

Attention

Remember: The function of ATTENTION is when someone wants to get attention for doing something! The goal here is to provide attention EARLY and for ADAPTIVE behavior rather than responding only after maladaptive behavior happens. And remember that technically prompting or responding correctively to maladaptive behavior is still attention and that in this case “BAD ATTENTION IS BETTER THAN NO ATTENTION AT ALL”

Here are some ideas for how to reinforce ADAPTIVE behavior by providing ATTENTION (the desired reinforcer):

1. Behavior Specific Reinforcement/Labeled Praise: Specifically praise your child/student for exactly what he/she is doing right! Make this compliment incredibly specific so they know exactly what it is they did that got your attention and be sure to do this as quickly as possible after you see them do that good thing
2. Reflections: You can repeat your child/student when they say things to you to let them know that you've heard them and are attending! This is a great way to provide some attention when a student is on the right track but hasn't quite reached the point in demonstrating adaptive behavior where you want to throw a party and provide a lot of praise. This could include things like when a child is working on an assignment, they aren't finished yet and they need to do the work, but they say to you “this is really difficult”, you could say back to them “it is a hard assignment, keep at it, you're almost there)
3. Behavior Descriptions: This is when you simply describe what you see them doing! You will probably think you sound silly at first, but I promise it's okay. It might be as simply as saying “You're stacking the red lego on top of the yellow lego”. This allows you to provide attention to the student without necessarily giving the most amount of praise, and you're not placing additional demands by asking them questions that they then have to answer.
4. High fives, Fist Bumps, and Hugs
5. Special Greetings/Handshakes/Inside Jokes
6. Sit near them and just be there
7. Eye contact and supportive gestures (thumbs up)