

# Positive Reframes for Negative Behaviors



Children are little scientists. They are frequently conducting little experiments to see what happens. They look for your behaviors, emotions, and verbal behaviors to see what behaviors cause what reactions. In this way, their sole job is to test boundaries. As a parent, our sole job is to get lots of things done in a 24-hour period, and often times your job (get things done) and your kid's job (test boundaries) clash. For example, kids want our attention when we are busy doing something else, may try to get our attention in negative ways, or react in other ways that may bug or annoy us.

This is where Positive Reframes can help. A positive reframe is a way to think about or conceptualize a behavior when you see it. Although a positive reframe may not change your child's behavior in the moment, it may help you keep your patience just long enough to turn what would be a negative (or no) interaction into a learning opportunity!

Below are some examples of common situations of children's behaviors or words that can be frustrating, and a potential positive reframe for that behavior.

When your child....	The Positive Reframe Might Be...
Lies	"My child is working on honesty"
Throws a tantrum	"My child is learning the healthy boundaries I've set in place"
Talks a lot	"My child is excited"
Asks ten times for you to do something with them	"My child enjoys spending time with me"
Shows frustration	"My child cares about it"
Shows worries	"I have an opportunity to show them they will be OK"
Hits someone	"I have an opportunity to teach them better coping skills"
Says, "I hate myself"	"I have an opportunity to understand my child's inner dialog so I can help them adjust it to something more accurate"
Says, "You don't love me"	"I have an opportunity to make my relationship with them better"
Doesn't follow directions (for certain activities)	"My child is creative"
Yells	"This gives me an opportunity to talk with my child about emotions and what they are feeling"
Argues or talks back	"My child is learning how to negotiate. This is a good life skill"
Says, "I don't want you to play with me"	"This is an opportunity to teach my child perspective taking and empathy"
Skips someone's turn in a game	"I love seeing my child excited to play the game!"
Crying	"My child is learning that small levels of distress are OK"
Says, "This is too hard!"	"My child is being challenged. Challenges allow my child to prove to themselves what they can do!"
Feels uncomfortable	"This is an opportunity for my child to learn change, since we don't make changes unless we feel uncomfortable"
Requires 1 on 1 attention to complete a task	"I am teaching my child about themselves and how they learn best."



Says, "No!", but does what you requested	"I love that my child is doing what they were asked to do"
Loses	"My child is learning how to handle disappointment"
Teases someone	"I can teach my child how to read and interpret other people's social cues"
Secludes themselves from other family members	"This provides me an opportunity to reach out to them and show them I care and support them (and maybe even include them in what I'm doing"
Does the opposite of what you said	"My child is showing me they are an independent thinker. How can I foster this good life skill for situations where this may be more appropriate?"
Shares the same story multiple times	"My child is proud of themselves, and they are looking for me to reinforce it"
Says, "I'm booooooored!"	"This is an opportunity for me to walk through problem solving skills with my child, and/or for them to learn that feeling bored is OK and to effectively tolerate this feeling"

