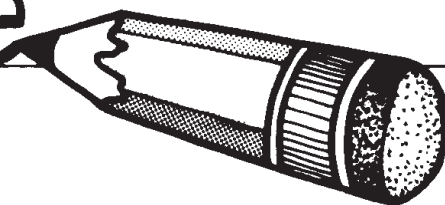


# Parenting Pipeline



A newsletter for parents of second-grade children  
from the North Dakota State University Extension Service



## Supporting Your Child

Positive feedback is a very effective way to motivate children and help them feel good about who they are. When giving positive feedback, let the child know why she is receiving it — and mean what you say. It is important to be specific and sincere.

Avoid saying, “Johnny, you have done a good job.” Say specifically what he did. “Johnny, you did a good job on your addition and subtraction tables.” Being too general with positive feedback may appear phony to the child.

## Goals of Misbehavior

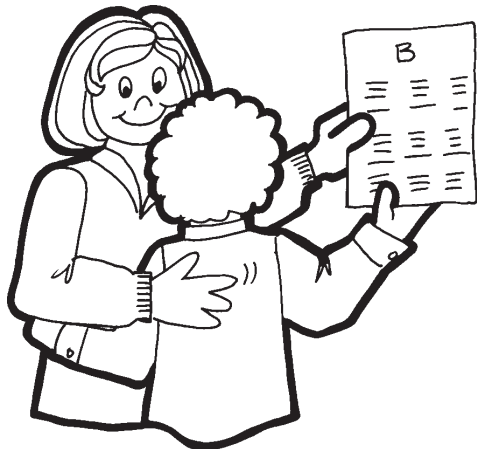
When problems occur, ask yourself what the underlying cause of the misbehavior might be.

Child's goal	Child's faulty belief	Parent feeling and reaction	Child's response	Alternatives
Attention	I belong only when I am being noticed or served.	FEELING: Annoyed REACTION: Tendency to remind and coax.	Temporarily stops misbehavior. Later resumes same behavior or disturbs in another way.	Ignore misbehavior when possible. Give attention for positive behavior when child is not making a bid for it. Avoid undue service. Realize that reminding, punishing, rewarding, coaxing and service are undue attention.
Power	I belong only when I am in control or am proving no one can boss me!	FEELING: Angry, provoked, as if one's authority is threatened. REACTION: Tendency to fight or to give in.	Active- or passive-aggressive misbehavior is intensified, or child submits with defiant compliance.	Withdraw from conflict. Help child see how to use power constructively by appealing for child's help and enlisting cooperation. Realize that fighting or giving in only increases child's desire for power.
Revenge	I belong only by hurting others as I feel hurt. I cannot be loved.	FEELING: Deeply hurt. REACTION: Tendency to retaliate and get even.	Seeks further revenge by intensifying behavior or choosing another weapon.	Avoid feeling hurt. Avoid punishment and retaliation. Build trusting relationship; convince child that she/he is loved.
Display of Inadequacy	I belong only by convincing others not to expect anything from me. I am unable; I am helpless.	FEELING: Despair; hopelessness. “I give up.” REACTION: Tendency to agree with child that nothing can be done.	Passively responds or fails to respond to whatever is done. Shows no improvement.	Stop all criticism. Encourage any positive attempt, no matter how small; focus on assets, don't be hooked into pity, and don't give up.

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## Reward Them Now

Parents can easily make the mistake of offering long-range rewards to young children. It does not work to offer Tom, a second-grader, a new bike for his birthday in November if he'll keep his room straight in July. Children do not have the mental capacity or maturity to hold a long-range goal in mind day after day. Time moves slowly for them, so the reward seems impossible to reach and uninteresting.



## How To Encourage Your Child

Send the right message. Encourage effort rather than demand results.

If you reward your child only for completed tasks well done, your child may interpret your message as, "To be worthwhile, you must meet my standards." The result may be that she will develop unrealistic standards and learn to measure worth only by how closely she approaches perfection.

If you focus only on personal gain for your child, he may believe you're saying, "You're the best — and you must remain superior to others to be worthwhile." The result may be that your child will learn to be overcompetitive, to get ahead at the expense of others, to feel worthwhile only when he is No. 1.

If you recognize your child's efforts and improvement, the message he will get is, "You don't have to be perfect. Effort and improvement are important." The likely result is that he will learn to appreciate the efforts of himself and others and be more willing to try again.

## Keep It Positive

Children need encouragement and approval. One way to be positive about guidance is to tell the child what behavior you want rather than what you do not want. Instead of saying, "Don't leave your school

books on the couch," try saying, "I want you to pick up your school books and put them on the shelf." By phrasing your expectations in a positive way, you avoid challenging the child.

Another way of offering positive guidance is to let the child choose to do something rather than telling the child not to do something. Instead of saying, "You can't go out without a coat," try asking, "Do you want to wear your coat or your sweater?" This gives the child a sense of control. Of course, the child may say, "Neither," in which case you can explain why the coat or sweater is needed. You set a limit, communicate it clearly and avoid being negative.

When problems occur, ask yourself what the underlying causes for the misbehavior might be. (See chart on front side.)

## Reminders

- Recognize improvements and efforts, not just accomplishments. For example, improvements in spelling or subtraction.
- Don't wait; say it right away. Children need immediate recognition. If you wait, the child may forget what you are recognizing him for.
- Follow through.
- Be sincere and specific.
- Avoid tacking qualifiers to your words of encouragement. Statements such as, "You did a good job, but..." will be discouraging. Don't give with one hand and take away with the other.

This newsletter is published for North Dakota families with second-graders by the NDSU Extension Service and distributed through your county extension office. See your extension agent for more parenting information and other home economics programs.