

Foreword

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Parents tend to manage their children's behavior in ways they hope will be both effective and expedient. Unfortunately, though their intentions are almost always good, parents also tend to manage behavior in negative, coercive ways. And why not? That's how most of them were parented!

In the book, *The Power of Positive Parenting*, I discuss non-coercive positive parenting skills. All of these skills have been shown through scientific study to be effective. These skills enable parents to:

1. have frequent positive interactions with their children;
2. clearly establish and communicate their expectations;
3. clearly establish the consequences for compliance and noncompliance;
4. ignore behaviors that do not threaten the basic quality of life, limb, and property (which includes *most* unacceptable behaviors);
5. attend to inappropriate behavior in an unemotional, precise, and directive way;
6. not question noncompliant children about their behavior, nor ask them to explain their inappropriate behavior;
7. use the inappropriate behavior of one child as a cue to attend to the appropriate behavior of other children;
8. smile and laugh, talk and touch—a lot; and
9. assess behavior analytically, and treat it clinically.

Parents must learn that after 60+ years of careful, disciplined, and thorough inquiry, much has been learned about human behavior: how to “shape” it, encourage it, and “fix” it.

The essence of this research has revealed, perhaps above all else, that behavior ultimately responds much, much better to positive than to negative consequences. True, aversive, negative consequences can and often do immediately produce the results parents want. But these results are almost always short term and, eventually, counterproductive. As noted by Dr. Murry Sidman, in his wonderfully insightful book, *Coercion and Its Fallout*, coercion ultimately finds children escaping (getting away), avoiding (staying away), and countercoercing (getting even). On the other hand, as observed by Dr. Sidney Bijou, “Research has shown that the most effective way to reduce problem behavior in children is to strengthen desir-

able behavior through positive reinforcement rather than trying to weaken undesirable behavior using aversive or negative processes" (*The International Encyclopedia of Education*, 1988).

In a word, what I want parents to understand is that short term compliance achieved using coercive means does not lead to long term gains. Coercion produces only short term compliance followed by long term losses. The skills taught in *The Power of Positive Parenting* use non-coercive positive methods to achieve both short and long term compliance and gains.

This book of study questions, when used as designed, will greatly help readers of *The Power of Positive Parenting* to better learn those skills. It will help them operate in a better way, a way based in solid behaviorological science, a way that leads to coordinated short and long term gains. Do put these books to work, both for yourself and for your children.☺

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