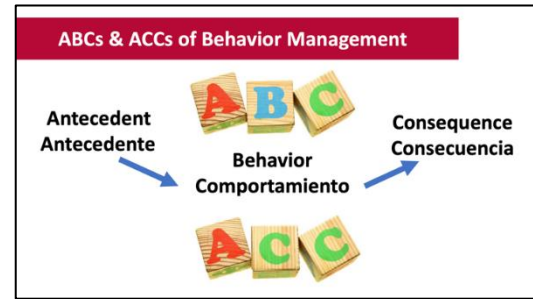


## Managing Challenging Behaviors at Home Part 3

To conclude our Managing Challenging Behaviors at Home workshop series, we are discussing the consequences.

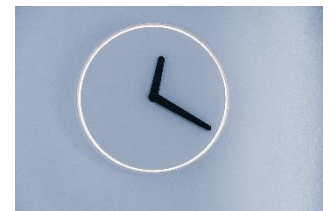
### The Complexities of Consequences

- **Consequences:** the results that follow a behavior. Consequences — positive or negative — affect the likelihood of a behavior happening again. And the more immediate the consequence, the more powerful it is, especially for young children.
- It can be hard for parents and caregivers to decide on what is an appropriate consequence for their young children. Some are an excellent way to create structure and help kids understand the difference between acceptable behaviors and unacceptable behaviors while others have the potential to do more harm than good.
- To make it even more complicated, **all children are different**, a point that we have highlighted repeatedly throughout our workshops, and their behaviors are different. The following tips can be used to help address many different behaviors, but if you are seeing some behaviors that put you or your child at risk, we encourage you to reach out for help from a behavior specialist in your community or check out the resources on the last page.
- **Being consistent is key.**



### Consequences to Avoid

1. **Negative Attention:** Negative attention, such as raising your voice or spanking, actually increases bad behavior over time. Responding to behaviors with criticism or yelling adversely affects children's self-esteem.
2. **Spanking or Hitting:** Hitting or spanking your child is not an effective or acceptable consequence. The American Academy of Pediatrics released a statement against the practice and pointed to the many studies that suggest spanking harms children, doesn't change their behavior for the better, and may make them more aggressive later in life.
3. **Delaying Consequences:** The most effective consequences are immediate, as this creates a stronger direct link from the behavior to the consequence. When we are delivering consequences to young children, the key is that they relate their behavior to the consequence. If we delay the consequence, it is less likely that they will understand that an unacceptable behavior will result in a consequence.
  - a. For example, say your child refuses to eat their vegetables. Avoid the **delayed consequence**, in which they can't go out for ice cream a few days later. The **immediate consequence** would be that they cannot eat dessert that night.
4. **Disproportionate consequences:** This means 'the punishment does NOT fit the crime,' and is too severe. Parents understandably get very frustrated. At times, they may be so frustrated that they overreact in the consequence they give. It is also easy to make consequences inconsistent when we let our momentary frustrations control the consequence. But your goal should be to deliver *appropriate* consequences that fit the action.
  - a. **Reading is a disproportionate consequence!** You should never make reading a consequence, otherwise children will start associating reading with punishment and it will no longer be an enjoyable activity for them!



5. **Positive consequences:** Another way of thinking about positive consequences is ...
  - a. For example, when a child wastes time instead of putting on their shoes or picking up their blocks and, in frustration, you do it for them, you're increasing the likelihood that they will waste time the next time this happens

## Effective Consequences

1. **Positive attention for positive behaviors:** This is probably the most important one! Giving your child positive reinforcement for doing the things you want to see helps maintain the ongoing good behavior. Positive attention enhances the quality of the relationship, improves self-esteem, and feels good for everyone involved.
  - o Example: "It was a great choice when you took your dishes to the sink. You should be proud of yourself!"
2. **Reward System:** A reward is something a child earns; a tangible way to give children positive feedback for desired behaviors. Rewards are most effective as motivators when the child can choose from a variety of things: extra time playing, a special snack, etc. This offers the child their own choice and reduces the possibility of a reward losing its appeal over time. Rewards should be linked to specific behaviors and always delivered **consistently. Being consistent is key.**

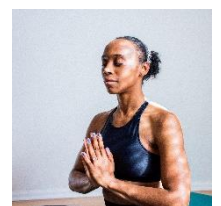
- o Below are examples of reward systems you can set up at home!

- **Marbles in a Jar:** Each time your child makes a positive behavior choice, they get to put a marble in the jar. When it is full, they get to choose a reward.
- **Daily Chart:** This option has a chance for your child to earn three stickers, one for the morning, afternoon, and evening and might work better for younger children. If they receive all three stickers, they receive a treat before bed or some other small reward. These reward charts work best when you are consistent with using them.



3. **Ignoring Actively:** Active ignoring involves you choosing to ignore your child when they start to misbehave. As you ignore, you wait for positive behavior to resume. You want to give positive attention **as soon as** the desired behavior starts. By not giving your child attention until you get positive behavior you are teaching your child what behavior gets you to engage with them.
4. **Take Time for Reflection:** Sometimes we all need time to ourselves to cool down and reflect on the emotions that are causing us to behave a certain way. This is true for both children and adults! Create a room or a space in your house to be a reflection space where children can go to cool down.

- o After everyone has calmed down, talk through how they are feeling and why this behavior is happening. Acknowledge their feelings and the right they have to feel a certain way, especially during this time of COVID-19.
- o Talk about how the other people involved in their behavior are also feeling.
  - For example, if your child took a toy from a friend, talk about how that action made the other child feel. This helps to teach the about empathy. If you're looking for more information on developing empathy, please check out our [earlier workshop](#) we hosted with Mutt-i-grees.



**If you have any questions about any content we covered in this workshop, email Kristen Rocha Aldrich at [krochaaldrich@reachoutandreadnyc.org](mailto:krochaaldrich@reachoutandreadnyc.org) and we will be sure to answer them during our next workshop!**