

## Tips for Improving Child Behavior via Child-Led Play

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### Using Child-Led Play

- Principles:
  - Giving more attention to behaviors you want to increase.
  - Giving less attention to behaviors you want to decrease.
- Can be used with both younger and older children.
- How to start: Turn off all electronics. Go to a non-distracting place in your home with 2-3 toys appropriate for your child's development. The focus is on you and your child!
- Follow your child's lead in play using the **PRIDE** skill as long as the play is appropriate
  - **P = praise.** Say exactly what you like about your child's actions.
  - **R = reflect.** Repeat back what they say to you as they play.
  - **I = imitate.** Play with the same toys in the same type of way as your child.
  - **D = describe.** Describe what your child is doing as they do it. For example, "You're pushing the tractor" as they push a toy tractor.
  - **E = enjoyment.** Show you are having fun while playing with your child and that you are delighted by good things they are doing!
- Things to avoid in child-led play:
  - **Giving any directions or commands.** Play is about following your child's lead.
  - **Asking questions.** Questions are sometimes directions in disguise. They may also suggest to your child that you weren't really listening or watching.
  - Avoid criticism with negative words like **don't, no, stop, quit.** These words give attention to behaviors you want to decrease.
- What to do if your child misbehaves during child-led play:
  - If their behavior is annoying, but not dangerous or destructive → **ignore the behavior.** Focus on your own play with the toys until they do something you can praise, describe, reflect, or imitate.
  - If their behavior is unsafe or destructive → end the play for the day. For example, "Our special play time is over because you threw a toy car and that's not safe."

#### References:

Troutman, B. (2016), IoWA-PCIT, Unpublished manuscript.

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