

# Ep #62 Teaching to behaviors instead of reacting

This is episode 62. In this episode, I will be discussing teaching to behaviors. So 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, Siope Kinikini.

Hello, everyone. How is everybody doing? I hope everybody is doing great. I am doing fantastic as always. And I am super excited, actually, for today because today I will be talking to you about teaching to behaviors, which is when your child has a behavior, what should you do? You should teach. So we will be talking about that during this podcast.

However, there are some housekeeping things I do want to go over before we start talking about teaching to behaviors. First off, in the previous podcast, in episode 61, [I was in Cincinnati awhile ago and we actually held some interviews with people who are using the Teaching-Family Model](#). Which is The Model that we use on Smarter Parenting and that you are learning through this podcast. So we interviewed people from all around the country and people from all around the world actually attended this conference.

So our first interview was with a person by the name Kurt Fuhman, who works at a residential treatment center here in the United States called [Thornwell](#). So, I advise you to go listen to it because we talk about [Following Instructions](#) during that video and how important it is to teach this skill to children and to teenagers and he shares his insight. One of the things that I really like about having guests and interviewing people is that they provide a different point of view. We're all using the same skills, however, they bring in their own personal experiences and how things have worked for them in their work. And so it's really fascinating to listen to somebody else discuss these things and as we work through it and talk about it. It's just great.

So in the next couple of weeks, you are going to be introduced to some additional guests. And that is something that I am hoping you will pay attention to because, again, you will be able to pick up so much from the experiences of other people who are using this Model around the world to help children and families. You can learn a lot from just listening to how other people are implementing it and what has been effective for them in helping families.

So that was the first thing I wanted to cover. If you haven't listened to [episode 61](#), jump back and listen to that because it's fantastic to talk to him. And again, in the next couple of weeks, you are going to hear more and more guests on the podcast doing interviews where I ask them questions and you will learn a lot from what they have to offer.

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Now, the next housekeeping thing that I want to go over is that if you are listening to these podcasts and you've started here, jump back and listen to podcasts beginning with episode 46 to 57, because in those podcasts, we actually go through each of the skills that you can find on the [Smarter Parenting website](#). These are divided into talking about each of the skills. You can learn more about those skills on the Smarter Parenting website, but we go in-depth, and we talk about each one. [The ABC's of Behavior](#), [Observe and Describe](#), [Effective Communication](#). These are skills that you can implement today. So jump back and listen to those. It begins with episode 46 and goes all the way up to episode 57.

So yes, go back and listen to those. They will be super helpful for you. You can pick and choose which one, but I suggest that actually you start with 46 and move on to 57. Those are kind of the meat and potatoes of the skills. The behavioral skills that you as a parent are going to be teaching your child, okay?

So yeah, that's the second thing. [Now, the third and the final thing is I want to give a shout out to those of you who have reached out for that 15-minute free coaching session](#). Thank you for doing that. Absolutely great to communicate with many of you via video conference call as well as on telephone. I will say this, it's been surprising to me the vast array of people that I am communicating with and where they're located. I am doing calls, interesting times during the day because people are located all around the world, from Australia to Canada to here in the United States in different areas. And so I am more than happy to continue to do that. So feel free to contact us for that free 15-minute coaching session. [You can sign up on the Smarter Parenting website and we can discuss how you can teach these skills depending on your very specific issue with your child](#).

Remember, each child is different, so you may approach it a little bit different. Even though the skills themselves remain the same, your ability to teach it and for your child to comprehend it sometimes needs a little tweaking. And that's what we cover in the coaching session, the free 15-minute coaching session.

So for those of you who have called in, fantastic. Those of you who are on the fence, call me up. I would love to discuss with you and let's work through some of these things and nuance it towards your family.

Yeah, that's a lot of housekeeping items, but super excited for all of those things. First off, some more guests will be joining me to talk about the skills that they are using all around the world in helping families, and these are the skills from the [Teaching-Family Model](#). It's going to be fantastic. You're going to love it. And then moving on from the guests to being sure that you listen to the skills podcasts. And you can also visit the Smarter Parenting website to watch videos about these skills. That will be super helpful. And then signing up for the 15-minute free coaching session.

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All right, so let's talk now about teaching to behaviors and what exactly that means. First off, when I am saying parents need to teach to behaviors, what I am saying is when a child behaves a certain way, parents have a choice. They can react to what's happening. They can react to the behavior the child is exhibiting, or they can teach to the behavior the child is exhibiting. There is a difference between the two. Reaction is a lot more fluid in a way, and by fluid, I mean it's inconsistent because your child can act one way and then you can react one way. And then if the child decides to escalate it, you have to react again, right? It's almost this dance where the child is leading the parent along the path of what needs to be done based on their behavior. I've seen that time and time again with a lot of families where a child will behave a certain way and then the parents react to it and then the child will escalate the behavior and then the parents have to react to that, and it continues and continues and continues.

The difference between teaching to behavior and reacting to the behavior is that when you are teaching to the behavior, what you're teaching is going to stay fairly consistent throughout whether or not your child escalates the behavior or decreases the behavior. So let me give you an example. You're probably thinking, "Yeah, well, teaching is reacting," right? Kind of, but not really. I was working with a mother with a young child, a young girl, and her daughter would escalate the behavior and begin with tantrums. Now, if the mother intervened and she would try to calm the tantrum by giving her child more things, because that's what she would tantrum about, she just wanted more toys or more food or whatever she wanted, then the child would escalate the behavior if the mom refused and then the mom would actually give more, and it would just continue this dance of this child upping the game where the parent had to up their game in order to match the tantrum.

So when I started working with her, we had to sit down and seriously discuss, okay, where are the limits of what you're going to do and what are we going to teach? So this is back to that whole how we coach. This is the question we always have to ask ourselves as parents, "What are we going to teach to that behavior?" We can react to it and let them take charge, or we can say, "Okay, we need to teach you a very specific concept to deal with that behavior? We need to be teaching and you need to learn how to adjust to that." And so what it did was it took the dance out of their interactions. When we determine, okay, she's throwing a tantrum, what do we need to teach? And for this mom, in this specific instance, we had to teach coping skills or relaxation and how to Follow Instructions. So we focused primarily on [Following Instructions](#), even small instructions, coupling that with praise, and you can learn more about that in the podcast about [Following Instructions](#).

So in helping this mother along, I gave her some very specific things to do. Now, the child would escalate the behavior, but here's where the dance changed. Instead of the mom reacting to an escalated tantrum behavior, the mom actually continued on with [Following Instructions](#) and maintaining this focus on what she was teaching. Now, while we were going through this process, she decided, the little girl, her daughter, decided to escalate the behavior maybe two or three levels because she was freaking out because she wasn't getting her way. And yet, I focused in and helped the mom focus in on just sticking to [Following Instructions](#), which were

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things centered around calming down. And as mom continually stayed there, it's hard for a child to dance if the partner is not dancing with them. And so this is where the dance broke and the mom was able to lead the child along the path of what would be more resourceful for her child and also for her because it calmed her.

This gave her permission to just focus in on one skill at a time. As we continually progressed and she would test the limits, mom continued to stay focused on Following Instructions and calming techniques for the tantrum. She didn't alter it and she didn't change it and she didn't try to appease it. So that's what I'm saying when I say you can either react to a behavior, which can be all over the place, or you can teach to behavior where you're using a very specific skill to address a very specific behavior and staying focused on that skill along the way.

Now, this is a powerful thing for parents. This is a powerful tool when I'm working with families and I tell them, "Yeah, we are not going to dance anymore with this back and forth. We're going to stay very focused and we're going to have the child adjust to what needs to happen." Some parents are like, "Well, I don't know if that's going to work. I don't know. You know, I just don't have the stamina for..." And this is where you have to measure your tolerance levels. And what I mean by tolerance levels is you have to know exactly where your point is where you feel like, "Okay, I'm just going to give in and give them what they want," and where you're like, "No, I'm going to stick my ground."

Most parents know that they can stick their ground in certain situations. It's when they feel pressure from outside sources where sometimes they give in a little bit easier. Exhaustion plays into that. Being hungry plays into that for a parent. So as a parent, you really do need to know your tolerance levels, but you need to always be asking yourself, "What do I need to teach in this situation? What skill, what behavioral skill do I need to teach to stop this negative behavior or to increase this positive behavior?" Teaching to behaviors requires a lot of insight into your own abilities as a parent and where your breaking point is, and it also requires you to think about what behaviors do I need to address and what skill do I need to teach in order to address that behavior.

Now, this is where the coaching comes in because if you call me up for a 15-minute free session on the Smarter Parenting website, we can set it up, I will call you. Almost every parent, in fact, every parent has done this. When they sign up, they actually list behaviors that they're dealing with. And so when I receive that list, what I'm asking myself in my mind is, "Okay, what skills can I teach to each of those behaviors that will help decrease the negative and increase the positive?" I'm always asking that. And that's something parents should always be asking because we're teaching to these behaviors.

Then when somebody calls in, we start discussing some of the nuances about their child, what are some nuances? And then I evaluate the parent's tolerance levels, what are the nuances in the relationship with the parent and the child? What are some things that make the child escalate the behavior, to challenge the behavior, et cetera? And then where's the breaking point

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for parents where they just want to give in and just, "Whatever. I just don't know what to do," to getting to that point?

The beauty of having the Teaching-Family Model and these behavioral skills is that you are never left wondering what to do because there's always a skill you can teach to every behavior. Now, think about that. That's actually a super powerful thing and it's a very empowering thing for parents. There is not a behavior out there where you are wondering, what should I do in this case? Which is often where I find a lot of people who contact me for help or parents that I have to go in and work with, that's usually where they're at, "I don't know what to do at this point." Well, the Teaching-Family Model actually gives you enough of the tools and behavioral skills that you can say, "Okay, I need to teach Effective Communication in this instance to address this behavior," or, "I need to teach my child Following Instructions," or, "I need to teach them how to Accept No Answer."

So the Teaching-Family Model gives you the skills that you need and then you are - this is where the artful part of parenting comes in - you choose what skill to match with what behavior to help decrease the negative and increase the positive. And so that's what teaching to behaviors is all about. That's what we teach here at Smarter Parenting. We want parents to walk out of learning these skills with a full tool belt of intervention techniques that they can implement with their child at any time and in any play.

And what's really beautiful is that all of these are interconnected. All these skills are interconnected to each other. Which is why I recommend you listen to all the podcasts regarding the skills as well as watching the videos because they are all intertwined with each other. And when you use one tool for one behavior, as your child develops and changes, you may have to adjust and use a different tool for that specific behavior.

So this actually is kind of an all-in-one, we're giving you all this information. We're telling you, you do not have to feel like, I don't know what to do. You do not have to feel helpless because we have the tools that you need. Now you just have to figure out what tools to put in where and I can help with that with the 15-minute free coaching session, right?

Always, always, always, always, always believe that you are teaching to your child even if you don't do anything. Whatever you do in your interactions with your child is teaching them something. It's either teaching them behavioral skill that they need in order to improve or if you are hands-off and not doing anything, that's also teaching them something. So you might as well be teaching them something that's proactive and that will help them in the long run, right? So always keep in mind that you are teaching and we want to remove the dance between you and your child. Some people call it power struggles where your child is pulling and you're pulling and you're trying to do this.

When you approach things from a teaching point of view, it no longer is this power struggle, but it's this, "Okay, my child needs to learn something and I need to help them learn it. So what's

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the best way to do that?" This kind of idea that we are working together in order to improve the situation, which is a powerful place to be as a parent. It's not that you're enemies or anything like that, but that, "Hey, we need to figure this out. We need to help you be better." Okay?

So teaching to behaviors, super, super, super important. Always ask yourself when you see a negative behavior or you see a positive behavior, what skill can I teach to this to either decrease the negative behavior, or what skill do I need to increase this positive behavior? And if we can do that, we actually help children become more successful.

Now, that's it for me. [And again, if you haven't signed up for a 15-minute free coaching session, do it. I would love to communicate with you.](#) Right now I am actually doing these phone calls and these sessions because I love it and I love connecting with you. So if you do sign up, you will get me at this point. Down the road, as more people sign up for coaching, we will have additional coaches who use this exact Model. They are active, they are using it with families right now all around the country and other people may be coaching you. But as for right now, if you call in, it's me and I would be happy to communicate with you and to work through some of the nuances of how to implement this with your child.

Right, that's it for me. I will see again next time. I hope you have a good one and stay tuned for so much more in Smarter Parenting. We're so excited for the things that are about to come. All right, bye.

### **RESOURCES MENTIONED IN THIS PODCAST**

[Behavior skills of the Teaching-Family Model](#)

[Ep #46: Understanding the ABC's of Behavior](#)

[Ep #47: Mastering Observe and Describe](#)

[Ep #48: What it takes to change behavior](#)

[Ep #49: Compound effect of Effective Communication](#)

[Ep #50: Changing behavior through praise](#)

[Ep #51: Finding Success with Preventive Teaching](#)

[Ep #52: How to fix negative behaviors](#)

[Ep #53: The importance of Following Instructions](#)

[Ep #54: Teaching kids to make better decisions](#)

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

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

[Ep #57: Teaching kids to Accept No Answers without issue](#)

[Ep #61: Incorporating Following Instructions in daily routine](#)

[Our Teaching-Family Model Family](#)

[The Teaching-Family Association \(TFA\)](#)

[Teaching-Family Association site: Thornwell](#)

[The ADHD Smarter Parenting Podcast](#)

[Free 15-minute ADHD coaching mini-session](#)

[Ep #59: The ADHD Smarter Parenting Coaching process](#)

[Ep #40: When do I need ADHD Parenting Coaching](#)

[Ep #41: How I coach parents of kids with ADHD](#)

[Behavior skill: Following Instructions](#)

[Blog post: How I made Following Instructions work with toddlers](#)

[Blog post: How to teach your children Following Instructions](#)

[Blog post: Getting ADHD children to Follow Instructions](#)

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