

# LABELED PRAISE

- The general rule is that **any behavior that is rewarded will increase**. For example, if you tell your child, “I love how you’re sharing with your brother,” your child will share more often with his/her brother.
- As a parent, your job is to “**catch your child being good.**” This can be difficult when your child’s negative behavior is taking all of your attention. You may need to take time to sit down and come up with the opposite of the negative behaviors that you can praise. For example, if your child is always yelling in the house, provide a reward for the opposite - talking in a calm, inside voice.
- **Praise is often the best reward.** “Labeled praise” is verbally letting the child know exactly what they did that you liked, such as “I am so proud of you for staying in your seat at the dinner table” or “You did a great job staying calm when your sister got to play the videogame first.”
- **Labeled praise** tells the child specifically what you like about what they are doing or saying. We use labeled praise with children because:
  - It causes good, desirable behaviors to increase.
  - It lets the child know very clearly what you like.
  - It increases the child’s self-esteem.
  - It adds warmth to the parent-child relationship.
  - It makes both parent and child feel good.
- For many children, behavior problems are related to emotional distress (uncertainty, sadness, anger, confusion). Praising and attending to positive behaviors has the added benefit of reducing their emotional distress, which in turn reduces their acting out behaviors.
- Examples of labeled praise:
  - Terrific counting!
  - I like the way you’re using your indoor voice.
  - Thank you for waiting while I talk on the phone.
  - I am proud of you for using your manners and saying “Thank you.”
  - I really like how you’re playing so gently with your toys.
  - Wow, you’re doing a great job staying by my side in the store.
  - I am so happy that you are staying in your seat at the dinner table.