



Pivotal Education
Behaviour Specialists
A Division of CPI



Behaviour Tips for Parents

Pivotal Tip 1 - Get in and get out quickly with your dignity intact

To effectively deliver a consequence to your child's inappropriate behaviour choice the message you give your child needs to be simple, clear and not negotiable; in practice it is easy to get caught up in a lengthy argument or confrontation. Focus on initiating the conversation, delivering your consequence as discreetly as possible and then moving out quickly. Choose a phrase that you will withdraw on: *'I need to see you thinking more considerately about the family, like yesterday when you did all that washing up, thank you for listening'* or *'I will come back and ask about what just happened in 10 minutes, we both need to calm down first.'*

Avoid waiting around for your child to change their behaviour immediately; they may need some time and space to make a better choice. Engage in a productive task or move elsewhere in the house and only check back once the dust has settled. No one likes receiving negatively perceived consequences and the longer the interaction the more chance of a defensive reaction or escalation. Get in, deliver the message and get out with dignity; quickly, efficiently and without lingering.

Pivotal Tip 2 - Countdown

There will be times when you request your children to become involved in household duties. After asking reasonably the first time, they may well not always willing get involved straight away.

When asking your child/children to get involved in a time sensitive household duty a good technique for getting their attention is to use a 'countdown' from 5 or 10 to allow them the time to pause what they are doing and listen to the next request. Explain to them that you are using a countdown to give them fair warning that they need to get involved, and that it is far more polite than calling for immediate compliance. Embellish your countdown with clear instructions so that your child/children know what is expected and be prepared to modify it for different age of child: (Note these are not seconds and so can be spread out over a time period that suits the age of the child and context of request)

"Marcus, I'd like you to come and lay the table for dinner please."

"I've asked you already, the table needs to be set now. I'm going to count you down from 5"

"Five, You should be finishing the game that you are playing so you can come and lay the table"



Pivotal Education
Behaviour Specialists
A Division of CPI



“Four, Dinner is nearly ready Marcus. It would be really helpful if you could help with the table”

“Three, The food is ready and I am dishing up, the table needs to be laid now, thank you.”

“Two, Marcus, we all help each other in this house, last chance to lay the table. “

“One, Food is on the table right now”

“Zero, Thank you.”

Some children may comply with you during the countdown, and some will not be ready by the time you get to zero at first, but persevere. Use praise and appreciation to reinforce its importance and it can become an extremely efficient tool for those times when you need everyone's involvement. You may already have a technique for getting everyone's attention, e.g. Shout upstairs once and then threaten punishments if they don't respond. The countdown technique is more effective as it is time related. It respects that your child may be right in the middle of something important to them. It also does not rely on threats of punishment.

Pivotal Tip 3 - Closed Requests

Prefacing requests with 'Thank You' has a marked effect on how the request is received. *'Thank you for putting your shoes on the rack or 'Thank you for putting your game controllers away'*. The trust in the child that this statement implies, combined with the clarity of the expectation, often results in action without protest. It is almost a closed request which leaves no 'hook' to hold onto and argue with.

A similar technique can be applied for children to respond to requests in a timely way that they would rather ignore; salesmen would call it an 'assumed close'.

Use phrases such as: *“When you tidy your room as close to 3 o'clock this afternoon as you can, we can make time for you to spend with your friends later that you asked about”*. As opposed to, *“If you don't tidy your room, you're not going out!”*

“When you pick up those toys/bring those 8 empty glasses down from your room, we can have that conversation you wanted to have about your screen time. As opposed to, “Clear your mess or you'll lose screen time”. You are assuming and encouraging a positive response; making it awkward for your child to respond negatively.



Pivotal Education
Behaviour Specialists
A Division of CPI



Pivotal Tip 4 - Jobs for Everyone

For children, mutual trust can be encouraged through sharing and delegating jobs in the home. A well-organised parent will have their children tidying shoes in the hallway, clearing and cleaning their rooms, preparing the table for eating, organising laundry etc. Children learn how to share responsibility with others and accept responsibility for themselves.

Younger children often seem more willing to help out around the home than their older siblings, but it is important to continue the expectations. The home is a shared living space, and everyone will need to contribute in suitable ways. The tasks and responsibilities that you may not automatically share with your children because it is easier just do yourself and therefore may seem mundane and trivial to them, but by encouraging them to be involved in the small jobs helps to create an ethos of shared responsibility which provides a secure foundation.

Pivotal Tip 5 - Proactively improving relationships with your older children

Choose your opportunities to develop your relationship with your child/children carefully. Open up casual conversation when they appear relaxed and unguarded. Try asking for help or advice, giving the child something you know they are interested in, (a magazine, web reference, Tv schedule) or simply say hello and pass the time of day. You may choose to wait until you find a situation that is not pressured or time limited. Aim for little and often rather than launching into a lengthy and involved conversation at unwanted times.

Remember, your attempt to connect may appear unwelcome at first. Your aim is to gently persuade your child that you are committed to building trust. Be prepared for your approaches to be rejected. They may be testing you to see how committed to developing the relationship you really are. He may not welcome any informal conversation with you because it is easier for him to deal with a conflict than a relationship of trust. Or quite simply, he may have decided that all adults need to be given a wide berth, especially parents.

Give your time freely and expect nothing in return; in time and with persistence your reward can be a positive relationship that others will be amazed at... *"How do you get him to behave like that? In our home he has made a den in his room and is refusing visitors."*



Pivotal Education
Behaviour Specialists
A Division of CPI



Pivotal Tip 6 - "Chase me": What to do with secondary behaviours

Secondary behaviours are those that occur during your involvement or intervention in a behaviour issue. They can also be as you walk away from a conversation about your child's behaviour. They are 'chase me' behaviours designed to push your buttons and gain a furious response. When you have exhausted all of your positive reinforcement, redirection techniques, warnings and consequences and need your child to just do/not do what you're asking, the secondary behaviours are the eye roll and heavy sigh, or door being slammed, or the infuriating smile that slowly cracks across their face. Your child may want to divert the conversation away from the original behaviour or encourage an adrenaline fuelled confrontation in the moment.

Don't allow them to take control of your behaviour. Resist the temptation to address the secondary behaviours in the moment. Instead record them and deal with them later on. If the secondary behaviour couples your child doing what you've requested, avoid the temptation to pick them up on their disrespectful retort. The fact that your child has complied means that they have followed your instructions; the dramatic trail of disruption that they may have left in their wake can be dealt with when they (and you) are calm.

Your calm and considered response will be closely observed by all of your children and they will be impressed by your confidence even in those emotionally fuelled moments. Your child may slowly begin to realise that their usual pattern of behaviour will not work with you.

Pivotal Tip 7- Don't just get down, get way down!

It is often said that getting down to young people's eye level is important when delivering praise or consequences to them. This can often be interpreted as leaning over a child rather than standing above them or sitting down next to them. I often observe adults in schools who think they are at the child's eye level but are actually still demanding that the child looks up at them.

We prefer the young person to be looking down at us; adults who do this know that crouching down lower than eye level is not weak but assertive and confident physical language. When you are delivering consequences there is less chance of a defensive/aggressive reaction, and when praising, you create a more private space.

You can even extend this so you are next to them and not face to face. Young people especially, can find the directness of eye to eye difficult and it can be far more productive to



Pivotal Education
Behaviour Specialists
A Division of CPI



hold a difficult conversation side by side both looking forwards. The child is less likely to back away or see it as an opportunity for confrontation and your conversation can be quiet, personal and non-threatening.

Pivotal Tip 8 - 10 reasons not to reach for the biggest consequence straight away

1. If you stray from the agreed hierarchy of consequences, you are showing your children that you are inconsistent; you have broken your agreement that has been in place based on your emotions.
2. Going for the most severe consequence straight away leaves no further room for manoeuvre.
3. The child may react defensively - answering back, confronting, protesting publicly.
4. The child may already be embarrassed for their behaviours and an instant punishment doesn't allow them the opportunity to repair the damage caused.
5. Partners and family members find it difficult to gauge when you need support and when you are simply sending children away through frustration.
6. You allow your children to see your negative emotional reactions over your rational choices.
7. You are encouraging other family members to question your management of behaviour.
8. By sending children away you usually only relieve your frustration temporarily.
9. Other children will see your inconsistency and may protest or react against it.
10. Children see their perception of fairness as a key driver of their behaviour choices. If they receive a punishment that feels disproportionate they are likely to be resentful.

Pivotal Tip 9 - Establishing Routines

It is important to introduce routines of behaviour expectations for your children. Don't negotiate them, but decide on the 3, 4 or 5 steps that you want children to follow when. Key routines can be effective when trying to stop the school bag being thrown in the hallway on arrival home, or dirty glasses and plates being left in the living room. Phrase your routines using positive language (avoid using "don't" or "no") and identify explicit behaviours that you expect to see.

Simply posting routines on the fridge door won't solve your behaviour issues. You need to use praise and positive reinforcement backed up with consequences, ensuring your children are constantly reminded of the routines. Try introducing one routine at a time until they complain, *"Ok, ok, enough already, I know the routine, I will turn the lights off!"* Once you have concreted simple routines (e.g. for entering and leaving the house), try routines for home work, mealtimes, bedroom cleanliness etc.

Pivotal Tip 10 - Being Assertive

Assertiveness is not saying the same thing over and over (the 'broken record'), neither is it continually stepping into confrontations with young people. We know that discussing 'choices' with young people is an important part of managing behaviour. Being in control of the choices we make in our own behaviour is the foundation for assertiveness.

When you encounter your children behaving inappropriately, there are many ways of acting assertively apart from intervening immediately. Enjoy the skill of stepping back and choosing which strategy to select. Do you:

- Note down what you have seen and follow it up later?
- Speak very briefly to your child and arrange to talk later to discuss the behaviour?
- Provide an immediate consequence?
- Use non verbal signals to let your child know you have seen and noted the behaviour?
- Feign shock and surprise at their behaviour?
- Give your child a clear warning?
- Move the conversation away from other siblings/friends?
- Use humour to prevent escalation of the behaviour?

Selecting the strategy which you are going to employ is an assertive act. It also allows you to see the interaction for what it is - an adult teaching a child what appropriate behaviour is and that inappropriate behaviour has consequences.

By taking time to make a choice and vary your response to inappropriate behaviour you can:

- Control the number of interventions you feel required to have.
- Demonstrate your assertiveness to children.
- Remove your 'emotional buttons' from display (*Wait until I tell your mother about this!*)
- Deal with behaviour away from other family members.
- Use the time you spend following up on issues to begin rebuilding your relationship.

Pivotal Tip 11 - Redrawing the Lines: Turning a Bad situation to your Advantage

Despite the promises to ourselves that we will never do/say the same things as our own parents, here we find ourselves almost verbatim spouting the same lines we rolled our eyes at

when we were young. Your pointy finger has been unleashed and desperate clichés fall from your mouth without irony.

There are positive alternatives to continually battling with a child who is not meeting your expectations. Even after nightmarish experiences you can redraw the lines of acceptable behaviour, make a fresh start and begin to develop mutual respect. A clear plan, honest self-reflection and a large portion of humility are essential ingredients.

Apologising to your own children is essential, assertive and models appropriate behaviour. If you have become frustrated and acted in anger, been inconsistent or unfair or thrown your toys out of the pram; admit your own mistakes and apologise. You may be surprised at the positive reaction that you get, both immediately and sometime after. Apologising is not weak or risky but a vital part of the process of change that you are initiating. In behaviour management humility is strength.

Apologising may already have prompted you into some essential self-reflection. There will be elements of your own behaviour that you want to change; identifying these and sharing them with your child will help to firmly draw a line under what has gone before. *'This is how I am going to change my behaviour...'*; the model is set for their own reflection.

A key change that you might consider making immediately is how you respond when things go wrong. It is after all your initial response to inappropriate and appropriate behaviour that sets the rhythm and intensity of interactions. Experiment with different ways of responding to poor behaviour, instead of immediate verbal responses. Try:

- Stepping back taking time to plan what you are going to say.
- Adjusting and softening your physical language.
- Focusing first on a previous model of the child's own success e.g. *'Last week your self-control helped you to finish your homework, today you are throwing pens...'*
- Approaching indirectly and reinforcing the behaviour of a sibling as you pass. (just be careful you don't inadvertently create a Horrid Henry vs Perfect Peter situation here.)
- Dropping down lower than eye level so your child can look down on you as you speak.
- Giving an assertive verbal response that temporarily suspends the conversation, *'I need you to think about what just happened while I settle your sister, we will talk about your choices shortly'*.

Pivotal Tip 12 - Assertiveness and Nasty Explosions

When out in public, many parents recognise that their pattern of behaviour is to be nice or compliant for far longer than they really want, until they reach the point of no longer being able to hold it in; then they explode nastily and inappropriately all over anyone who happens to be around. This can leave young people with the impression that there are only two states or behaviours their parent can do when in public: 'Nice' or 'Nasty'. The shades in between, where assertiveness lies, are unused and eventually lost from the repertoire of behaviour management strategies.

Assertiveness is not simply standing your ground, just saying 'no' and repeating your demand (the 'broken record' technique). Just as young people have choices, so you have the opportunity to choose your behaviour. You have many options as to how you respond to inappropriate behaviour all of which can be assertive actions. You might choose to record it and address it at a more appropriate time when you're home, ignore it, confront it or walk away and consider your response. Assertiveness is knowing that you can control your own behaviour and making considered appropriate choices in your response to your child's. Don't be afraid of saying 'no' and saying it with impact when it is appropriate. Be careful not to overuse it as it will soon lose its power and negatively impact on the atmosphere. You risk being ignored if your repertoire of verbal responses is so predictable.

Pivotal Tip 13 - Teenager Hell

Your teenager arrives home, storms upstairs without a hello, throws their door open, dramatically collapses, head on their bed, coat still on and hoody over their head. Before you are tempted to open 'Pandora's box' it is worth reminding yourself that:

- The house rules are a long way down on your child's list of priorities
- They are unlikely to be thinking rationally
- You are unlikely to be able to solve the situation in an instant
- A calm and caring enquiry. 'Are you ok?' is your best chance of opening a dialogue
- You may need to leave them and return periodically, breaking down your requests, providing clear choices and easing them into a safe conversation.



Pivotal Education
Behaviour Specialists
A Division of CPI



- The ability to control emotions is a skill that develops with age; teenagers' brains are not fully developed.
- Children's emotions are fragile. Problems can seem insurmountable, all consuming, life and death and switch in an instant - remember being a teenager?
- You are a parent helping a child to manage their own behaviour
- If your child explodes emotionally, what comes out is raw feeling, not necessarily directed at you even if you take most of the initial blast.

Pivotal Tip 14 - Respect

I tend to spend a great deal of time talking to adults about the issue of 'respect'. 'Children have no respect', 'We have a right to be respected', 'There is no respect in society anymore'. I smile politely, feign interest and try to work out what is beneath their protestations.

Demanding and expecting respect is not a starting point I would encourage in anyone communicating with young people. There may have been a time when respect was automatically bestowed on adults. If there ever was it has passed and will not be retrieved by passive appeals or rose-tinted nostalgia. Victorian child street gangs didn't have ASBOs or tags but were terrifyingly brutal and had no respect for those on the outside.

Before you can have respect, you must have demonstrated yourself as willing to show respect without exception. Instead of demanding (however much deserved), if your starting point is 'How do I earn your respect?' you are immediately engaged in building relationships, gaining understanding about your own children's lives. By expecting your children to give you respect you are placing the responsibility for building relationships on them. You are the adult, in control of your emotions, with skills and experience in developing appropriate relationships and a clear view of your family dynamic. You are best placed lead the development of trust.

By being proactive you can earn the respect that seems so elusive. By sustaining your perspective as the adult, you can take control and marshal your relationships appropriately. Or you could wallow in self-pity. As they say in behaviour management, 'It's your choice!'



Pivotal Education
Behaviour Specialists
A Division of CPI



Pivotal Tip 15 - Delayed consequences have less impact

The longer a consequence is delayed the more disconnected it becomes from the original behaviour. Children who find themselves being punished regularly often forget why they are being so. For your higher order consequences to have the best chance of being effective they need to be:

- Executed as soon as possible (immediately or on the same day)
- Not deferred for another parent to impose
- Used to reset and reaffirm expectations with the child
- Reasonable and proportionate

If punishments are ever effective, the time is used for the parent and child to reflect on the inappropriate behaviour, re-negotiate what will happen in the next time a similar situation occurs and build understanding in the relationship. Although it may relieve your frustration temporarily to give a lengthy punishment, it is not the length of consequence or severity of punishment that will change future behaviour. It is how the time is used that is crucial.

A planned, private five minute' conversation can have a more positive impact on the child than more punitive measures. If consequences are really just retribution, then the effect on the child is likely to be negative. How many children spend their time sent to their room thinking about how they are going to change their behaviour? How many spend their time planning the weekend or planning revenge on their sibling/parent/whole family?

The investment of your time is worthwhile as you are working to change behaviour not simply to punish it.

If your consequences are efficient, designed to promote understanding of appropriate behaviour and connect your child with the original behaviour they will be effective. If they are delegated to your partner, punitive and disconnected a destructive relationship is allowed to grow.

Pivotal Tip 16 - Advanced Assertive Skills

Assertiveness is not just about how you react to inappropriate behaviour. Assertive parents use proactive strategies for managing behaviour, their expectations are implicit in their language, tone, attitude and actions. They expect appropriate behaviour, they expect to acknowledge and reward it:



Pivotal Education
Behaviour Specialists
A Division of CPI



Assertive adults set precise time limits within their requests, *'In five minutes you will be....'*, *'When I come up in two minutes I will see....'*, *'You have ten minutes to successfully....'* The assertive attitude is *disappointment not anger*. When children break the rules the assertive parent feigns surprise/shock. With their physical language they say *"I can't believe you talking to your younger brother like that"* rather than *'How dare you say that to your brother!'* The assertive parent separates their emotional and rational response. They attack the behaviour and not the child, avoiding labeling, *'I am so disappointed that you have chosen to break the rule again, you are making some poor choices today, think very carefully about your next move'*.

Assertive adults do not hold grudges but neither do they pretend that yesterday did not happen. They are able to be cold (for a day) rather than confrontational, allowing the child to know that their behaviour can have a negative effect on others while encouraging the child to work to recover damaged trust. The assertive adult has the ability to switch from an informal tone to a formal one, to control the atmosphere within the relationship.

Pivotal Tip 17 - Passing Over Control of Your Emotions

Throughout the day or week, check how many times you say:

'You are getting on my nerves'

'You are making me angry'

'If you do that again I am going to shout/get cross/scream'

'I find that word particularly offensive'

'I am thoroughly irritated by your behaviour'

When you connect inappropriate behaviour with your personal emotional response some children will empathise. Many will take note of the power and impact certain behaviours have on your emotional state. Some may use the information to provoke a reaction, to divert you away from dealing with the initial behaviour. The behaviours that provoke an emotional reaction within you ought to be ones that you remain outwardly impassive towards.

Connecting behaviour and emotion passes over control of your response to your children. I catch myself doing it when I am most tired, most frustrated, most exasperated. Before passing over your emotional control to a 6 year' old child adjust your language and focus on rational responses to inappropriate behaviour. State the behaviour that you observe, what the consequences of it continuing will be while giving your child a model of their previous good behaviour. Coolly, calmly but with absolute certainty.



Pivotal Education
Behaviour Specialists
A Division of CPI



'Jamie, you are chewing the curtains. (I am not going to get angry, irritated, scream, sigh, twitch etc) This is a warning, think carefully about your next move Trevor, try to make better choices like you did yesterday when you helped me tidy up after dinner.'

Pivotal Tip 18 - 10 Questions that Tempt Inappropriate Responses

Do you actually want the answer to these questions or are you just voicing your frustration. Consider how you'd feel in the moment if your child responded with an inappropriate response.

- *'How many times do I have to tell you?'*
- *'Why am I waiting for you?'*
- *'Why are you wasting my time?'*
- *'What did you say!?' (in response to being sworn at)*
- *'What am I going to do with you?'*
- *'Why am I repeating myself?'*
- *'Is it me...?'*
- *'Why are you wasting your time?'*

Stop yourself and consider rephrasing before you fall into any of these traps.

Pivotal Tip 19 - Intelligent Use of Praise

'Wallpapering' your home with praise and positive reinforcement is important. Being upbeat and energetic is certainly infectious but parents who succeed with the hard to reach know that there is more to praise than simply saying lovely things.

Over the course of a day make a mental note of how you are using praise and see if you can get a balance between the five definitions below.

1. Wallpaper praise - praise that makes your children feel good; *'Great, lovely, marvellous, splendid.'*
2. Personal praise - praise that is aimed at child's personality; *You are brilliant, you are intelligent, you are really doing well.'*



Pivotal Education
Behaviour Specialists
A Division of CPI



3. Directed praise - praise that reinforces good choices in behaviour *'Well done for clearing up after dinner, thank you for helping out and doing your share of the work.'*
4. Reflective praise - praise that encourages positive self-reflection; *'You must feel good about helping your little brother.'*
5. Contextual praise - praise that places the achievement in a wider context; *'That cake is exactly something that your gran would like. Can we keep her a slice?'*

If your child/children have low self-esteem and a negative view of their own potential, it is reflective and contextual praise that attacks this most effectively. Take a few moments to give some reflective and contextual praise to your children at some point throughout each day.

Pivotal Tip 20 - Cycles of Negative Behaviour

Behaviour management strategies that allow you to win the fire fight from day to day are essential for survival. However, in-order to thrive in more challenging times, a more strategic approach is also needed.

Make a point of observing your child if their behaviour is causing you some concern. Can you identify and map their negative behaviour patterns? How do they begin? Disconnection, frustration with siblings, other family members, tiredness, becoming argumentative. Can you identify how the cycle progresses and how it repeats or ebbs or crescendos? With your map think strategically about how and when you are going to intervene during the cycle. Consider the following example:

A child does not want to get out of bed on your one and only instruction – misses breakfast - looks for someone to blame – annoys siblings – makes rude remarks to parents – bangs kitchen cupboards - puts coat on – leaves the house.

When we examine the behaviours in a pattern the interventions become obvious; when we have a busy day it is all too easy to be distracted by the immediate behaviours. Having a plan to divert or halt the cycle before walking in gives you more chance of achieving real changes over time.



Pivotal Education
Behaviour Specialists
A Division of CPI



Pivotal Tip 21 - Share Positives with the Whole Family?

When your child has made a determined effort to make good choices with their behaviour over a period of time, share and celebrate these good choices with other members of your family. Celebrate the good news with a grandparent, a favourite older cousin or an aunty or uncle. Encourage them to mark this positive behaviour with your child and acknowledge their efforts.

Such a high level of personal, sincere, verbal praise can make a lasting impact and may sweep away negative preconceptions or damaging self-imposed labels. It also allows you as a parent to openly admit that you discuss the behaviour of your children with the rest of their family.

Pivotal Tip 22 - Follow Up, Follow Up, Follow Up

Parents can often pass behaviour to one another, avoiding effectively following up. They believe the idea that for the most troubled children, the heaviest hitters should take control. 'Wait until I tell your father/mother about this!' By doing this, you are undermining your own authority by pretending that higher up the food chain there is a magic bullet.

In the management and improvement of behaviour follow up is everything. If you want to establish true consistency over time how and when you follow up is the critical element.

Follow up works. It ensures consequences are faced, mirrors held up and agreements re-chalked for future. My child, my responsibility, my consistency. If someone else is trying to talk through the incident, administer the punishment and reset the boundaries then you cannot expect the change in behaviour that you so desperately need. Of course, if you allow other members of the family to always deal with your child, you can also undermine your own position in their hierarchy of importance.

Pivotal Tip 23 - 9 Steps to Certainty:

How to Create a Consistent Home Environment

1. Display and share your consistency clearly in a centre point in the home. Encourage your children to keep you on track.
2. Map rules, routines, habits and rituals for individuals and specific activities that are becoming difficult to manage.



Pivotal Education
Behaviour Specialists
A Division of CPI



3. When childrens escalate a situation, take them back to the original behaviour before you deal with the secondary behaviours.
4. Manage escalating inappropriate behaviour with an emotionless, even scripted response.
5. Where possible, recognise and celebrate your child's positive choices, even in the most inconsistent times.
6. Have a clear tariff for appropriate and inappropriate behaviour and be prepared to concede when you have a bad day and don't apply it correctly.
7. Don't judge yourself too harshly when you fall off the wagon and behave inconsistently. Apologise and get back to your consistent habits and routines.
8. Resist the temptation to deal with minor indiscretions with high level consequences. In effect, you are 'crying wolf'. When you really need support for behaviour that warrants a high-level consequence, your partner or other relatives may not be so keen to get involved.
9. Aim to deliver and execute consequences on the same day so that your child/children can start each day with a clean sheet.

Pivotal Tip 24 - Hooking the Hard to Reach

Young people who are 'hard to reach' may have decided that adults, especially parents, should be given a wide berth. Trust has been broken. The barriers come up. Some try to disengage, some stop communicating, most demonstrate their anger, confusion and lack of trust with behaviour that says *'leave me alone, I am not worth bothering with'*.

We recognise in young people who have low self-esteem and a limiting self-belief a 'negative internal monologue'. The root cause(s) may be different for each, but it usually includes negative assumptions about their own ability, the commitment of adults around them and a collection of labels that they have been given along the way. You may recognise this monologue at home. Perhaps when trying to complete homework with your child. As you present homework to your child, they reject it before it lands on the table. *'I can't do it'* is the first thought followed very quickly with a raft of avoidance tactics designed to protect themselves from further failure and embarrassment. You may also recognise it when trying to give them praise and positive reinforcement as they immediately reject the idea that he could have done something right.

What is the answer? Repairing self-esteem, spearing the negative internal monologue and replacing it with positive self-image. If the principle sounds attractive be advised, the practice

is difficult and stressful. It is because it is so hard and so time consuming that we continue to search for quick fixes. The bad news is there aren't any.

The drip feed of your relentlessly positive and nurturing dialogue is the foundation of this longterm strategy. Directly challenging their negative assumptions about their own ability, *'You are not stupid because you are still learning to spell'*, *'You are not an idiot because you have the wrong answer'*, persistently suggest alternative thoughts *'Spelling aside this is a beautiful sentence'*, *'You have a real talent for choosing the right combination of words'*. Over time the waves of positive thought begin to erode the barriers to their potential. Continually attack their assumption that you are going to let them down, *'I care about you, I am here to help you and I am not going away'*. Use examples of their previous appropriate behaviour to hook your judgements about their character, *'Do you remember, yesterday, when you helped me clear up the room? That is kind of behaviour I want to see today, that is the person I know and love.'* Refuse to allow them to connect their behaviour with their identity. Now make your interventions to challenging behaviour emotionless, robotic, dull, repetitive, predictable and safe. Save your emotion for when it is most needed and break the connection between their inappropriate behaviour and your negative emotion.

Pivotal Tip 25 - Teamwork

The way you work collaboratively with other adults in your home is a model to your children. It should be evident to them that this is a joint endeavour and you have a shared responsibility for managing your children's behaviour. Your children should see you are both determined to recognise and reinforce good conduct and both have equal power to issue consequences. Spend time with your partner or other adults in your home to agree on how you are going to manage behaviour.

Pivotal Tip 26 - Turn It Around

I'm sure there isn't a parent who hasn't asked their youngster why they have done it or what they have done only to meet with a shrug of the shoulders and the response *"I don't know"*. Invariably our buttons can be pressed at this point as we're trying to find a way forward and we are seemingly met with a brick wall statement. However sometimes your child just needs some time to think and the *"I don't know"* buys them some time. Instead of launching into

"Well why don't you know...?" type of response - which can easily trigger behaviour issues, turn the question around by asking, "If you did know what would it be" or "If you were going to write down three guesses/ideas, what would they be?" Again, allow your child some take up time. Invariably they will come up with an answer that allows both of you to move forward with the conversation.

Pivotal Tip 27 - 6 Ways to Add Impact to Your Consequences

1. Design them so they can be delivered them as soon as possible after the event. It is not the severity of the consequence that has most impact but the speed with which it is delivered.
2. Once given don't remove a consequence. Some children will get the idea that they are negotiable.
3. Keep your response rational; indifference is better than indignation.
4. Avoid passing consequences for others to execute. Use the time to reconcile, repair and reset expectations.
5. Tread carefully with public consequences, private is preferable.
6. Beware of 'hovering', deliver the consequence and leave the child to think.

Pivotal Tip 28 - Relational Rewards

Whatever 'carrot' you choose it is not a true reward, but a token that represents something far more important. Material rewards offer brief pleasure but not lasting satisfaction. The rewards that children value above others are relational, the good opinion of their parents, grandparents and teachers. Gentle smiles of appreciation, a quiet word for some, public praise for others. These rewards are the foundation for positive relationship with a parent or adult that offers satisfaction today, tomorrow and for a lifetime.

5 Relational Rewards

1. Acknowledgement
2. Positive reinforcement
3. Private, sincere verbal praise



Pivotal Education
Behaviour Specialists
A Division of CPI



4. Positive referral, 'Go and show your dad/big brother what an amazing job you have done with your maths work!'
5. Positive phone call to grandparent/aunt/cousin/scout leader.

You will have the best ideas for rewards for your child. Pick something you know they will value. It may be:

1. Their favourite meal.
2. Staying up later to watch a movie.
3. A visit to grandparents/cousins.
4. A friend over to play/sleepover.
5. Their choice of activity.

Pivotal Tip 29 - The Power of Silence

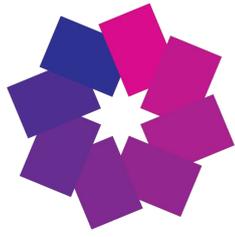
When used appropriately, silence can be a very powerful and a very therapeutic ally. Not rushing to "*fill the void*" can allow time for information/thoughts to be processed. Your child may require this additional time.

If you feel that your child is unsure or unwilling to speak, being able to say, in a genuine manner, that it is alright to take time to think and that you are impressed by the fact that they are considering what to say, will often start a useful conversation.

Pivotal Tip 30 - So Who Are You Talking To?

Your body language and physical positioning has a big impact upon the communication experiences you have with your children. Indeed, your posture significantly affects the way your voice sounds after it has emerged into your child's consciousness. What we do need to keep in control is the relationship between what it is we are looking at, and, what it is we are talking to.

A large part of the communication we receive is visual. It provides a range of clues about your child which significantly influences your understanding of the nature of the communication event as well as the content of the communication. There is basic power in eye to eye contact which reveals the emotions underlying the situation. Avoiding eye to eye contact conveys very



Pivotal Education
Behaviour Specialists
A Division of CPI



powerful messages in itself. *"I am not interested."*, *"I am untrustworthy"* *"I am scared."* *"I am ashamed."* A child who "needs" the support of a parent will not be encouraged by such responses, especially if the child is struggling to raise the confidence to make a disclosure or request help. You cannot understand what is on your child's mind if you are busy doing something else, even though you assure them that you are listening. Nor can you appreciate the nature of your child's emotional state if they are talking to your shoulder blade, following you into the kitchen as you rush to prepare dinner.

Face to face interaction, positive eye contact and the appropriate use of facial gestures can not only significantly improve behaviour management and allow you to more easily assess your child's emotions, it can also encourage children to adapt those behaviours for themselves.

Pivotal Tip 31 - Reminders of Previous Good Behaviour

A very powerful technique for redirecting negative behaviour is to remind your child/children of their previous good behaviour as you tackle their present actions.

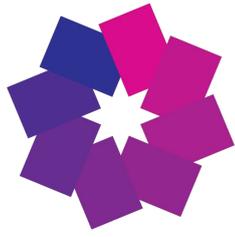
'David, do you remember when you helped me clear up the kitchen/helped your brother with his homework/did a fantastic job with your homework, that is the David that I need to see today, that is the David I know who can make good choices'.

In the middle of gentle castigation there is a moment of positive reinforcement, a reflection of a better time, a splinter of self-belief. For your child there is nothing to argue with, nothing to attack.

Pivotal Tip 32 - Sincerity

It is the small things that make the biggest difference and build the most positive relationships. Convincing your children that there is no place that you would rather be, tailoring your reinforcement for individuals, treating children with kindness even when their behaviour tries to trigger a different response. Finding the subtleties in behaviour makes you more likely to effect positive change that is sustained.

Over-praising lowers expectations, makes you appear insincere and won't encourage your children to feel genuinely appreciated. No one over the age of 8 is really convinced by flattery. Preserve the value of praise by balancing it with other reinforcers that are just as powerful.



Pivotal Education
Behaviour Specialists
A Division of CPI



Give your children what they really desire. Your time, attention, pride, humour, pleasure with their company and positive relationship.

Sincere praise that is pinned to evidenced effort works. Celebrating every behaviour with effusive praise means you have nowhere else to go when the really good things happen. Rather like the parent who shouts too much, your strategy- overused- loses impact.

Pivotal Tip 33 - Practical Strategies for Managing your Expectations

- Start each day with a truly clean sheet by ratcheting up your self-awareness. Think positively about how the day is going to go.
- Use an extended vocabulary and refuse to dumb down your language. The more children are surrounded by language that challenges the faster they learn it and widen their vocabulary.
- Along with your *'Just for today don't get angry mantra'* remind yourself that *'When you change the way you look at things the things you look at change'*
- Regularly reinforce specific expectations for and with your children. Display them clearly if appropriate and refer to them tirelessly.

Pivotal Tip 34 - Private Talks

For a child, being spoken to about your behaviour in public is at best tense and at worst, terrifying. Just check your own reaction the next time you are beeped at for some minor driving error, or admonished at the dinner table by your partner in front of friends. Being spoken to about your personal conduct in public is embarrassing; it can be humiliating and more often than not elicit a defensive reaction. So it goes with children.

Private and discreet application of consequences reduces the chance of challenge and confrontation. The audience is removed and conversation is quieter and calmer. By publicly highlighting your child's behaviour can be a catalyst for disruptive behaviour.

All children deserve private, individualised and personal interventions whenever possible.

Pivotal Tip 35 - Listen and Understand

Do you ever feel that you are having a really difficult time with your children, where they are regularly and consistently disturbing everything you do as a family. Do you feel as if you are never being listened to? No matter what you say, it doesn't make a difference? Take the time to reverse the roles. Talk with your children and really listen to what they are saying to you and try to understand where they are coming from. This may have a huge impact on how you try to manage their behaviour in the future.

Pivotal Tip 36 - 6 Ways to Add Impact to Your Consequences

1. Design them so they can be delivered as soon as possible after the event. It is not the severity of the consequence that has most impact but the speed with which it is delivered.
2. Once given don't remove a consequence. Some children will get the idea that they are negotiable.
3. Keep your response rational; indifference is better than indignation.
4. Avoid passing consequences for others to execute. Use the time to reconcile, repair and reset expectations.
5. Tread carefully with public consequences, private is preferable.
6. Beware of 'hovering', deliver the consequence and leave your child to think.

Pivotal Tip 37 - "Put Your Phone Away!"

Have clear and agreed rules around mobile phones, game consoles and wifi. You may have a basket or box to place mobile phones during mealtimes or during sleep time. You may have agreed hours for wifi. Involve your children in the discussion around phones and game consoles. Once your rules are agreed, everyone in the house has to abide by them, including parents and adults.

Pivotal Tip 38 - Reparation

Always repair your relationship after having a difficult conversation.

If you have had to challenge your child about their behaviour, always take the time after to repair the relationship. The old adage of never go to bed on an argument is imperative here.



Pivotal Education
Behaviour Specialists
A Division of CPI



Pivotal Tip 39 - Widen the range of strategies available for really tricky behaviour.

Try different approaches to managing behaviour, don't give up on one activity just because it doesn't work the first time. Sometimes heaping on additional responsibilities can be more effective than continuing to lay further consequences on young people.

You can use strategies to involve your children rather than push them away: taking their younger brother to football on a Saturday morning, helping out with their elderly grandparents or spending time with their younger cousin who's going through a difficult time. 'Convincing them that they belong and are valued' is fast becoming the new 'chucking them out'.

Pivotal Tip 40 - Vary Your Rewards

Any system that you use to recognise and reward your child's efforts and conduct will become tired unless you ring the changes. Even the most creative and delightful reward system whether it be a tally table, sticker chart or giant advent calendar 'prize doors', can become predictable after a while. Changing the way that you reinforce positive behaviour and attitudes every few months, provides enough variety and interest for your child without disrupting the flow of the daily routine.

You might even ask other parents/carers who have created charts/tables to rotate the reward system ideas between your homes. If you have more than one child, team reinforcement is used in preference to the divide and rule of individual rewards. The children are motivated by their corporate goal and by the quirky nature of the reward process.

Pivotal Tip 41 - Naikan Self Reflection

Here is an audio clip from the [Pivotal Podcast](#) where the idea of Naikan is presented in the context of a classroom but can be easily adapted and applied in the home. The three key questions can be used to support your child in reflecting on their day in relation to the people in their lives. The method works best in a quiet, calm space with no distractions. Ask your child to answer the following questions in relation to their day's events. Initially, they could simply think about and then verbalise their responses. As they get more used to the process they could start to make a note of their answers. Whatever works best for you and your child.



Pivotal Education
Behaviour Specialists
A Division of CPI



What have I received from others today?

What did I give to others today?

What troubles and difficulties did I cause to others today?

Children are acutely aware of how other people, including their parents/carers, cause them inconvenience or difficulty and yet when they are the cause of someone or something else's troubles, often they don't notice at all (this can be true of adults as well of course).

These questions will:

- broaden your child's view of reality.
- provide them with a strong basis for reflecting on their relationships with others.
- conducting a candid exploration of themselves and the impact their actions have on others.

Transcript from Podcast:

"My best practice of the week is around self-reflection and it links nicely into this one-to-one mentoring. But also, of course, self-reflection is something that we would use in the classroom, in the teaching space as part of our assessment for learning and as part of our young people trying to build those metacognitive skills - that ability to know what you know. And for me, self-reflection, when I see it in classrooms and also when I see it in mentoring situations can almost be a throw away line - you know 'reflect on that for a couple of minutes'. I'm just very aware that young people don't necessarily have the skill of self-reflection. Interestingly, if you have a faith, one of the things that faith does for you, and particularly through prayer, is that you do have that time and a structure through which you self-reflect. If you have great parents and you sit down at the dinner table with your parents, those reflective conversations encourage you to search inside of yourself and see how you felt about certain things and reflect on your achievements. But if you have neither of those things, if you go back to an empty house or indeed you go back to a house that's full of other people, if you've never been taught to self-reflect and you have no structure for that, being asked to self-reflect by your tutor, by your mentor or by your teacher is quite a big ask.

"So I found something a few years ago that I really, really like and we use it with young people a lot, in fact I use it as part of the assessment work I've been doing. The structure is called Naikan Self-Reflection and it's based on a very simple model of self-reflection that young people use in Japanese schools. The way it works is very straight forward: there are three



Pivotal Education
Behaviour Specialists
A Division of CPI



titles and you make three lists. The first list is "What have I received from other people?" The second list is "What have I given to other people?" And the third heading is "What troubles have I caused?"

"Now interestingly when we ask teachers to make those lists - the first time you make them it's really very difficult. I ask teachers to really hone down on the last 24 hours of their life and think about the things they have received from other people - the positive things they have received from other people. I don't mean the big things, I mean the small things as well - someone let you out at the roundabout, somebody brought you a cup of tea this morning, there was something in your pigeon hole for you, somebody brought you a biscuit at breaktime - every tiny thing. People find it very difficult to make that list.

"So, we do the second list - 'What have I given to other people?' - and again, people are searching through the last 24 hours of their life, trying to pick everything they've given to other people. And finally, the troubles that they've caused. It's really important in the exercise to spend ten minutes just wracking your brain and really trying to think hard about those three headings. The first time you do it the lists are not so long, but then, of course you go off into the world. The following day someone gives you something and you almost log it in your head. You know that later on you're going to put it on your list and you start to become quite self-reflective about things you have given, things you've received and the troubles that you've caused. After a few days, if you just do that exercise 10 minutes before bed every night, very very quickly, you find yourself being cognizant of those moments in your daily work and your study. Suddenly your lists get longer and longer and you start to see your contribution to the lesson, to your home, to other people.

"So on a broader scale, it's great to use for one-to-one mentoring. I ask young people to keep a diary and I'll maybe do the exercise with them once a week and look, over the course of maybe five or six weeks, how their interaction with the world has changed and indeed how their behaviour has changed. It's a lovely little self-regulator for young people. I also use it when I'm doing assessment in the classroom. If I've got a group working I might ask them the same questions. "What have you received from the group?" "What have you given to the group?" and "What troubles have you caused the group?" So it's very quickly adaptable into a learning situation, but it's equally as valuable as a self-reflection tool, because of course, in order to modify your behaviour you do have to think through it for yourself. A good mentor, a good teacher will hold up the mirror to you and allow you to do that. So this exercise, Naikan Self Reflection, really does allow the teacher to hold the mirror up to the student without

being judgemental and allow them to make those lists and see how they develop day after day. "

Pivotal Tip 42 - What's in a smile

Smiling or the lack of smiling plays a significant role in all relationships. Where parents and their children are concerned, a smile can be used to reassure, provide comfort and to encourage. On the flip side, a non-smile could be interpreted as a threat signal.

From the moment they're born, your child needs to be shown that they are loved and valued. Positive non-verbal communication from the key adults in their lives will help them to a strong self-image.

Starting each day with a smile and a warm 'Good Morning' even if the previous day's behaviour was not particularly positive, will help your child to feel safe and secure in the knowledge that no matter what their mistakes or mishaps, they are loved and valued.

A warm, heart-felt greeting in the morning could be the difference between a relaxed day of mostly positive behaviour and a day of endless nagging, confrontation and tension.

Pivotal Tip 43 - Dealing with Children who Show Off and 'Play the Fool'

It has been wrongly suggested that using humiliation and sarcasm with children who play the fool or tend to show off in front of their friends can be an effective way of managing their behaviour. In fact, humiliation and sarcasm will only make matters worse. Children will most likely use it to fuel their disruption.

Don't respond to your child's behaviour in front of their friends. Speak to them privately. Explain that you will not tolerate their disruptive behaviour and intend to do 2 things:

1. Let them know why their behaviour is inappropriate. How does it affect the other people and what impression are they giving?
2. When they behave badly in front of their friends and other adults, remind them of your expectations. Let them know what you need them to do differently in the future.

Remember "Praise in Public and Reprimand in Private".

Pivotal Tip 44 - Values at Home

The way children learn values is by observing key figures in their lives and so to be successful in teaching them you need to lead by example.

For some young people the values that are held at home conflict with those they meet at school or in college. Familiarise yourself with your child's school's values. These are likely to be centred around ideas such as respect, integrity, resilience and any others that help children understand right from wrong and shape productive mindsets in preparation for adulthood. Here are some ways of creating opportunities for your child to exhibit and reflect on their school's values when at home.

- Supporting another child with their schoolwork.
- Doing chores around the house – not always/only for a reward.
- Carrying out acts of kindness around the community - (caring for the elderly, litter picking, voluntary work, offering their support to a local charity).
- Playing games where they experience both winning and losing to help develop resilience.
- When your child is stuck trying to complete a task, avoid jumping in immediately with a solution. Allow them time to struggle, fail even and work out a solution independent of adult support.

Pivotal Tip 45 - 5 Key Principles of a Good Reward System

- 1. Reward over and above** - don't reward minimum standards because that is what you will get, rather reward your child when they go over and above the required expectation.
- 2. It's not what you give but the way that you give it** - the reward system itself isn't necessarily critical, it's how you use it.
- 3. Make the reward system simple to operate** - it must be simple enough to fit in with the rhythm of the daily routine.
- 4. Recognition beats material rewards every time** - the tiny moments of appreciation and feeling valued are far more important to the majority of children and young people than monetary rewards or extravagant presents like an iPad when they earn all the stickers on their reward chart. Instead, incentivise your child with:
 - a. Being able to choose the evening's meal.
 - b. Having a sleepover with a friend.
 - c. Choosing a film or television show for the household to enjoy together.



Pivotal Education
Behaviour Specialists
A Division of CPI



Pivotal Tip 46 - 30-second Intervention

Limit your interventions for poor behaviour to 30 seconds each time. Get in, deliver the message, 'anchor' their behaviour with an example of previous good behaviour and get out. With your dignity intact and your child's dignity intact. That is the 'win, win'. The 30 second intervention demands careful often scripted language. The idea is simple. The performance takes practice. The 30 second intervention is not designed to force your child to play 'good puppy', beg for forgiveness and immediately turn their behaviour round. It is a carefully planned, utterly predictable and safe way to send a clear message to them. *'You own your behaviour, your poor behaviour does not deserve my time, you are better than the behaviour you are showing today (and I can prove it!).'*

The moment you deliver a consequence is the moment that confrontation/complaint/protest will emerge. Counter this defensive response in your 30 second intervention by immediately reminding your child of a previous example of their personal discipline, *'Do you remember yesterday/last week when you: helped me tidy up the kitchen, mow the lawn, stick stamps on all those letters I had to send? That's the Chelsea I know and love'*. Then use *'Thank you for listening'* as an excuse to move away and leave your child to make their choice. Walk away. Don't be tempted to 'loom' over them waiting for them to decide what to do. Walk away. Don't turn back. Even if you have just perfectly performed the 30 second intervention your child may need time to make a choice.

Pivotal Tip 47 - Three is the Magic Number

What if we limited sets of rules or routines to just 3 steps? Made them simple to recall, so that they are referred to more frequently and consistently. Suddenly what is important is brought into sharp focus. Try simplifying your household expectations into sets of 3 so that even when your child is feeling tired or demotivated they know what behaviours are important and can strive to demonstrate them. When framing your household rules, less is most definitely more.

Pivotal Tip 48 - Displaying Daily Routines

Children read signs quicker than they read your intent or remember your voice. The digital child is icon intelligent. Signs and symbols guide them through new media and technology. Children and young people use icons to plot their map of new worlds and new routines. Using them in the home means you can teach complex routines and have clear reminders displayed.



Pivotal Education
Behaviour Specialists
A Division of CPI



As you negotiate or impose routines agree a set of icons to represent the steps. Leave the icons on display near the activity. The signs you agree with your child help to focus them on the behaviours that you need to see. They must be positive, affirming and engaging. Before embarking on a new activity establish the routine, draw it, display it and refer to it continually.

Teach new routines immediately before the activity, giving examples and modelling your responses carefully. When the activity is revisited, it is vital that you run over the routine with your child. When the activity begins, acknowledge your child for following the agreed steps to support their good choices. *'Thank you. You've wiped your feet before stepping into the house.'*

Pivotal Tip 49 - Modelling and Teaching Behaviour Control

Your child is continually reading you. They read your physical language, they read your tonal language and they read your verbal language. In fact, more often than not they're reading the physical and the tonal first before they're actually hearing what you're saying. They are looking to see how assertive, how positive you're feeling. They're making decisions about your behaviour so that they can make decisions about how they're going to behave. They're watching carefully to see if you're going to be an angry adult or somebody that's looking to catch them doing the right thing.

So what happens when you are feeling emotionally unstable or irritated? Instead of ignoring emotion that's causing you to act inconsistently, choose whether you're going to explain how you're feeling or if you are going to switch into an assertive performance to try and disguise it. Now if you don't make a conscious decision either way to do one or the other, the emotional stability of your household is at risk. Your responses to inappropriate behaviour may be affected by your emotional state and you find yourself dealing with your children in a way that, rationally and sitting back and looking at it from a distance, you wouldn't necessarily choose to do.

Parents who are particularly good at hiding their emotional buttons and putting on an assertive performance rarely share those skills with their children. Your children are learning how to deal with their own feelings and part of managing behaviour is giving them the ability to deal with their emotional brain to calm it and to try and get back to rational thinking and high order thinking that happens in the prefrontal cortex of your brain - just behind your forehead. That is where learning takes place.

So next time you control your own emotions and put on an assertive performance, try to deconstruct what you are doing so that you can teach these skills to your children and help them to manage their own emotional brain.

Pivotal Tip 50 - The Restorative Discussion

Restorative meetings give you a structure for discussion following an incident with your child.

Here are the six questions we should use in restorative conversations:

- What has happened?
- What were you thinking at the time? (parent and child)
- Who has been affected by the actions?
- How have they been affected?
- What needs to be done now to make things right?
- How can we do things differently in the future?

Having structured restorative conversations is not an instant solution. They work best when trust has been damaged as a result of serious misconduct rather than as a response to low level behaviours. This is a chance for you to hold up the mirror to your child and let them reflect on their behavioural choices.

A reparation meeting with your child should take no longer than 15 minutes. It isn't a prelude to your child apologising. It should be a genuine conversation that re-chalks the lines of acceptable behaviour and repairs damage. The discussion should take place soon after the event but not too soon. It is vital that everyone is in a calm and reflective mood.

Parent and child discuss their behaviour and not the child's character. The discussion is structured to address what happened, reinforce expectations and reset behaviours for the future. At times it is appropriate for the adult to account for their own behavioural responses during the incident (shouting, losing their temper, not listening).

Reparation will not give you the instant satisfaction that comes from pure punishment. It will give you a platform to build relationships that change and improve behaviour for the long term.



Pivotal Education
Behaviour Specialists
A Division of CPI



Pivotal Tip 51 - Relentlessly Pursue Positive Relationships

You don't lay your relationship down every time your child has a bit of a wobble. It's not about you and them, it's about them and their behaviour. The relationship you have with them is the truth that sustains and carries in into the future.

You must persist in building mutual trust even when it's broken, even when children are rude and obnoxious, even when they throw it back in your face. You need to constantly show them that you're able to love and care for them: care that comes from wanting to have a positive relationship. Don't imagine you can have a perfect relationship with your child every day, but relentlessly pursue that goal.

Make it a habit.

Pivotal Tip 52 - The Importance of Importance

The deepest desire in human nature is the desire to feel importance. That's why praise and reward works. Of course it's not always the size of the reward that matters; it's how you give it. You can give someone a star and make them feel like a king. You can give someone 20 quid and make them feel utterly worthless. So we should focus on how we give rewards and praise.

Read the article below written by **Pivotal Education Trainer, Chris Sweeney**. He talks about someone he worked with who mastered the art of making people feel important and the knock on effect that had on everyone else. So while you read the article, think about how you make your child feel important.

Giving Importance

Before I became a teacher, I worked in a pub for a year. It was a "classic" country pub in an old building with a head barman who'd been there longer than the foundations. Peter was to me the perfect barman, he had a knack of working with people and putting them at their ease. Whether it was the regulars who came in every day or once a week. Or whether it was a new customer who had just found the pub, Peter would make them feel that he was privileged that they had come into the pub.

With the regulars, he would know those who liked to have a particular drink in a particular glass and that would be poured and on the bar ready for them before they asked; he'd know those who had something different each time and so would wait to check what they wanted; he'd know those who always had the same drink but were worried about being predictable or



Pivotal Education
Behaviour Specialists
A Division of CPI



boring. He would patiently wait whilst they went through the charade of deciding what they were going to have before choosing the same drink they had every day. He would keep up to speed with their lives, their interests asking after weekends, spouses and families. But he would also know the difference between those who wanted to discuss their lives in great detail and those who wanted to keep "distance." When new people walked into the bar, he would adjust his greeting according to what he felt would suit them best. He would get the balance right between welcoming them in without being overpowering. He could see when trouble was brewing and would intervene early with a subtle comment, diversion or a joke to defuse the situation. In short, Peter had the skill of making every person who came into that pub feel important.

Giving importance is an essential skill in a family as well. Ask yourself the question, How do you make your children feel important? I'm not talking here about the whole class, I'm talking about individuals. Take the time to make each child feel that you're glad to see them, you're please they're here, they're important. This doesn't take a lot of time or effort, but it has a huge impact. Greeting children as they come in - with a smile, a brief comment/question about something you know they're interested in, marking moments with genuine, meaningful praise. Giving importance is different for everyone- we all value different approaches and have different interests.

Sadly Peter died a few years ago. I remember going to his funeral- it was standing room only. There were family and friends there but there were also large numbers of people who had known Peter as the barman of their local. They came because they wanted to pay their respects to Peter, but also because he had an impact on their lives- he had made a difference. We are immensely privileged to be in the position where we can have a huge impact on the lives of children and young people- every day. Ask yourself the question at the end of the day- Have I made my children feel important today?

Pivotal Tip 53 - Things To Do Before You Issue Consequences

- Agree manageable short-term targets for your child.
- Be explicit about the behaviours/conduct that you expect to see.
- Re-establish the routine you are teaching, then catch your child/children who are following it (Even though it might feel odd!).
- Look for an opportunity to help in amongst the poor behaviour, *"Show me how I can help you."*
- Use, *"I understand..."*, *"I hear..."*, *"Maybe it is..."*, to return your child back to positive behaviour.



Pivotal Education
Behaviour Specialists
A Division of CPI



Pivotal Tip 54 - Positive Reinforcement not Material Reward

The Argos catalogue approach to behaviour management corrupts the pursuit of personal discipline. It is just funky bribery. The 'points for prizes' systems encourage a materialism that we are trying to educate against. We complain of the gluttony of some children, yet we resent them with an escalator of ever increasing rewards of stuff. Like all 'behaviour solutions' they sell the lie that the relationship can be replaced. That one click of a reward button can replace a reinforcing conversation that you can engage children without any real engagement from the adult.

Positive reinforcement is an anchor for the behaviour that works. It is an anchor that you may need to return to in order to remind your child of their best side, a time when they were compliant, disciplined and cooperative. Remove the personal touch and there is no anchor. No moment that you can return to and say *'Remember when you helped me with your little brother last week. You were kind and responsible. That is the kind of behaviour that I expect from you. That is who I need to see today.'*

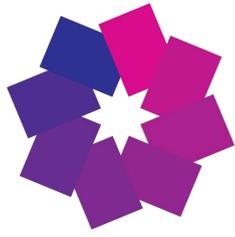
As a parent, you want your child to have intrinsic motivation to make good behavioural choices not just to receive a material reward.

Pivotal Tip 55 - "This Is How We Do It Here"

Consistency comes from an absolute belief that within the walls of your home there are certain behaviours expected.

Conversations about behaviour are punctuated with, *'This is how we do it here.'* Creating an oasis in the middle of challenging environment and communities requires everyone to hold this to be true. Other behaviours might be acceptable outside your home, other attitudes required in different contexts and different language used with other adults yet... *'This is how we do it here.'* Accept the behaviours that many of us use to survive and thrive in different environments but insist that they stay outside your home.

Now strip this headline into consistent behaviours demonstrated by adults in your home. Consistent scripts used with your children, and consistently rational responses to inappropriate behaviour. Your plan for consistency must be more than just a wish or an assumption that it happens. Make a plan with concrete checkpoints centred around an absolute and *'This is how we do it here'* becomes a mantra for children as well as parents and adults.



Pivotal Education
Behaviour Specialists
A Division of CPI



Pivotal Tip 56 - Over and Above

Recognising your children when they go 'over and above' is important. Too often parents pitch their positive reinforcement too low. Praising children for the smaller, everyday minimum standards sets a low expectation. When your children follow your rules they deserve acknowledgement, thanks even, but reserve your praise for when they go 'over and above.'

Your children will soon realise this new standard, as parents and adults recognise when they make the extra effort to be responsible, polite, to help tidy without being asked. Celebrate and recognise when your children go 'over and above,'.

We want children to stretch a little more, to demonstrate self-discipline and to be recognised positively for it. Try using the phrase with your child tomorrow and set a new expectation for behaviour overnight.

Pivotal Tip 57 - Making Follow Up Conversations More Productive

If any of your children find it difficult to engage properly in restorative conversations after an episode of very poor behaviour, try:

- Pre-empt the conversation, give them a heads up about the things you are both going to talk about. Let them think it over beforehand.
- Thinking carefully about where and when the conversation takes place.
- Talking with your child whilst cooking, travelling in the car or whilst you're busy together at home rather than sitting or standing face-to-face.
- Trying not to launch straight into the conversation, put your child at ease first, have the conversation when you are both relaxed.
- Having an activity on the table that you can both do while you are talking: pile of Lego, play dough, doodle paper etc.
- Keeping the discussion short and to the point.
- Finishing the conversation with a smile and positive comment.

Pivotal Tip 58 - Angry Children Are Often Hyper-Vigilant

What you choose to say when intervening with angry children is critical, but your child is also keen to other factors.

When your child is angry, every slight change in tone, irritated inflection or frustrated screwed up face can provoke a disproportionate reaction. The skill of the parent is to strip away every negative indicator, anything that your child may use to accelerate the situation. How you approach; how you physically react, even the light roll of the eye is interpreted.

Interacting with angry children requires the patience of a fisherman and a super thick skin.

Pivotal Tip 59 - Behaviour Games

In many homes rewards and consequences have become a behaviour game. Token economies for good behaviour, ladders for consequences. There is the 'name on the fridge' game, the 'gold star or sad face sticker chart' game and the 'restricted Xbox' game. They are all based on the idea that behaviour can be managed by giving a consequence for poor behaviour and then removing it when your child behaves well.

The opportunity for your children to behave badly twenty times over the course of a day as long as they behave well twenty times is ingrained into your family practice. Every day the idea that poor choices can be made better by a good one is reconfirmed. As your children become more sophisticated, game players' self-discipline seems a distant dream. If you give your child a consequence it should not be removed. If you give your child positive recognition or praise it should never be rescinded.

Pivotal Tip 60 - Consistent Use of Expectations

Slimming your house expectations down to just three goes a long way to ensuring some level of consistency. Yet even this dramatic reduction is not enough. All adults in your house now need to use these three rules in every behaviour intervention; positive or negative. The consistent 'pegs' afford every adult the opportunity to refer back to them and ingrain them in the running of your home.

If your expectations are, for instance 'Be Kind, Be Respectful, Be Safe', are all adults at home consistently referring to these terms? When your child leaves the kitchen in a mess after



Pivotal Education
Behaviour Specialists
A Division of CPI



making a snack or leaves a trail of destruction around the house, are all adult consistent in their reference to expectations? Does every adult have the same approach?

Pivotal Tip 61 - 3 Micro Scripts You Should Use Every Day

What you repeatedly say in response to poor behaviour is important. Most of us have had our defaults set by our own parents or relatives. This is why, in moments of stress you find yourself saying ridiculous phrases like *'What on earth are you doing?'* and *'Why am I waiting? I don't have all day!'* Here are three key phrases to use instead.

'I've noticed.....'

Removes the judgement from behaviour interventions. *'I've noticed that you aren't dressed for school yet/crawled under the bed/are finding it difficult to follow instructions'*. There is no blame attached, there is nothing for your child to defend against.

'I need you to....'

Assertive and direct. Using 'I need you to..' allows you to give instructions that are not based on choice. Often introducing 'choice' in the moment is not helpful, 'You can choose to do this now or after dinner' may tempt your child to go for the latter and that is not the outcome you really wanted.

'You are better than that...'

Instantly reminds your child that you have faith in them despite their poor behaviour today. Done well it can re frame your child as the best version of themselves. It refers them back to a time when they behaved well.

Pivotal Tip 62 - Sharpening Restorative Skills:

A restorative conversation held across a table with your child under pressure to account for their actions is barely restorative. If the conversation is simply a prelude to an apology, it is unnecessary. With a few simple tweaks you can create a more open and productive atmosphere in your restorative conversations.



Pivotal Education
Behaviour Specialists
A Division of CPI



Apart from the 5 questions structure (What happened? What have you thought since it happened? Who was affected? How they were affected? What could you do now to make it right?) what else is critical?

- Sit next to your child not across the table.
- Have an activity to do that will encourage a more conversational atmosphere. For example, use Kinetic Sand, Lego or a jigsaw puzzle. You might choose to walk and go for a drive and talk.
- Answer the 5 questions yourself so that it is a real conversation not a pep talk.
- Search for natural consequences that your child decides upon. The meeting is not genuine if it is a prelude to a forced apology or punishment.
- Have simple actions that your child will carry out with timescales agreed.
- 'End and send' from the conversation as kindly as you did the Meet and Greet.

Pivotal Tip 63 - All Parents and Adults.

It is every parent and adults' responsibility to teach behaviour. When all adults feel confident and empowered to become a full part of the behaviour practice it is a sure sign that the family is becoming truly consistent.

All adults should take responsibility for the behaviour of their children and be encouraged to look for and promote positive behaviour.

You can even ask relatives or visitors to help reinforce great behaviour in your home by asking them to catch and celebrate your children going 'over and above'.

Pivotal Tip 64 - The Impact of the Day

How many times has your mood at home been affected either adversely or positively by your day or your journey home? Has the experience either enhanced your interaction with your family, or unnecessarily hindered it? If the latter, how have you managed to heroically shrug off the misery of the unexpected traffic jam, the over packed tube, or the overly busy and stressful day at work? What are the actual skills you have learnt in order to be resilient to this external stimulus to feeling?

A useful activity at the end of the day is to take time, where together as a family, you share how your day has gone. You might want to frame it with some exploratory questions such as these:



Pivotal Education
Behaviour Specialists
A Division of CPI



- What was unusual about your day today?
- What did you notice that surprised you?
- What did you learn about yourself today?
- Who helped make your day better?

Making time to check in with your children and share how their day has gone will give you a better insight into how they are feeling and what they've been up to. It gives you all an opportunity to offload any anxieties or frustrations you may have or just time to be noticed, heard, understood or connected. All of which could have a significant impact on their behaviours.

Pivotal Tip 65 - Evolved Intelligences & New Needs

The Quebecois theatre director Robert Lepage suggests that instead of constantly berating young people for lacking the contextual skills of yesteryear, we could be celebrating what new skills have arisen as a result of an ever-changing world. He calls these new skills 'Evolved Intelligences' which is a great way of framing the abilities of our children that we might otherwise miss if we are so fixated on the loss of old ways or making/doing/seeing that might have been dear to us. There will always be a threat associated with the 'new'. Lepage argues that photography was looked down on as a lesser medium at first and some heralded that it means the death of fine art as it seemed to capture real life with greater efficiency and accuracy

Of course, what happened was that painters, in the face of this new precocious kid on the block, began to explore new and exciting ways of making/doing/seeing which gave rise to the extraordinary movements such as impressionism, abstraction and futurism. Likewise, when film and television came along it was suggested that these mediums meant the 'death of theatre'. Just as the artists had done, theatre makers responded by exploring the very boundaries of performance and in doing so emphasising the live-ness of the event of theatre accentuating what makes theatre theatre.

Similarly, our children may be acquiring new skills that we might miss, so let's take some time to take stock of these so that we might be able to identify what new needs might be arising from new skills.

Firstly, ask yourself the question: *what your children have never lived without?* Spend some time mind-mapping this.



Pivotal Education
Behaviour Specialists
A Division of CPI



Secondly, go through each item on your mapping and start to identify what *new skills* might have evolved that your children have. *Think how you might draw on these skills and celebrate them in daily interactions with your children.*

Thirdly, go through each item on your mapping and start to identify what *new needs* might have arisen directly as a result of these new events, and new skills. Think about where, in your parenting you are directly addressing these new needs.

Ask yourself, how much would change in terms of behaviour management if you were actively factoring in the meeting of these new needs?

Pivotal Tip 66 - The Art of the Apology

Consider where you learnt the art of a great apology?

Usually we have learnt how to apologise from how it has been modelled for us. But what if your child has never seen you as a parent model this effectively? What if all they have experienced is a parent who models an evasion of truth or the abnegation of responsibility?

Your children need you to show them how to apologise. So be ready to do it at appropriate times. The key behaviour here to work from is humility. It is not necessarily an oxymoron to be both humble and assertive at the same time. Try to adopt a neutral rather than defensive body posture and calm tone rather than an overly aggressive or pleadingly passive one. Rehearse this for yourself, so you can find your perfect neutral with which to adopt at times when you wish to make an apology.

The attitude you want to convey is that is sincere. Anything offhand and cavalier will just not wash with children. It may be instructive for them to actually see and hear and feel their parent being prepared to embrace vulnerability as an adult. It could be a very powerful lesson for your children to learn that there is a power in vulnerability if it can be harnessed properly. A simple formula for an apology can echo or indeed follow the 5 Question structure of a Restorative Conversation. When you need to make an apology to your child then use this simple 6 step structure:

1. Let them know that you need to make an apology.
2. Say precisely what you need to apologise about.
3. Detail the impact that this action had on your child or rest of the family.
4. Detail the impact that this action has had on you.
5. Venture to say what you will do differently in future to assure it won't happen again.

6. Check in to see if your apology is accepted.

If repeated, with time, it will become an embedded and relentless routine that the whole family can follow.

Pivotal Tip 67 - Don't Go Down With Your Planned Activities

Don't stick rigidly to a plan or activity if it's just not working.

It might have seemed a great idea at the time to take a trip to the museum, have a picnic or go to a party, but sometimes it's just not the right time or context for that plan. If an activity or outing is bombing, look at your children and assess the situation.

Don't stubbornly refuse to give up on your fantastic idea or planned trip. Sticking it out to the bitter end may only result in a terrible experience for both you and your children. It may very well be that there is nothing wrong with you, your plan or your children but it just wasn't the right time, for whatever reason for it to happen.

When any parent is managing behaviour, an important skill to practice is flexibility. To be able to think on your feet and adapt your plans accordingly.

When you know an afternoon or planned activity isn't going as you had imagined, changing direction and sometimes going '*off piste*' can be the most rewarding experience for both you and your children! Admitting defeat, that your idea isn't working can be a great *levelling moment* between you and your family. A moment of empathy and complicity. We are all human, and sometimes we just have to throw in the towel in the face of things just not working. An instant level of new respect is garnered, especially from teenagers, and a bucketful of rapport. When you ask the inevitable question... '*what shall we do instead today?*'. Suddenly choice and collaboration is in the air, and, ironically, the outcome will be some of the best times spent together with your children