

# Parents taking action

Group for parents whose child challenges parental authority



## Support guide

Under the direction of Charlaïne Bisailon

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In this text, use of the masculine is generic and applies to both men and woman.

Parts of this document are from various authors. We use extracts to draw inspiration to devise our activities and create appendices. We quote the author in a footnote and at the end in the bibliography in order to respect copyright. These extracts are used to complement this facilitator's guide.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

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<b>Introduction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ <b>Context</b></li><li>✓ <b>Description of the group</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Overall objectives</li><li>• Specific objectives</li></ul></li></ul>	
<b>Activities</b>	<b>Titles</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>First activity</b>	<b>The techniques</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Disobedience interaction</li><li>✓ The six techniques</li></ul>	<b>p. 6</b>
<b>Second activity</b>	<b>The routine</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Establishing a routine</li></ul>	<b>p. 14</b>
<b>Third activity</b>	<b>Making an appropriate request</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ How to make an appropriate request</li></ul>	<b>p. 15</b>
<b>Fourth activity</b>	<b>Preventing aggressiveness and anger</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Adjusting our interventions according to the child's age</li></ul>	<b>p. 16</b>
<b>Fifth activity</b>	<b>The token systems</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Identifying tasks</li><li>✓ Identifying privileges</li></ul>	<b>p. 18</b>



# INTRODUCTION

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## Context

**This support guide** The facilitator's guide is a tool to support the intervention when a child, a teenager or a parent participates in a therapy group. It allows the participants to consolidate the concepts, tips and tools they acquired and a transfer into practice for the accompanying facilitators.

Participants need to be supported both during and after their participation in the group. This guide is a tool that complements the group. It improves support to the user.

## Description of the group

The aim of the *Parents Taking Action* group is to help a parent exercise his authority when he has to cope with children who refuse to obey and, consequently, suffer from behavior disorders. During the meetings, different themes will be addressed: situation analysis, parent-child relationship and guidance.

## Overall objective



Parents are made aware of theoretical concepts related to discipline and guidance, particularly with regard to child behavior disorders.



The parent applies methods conducive to a harmonious family environment.



The parent develops abilities and skills to improve his child's obedience.

## Specific objectives



The parent knows the definition of disobedience.



The parent identifies his child's disobedient behaviors.



The parent identifies the factors (child's and parent's characteristics, family and environmental stressors) which can lead to their child's disobedience.



The parent identifies solutions to minimize the impact of family and environmental factors and consequently, on disobedient behaviors.



The parent learns to make a clear and concise request to his child.



The parent learns five styles of parental discipline.



The parent identifies the style of discipline he uses most frequently.



The parent applies the positive attention technique in the presence of the facilitators.



The parent shares a special moment with his child.



The parent learns the stages of anger in children.



The parent learns to stop his child's unacceptable behaviors.



The parent learns to motivate his child.



The parent identifies ways of taking care of himself.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTIVITIES

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### First activity – The techniques

When parents ask their child for something or give him instructions, the child can react in two ways: say "yes" or say "no". When the child does what is asked of him, we move on to something else and everyone gets along. However, when the child says "no", things can escalate between the parents and the child.

See the chart that follows. Ask the parents where they are in this chain. Are they feeling **repetitive, threatening** or **helpless**? What are they doing to stop this escalation?

#### shéma

One of the ways to counter this escalation is to put into practice the six techniques learned in the group: *Surprise them*, *Do me a favour*, *Positive attention*, *Structuring for preventing*, *Time-out: 1-2-3 approach* and *The token systems*.

Therefore, *Parents Taking Action* teaches techniques that are mainly focused on re-establishing a positive parent-child relationship. It is hoped that after putting into practice the techniques learned, children will display more appropriate behavior. It is important for parents to continue putting into practice these techniques after their participation in the group.

**Review** the techniques with the parents. Ask them **what happens when** they put them into practice and **how the child reacts**.

**Insist that parents put them into practice.**

## "Surprise them" technique

To build a positive parent-child relationship, it is important to emphasize your child's good behaviors.



When your child does something, he is supposed to do, you must provide positive feedback like: "Thank you for doing what I asked" – "Good work!" – "I am proud of you" or simply hug him or give him a wink: "Thank you for doing what I asked."



As soon as you see your child obeying (a rule, instructions, a task, etc.), congratulate him. Be generous in giving positive feedback.



Do not ask for anything, the behavior observed must be spontaneous and at the child's initiative.



Caution! Certain children can react negatively to this type of comments. Don't worry, you should continue and keep trying.



"Surprise" your child every day, at least three times a day.

### Words and actions to "Surprise" your child . . .

- ❖ I love it when . . .!
- ❖ It's nice, wonderful, wow!
- ❖ You really are a big boy (a big girl)
- ❖ What you did was terrific!
- ❖ You are improving!
- ❖ I am proud of you!
- ❖ A wink
- ❖ A touch on the shoulder
- ❖ A pat on the back
- ❖ A hug
- ❖ A kiss
- ❖ A high five

## "Do me a favour" technique

The more you make positive comments on a child's behavior, the more likely he is to perform this behavior spontaneously.



Choose moments where your child has nothing special to do to ask him for small favours, e.g., "Could you please give me a tissue?" – "Could you please get my slippers?" These are favours that can be done within 30 seconds.



If your child complies with your request, compliment him on his behavior. If your child refuses to do the favour you asked for, do not reprimand him, say nothing.



It is important that when you ask for a favour, it sounds like a request not an order; e.g., "Could you please bring me a glass of water?" not "Give me a glass of water!"

## "Positive attention" technique

### What is positive attention?

The quality of attention we get from a person determines our interest in doing things with him or her. For example, when we enjoy spending time with someone, we want to be with this person. On the other hand, when we don't enjoy spending time with a person, we try to avoid being with him or her.

### How it works

Play with your child every day	Give attention to the good behaviors and ignore the bad ones
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan a time: set a fixed time or when your child is playing. Allow at least 15 minutes to the positive attention technique.</li> <li>• Choose a two-player game: the other children cannot play.</li> <li>• The child chooses the activity, one allowing interaction. No television.</li> <li>• Show your interest and forget criticism. Enjoy watching and commenting his achievements.</li> <li>• Encourage your child.</li> <li>• If your child misbehaves, focus your attention elsewhere. If he continues, stop the activity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quickly encourage your child's efforts. <b>DON'T WAIT!</b></li> <li>• Say what you like about your child's action (I like it when you speak quietly.)</li> <li>• Do not mix praise and criticism (You finally cleaned your room, it's about time.)</li> </ul>

### Don't forget!

Ideally, you should apply the *positive attention* technique every day, a minimum of 3 to 4 times a week, or according to your child's life situation (at every possible opportunity, when visiting, etc.). All you have to do is play with your child and pay attention to good behaviors while ignoring bad ones.

### Suggestions of games to put positive attention into practice

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Building sets (LEGO, K'Nex)</li> <li>❖ Handicraft, coloring, drawing, painting</li> <li>❖ Puzzle</li> <li>❖ Scale models</li> <li>❖ Card castle</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Writing a poem or a letter</li> <li>❖ Memory games</li> <li>❖ Play a sport (soccer, baseball, etc.)</li> <li>❖ Play a musical instrument</li> <li>❖ Board games (Guess Who?, Risk, Trouble, Monopoly, Uno, etc.)</li> </ul> |
|---|--|

**\*These games allow your child to be creative, while letting you pay attention to his positive behaviors when he plays.\***

Taken and adapted from Cloutier, G. (2012). *Vivre en harmonie avec un enfant qui s'oppose*. Montréal: Éditions Gily. (p. 64-67)

## "Structuring for preventing" technique

In keeping with the "positive attention technique," we ask that you structure free time. It is often when you have a task to do and don't want to be disturbed that your child will make frequent interruptions to get your attention.



When you know you will need some time without being disturbed (make a phone call, get dinner ready, etc.) explain the situation to your child.



Together, choose an activity the child can perform by himself, without your help (e.g., draw, build a card castle, play with LEGOs, etc.)



To reassure him, let him know how much time you will need (never longer than 15 minutes).



Accomplish your task!



When you are done, congratulate your child and thank him for not interrupting.



If need be, you can create situations to put this technique into practice. Given time, your child may be able to find something to do by himself when he sees you are busy.

When a child bothers you, it is mainly to get your attention. Few parents will stop what they are doing to pay attention to a child playing by himself, but many parents will stop what they are doing to reprimand a child who interrupts.

## Time-out: 1-2-3 approach

The aim of the 1-2-3 approach<sup>1</sup> is to end unacceptable behaviors, while ensuring that clear limits are set, without emotions or complicated situations. This approach encourages action rather than reaction.

### Advantages of the 1-2-3 approach

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Restricts the child's and the parent's impulsiveness</li><li>• Clarifies the role of the parental authority</li><li>• Uses the child's self-control ability</li><li>• Sends a clear message</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Makes consequences predictable</li><li>• Limits hard feelings</li><li>• Is easy to learn</li><li>• Provides a balance to permissive and controlling parents</li></ul> |
|---|---|

### How it works

Before applying this technique, you must explain the 1-2-3 approach to your child. Be consistent, no matter what happens and who is there.

- When your child acts up, name the behavior that must stop and say out loud "1." Nothing more, nothing less.
- If the behavior does not stop after a few seconds (approximately 10 to 20 seconds), say "2." If the behavior still hasn't stopped, after a few seconds, say "3." This is the signal that your child must take a time-out. This time-out can take place in the child's room, on a chair meant for that purpose. The length of the time-out is proportional to the child's age. For example, for a 5-year-old, the time-out will be 5 minutes.
- When the time-out is over, don't mention the situation. No discussion about what happened, unless it is necessary.

### Remember!

The time-out technique must be used at every opportunity, no matter when and where you are.

### Three rules to follow in public places<sup>2</sup>:

**1- Give your instructions to the child before going to a public place** (store, movie theater, grocery store, park, etc.).

**2- Set up a reward system that will help motivate your child to behave properly** (e.g., play together, make his favorite dessert, etc.).

**3- Plan the corrective measures you will apply if your child misbehaves.** You will count to "3" and if the behavior hasn't stopped, you will call a time-out (on a park bench, in the car, etc.).

**Please note that it is important to congratulate your child if he behaves properly.**

<sup>1</sup> Taken and adapted from: Phelan, Thomas, W. (2003). *1-2-3 Magic : Effective Discipline for children 2-12*. Illinois: Parent Magic Inc.

<sup>2</sup> Taken and adapted from Cloutier, G. (2012). *Vivre en harmonie avec un enfant qui s'oppose*. Montréal: Éditions Gily.

## The token systems

The token system is a rewards technique which motivates a child to adopt good behaviors. This technique is structured and efficient and is not influenced by the parent's mood or the moment of the day. It complements the "positive attention" technique.

### Token system A

(with earnings - tasks and privileges)

- A positive token system is a technique that reinforces a child's good behaviors and acknowledges what he does well. For each chore he does or each time he behaves properly, the child gets one or more tokens. He then gets privileges in exchange for these tokens.
- It is strongly recommended that the child spends a minimum of tokens each day (e.g., 6 a day).
- The parent may give extra tokens if the child had a good day or if he has accomplished a task exceptionally well.
- A monetary value may be assigned to the tokens for privileges with a cost (especially for older children).
- Additional tokens may be required for any activity that requires travelling.

### Token system B

(with earnings and losses – tasks, privileges and loss)

It is possible that you may have to use a token system with partial loss, when the child has unacceptable behaviors. Specific behaviors are then targeted and the child, in addition to getting tokens for what he does well, could lose tokens if he misbehaves.

- Establish a daily routine with your child and draw a list of privileges to which he will be entitled with his tokens (similar to token system A).
- Identify the unacceptable behaviors you would like your child to change. Explain how many tokens he will lose if he has these behaviors.

### A few more comments . . .

- ☑ Review the tasks and privileges list each month to make the necessary adjustments and corrections.
- ☑ Any good behavior is worth a reward. For example, you can use this system to encourage your child to stop interrupting.
- ☑ Never give tokens ahead of time. The tasks or the chore must be completed.
- ☑ If both parents live together, it is well understood that they must jointly manage this system in order to make it more meaningful.
- ☑ Finally, don't forget to smile when giving out rewards and even add a compliment from time to time.

Taken from *PEDAP*(1997). Fact sheet 31.

## Second activity – The routine



The routine is a tool used to **establish stability, make a child feel secure** and bring him to **anticipate what's coming**. It helps the child to develop his autonomy and sense of responsibility.

During the meetings of the *Parents Taking Action* group, parents are invited to review their routine and set one up if they don't have one. It is suggested that the routine be prominently displayed so the child can look at it.

A common situation experienced by many families is the bedtime period: bath, pajamas, tooth brushing, storytelling, sleep time. It is a time where parents might repeat the same instructions and where children disobey.

Ensure that parents have set up this routine properly. If it is not done, take the time to set one up. The routine can be **written** or **illustrated** depending on the child's age so he can develop his autonomy. This way, children will be well cared for and provided with a structured environment. Be creative!

**Routine de votre enfant**

Am : \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Pm : \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



### Third activity – Making an appropriate request

When a parent makes a request, it is important to be brief, clear and to the point. Here is a checklist to **read** with the parents. Ask them to **give examples** of things they ask their children. Do not hesitate to **rephrase if needed**.

For example, when a child runs in the house and the parent would like him to stop, parents tend to say: "Stop running in the house!" The parent should say: "Walk in the house" while ensuring that the child maintains eye contact with him.

#### HOW TO MAKE AN APPROPRIATE REQUEST

- Be brief (no unnecessary explanations)
- Be clear and concise (like in a good recipe)
- Be positive (describe the behavior to perform not the one to eliminate)
- Be assertive (its compulsory nature is obvious)
- Point out to the child when and how much time he has to comply (immediately or at a particular time)
- Use a respectful tone when speaking to children (no signs of criticism or impatience)
- Ensure that other family members support the request

#### **Pssst . . . Some tips for having a better chance of getting obeyed**

- Establish eye contact with the child. Ensure that your child is listening when you are talking to him. Eliminate all distractions.
- Divide the task to be carried out into steps (do not make several requests at once, but establish a sequence, if required).
- Ask your child to repeat the instructions.
- Stay in the room. Supervise your child's activity by checking on him now and again.
- Positively reinforce good behaviors. Compliment your child when he behaves properly.

## Fourth activity – Preventing aggressiveness and anger



Anger is a normal emotion. We all get angry at times. It is important to teach children to express their anger properly and find ways to prevent angry outbursts.

Here are some tips that summarize the concepts covered during the group meetings. **Read** the following with the parents. Bring them to **give examples** from their everyday life where they could carry out these recommendations.

### FOR ALL CHILDREN

- **Set an example:** Children are influenced by their parents' behaviors.
- **Compliment the child when he expresses his anger properly:** It is important to encourage the child and boost his self-esteem when he deals with frustrations adequately. Use the "Surprise them" technique. The child will develop confidence in his ability to control himself.

### CHILDREN FROM 6 TO 8 YEARS OLD

At 6 years old, the child is in the most aggressive period of early childhood; both physical and verbal aggressions are at their peak! He will learn to express his anger more appropriately; and outbursts will be less frequent.

- **Call a time-out:** When you feel the pressure building, call a time-out to allow the child to calm down. "Start by cooling down, we will talk after." You could use the "time out technique"!
- **Ask the child to propose some solutions:** This forces the child to assume responsibility for what he does.
- **Appeal to empathy:** It is about the following saying : Don't do to others what you don't want done to you.

**CHILDREN FROM 9 TO 12 YEARS OLD**

At 9 years old, children's tendency to criticize increases. The other person's point of view is not always taken into consideration.

- **Establish time limits for negotiation ahead of time:** Define the negotiation process; e.g., "You have five minutes to convince me."
- **Make clear agreements:** Use clear and simple language. For example, say: "If you come home before 4:00 p.m. from Monday to Thursday, you will be able to play with your friends until 5:30 p.m., on Friday afternoons."<sup>3</sup> rather than "If you come home in time during the week, you will be able to play with your friends for an extra hour on Friday afternoons."<sup>4</sup>
- **Encourage the child to find his own solutions:** This brings him to think about what he has done. Don't forget to limit the time allowed to finding solutions, if need be.
- **Respect the child's mood changes:** Do not force the discussion. This does not mean that there will be no discussion. It means ensuring that the discussion will take place later. It might be a good idea to set a time.
- **Define broadening of the rules as a privilege to earn:** Children must prove themselves before the rules change.



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<sup>3</sup> [Translation] Taken from Cloutier, G. (2012). *Vivre en harmonie avec un enfant qui s'oppose*. Montréal: Éditions Gily

<sup>4</sup> [Translation] *Programme de formation P.E.D.A.P., manuel d'animation du programme Barkley* adapted by Gilles Cloutier, CLSC Mercier-Est/Anjou, 1997, p. 157.

**Fifth activity – The token systems**

At the seventh meeting of the *Parents Taking Action* group, we explain to parents how to prepare a token system with the parents. **Review "The token systems" technique sheet** with the parents. **Help them organize their token system** to motivate their child. Make a list of tasks and privileges **with the parents and the child**. Help the parents structure their approach – will they be using plastic tokens, stickers, money, buttons?

**LIST OF TASKS**

No	TASKS	TOKENS
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		



### LIST OF PRIVILEGES

No	PRIVILEGES	TOKENS
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		



Once the child clearly understands this system, **certain behaviors may still present a difficulty**. The parent can take away tokens as a negative consequence. He doesn't stop rewarding! He puts the emphasis on unacceptable behaviors that will not be tolerated. This means that the parent **insists that the child gives back**, for all negative or disobedient behaviors, the number of tokens he would have earned if he had behaved well. For example, if the child makes his bed, he gets two tokens, if he doesn't, he gives back two tokens to the parents.

Parents can also add unacceptable behaviors, such as:

- making aggressive gestures,
- telling lies,
- saying swear words, etc.

Here is an example of a table that will help you identify the different elements:

**LIST OF TASKS WITH PARTIAL LOSS**

<b>DAILY ROUTINE</b>			<b>DESERVED TOKENS OR LOST</b>
<b>GOOD DEEDS</b>	<b>DESERVED TOKENS</b>	<b>UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIORS</b>	<b>LOSS TOKENS</b>