

## Praise

### Use This:

To teach the parent how to give effective praise to his or her child.



### Goals

- The parent will understand how to provide appropriate praise for his or her child's positive behaviour
- The parent will understand how to reward independent play with appropriate attention

### Materials

- **Fear Thermometer** and **Fear Ladder** (2 unrated copies for anxiety/trauma), **Feelings Thermometer** (for depression) (pp. 318, 320, 342)
- **Praise** parent handout (p. 392)
- **Checklist of Strategies** (p. 391)
- MINDED video
- **Weekly questionnaires** and **Monitoring sheet** (see pages 277-293)
- **Therapist Note Taking Sheet** (p. 276)

*⌚ If time is tight: Teach the parent to “catch his or her child being good” and to respond with attention, appreciation, and labelled praise.*

### Main steps

<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Set an Agenda</b>	Remember to start by setting an agenda together and reviewing any practice assignments.
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Obtain Weekly Ratings</b>	If the main focus is traumatic stress or anxiety, use the 0 to 10 scale of the <b>Fear Thermometer</b> to obtain <b>Fear Ladder</b> ratings from both the child and his or her parent. If the main focus is depressed mood, use the <b>Feelings Thermometer</b> to take a rating. Review the <b>Weekly questionnaires</b> and <b>Monitoring sheet</b> in detail, in particular examples of effectiveness of One-on-One/Special time. Discuss any difficulties with monitoring, usefulness etc.
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Introduce Praise</b>	Introduce the idea that a child's rate of positive behaviour can be increased by the type of parental attention that follows that behaviour. Point out how praise can be used as a tool to increase behaviours that are most desired by the parent. Understand how the parent currently praises their child's good behaviour (e.g., verbal, non-verbal, high fives, etc.)

<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Discuss Attention as a Motivator</b>	Discuss the specific kinds of disruptive behaviour often seen in the child, asking the parent specifically about his or her beliefs about why this type of behaviour persists. Many parents will indicate, correctly, that their child engages in these disruptive behaviours in an effort to gain attention from the parent. Highlight that, although the disruptive behaviour is a problem, the fact that the child is motivated by parental attention is a very good sign. That means attention can be used as a powerful tool to promote positive behaviours as well.
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Discuss Praise for Follow-Through</b>	Point out that one type of behaviour to praise involves the child's following through on a request or instruction. For children who do not engage in many positive behaviours and do not spontaneously do chores or pitch in, this type of praise will be more common, at least at first. The point is to increase the rate of follow through in such children by providing positive attention when it happens.
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Cover What Makes Praise Better</b>	<p>There are several aspects of praise that make it more effective. Review these with the parent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow through has to be noticed. Thus, when a parent makes a request, he or she should stay in the area and pay close attention to whether or not the follow through occurs. Parents should not issue instructions and then go on to do something else.</li> <li>• Praise works best when it comes quickly. Thus, the parent should praise at the first sign of follow through.</li> <li>• Praise works better if it is "labelled", meaning that it names the specific behaviour being rewarded.</li> <li>• Praise works better if it is focused and concise (short and sweet). Children with epilepsy and learning difficulties do well with very focused, concise praise that doesn't have a 'sting in the tail' at the end and without a lot of additional explanation as to why you are praising it.</li> </ul>

#### **Example script**

*I really like it when you pick up your clothes so neatly.*

*I really appreciate your coming inside so quickly when I called you.*

#### **Rather than**

*I really like it when you pick up your clothes so neatly. I don't know why you don't do it more often. See, you can do it! I've told you that before.*

<input type="checkbox"/> <b>ACTIVITY</b> <b><i>Praising Follow-Through</i></b>	Engage the parent in a role-play in which you act as the child ( <b>adapt for telephone delivery</b> ). Have the parent think of a simple instruction to issue (e.g., “Please pick up your clothes now”) and then praise you for obeying. Observe the parent’s behaviour during this exercise to make sure he or she watches you perform the behaviour, narrates what you are doing, and praises your follow-through. Make sure that the praise is “labelled”, or specific to your actions. Provide the parent with feedback on his or her use of praise after the role-play is over. Make sure the praise is short and sweet.
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Discuss Praise for Good Behaviour That Happens by Itself</b>	Point out that another time to praise is when a child does something positive (e.g., performs a chore, helps a sibling) <i>without having been told or asked to do so</i> . This type of praise is especially important if this is a new behaviour for the child. Point out that the same aspects of praise are important here: the behaviour must be noticed, it must be praised quickly, and the praise should be “labelled.”

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☐ **Highlight Natural Patterns of Attention**

Ask the parent whether the child gets more attention when he or she is behaving well or behaving poorly. The parent should realise that bad behaviours naturally attract more attention. The idea is to reverse this pattern and to try to start noticing good behaviours when they happen. When children are behaving appropriately (playing nicely with a sibling, colouring quietly) parents take the opportunity to get on with chores/making calls etc. Parents do not positively reinforce behaviour that they would like to see more of – instead they ignore the behaviour. A parent may be more likely to drop what they are doing to attend to bickering than peaceful play. This inadvertently teaches children that inappropriate behaviour is a good way of gaining attention and children quickly learn that an effective way of gaining their parent's attention is to misbehave, cry or fight with a sibling.

**Example script**

*Have you ever had to interrupt your phone conversation to correct, reprimand, or discipline your child for being disruptive? Of course! Most parents have. But have you ever interrupted your phone conversation to praise or attend to your child for not disrupting the call but instead playing quietly nearby?*

Few parents will indicate that they have actively taken time out of an activity to praise their child for good behaviour. The point is that if children want to receive parental attention, they are often more successful in getting it by being disruptive, particularly if the parent is paying attention to someone else. Suggest to the parent that if the situation were reversed, such that parental attention were given for positive behaviour, the child would increase his or her independent play.

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<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Focus on Independent Play</b>	<p>Point out how, like follow-through, independent play is an especially important behaviour. Suggest to the parent that in order to decrease the extent to which the child disrupts him or her to get attention the parent first needs to start attending to the child's independent play very frequently. Tell the parent that the frequency of this attention can be gradually reduced as the child spends longer periods of time without disrupting the parent when the parent is engaged in other activities.</p> <p>Praise for independent play has several steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The parent should assign the child some desirable activity to perform while the parent is occupied.</li> <li>• Praise should be issued about once every minute at first. Over time, these intervals can be lengthened. The instruction to stay in the desirable activity can be repeated as well.</li> <li>• The parent should think of these as "training periods" during which the main purpose is not for the parent to cook a meal or read a magazine, but to teach the child how to play independently.</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>ACTIVITY Praising Independent Play</b>	<p>Engage in a role-play exercise with the parent (<b>adapt for telephone delivery</b>). Instruct the parent to issue an instruction to you (the child) to play independently while he or she (the parent) reads a magazine. When role-playing this technique with the parent, pay close attention to the frequency with which the parent provides praise and the type of praise given. Provide the parent with feedback on his or her use of the technique following the role-play.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Debrief after Activity</b>	<p>Discuss the parent's reaction to using this technique in the role-play situation. Suggest to the parent that many parents abide by the philosophy of "let sleeping dogs lie." Essentially, many parents think that it is best to not pay attention to their child when he or she is behaving quietly and appropriately, for fear that the parent's attention will only spark new occurrences of undesirable behaviour. In fact, the opposite is true: paying attention to, and encouraging the child's independent play from time to time will make independent play more rewarding to the child and more likely to continue.</p>

□ <b>Discuss Concerns</b>	<p>Review common concerns that parents may have. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some parents feel that their attention will trigger new episodes of negative behaviour. For one thing, the child likely knows that if he or she continues to play appropriately, he or she will lose the parent's attention because that's what's happened in the past. If the parent can commit to regular praise using the steps above, over time this should no longer be a problem.</li> <li>• Some parents also complain that they are not able to finish their own activities if they must stop frequently to attend to the child's independent play. Assure the parent that these interruptions will only be a problem at the beginning of the process. Over time, it is quite possible for a child to learn to play independently for increasingly longer periods of time between praise. Eventually, the child will be able to play alone for the entire time that the parent is involved in his or her own task and will no longer require such frequent reinforcement for playing quietly and independently.</li> <li>• If the child doesn't respond to verbal praise, you may suggest non-verbal praise such as thumbs up, high fives.</li> </ul>
□ <b>Praising Yourself</b>	<p>Many parents find it difficult to praise themselves. It is important to praise yourself when you do something well both for your own sake and also because it models the principles of praise for good behaviour. If appropriate, you can ask parents to monitor examples of them praising themselves or accepting praise from others. This praise could be related to their parenting but does not have to be related.</p>
□ <b>PRACTICE ASSIGNMENT</b> <b><i>Praise at Home</i></b>	<p>Review the practice assignment for the coming week with the parent. Explain to the parent that before you speak again he or she is to choose one or two occasions when the child often disrupts his or her activities and to practise his or her attending to and praising skills at those times. Suggest to the parent that it is often useful to concentrate initially on situations at home. Parents may also wish to use talking on the telephone for practising this method. If the parent chooses this activity for practising giving praise, suggest that he or she arrange for another caregiver or friend to call daily for the sole purpose of practising this procedure. This allows the parent to interrupt the call frequently to appropriately attend to and praise the child's independent play without being too disruptive to the other caller. Ask the parent to record what happened on the <b><i>Monitoring sheet</i></b>.</p>

<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Send the materials for the next session</b>	Tell the parent/s you will send a written summary and the <b><i>Weekly questionnaires, Monitoring sheet</i></b> and <b><i>Checklist of Strategies</i></b> which need to be completed for the next session.
Confirm date and time of the next call.	
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Summarising</b>	Ask if they would like you to summarise the session, if they want to summarise or if you should do it together.

### Leave 'Em Laughing

End the session on a positive note with the parent by perhaps talking about things that are unrelated to his or her child, or discussing an area of interest you have in common with the parent. Also, the parent might be feeling overwhelmed by the challenging tasks he or she is undertaking; it can sometimes be helpful to leave a few minutes at the end of the session for the parent to share concerns or the challenges he or she has faced with the child since the previous session. The end of each session should be used to praise the parent's efforts and to convey support and encouragement.

### Share with Child (if possible)

At the end of the session, if the child is available, it can be helpful to brief him or her on the materials covered.

<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Review Concepts</b>	If the child joined the session with the parent, bring the child into the session and explain to the child that there will be some changes in communication in the family that are meant to be helpful for everyone. You can tell the child that for the next week, his or her parent will be paying more attention to the child when he or she is playing quietly and independently and not disrupting the parent. Ask the child if he or she has any questions about the new way that his or her parent will be responding to his or her behaviour at home.
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>ACTIVITY</b> <b><i>Praising Independent Play</i></b>	Provide the parent with a book or magazine to read. Make sure that there is an activity available in which the child can engage independently and that he or she finds enjoyable (e.g., drawing, reading, playing with a game or puzzle). Instruct the parent to issue an instruction to the child to play independently while he or she reads a magazine or book. Pay close attention to the frequency with which the parent provides praise and the type of praise given. Make sure that the parent expresses appreciation of the child's play activities and that the praise provided is specific to the child's actions. After the activity, excuse the child briefly, and provide the parent with feedback on his or her use of the technique.

### Helpful Tips:

- For children who are doing well with independent play, this module can be presented in brief form and combined with another skill (e.g., Active Ignoring) in the same session.
- For parents who may be reluctant to praise children just for doing “normal things,” it can be helpful to use the analogy of work for the parents: *Imagine if you received a payslip only during a workweek in which you did something extraordinary. People receive a payslip for doing the basic requirements of their job. For children, praise is the currency, so it is important to praise them just for having regular, appropriate behaviour (like buckling their seatbelts, or sitting straight at the dinner table) as well as for exceptional behaviour.*

### How's Your Style?

- Did you praise often?
- Did you review often, by asking questions?
- Did you simplify the steps as needed?
- Did your pace match that of the child or family?
- Did you stay on track?