



Summary Sheet

Module 2

ATSI: Systematic use of daily interactions

Systematic use of daily interactions

All children learn from adults. Children spend much more time with family members than in the classroom. Because you and other family members are important to your child, your child is likely to want to learn from you. This module is about what you can use in your daily interactions with your child to help them develop better skills.

Identifying the skill strengths of your child

The first step in helping your child learn is to identify their strengths. Strengths are what a person does well compared to other things they do. Strengths are not just what you like to see your child doing. Your child might have strengths like running or being good with his hands. Even if he uses these skills to unlock the front door and run away, they are still skill strengths.

Four common areas of strengths are:

- motor skills (movement of head, arms, legs, hands and fingers)
- communication skills (speaking or using signs, body movements or facial expressions to tell you something)
- self-help skills (eating, washing, dressing)
- academic skills (listening, taking turns, drawing, reading, writing).

To identify your child's strengths, watch them closely when they are doing different things (especially things they like to do, or things they do often).

Allowing your child to do the things they know how to do will improve their skills. You can:

- increase the number of times in a day or week your child does things he can do
- look for different ways he can use the skills
- make activities and materials more user friendly for your child.

Understanding the effects of triggers and consequences on behaviour

Triggers are events that happen before a behaviour and bring on that behaviour. For example, a child may be upset and crying. The trigger for this crying behaviour might be that another child has taken away their toy.

Consequences are events that result from the behaviour. In the above example, the consequence of the crying behaviour might be that the other child gives back the toy.

Effects of consequences on behaviour

For behaviour to occur **more often** in the future:

- The behaviour occurs and something pleasant is provided.
- The behaviour occurs and something unpleasant is removed.

For a behaviour to occur **less often** in the future:

- The behaviour occurs and something unpleasant is provided.
- The behaviour occurs and something pleasant is removed.
- The behaviour occurs and there is no consequence.

In the above example, if the other child gives back the toy something pleasant is provided, therefore it is a positive consequence and the behaviour (the crying) is more likely to happen again in the future.

Thinking about consequences for your child

1. Identify what your child likes and dislikes.
Does your child like music or being talked to, or would they rather be left alone? What ways do they like you to show your approval: a hug? a high five? Are there activities they especially like? A favourite TV show, playing with brothers and sisters or friends, a particular toy? What food or drinks do they really like?
2. Expect that your child's likes and dislikes will change from time to time.
3. Do not assume that something is a positive or negative consequence without checking out your child's current reaction to the consequences.

Identifying the skill strengths of your child

Using triggers and consequences to build on your child's strengths

Now is the time to put together the triggers and consequences you have identified to improve your child's behaviour.

Strengthening desirable behaviours

Use triggers and consequences to strengthen desirable behaviours by:

- making sure the trigger happens as often as possible, and
- making sure that using the skill results in a positive consequence for your child.

Positive consequences can include labelled praise (telling your child what they have done that you are pleased about), allowing the child access to a favourite activity or treat, or removing something unpleasant.

Weakening undesirable behaviour

Make sure you do not provide a positive consequence for the difficult behaviour. For example, if your child shouts when it is his brother's turn at an activity they both like, and so his brother misses his turn, then this is a positive consequence. Do not let his shouting result in his brother missing his turn.

Many parents find that by using these ideas, their child's difficult behaviour starts to improve. Sometimes it is necessary to provide negative consequences for difficult behaviour. This will be discussed in the next module.

How to give your child effective instructions

An instruction is a type of trigger for your child's behaviour, so it is important to use instructions that will make it more likely that they will do as you tell them.

Planning your instructions

1. How important is this instruction right now?
2. Give one instruction at a time.
3. Time the instruction well. Do you need them to do this right now? Or are they busy with something else, and it doesn't really matter whether they do this now or later, when they have finished.
4. Are you telling them to do something they can actually do?

5. Have you allowed enough time for your child to do what you have told them?
6. Does your child need help?

Giving effective instructions

The way you give the instructions is important to make sure the child has the best chance of understanding what you want and doing it.

1. Using your body.
 - a. Get up close, or as close as your child is comfortable with.
 - b. Get down to the child's level.
 - c. Make eye contact, or give them another signal that you want their attention.
2. Using your voice.
 - a. Start with your child's name.
 - b. Use a firm and pleasant tone.
 - c. Tell the child what you want them to do. Don't ask them or give them a choice.
3. Wait for a response.
 - a. If your child does not respond immediately, do not repeat the instruction.
 - b. Wait about five seconds.
 - c. Don't leave. Stay close by, looking at your child, and wait for them to respond.
4. Give a positive consequence for them doing what you have told them to do.
 - a. Use labelled praise, e.g. "That's great you have done what I have asked, you have..."
5. If your child does not comply...
 - a. For the moment, just do whatever you usually do. Other options are discussed in the next module.

Giving “stop” instructions

If your child is doing, or is about to do, something dangerous you need to tell them to stop. Telling them to stop works better if you also tell them what to do instead of the thing they are doing wrong. For example: “Christos, stop jumping on the couch, sit on it” tells the child more about what you want than just, “Christos, stop jumping on the couch”.

Household rules

Having some rules about what is allowed can help your child behave well.

Agreeing on rules:

- helps you be consistent
- helps other family members treat the child in the same way
- can be a trigger for the child to behave well.

Have no more than five or six rules at a time, and think of more “Do” rules than “Don’t” rules. You will probably need to change the rules over time.

Getting the rules to trigger good behaviour

1. Write down the rules, or use pictures to show your child and others what you mean. Put the rules where you can see them often, e.g. on the fridge
2. Remind your child about the rules every now and again.
3. When your child follows the rules make sure they get a positive consequence (remember labelled praise).
4. Make sure your child does not get a positive consequence if they break a rule.