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Giving kids the best start

**LOS ANGELES COUNTY  
DEPARTMENT OF  
MENTAL HEALTH**  
hope. recovery. wellbeing.

**Five positive parenting techniques  
to help your child thrive**

# What's inside

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This booklet presents five parenting skills that are based on the philosophy of positive parenting. Researchers have found that using these skills makes a large impact on children's development and well-being.

## 1 Positive parenting

Part 1 describes positive parenting and highlights how it can make a difference for children now and over the long-term.

## 2 PRIDE skills

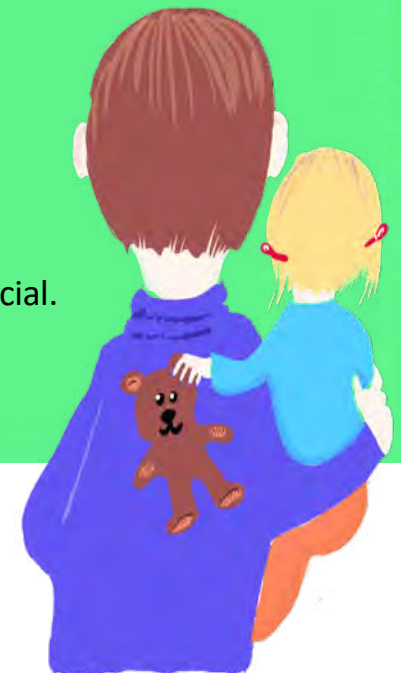
Part 2 presents the five positive parenting skills: **P**raise, **R**eflection, **I**mitation, **D**escription and **E**njoyment (PRIDE skills). Here you'll find an overview, examples, and the benefits of each skill.

## 3 Putting it all together

Part 3 is about using PRIDE skills to achieve certain goals for your child. This includes promoting behaviors you'd like to see more of and lessening behaviors you don't like.

## 4 Playtime

Part 4 focuses on playtime and two ways to make playtime extra special.





# Positive Parenting

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What is positive parenting  
and why is it powerful?

# POSITIVE PARENTING

Positive parenting is about showing children love, warmth and kindness.

It's about guiding children to act the way you want by encouraging and teaching them.

It's about helping children thrive by sending the powerful message: *You are loved, you are good, you matter.*



# Research reveals the power of positive parenting



## **Positive parenting sets children up for success**

Research shows that positive parenting helps children do better in school, have fewer behavioral problems, and stronger mental health.<sup>1</sup>



## **Positive parenting helps the teenage brain**

Neuroscientists discovered that positive parenting contributes to better functioning in the brain regions associated with emotions and cognition during the teen years.<sup>2</sup>



## **Positive parenting is linked to a happy and healthy adulthood**

Harvard scientists found that positive parenting has long-term benefits, including better relationships, mental health, and well-being during adulthood.<sup>3</sup>



# **PRIDE Skills**

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**Five ways to provide  
positive parenting**

# Parenting with PRIDE

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The PRIDE skills are five positive parenting techniques that can easily be used in every day life. The skills have been shown in studies to be a successful way to support children's development.

## Tip

As with all parenting advice, experts recommend using the skills in a way that feels right for you and your family.



**P**RAISE  
**R**EFLECTION  
IMITATION  
**D**ESCRPTION  
**E**NJOYMENT



**PRAISE**  
LOVE WHAT THEY DO  
.....





# PRAISE

is a positive statement that expresses approval.



1

## Praise makes children feel good

What we tell children becomes their inner voice and has the potential to build up or tear down. Praise builds children up by strengthening self-esteem and self-concept.

2

## Praise teaches children

Praise gives guidance about your standards of behavior. When a behavior is rewarded, children learn how you want them to behave. Each time you praise that behavior, your child will be reminded of your expectations.

3

## Praise changes behavior

When a behavior is praised, children will continue on with this behavior.

# WAYS TO PRAISE

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I love seeing you help little sis with her homework.



You made that nice picture for Tio! I love it.



Thank you for listening to Mom that it's time to clean up.

# 4 tips for harnessing the power of praise



## Tip 1: Label your praise

Be specific with your praise to teach your child what she did correctly. For example, instead of saying, "Good job," try adding an explanation such as, "Good job waiting patiently while I was on the phone." Your child won't have to guess what you like.

## Tip 2: Praise the baby steps

Praise doesn't have to be reserved for "big" behaviors. Praise for small accomplishments can motivate your child when working towards a larger goal. For example, if you want your child to get ready for bed independently, positive feedback for small steps such as brushing teeth and picking out pajamas can keep him encouraged.

## Tip 3: Praise achievement *and* effort

Focus your praise on effort and hard work, rather than just the end product. For instance, after a soccer game, praise your child for winning the game *and* trying her hardest.

## Tip 4: Praise with your words *and* body

Adding smiles, a rub on the back, enthusiasm, a hug, a kiss or a high five can make praise feel extra special.

# REFLECTION

SAY WHAT THEY SAY

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# REFLECTION

involves repeating back a child's words and elaborating on what the child said.



1

## Reflections show you are listening

Reflections let your child know you are paying attention. They communicate the message: 'I hear you and I get you.'

2

## Reflections promote back-and-forth conversation

When a child's statements are reflected, it rewards the child for speaking. This encourages children to start conversations and share their thoughts more frequently. Reflections are more powerful than questions to get a child talking.

3

## Reflections help language development

Reflections are a great tool to improve children's speech since they offer an opportunity to subtly correct grammatical mistakes. For instance, if a child says "I *ranned* home," a parent can reflect "Wow, you *ran* home!".

### Did you know?

Back-and-forth conversation with your child strengthens the language center of the brain.<sup>4</sup>

# WAYS TO REFLECT

**Tip:** try replacing acknowledgements such as “Uh huh” and “I see” with reflections.



He broke it!

He *broke* the jar when it dropped.



Chicky ricky na na na!



I'm gonna sing it like you! Chicky ricky na na na!



I didn't like it when he took my ball!

It made you upset when Zack took your ball. I can understand that.

# IMITATION

DO WHAT THEY DO

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# IMITATION

involves playing in a similar way as your child or making similar gestures.



# 1

## **Imitation makes children feel important**

An adult imitating a child's actions is very flattering. Imitation sends the message: 'What you are doing is interesting and important, and I want to do it too.'

# 2

## **Imitation allows you to get on the child's level**

Imitation is a good way to join in the child's play if you are unsure of how to do so. Children are the play experts and by imitating what they are doing, they will teach *you* how to play.

# 3

## **Imitation helps with social skills**

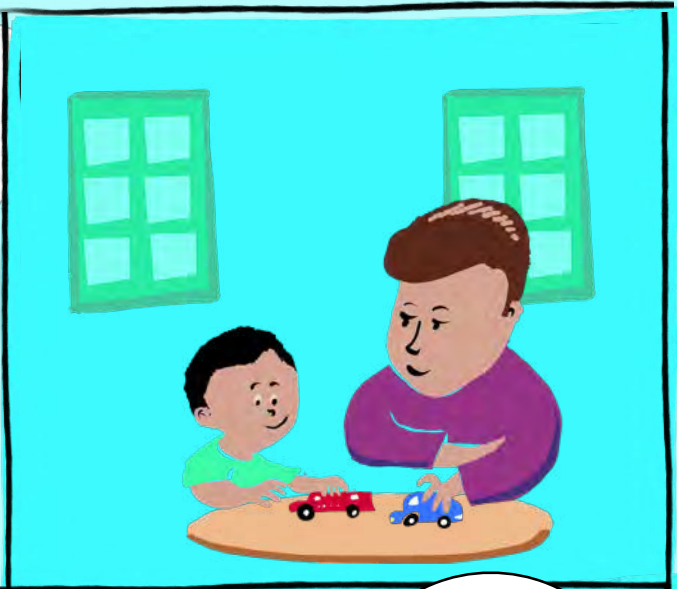
When an adult imitates a child, the child is more likely to imitate the adult. Imitating each other is a great way to practice back-and-forth social exchanges.

# WAYS TO IMITATE

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That looks yummy! I'm gonna try that too!



You're holding your baby so sweetly. I'm going to rock my baby doll just like you.

# DESCRIPTION

SAY WHAT THEY DO



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# DESCRIPTION

involves describing what your child is doing, much like a sportscaster giving a play-by-play narration of a game.

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# 1

## **Descriptions show you are paying attention**

Descriptions let your child know they have your undivided attention and you are interested in what they are doing. This is a big self-esteem boost!

# 2

## **Descriptions increase attention span**

Descriptions help children focus and spend more time on a task. It's a great tool to use during homework.

# 3

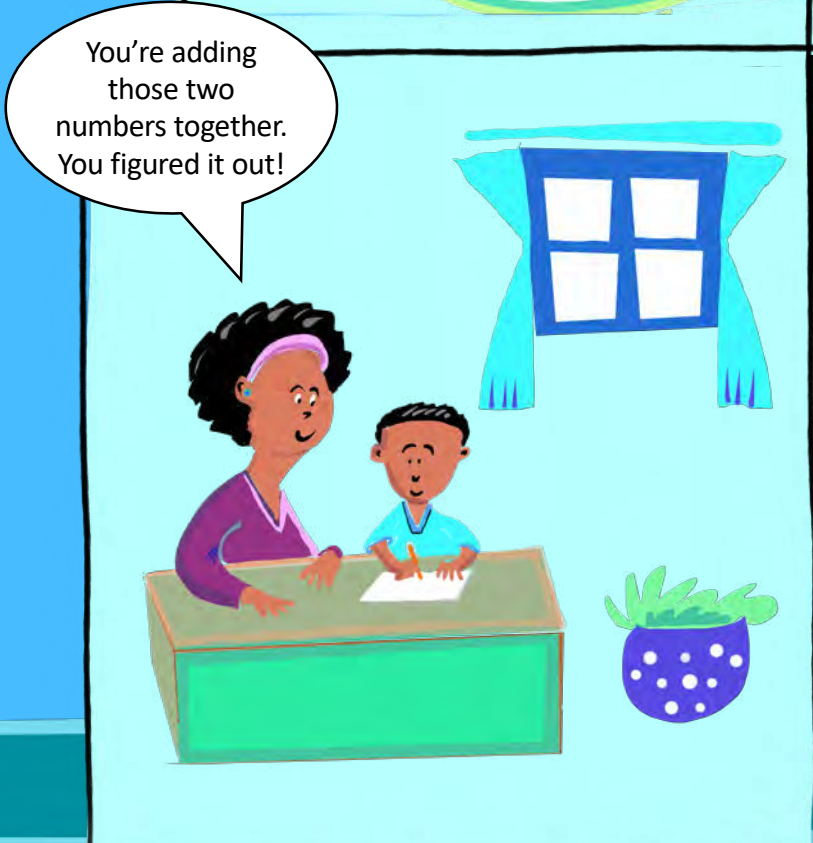
## **Descriptions teach young children**

Descriptions help young children learn new words and concepts such as shapes, sizes, numbers and colors.



# WAYS TO DESCRIBE

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# ENJOYMENT

SHOW WARMTH AND  
ENTHUSIASM



# ENJOYMENT

means expressing warmth and positivity with your words and actions while you play and interact with your child.

I like going to the game with you, son.



# 1

## Enjoyment strengthens the parent-child bond

Adding warmth and excitement to the interaction lets your child know you care about them and enjoy spending time together.

# 2

## Enjoyment models positivity

Children pick up on and mimic the emotions of others. When you are cheerful, your child will be more likely to act positively.

### Showing enjoyment with your body

- Smile
- Make eye contact
- Hug and kiss your child
- Put your arm around your child
- Rub your child's back

### Showing enjoyment with your voice

- Let your child know how much you enjoy being with them
- Talk in a warm and animated voice
- Laugh together



# WAYS TO SHOW ENJOYMENT

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# Putting it All Together

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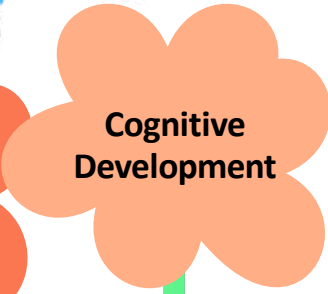
Promoting good behaviors  
and targeting inappropriate  
behaviors with PRIDE skills

# Promoting good behaviors with PRIDE skills

PRIDE skills can be used to teach social skills, prepare children for school, and help them learn to manage behaviors and emotions. To promote healthy development with PRIDE skills, watch for moments where your child displays a good behavior. Every time you notice a good behavior you'd like to see more of, shower your child with PRIDE skills. The more you point out these good behaviors, the more they will blossom and grow.



See the next page for examples of good behaviors.



## Good behaviors to notice

### Social skills and manners

- Being kind
- Being a good sport
- Compromising
- Doing things for others
- Helping
- Making eye contact
- Saying *please* and *thank you*
- Sharing
- Showing empathy
- Taking turns
- Using nice words



### School and learning skills

- Concentrating
- Creative thinking
- Flexible thinking
- Focusing and staying on task
- Persisting
- Problem-solving
- Thinking things through
- Working hard
- Working independently

### Self-control skills

- Being careful and gentle
- Being safe
- Staying calm
- Calmly expressing feelings
- Waiting patiently

### Listening and obeying skills

- Accepting *no* for an answer
- Asking permission
- Doing things right away
- Following directions
- Listening the first time



## Targeting inappropriate behaviors with PRIDE skills

PRIDE skills can help decrease unwanted behaviors. This is done by “catching” your child doing something good that is opposite of an inappropriate behavior. For instance, want your child to stop running ahead at the grocery store? Praise him for staying next to you.

Almost all unwanted behaviors have an opposite good behavior. When you compliment your child for displaying a good behavior, it helps him learn what *to do* rather than what *not to do*, and increases the likelihood he’ll repeat that good behavior.

See the next page for examples of opposite good behaviors to “catch.”

To decrease an inappropriate behavior...



“Catch” the opposite good behavior...



### Tip

Be on the lookout for good behaviors, even if they are brief, and “catch” them right away.



To decrease these...

“Catch” these...

**Acting aggressively**

Being careful and gentle  
Keeping hands to self  
Making safe choices

**Acting impulsively**

Being patient  
Concentrating  
Thinking things through

**Disobeying**

Cooperating  
Following directions  
Listening right away

**Fighting with siblings**

Sharing  
Taking turns  
Using kind words

**Interrupting**

Letting others talk  
Saying *excuse me*

**Lying**

Being honest  
Telling the truth right away

**Picky eating**

Being brave  
Trying new foods

**Talking rudely**

Saying nice things  
Using polite words

**Throwing tantrums**

Calmly expressing feelings  
Calming down

**Whining**

Having a positive attitude  
Asking with a big boy/girl voice  
Using words to express needs

Thank you for being truthful and letting mom know.



4

**Playtime**

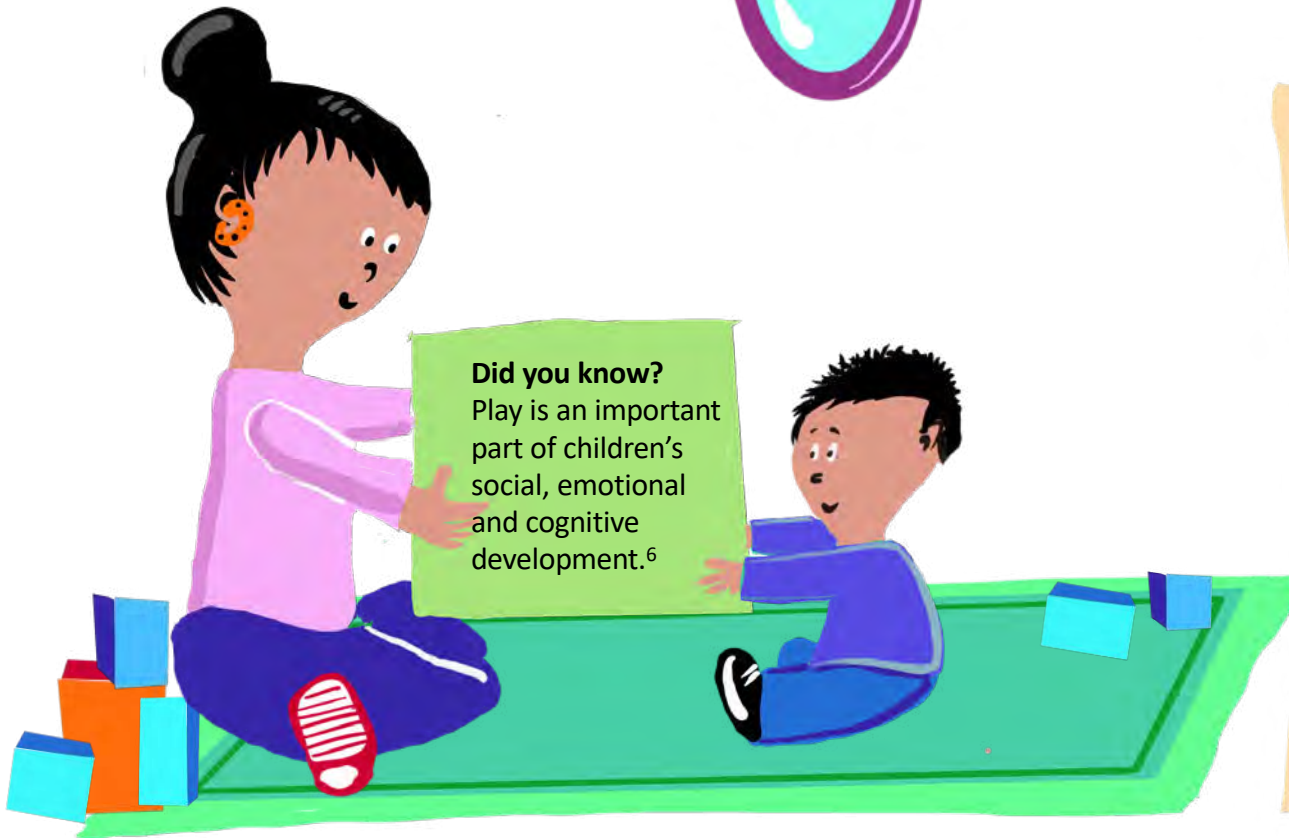


**Taking the time to play**



# Taking the time to play

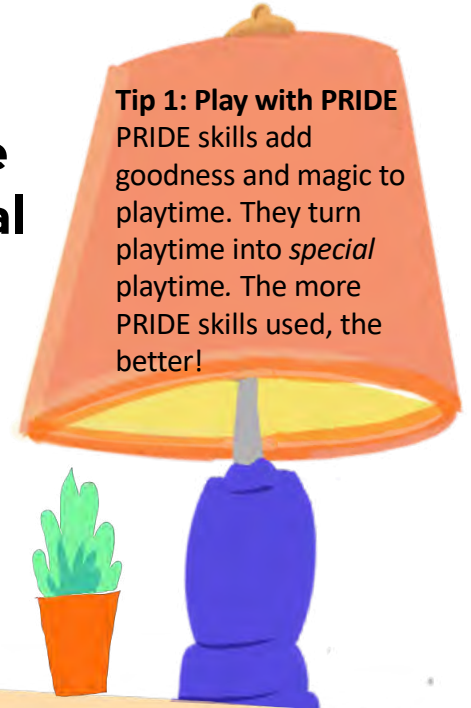
Playtime is easily forgotten in the hustle and bustle of daily life. Distraction-free playtime offers a chance to pause, breathe, and connect with your child. Parenting experts say that as little as five minutes of daily playtime can strengthen the parent-child bond.<sup>5</sup>



## 2 tips to make playtime special



**Tip 1: Play with PRIDE**  
PRIDE skills add goodness and magic to playtime. They turn playtime into *special* playtime. The more PRIDE skills used, the better!



### Tip 2: Let your child lead the way

Since children rarely have the opportunity to be in charge, letting your child lead can make playtime feel extra special. Here are two ways to follow your child's lead:

Go with the flow by letting your child choose what you play with and how you play (as long as it's safe).

Reduce commands and questions such as, "Say *choo choo!*" and, "What will his name be?".

# A final note



## **Do what feels right for your family**

You know your child best, so use the skills in a way that feels right. It's all about encouraging values and behaviors that are personally important to you.

## **Give yourself praise**

Parenting can be hard so remember to go easy on yourself. Showing yourself love is important just as you'd show your child love. Give yourself praise from time-to-time for doing your best.



For more  
parenting  
resources visit  
[www.First5LA.org](http://www.First5LA.org)

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