onto the table and crawls across it
3. Mum stops washing the dishes/ checking her phone/ folding the clothes and goes over to child, "don't climb on the table, you know you shouldn't do that" lifts child off the table and puts him on the floor
4. Mum goes back to washing the dishes/ checking her phone/ folding the clothes.
5. Child thinks, "Hmm that didn't work, what can I do now to bring her attention to me?"
6. Child goes over and pinches little brother, little brother cries
7. Mum stops washing the dishes/ checking her phone/ folding the clothes and goes over to child, "Don't pinch your little brother, that's very mean, now go and sit on the naughty step.
8. Mum consoles little brother, then goes back to dishes/phone/clothes
9. Child comes off the naughty step and finds something else to do to get mum's attention

Can you see where I'm going with this?

We can turn this behaviour around before it even starts by giving our child some positive attention just for being the best version of themselves or for doing something well.

1. Child is sitting on the floor playing with his toy cars
2. Mum turns from the sink, "You look like you're enjoying there, Jamie, what are you playing?"
3. Child responds "playing with my cars, / they're having a race/ they are going to crash etc.
4. Mum shows interest in the cars. "I really like the red car". "Which one is your favourite?"
"Can you make them go very fast?"
5. Mum says, "let me just finish these dishes and I'll come and play with you if you'd like?"
6. Mum finishes dishes and joins child on the floor – this doesn't have to be for long, just a short interaction will be hugely beneficial in terms of your child's development and their behaviour
7. Child enjoys Mum's attention, it's positive and its meaningful for both Mum and child.

When a child gets **positive attention** like this, they are less likely to feel the need to look for other, unsuitable ways to get your attention.

We can give our children **positive attention** lots of times during the day, just by catching them being good, or as one Mum said to me the other day *"so I have to catch him when he's not doing something bad"*

If you walk into the living room and your child is sitting nicely watching TV or playing cars on the floor, tell him how happy it makes you to see him doing that

"Look at you sitting there nicely, I love it when you're can sit like that, it makes me very happy"

"Look at you being so gentle with your little brother, you're so good with him. I'll have to remember to tell Dad, Gran, Aunty Sue how lucky he is to have such a great big brother"

When my children were small I picked up the phone and "called" my husband numerous times a day just to tell him how pleased I was with the way the children were behaving.*

All children love to hear positive things being said about them.

These kinds of comments reinforce the fact that you enjoy your child's good behaviour.

The key is to give praise and attention for positive behaviour however simple it might be, rather than only give attention for unwanted behaviour.

It's very easy to fall into a pattern of just commenting on "the bad stuff" and losing sight of what your child does well. Hopefully this will remind you to look out for positives and give them the attention and the credit they deserve. This, in turn will help you to enjoy each other's company more which will be beneficial for you both.

*I didn't really call him, I just pretended!

P.S. I've used Mum in my examples, just because I'm a Mum, this works just as well for Dads, Grandparents other Care givers etc.