



Positive Parenting

Parenting children is never easy, particularly when there is neurodivergence in the mix. This could be one or more of your children with ADHD/ASD and possibly a parent too.

It is so easy to fall into the downward spiral of negative behaviours – shouting, uncooperative and unpleasant actions, followed by inconsistent punishments that never seem to improve the choices of your child.

By focusing on positive behaviours and demonstrating the traits you want to see in them, such as kindness, respect and honesty, you can start to create a much happier household.

Tips for a more positive approach

- **Make time** to take part in activities your child enjoys and show interest in what they are doing by giving it your full attention
- **Stay calm**, and speak to your child with kindness, respect and encouragement
- **Listen carefully** to your child's thoughts and feelings
- **Show your love** to make them feel secure, even when you don't like their behaviour!
- **Model positive actions and language** so they can mirror respect and kindness
- **Celebrate success** and praise or acknowledge when you notice them trying, or demonstrating appropriate actions



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Establish clear boundaries and expectations

- **Set clear rules** and make sure everyone understands them
- **Be consistent** and set limits that are achievable and not too harsh
- **Mistakes** – turn them into learning opportunities for you and your child. Guide them through their mistakes and help them to understand how they can do better next time
- **Positive discipline** – instead of punishments and difficult to enforce sanctions, focus on teaching and guiding your child to make better choices next time



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How do we get started?

Firstly, any adults in the household need to work together to ensure there are no mixed messages for the children. They need to understand that there isn't an alternative option if they don't want to follow the agreed rules!

Sit down and produce your own list of boundaries and expectations. Have a think about a reward system you could introduce as an incentive so you can be fully prepared to start.

Have a family meeting so you can introduce your ideas and give your children a chance to have their say and offer a few ideas towards the final plan. The more they are included in the planning, the more likely they are to follow it. Put your agreed list of rules up on the wall where all family members can see it. Don't forget those rules can include ones for the parents too!



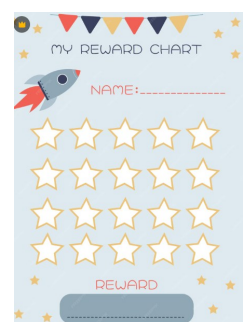
Reward systems

These need to be age and ability appropriate and will need to evolve frequently to keep the interest going. All rewards, for trying or achieving, need to be incremental so the child can see immediate progress. The points must be given for a specific action; not just for being 'good' - this is too vague and doesn't explain what they need to keep doing. The most important thing is that you **never** take a reward away if they mess up at a later point - if you do, they could give up trying.



All incremental rewards will, at an agreed point, add up to a bigger prize. This prize can be something you negotiate with your child, but it has to be affordable, realistic and in proportion to the effort used to earn it. It could be a toy or book, extra time on their game device, a special trip out to their favourite park, swimming, cinema, or even individual time with a parent to do something fun together.

You'll need a chart to record the rewards. There are many templates available online, or you and your child could design their own using pictures and stickers of their favourite characters. Some people use counters in a jar, or Lego bricks in a tower. Keep the chart on the wall where everyone can see it and regularly review their success.





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Additional considerations

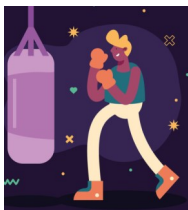
Neurodivergent children will have some added struggles when learning to cooperate in the family household. There may be sensory sensitivities, social communication difficulties, anxiety, or rigidity in how they want things to be.

There may be other strategies you can use to help their emotional regulation and avoid dysregulation and overload. You may need a plan for anticipating meltdowns and outbursts by reducing obvious triggers. Agree a strategy with your child that allows them to go to a 'safe place' in their home to decompress in their own way. You may need to provide particular sensory objects, a soft blanket, or a punch bag for example.

See our other information sheets on After-school Overload and Emotional Regulation or speak to one of our advisers for other ideas.



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