



# HEALTHY MINDS

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## REINFORCEMENT

Reinforcement is provided AFTER a behavior occurs to increase that behavior in the future. In other words, we reinforce what we want to see more of! We all work for reinforcement. There is a "pay out," for all behaviors that we engage in more than one single time. Of course, most of us love what we do for a living, and may even consider doing it for free but our overall purpose for working is for an income. That is our reinforcement! We continue to work more than one day, for a income. Reinforcement is often confused for bribery. Bribery is a quick fix after interfering behavior occurs "ill give you a piece of candy if you stop crying" Whereas reinforcement is a planned practice that is controlled. "When you are done working for the day, you can go outside with your friends." The reinforcement can be withheld until the work is complete if needed, which is that control piece. (If you don't show up for work, you don't receive your paycheck. It is often helpful to ask a child what they would like to work for! Another way to identify reinforcement for a child is to observe within their natural environment. What do they gravitate to? What do they choose to play with, or who? What do they request often?

## BEHAVIOR SPECIFIC PRAISE

*"Catch them being good."*

*An example of reinforcement that is available, always!*

Anytime you notice your child engaging in a behavior that you would love to see more of, "mark," that behavior specifically, instead of simply just saying "good job." Often in our kids brains, they need to figure out "okay.. good job.... for... what?" Let's tell them WHY and WHAT. "Alexis I love how helpful you're being in the kitchen tonight, I appreciate it so much." "Alexis it makes me proud to see you play with your brother, thank you." "Alexis you are working so hard on your school work, you are so smart!"

Behavior specific praise is so important. Every time you feel yourself going to say "good job," think about why you're saying it, and extend that sentence a little further!



## PROMPTING STRATEGIES

Prompting is a tool to help assist a learner from incorrectly responding to a question, task demand or activity to correctly responding. Prompting is implemented in a strategic manner depending on the task at hand and the learner's ability. Strategic and systematic prompting is done so that the learner does not become dependent on the prompt. When prompting is done correctly, it can help reduce frustration, and build independent workers. Prompting is also a great strategy to utilize when our kiddos are having a tough day, or are experiencing more emotions or non-compliance. Prompting is a tool that can be utilized across all settings, for all skills.

**Visual-** using visual reminders or positioning & highlighting the correct item so it stands out to the learner. Example: Using a highlighter for initial writing skills.

**Gestural-** pointing to the appropriate response or the area where a task must be completed  
Example: pointing to the location they are supposed to be, or the assignment they are to complete.

**Verbal-** a vocal cue, or vocal demand

Example: "If we need help how can we ask?" Oftentimes can include providing the words we are expecting the child to independently use.

**Modeling-** demonstrating the action your learner must complete

Example: If the demand is to open the door, then open to door to provide a model, close it, and then give the demand again

**Partial Physical-** gently guiding a learner's elbow or lightly moving their hand to complete a task

Example: If your learner is writing their name, guide their elbow to the paper

**Full Physical-** gently taking a learner's hand and guiding them through the task hand-over-hand

Example: If your learner is washing hands, guide their hands through the entire task using your hands over theirs.

### Strategy Planning

For NOVEL skills, you will want to utilize MOST to LEAST prompting. Providing the child with the MOST support during introduction, and fading back when necessary. With that said, you may provide a full physical prompt the first few trials and then fade back to partial, or modeling  
For previously mastered skills, during times of frustration, or just "off," days you will want to utilize LEAST to MOST prompting. You may provide a gestural prompt, or a verbal reminder.



## TEACHING PROBLEM SOLVING SKILLS

Teaching our kids how to problem solve is incredibly important, but also not always easy. Breaking it down into parts allows us to streamline teaching the skill across many problems that may arise. The following steps are ideal for children ages 7 and up, but keep in mind... problem solving can be modeled at all ages.

1. Identify the problem: This may require us to point out the problem! "It looks like you are having to share the ipad, and it feels hard for you," Or, if your child is ready, you may be able to say "What is the problem here?"
2. Make a plan: This starts with "What do you think we should do?" Keep in mind that there may be multiple options here.
3. Talk it out: "what would be the consequence of that choice?" "If we choose to ask for another minute before sharing, how would that look?"
4. Let them choose. "We talked about these three options, which feels best for you?" You can even go as far to talking about why that option feels best.
5. Discuss if there is a way to avoid this problem in the future. "Is there something we can do to avoid this problem from happening?"

Walking through these steps with our children allows them to learn the steps it takes to solve problems, and allows us to scaffold them along the way. It is so important for us to not continuously solve all of the problems for children, as eventually they will be adults who will need to have the ability to assess potential outcomes for behaviors they engage in. However, at the same time we cannot expect them to understand how to solve everything on their own. Keep in mind that the language we use may change based on age, and development. [Here](#) is an excellent visual that breaks down teaching problem solving across the lifespan. All of the mentioned are similar to what we spoke about today, while tweaking for specific age ranges.





## **A MINDFUL MOMENT**

Gather a few tasty treats and find a comfortable spot to relax. You may want to use napkins as this can get a bit messy. Take turns exploring how each food smells (does it smell like anything else? Does the scent bring a memory to mind?). Then feel the food with your fingers (Is it squishy? Rough? Does it feel like anything else?). Then taste the food slowly (does it taste sweet, sour, salty? Do you like it? Does it taste like any other foods?). Last, take turns sharing what food you want to try next!



## **FIVE FINGER BREATHING**

Sit criss-cross-applesauce facing your child, and if possible, looking into your child's eyes (if your child has difficulty maintaining eye contact, don't worry about it!). Raise your left hand with an open palm. Have your child mirror you. Trace your fingers, starting with your thumb, trace the outside of your thumb with your pointer finger, breathing in for a count of three. While tracing the inside of your thumb, breathe out for a count of 3. Continue across your whole hand (see above illustration). Take turns leading- adult leads and then child leads. Practice together- if you are feeling irritated, invite your child to lead you. If you notice your child feeling frustrated, invite them to join you. Practicing simple, mindful, face to face activities with your child increases the emotional connectedness you share in your relationship! Enjoy the small moments !



## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:



Additional info on behavior specific praise: [Click here](#)

Additional info on reinforcement vs. bribery: [Click here](#)

Video representation of five finger breathing: [Click here](#)

Additional info on the prompt hierarchy: [Click here](#)

Additional info on problem solving: [click here](#) and [here](#)

Additional breathing activities for kids and adults : [click here](#)