

# Ep #85 How to use Effective Negative Consequences: Part 3

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This is Episode 85. Let's begin.

Smarter Parenting welcomes you to our podcast series, The Parenting Coach for ADHD. Here to heal and elevate lives is your Parenting Coach, Siopé Kinikini.

Today is a great day because we will be talking about Effective Negative Consequences. And during the last two podcasts, we have been talking about [Effective Negative Consequences](#) and what it takes to [implement consequences that change your child's behavior](#) to more positive behaviors.

[Ep #83: How to use Effective Negative Consequences: Part 1](#)

[Ep #84: How to use Effective Negative Consequences: Part 2](#)

And so today, I'm answering questions that have come up during my coaching sessions with parents. And I think it's super important for us to address these questions right now because there seems to be a certain perspective on how we can implement Effective Negative Consequences and what role [Effective Positive Rewards](#) play in this whole interaction with our children.

So during this podcast, we are going to discuss how to determine if you should use [Effective Negative Consequences](#) or Effective Positive Rewards. We're also going to talk about the brain and the way that a child's brain develops, and a study that was done that gives us more insight into why one approach is more effective and can be more effective than another. And then the third thing we will talk about is what do you do when your child misbehaves? So we're kind of taking most of the questions that I've received about consequences.

I received a phone call last week, and during our coaching session, we were talking about Effective Negative Consequences. And while we were discussing this, we tended to go deeper and deeper and deeper into what consequences are going to give us the results that we want. What can we do to change the child's behavior?

I recommended we take a different approach and focus on Effective Positive Rewards. Now, this became a point of discussion between me and the parents of this child, because, for them, they were unsure exactly the balance between the two. When should we consequent our child

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and when should we focus on the positive behaviors of the child in order to shape and change their negative behaviors?

The answer is a lot more difficult to really understand than we can discuss. I mean, each individual child responds differently to whatever may motivate them. And so, parents need to take special caution in the way that they approach it.

However, and this is the however I gave to the parents that I was speaking with, we have to be able to determine and understand the differences between Effective Negative Consequences and Effective Positive Rewards, what they do and what their function is. So what is the function of Effective Negative Consequences and what is the function of Effective Positive Rewards?

Now when we're looking at the gamut of a child's behavior, if we're going to change a child's behavior, in this case, this child was just rebellious and refused to do what the parents were asking them to do, we started to approach it from Effective Negative Consequences. And the idea is that we need to give a consequence in order to decrease that negative behavior.

So Effective Negative Consequences, the purpose of implementing that is to decrease the negative behavior. However, the role of Effective Positive Rewards is to increase a positive behavior. [So while we're decreasing a negative behavior, we should always, always, always be focused on what behavior do we want them to exhibit and how do we increase that behavior to take over the negative behavior?](#) So in a balancing act, the two can be very powerful, but only if a parent understands which one to use and how to use it.

So again, when I was speaking with these parents about their rebellious child. That's what they called their child, rebellious. Just defiant. So we have the behavior, which is defiance. That defiance needs a consequence, okay? We need to address a consequence for the defiance, but we also need a counter to that. We need to have a positive reward focused on a behavior that we do want them to exhibit to give them power, to give them buy-in to what it is we want them to do. We cannot just give consequences to children and expect them to change the behavior without having something else for them to do in return.

In real life speak, if you're going to take and focus on giving a child a consequence for a negative behavior, always, always, always be very specific on what positive behavior you want to replace that negative behavior with and find ways to reinforce that positive behavior with Effective Positive Rewards.

Now, this is where you get the meat of what this is all about in providing Effective Negative Consequences and Effective Positive Rewards. Don't focus on consequences to fix all the problems, because it won't. What happens with consequences that are piled on and on and on to children, it does affect their self-esteem and their ability to function and their ability to comprehend the world and their parents' relationship.

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So parents who are heavy in the consequences without thinking of the other side, the flip side of that, tend to have less effective relationships in the long run. Because the child, instead of viewing my behavior as a mistake, the child starts to believe, "Well, I must be the mistake." Can you see how the connection is made that way?

So as parents, be very cautious about your approach in working through when my child misbehaves, I need to provide a consequence for that behavior, and yet at the same time, I need to find an Effective Positive Reward to balance that out so my child does know how to behave well, and so I can praise them. And so I can let them know that they're doing well. And so that they feel like they can accomplish something, right?

Super, super powerful to think of consequences and rewards in this way.

What's fortunate is that the skills that you find on Smarter Parenting teach you how to do both of those and how to give Effective Negative Consequences and how to give Effective Positive Rewards. And surprisingly, they are very, very similar. In fact, they all have the same five elements when you are working with children. And that's the beauty of it. That really is part of the beauty of being able to provide an Effective Negative Consequence and using Effective Negative Rewards. The way that we use it in Smarter Parenting. Because the way that we implement it, you just need to keep in mind that the five elements need to be present in every sense of the way that we do it.

[Let me give you those because I think it's important for you to know exactly what those five elements are for Effective Negative Consequences and for Effective Positive Rewards.](#)

The first thing that makes rewards or consequences effective is that it needs to be immediate. So a consequence should be given immediately after negative behavior. The same thing goes for Effective Positive Rewards.

The second thing that makes them effective are the degree and size. So how big or small the negative consequence or positive reward is. It needs to match the size of the behavior of the child.

The third thing is consistency. So your ability to follow through and be sure that you can give a reward at the right time, every time, to reinforce that, or give the consequence every time so you can decrease that negative behavior.

The fourth thing is important. Whatever you're doing, consequence or reward, it needs to be meaningful to your child.

And then the fifth thing is it needs to vary over time. As your child develops, those consequences and those rewards will change because your child is changing. So always be

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aware of that. And you want to be sure that you are providing something that is motivating for your child.

So I'm going to go over them again, just so you can keep them in mind when you are working with Effective Negative Consequences and Effective Positive Rewards. The five elements for both of those are immediacy. It needs to be immediate. The degree or size. How big or small they are need to match the behavior. Consistency, your ability to follow through. The importance, it needs to be meaningful to your child. And varied. That you are aware of your child's changing needs and you can adjust those rewards or consequences appropriately.

Now, with the family that I was working with, the defiant behavior, instead of focusing on their interpretation of defiant, I had to have them give me very specific examples. So in our phone call, we were talking about defiant behavior. Defiant behavior could be a lot of things, and unless you're specific, I don't know what that is.

So I had to have them give me some very, very specific examples of defiance. And then we would focus on each of those elements. We would use the elements from Effective Positive Rewards and Effective Negative Consequences in order to address the behavior.

So as I had them explain different scenarios where their child was defiant, we ended up focusing on the child being able to go to bed on time. That seemed to be something the child did not want to do. So in our discussion of that, we talked about it. What are some effective consequences that you can give your child based on that behavior of not going to bed on time. And always getting up and walking around the house and asking for drinks. And doing all those things that children do? What are some effective consequences that we can implement in order to decrease that behavior?

And we discussed a lot of things. We discussed having the parents ground her. Having the parents take away privileges. Take away toys. Take away free time. We talked about all those things to decrease that. And what we found was that they were able to come up with a solution for that behavior to decrease, that they specified for this child that any time that they left the room, then they would lose time the next day to play on their video game or lose time to be with friends. So if they left once, twice, three times, they would lose a specific amount of time.

Now, it's not as immediate as we like, but the focus was trying to get the child in bed, right? So that was the consequence that they felt they could implement and that would be meaningful to their child. And then we went on the flip side and we focused on, "Okay, what are some positive rewards we can focus on to implement the behavior that we do want, which is keeping her inside her room after bedtime?"

And so, what they found was, "Okay, we can reward you by checking in with you every 15 minutes until you fall asleep." So they would come in and check in on her. 15 minutes, mom would come in. 15 minutes, dad would come in. And when they came in, they would either come

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and give her a rub on her leg and just check-in. Or they would just engage with her in a positive way to keep her in her room until she fell asleep but to also allow her some time to fall asleep on her own.

Now, this is not the solution for every parent, but this is the solution that we came up with where we used the balance of Effective Negative Consequences, based on what would affect the child's behavior, and Effective Positive Rewards. And so what I'm hoping you can gather from this is this connection between the two. Effective Negative Consequences does serve a purpose, a very huge monumental, important purpose, but so does Effective Positive Rewards. And when you're attacking a negative behavior from both sides, you have a lot of power. You have a lot of power and the behavior will change a lot faster.

It's important to think about that. Now for younger children, like for this child, we focused more on the rewards and let me tell you why. There was a study done by the Dutch. Some Dutch neuroscientists discovered that Effective Positive Rewards could be more effective for children who are younger, ages 8 through 12. They held a study, and during the study, they, children, they were scanned. They were in a brain-scanning machine for this test. And during the test, the children had to navigate through a program and there were no rules, but once they figured out the rule, they would either get a checkmark that was positive saying, "Hey, you did well, that was right," or they got a checkmark that said, "No, you got it wrong." Okay? Yes and no.

So these children, 8 through 12, were connected to machines and they were scanning their brains. What they found was that rewards tended to be more powerful in shaping a child's behavior. Because when they got the checkmark, the brain scanning images seemed to light up more than when they got a negative.

Now they ran the test again for young adults from the ages of 18 through 25. They were tested and their results actually were very different. And this goes to my point where I'm saying children evolve over time and they change. So it's important to meet them where they're at. For the older children, they found that the negative actually stimulated more of their brain because it made them try and process and make sense of everything that was happening.

So the cognitive tasks central to the research were administered to these young people, and what they found was that the young people were more stimulated and more engaged when they received positive feedback. You might be wondering why this is so. What they came up with is that the study showed that younger children have an easier time processing simpler concepts. Like they are concrete thinkers. And so when you say they're doing something positive, they can connect that a lot easier than if you say, "Hey, this is wrong." When you're saying something that this is wrong, when you tell your child, "Hey, this is wrong," your child has to connect some dots and make sense of what you're saying, and that takes a lot more brain work.

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I've said this before, but the brain is such an efficient tool, and whatever is easiest for the brain, that's the default. For younger children, when you say something positive to them, it snaps and it clicks and it makes sense to them easier than when you say something is wrong.

So, they found in their study that engaging with children who are younger, more positive interactions and more positive feedback was more effective than giving them negative feedback. So I just needed to show that because in the case of the family that I was working with last week, this was the case. We went a consequence that we could implement, and when that would work, we thought that was great, but that was only half the job. The other half was finding a reward that would help the child make the behavior that the parents wanted more concrete to them and more specific to them.

You can see how these work together. They work in tandem. They really do. And effective parents know how to use both and when to use both.

So we have talked about now how to determine if you should use Effective Negative Consequences or use Effective Positive Rewards. If you're an effective parent, you're going to use both. You're going to use both, and you're going to know which one to focus on based on your child's age and their development and what they need to do.

We've also talked a little bit about the brain and why that works, [why we need to focus on rewards for younger children](#), while also giving consequences for their negative behavior because we can't ignore them.

Now, the third thing that I had mentioned we would talk about during this podcast is what do you do when a child misbehaves? Because this was the question that the parents had when we were talking. And I get it because they're like, "Well, yeah, let's focus on rewards. That's a great thing for the positive behavior, but if my child misbehaves, they have to be corrected. And they need to be corrected on their behavior."

And I said, "You're absolutely right." [When a child does misbehave, you do have to point that out](#). You do have to let them know that that behavior is inappropriate and that it is not something that you will tolerate, because if you do not address the behavior and you only approach it from rewards and trying to focus on the positive, then what you will find is the child will get some mixed messages about their behavior.

So I talked to them about being able to use the other skills that are available in the Smarter Parenting website, like [Observe and Describe](#), and also specifically the skill of [Correcting Behaviors](#).

So there's a skill on the Smarter Parenting website called Correcting Behaviors, and this tells you specifically, step-by-step what you need to do in order to correct a child's behavior.

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The reason that these skills work so well together is that they are all interconnected. When a child misbehaves, you can start using the skill of Correcting Behaviors for that behavior, and also implementing Effective Negative Consequences, and also implementing Effective Positive Rewards. They're all interconnected. All of these skills are like a toolbox where you have not only a hammer, but you have a wrench and a screwdriver and they all serve very specific purposes. And your skill as a parent is to know which one to you use when.

My answer to all parents who think I'm saying, "Just focus on the positive behaviors." I'm saying absolutely not. I'm saying we should focus on positive behaviors and we should reinforce those positive behaviors because it makes sense to children, but we should also correct children when they misbehave. We should be engaged in teaching them, "This is not appropriate." Right? And then implementing consequences.

It's a fine balancing act. You know, I constantly hear, and everyone will agree, I don't know anyone who disagrees with this statement, that parenting is hard. I mean, do you know anybody that walks around that says parenting is super easy? The only people that say that are people who are not parents. I mean, seriously, because it is hard. It's very hard. And there are so many nuances to consider when you're working with your child.

And yet, I know with the Teaching-Family Model, the skills that we use on the Smarter Parenting website, you can find and figure out exactly what approach and what tool you need in order to address negative behaviors and improve positive behaviors.

Now, for those of you who are curious on how to make that work for you, we do offer coaching for you. You can sign up for a free initial coaching session. Send me information. Let's talk about it. Let me give you three or four things that you can implement immediately in your home in order to change your child's behavior that you can use.

What's beneficial about doing the coaching is that we can take very specific examples based on your knowledge, and also take your situation based on what is happening. Because there are so many different types of families, so many different type of children, but when we can specify specifically what the needs are, then we can address them almost like a laser and get right to the point of what it is we need to get done.

So feel free to sign up for a free coaching session. I would be happy to go through some of this with you in person. We can set up a Zoom call and talk about it.

So again, this wraps up this segment of us talking about Effective Negative Consequences. The two previous podcasts where we talk about Effective Negative Consequences are great. And I advise you to go back and listen to them because they are part of this podcast.

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And I just totally want to welcome those who are new listening to the podcast. Welcome, welcome, welcome. And for those who have been here forever, let me just express gratitude to you for being here.

This podcast, again, was focused on how to determine the use of Effective Negative Consequences and Effective Positive Rewards. We also talked a little bit about the brain, a child's brain, and what stimulates them, and where they do their learning the most is usually on the positive side of things.

And then I discussed with you that we do need a balance between the two. When your child misbehaves, they need to be corrected. Yeah, absolutely, they need to be corrected. Consequences, they have their place. All these things have their place and knowing how to put them together is the art part. Is the artistic part of parenting, which is a powerful thing when you can get it just right. And then you adjust as your child grows.

So this is a great way for you to actually grow with your child as they develop and learn and progress and grow. I have confidence that you can implement these things, and these skills are available on the Smarter Parenting website. Jump over there, check them out. Super awesome stuff. And I just want to let you know that I love you. You take care. Until next time.

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### **PODCASTS MENTIONED IN THIS PODCAST**

[Ep #84: How to use Effective Negative Consequences: Part 2](#)

[Ep #83: How to use Effective Negative Consequences: Part 1](#)

[Ep #60: Moving from consequences to rewards](#)

[Ep #56: Reinforcing good behavior using Effective Positive Rewards](#)

[Ep #55: Reducing bad behavior using Effective Negative Consequences](#)

### **RESOURCES**

[Behavior skill: Effective Negative Consequence](#)

[Elements of Effective Negative Consequences](#)

[Behavior skill: Effective Positive Rewards](#)

[Behavior skill: Observe and Describe](#)

[Behavior skill: Correcting Behaviors](#)

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