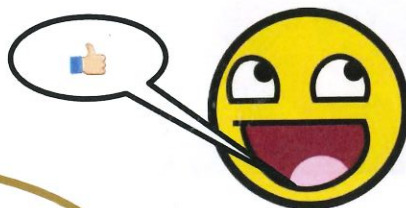


Webinar 3



Commands

Power of Positive Commands!

When a young child hears a command, it is the verb, or the action word, that they tend to focus on first.

So, if you say *Don't run!* the child is most likely to focus on the word *run* first. This may have the opposite effect that the adult is hoping for, and in fact make the child even *more* likely to run!

Instead, you can help the child to show the appropriate behaviour by giving a positive command, or using phrases that tell them what you *would* like them to do.

If you say *Walk please* the child is likely to focus on the word *walk* first. They will therefore be much more likely to walk than to run.



Effective Commands

In our busy daily lives, it can be difficult to find time to think about the language that we use with children. However, small adjustments, such as using positive commands, can be an invaluable way of encouraging appropriate behaviour.

An easy adjustment to make is to **give specific commands**, instead of using vague language. A young child may not understand exactly what you want them to do when you say: *Behave!* Instead, you can encourage appropriate behaviour by giving a specific command: *Please use a quieter voice.*

We can also consider how to **give clear commands**, instead of asking questions. Young children are more likely to take our words literally. So, if you say *Would you like to tidy up now?* they may respond by saying: *No!* Instead, you can encourage appropriate behaviour by giving a clear command: *Please tidy the blocks into the blue toybox.*

Similarly, if you say *Let's tidy up now!* a young child may expect you to be tidying up with them. When you do not do so, this may confuse, or seem inconsistent to the child, making them less likely to follow adult commands in the future.

Be Consistent



In our busy daily lives, we can also find ourselves giving a list of commands. However, the over-use of commands can make it more difficult for adults to be consistent and make sure that children listen and do what they have been asked.

Try instead to give only **essential commands**. This helps children to avoid feeling overwhelmed by instructions and understand that when adults do give a command, that it is important to listen.

After giving a command, many adults find themselves moving on before ensuring that the child has started, or had enough time to complete the task. Some may even step in and complete it themselves!

This can be avoided by giving commands when you have **time to be consistent**, making sure that the child is listening, understands and has the time that they need to complete the task.

Praise



In Webinar 2 we talked about the importance of giving **praise** as a form of **positive attention** to a child.

Praise is an invaluable way of encouraging appropriate behaviour, such as following adult commands.

Try to give **instant** and **specific praise** as soon as you see the child begin to carry out the command: *Thank-you for listening to me and walking.*

The child will soon learn that this behaviour has earned them the adult attention that they crave and therefore be more likely to carry out adult instructions in the future.

To Do



Identify a behaviour you would like to see the child do more often. Think of some effective commands that you can give use to help them to carry out this behaviour.

Try to find time to give these commands during the week. Don't worry if experiences are not positive to begin with. This is perfectly normal if we are not used to giving, or the child is not used to receiving, or following through with, adult commands. You will soon notice how your experiences will begin to change as you start to give effective commands, followed by instant and specific praise when the child carries them out.

Top Tips



for Using EFFECTIVE COMMANDS

ATTENTION

Ensure that you have the child's attention by making eye contact with them.

This shows you that the child is ready to listen.

TONE

Use a firm, but friendly tone.

This helps the child to understand that what you are about to say is important.

EFFECTIVE LANGUAGE

Use commands that are positive and specific: *Please tidy the blocks into the blue toy box.*

This helps the child to understand exactly what you want them to do.

Keep commands simple and give the child just 1 at a time

This helps the child to understand, remember and carry out the task.

TIME

AVOID giving a command when you **don't have much time**.

This makes you more likely to leave the task uncompleted, or to complete it yourself.

Give the child time to begin to carry out the command.

This helps the child to process what you want them to do.

PRAISE

Give instant and specific praise when you see the child begin to follow the command.

This positive adult attention helps to reinforce the child's appropriate behaviour.





Activities



Think of a behaviour that you would like to see the child do more often. Write it down.

Then think of a *positive* command that you could give the child to encourage them to carry out this behaviour. Write this down too.

BEHAVIOUR 	Positive Command 
<i>For example, listening, sharing or being gentle.</i>	