

Ignore (aka Selective Attention)

- Kids do things like rolling eyes, arguing, having temper tantrums, and whining to get their way. These undesirable behaviors will often decrease or go away completely if ignored. By engaging with kids (such as arguing back) when they do these behaviors, you are giving attention (which is what they want) and keeps the behaviors going.
- Ignoring should only be used for behaviors that are not physically harmful to your child, others, or property. If a behavior is harmful, you must immediately address it!
- You must ignore 100% with your actions and words. When ignoring the negative behavior, make no response to your child. No more warnings, comforting, scolding, laughing, reminding, etc. or it's back to square one.
- It can be helpful to direct your attention elsewhere and wait for your child to return to you in an appropriate manner. For example, if you are engaged in a game with your child and he or she begins throwing a temper tantrum, direct your gaze elsewhere and return to playing with the toys. Wait for your child to return to or approach you. When they do, give a lot of praise for their appropriate behaviors ("I'm so glad you came back to sit at the table and play with me.")
- When you first ignore a behavior (such as whining), you can expect your child to "up the volume" at first. If you continue ignoring and do not give in to your child's attempts to get your attention, they will stop the behavior...although they may test you a few more times! However, if you do respond to your child at this louder volume, you've just taught them that, if they whine loud enough, you will give in--- not what you want them to do!
- Stay calm! Your children learn a lot from you about how to handle strong emotions. When you are calm and choosing to avoid a power struggle, they learn this skill just by watching you do it!

Balance Selective Attention With:

- Labeled Praises for opposite, positive, and desired behavior. Catch your child being good! Example: "I like the way you kept all of your food on your plate."
- Avoid arguments by responding with powerful EMPATHY when your child expresses frustration. Example: "That is really frustrating when plans change." You don't even need to say anything after that!

- Incorporate moments during the day when you can share power with your child and they can feel in control. Offer two choices, both of which you can live with. Examples: “Would you like to read one book or two books before bedtime?” “You can have ice cream or a Popsicle for dessert.” Don’t be tempted to offer more than two choices and always stick to what you initially offered. If your child does not make a choice, simply respond by saying, “It sounds like this was a difficult decision for you to make. I love you. Maybe later you will be able to choose.” Even if your child is upset, it is important to stand firm and use your Selective Attention skills, or your child will learn that you will cater to their demands - that doesn’t feel good to parents!
- Schedule daily and regular 5 minutes of Special Time with your child where they are in the lead of the playtime. Use toys instead of games. This will meet your child’s need for positive, unconditional attention from you EVERY DAY!
- Remember: kids can’t “hear” you when you lecture them after they have just made a mistake - their brains are not able to receive that information from you in that moment. Instead, use Selective Attention, Empathy, or reassuring statements, such as, “We will talk about this later,” or “I love you even when you make a mistake.” Then you can engage in Selective Attention until you and your child calm down and can process what happened - this is a better time to teach those important “life lessons.”
- Remember: you are in control! You are a confident parent. You can still give your children all of your love AND not respond to them when they are engaging in unhelpful behavior.

You are learning to RESPOND to your child’s behavior rather than react!