



# 5 Little Wins

that are proven to  
improve your child's behavior  
in just 13 minutes a day!



Enabling you to nurture your child  
from outcast to outstanding

# Little Win #1: Radically transform your child's behavior with an easy change in the mindset

**The Trick: Change your child's experience from a failure paradigm to a success paradigm by creating little successes.**

Your experiences shape your thoughts, your thoughts shape your feelings, and your feelings shape your behaviors. A child's behaviors reflect how he feels internally, which traces back to his experiences.

Children with behavioral challenges have typically experienced more failures and disappointments than successes. They struggle to meet the behavioral expectations at school and at home. They form the subconscious thoughts: "I'm not good enough", "every time I try to do something I mess it up", "I can never behave the way my parents and teachers want me to"... These subconscious thoughts give way to feelings of inadequacy. When you feel inadequate and small, you act like you are inadequate and insignificant; on the other hand, when you feel like a million bucks, you act like you are a million bucks.

The key to changing a child's behavior is to change the child's experiences, which in turn reprograms the child's thoughts and feelings about himself, and gets projected in his behaviors. It is our job and our privilege to step into a child's life and give him the gift of a paradigm shift— a success paradigm. We want to shower the child with so many successful experiences that he can't help but feel a sense of greatness about himself and project that sense of greatness in his behaviors. How?

Children with behavior challenges aren't going to just experience a big load of success on their own. We have to go out of our way to create it for them. We have to be the ignition to their success paradigm. Here is an example of what I mean – to my most defiant son who is so stubborn that he never wants to do anything that I tell him to do, compliance is not a strength. I strategically set up compliance exercises that create little successes for him:

I asked him to go to the kitchen counter, get my white bowl and take a few bites of the chocolate inside the bowl. My son did exactly as I said, which is unusual. I immediately cheer him with excitement, "Wow, look at you! You did EXACTLY what I told you to do! You're great at obeying your parents!" But you know what really happened. What child will refuse to eat a chocolate when asked? While I do not promote sweets for children, I am trying to make a point here that this situation was a "set up" because I'm giving him credit for something that no child would refuse to do. Now do you see what I mean by "creating" little successes? You must "create" these scenarios, almost "artificially" if need be, to elevate your child's successful experiences. It really doesn't matter what the actual experience is so long he walks out of the interaction feeling successful. By doing a few of these exercises each day, you are re-writing your child's life story from failure to success. You are erasing the past and creating a success paradigm for your child. This success paradigm once created will transform your child's behavior inside out.

## **Today's little action for big results:**

Ask your child to do something that you know he will easily do. When he does it, tell him how great he is for getting out of his way to do so and showing that he cares; make him feel wonderful. Change the way your child experiences himself.

# Little Win #2: Turbocharge the excellence in your child with this free and simple method

**The Trick: Build confidence by saying one good thing about your child for every 10 minutes that you are around him/her.**

Have you ever written for or received from your loved one one of those romantic cheesy cards titled “25 things I love about you” or “20 things you are great at”? If you haven’t, people who write those cards are usually crazily in love and want their recipient to feel absolutely awesome and appreciated. That’s just what you want your child to feel, so he would have the greatest confidence boost.

You can certainly write your child a card like that and just give it to him, but what’s even more effective is to sprinkle these wonderful encouragements all over the place throughout the day. Imagine you are playing a video game and you keep getting a boost in your character’s power every 10 minutes, wouldn’t you feel almighty and powerful? Your child would, too, especially when the boost is coming from you and it’s in real life.

Today, say one good thing about your child for every 10 minutes that your child is around you such that he gets a confidence boost every 10 minutes. You can do this while driving your child somewhere. You can do this while you are making dinner and your child is around. You can do this anytime. If you think you may forget, you can even set up a vibrating alarm on your cell phone that snoozes every 10 minutes as a reminder for you. Compared to the many hoops you could try to jump through to change your child’s behavior or fix his poor self-esteem issues, this one is almost effortless and it’s free, but every 10 minutes you are giving your child a positive charge.

This strategy is highly effective yet can be very simple. For example, my son comes shopping in the mall with me. Before we leave the house I tell him to get ready and meet me in the car quickly. I get to the garage and see him in the car, I tell him “wow, you got yourself altogether so quickly and you are here already waiting for me, on time!” There it goes, a positive boost. During the drive, if he says something, I compliment him with another boost, and if he doesn’t say anything I praise him for how calm and quiet he is keeping himself. It’s unconditional – no matter what he does, says, or doesn’t say, he will get a validation that he is awesome. We get to the mall and he makes a suggestion on what I should buy - I say “You certainly have good taste and you can dress somebody very well”. If he does nothing else worth commenting, I say “thanks for coming with me. You are a pleasure to spend time with and I’m really enjoying shopping with you!” Again, it’s unconditional. He doesn’t have to do anything, yet every 10 minutes he gets validation and a confidence boost that speaks to his being, reminding him what a great human being he is regardless of his actions. Have you ever received sincere unconditional validation this way? Can you see what a wonderful gift this simple action is?

## **Today’s little action for big results:**

Make a bullet list of all the good things about your child. For every 10 minutes that go by, praise him with one item on your list. Keep it spontaneous. You don’t even have to use a list as long as you can keep popping up with praises and validations of awesomeness every 10 minutes.

# Little Win #3: Unleash your child's power with your simple words

## The Trick: Give effective, meaningful verbal acknowledgements.

Do you know how much power is in your words? Think of the last time you've been terribly hurt by something someone said to you. Think of the last time you've been absolutely inspired by something you read or something you heard. It's a day and night difference in the outcome with you, isn't it? But they are just words, nothing else.

Yes, words come with power. You want your words to be absolutely igniting for your child. You want your words to set your child on fire for success. You not only want to acknowledge every little effort that your child attempts, but you want to acknowledge it in an effective, meaningful way. Your simple words can go so long in unleashing your child's power, and it's so easy it won't even cost you anything.

When your child makes the smallest attempt to do something, he doesn't even have to actually succeed in it, you want to give him an effective, meaningful verbal acknowledgement. Here is an example:

My 5 year old son was about to go out to the backyard to play when his one year old baby brother tried to follow him out. My 5 year old son turned to the baby and paused for a moment. I could wait until he puts a jacket on the baby and actually holds his brothers hands to go out together before I acknowledge his action of "pausing" or thinking about taking the baby with him, but I may never get that chance. When we are trying to breed excellence we want to lift up our child for every little initiative, and set a fire under it so you ignite the excellence in your child. Even though he hasn't done anything real yet, you can use your simple words to acknowledge his potential intentions.

Here is what you say, "Wow, you saw that your brother wanted to go out and play, too, so you turned back to ask him to go out with you. You could have completely ignored him and went out all by yourself and not wasted any time dealing with a baby, but instead you paused, turned around to him and paid attention to him. What you did was not easy because most people would have just left to the backyard and started playing without getting slowed down by a baby. I really appreciate how much you care about your brother and how kind you are to wait for him. That is so thoughtful of you." Notice what I said to him – it's not a simple "good job seeing your brother". I poured my heart out to acknowledge his tiny bit of effort - a pause. Your child needs that from you, and it's so simple to do.

Here is a simple 4-point format to follow when trying to unleash your child's power with simple words:

1. Narrate the exact thing your child just did.
2. Describe the lesser action he could have taken instead of the greater action he actually took.
3. Acknowledge his effort by pointing out that what he did was not easy.
4. Tell your child how much you appreciate what he did and how awesome he is.

## **Today's little action for big results:**

Find one small thing that your child is doing to acknowledge with the power of your words, using the above 4 point format.

# Little Win #4: Making success easy and fun for your child

## The Trick: Break a task up into baby steps and pad it with fun in between.

Have you ever had to do something that you were so overwhelmed by that you didn't even want to start or know where to start? Many times we ask a child to do something and it is just not getting done - cleaning his room, homework, etc. The child struggles to get the job done. At times instead of doing what he is supposed to do, the child wanders off to something else and gets into some other troubles.

The trick to help your child be successful completing a task is to break it up into baby steps and insert something to look forward to in between the completion of each baby step. Make it fun, give credit to every baby step, keep it fast paced and keep it successful in every baby step. This can apply to anything such as a simple task like cleaning the room (break it down to one tiny corner at a time with a line drawn for that corner), a bigger project, or a bigger achievement goal.

For example, a child had 20 items to complete on an assignment and the child was dreading the work. I broke down the 20 items into 4 batches of 5 items. I make a deal with him to do only 5 items at a time followed by something fun at the completion of every 5 items. Together we wrote down on paper our plan/sequence which looked something like this:

- > Do items #1-5
- > Watch a video clip of my favorite song and sing along together
- > Do items #6-10
- > Race you to a lap in the backyard
- > Do items #11-15
- > Get a quick yogurt snack
- > Do items #16-20
- > All done – have some free time building Lego!

You may feel like it's going to take longer to complete a task if I have to stop so much. Notice in this example, singing was 3 minutes; racing was 3 minutes; and the yogurt was 4 minutes. The total 10 extra minutes plus 4 extra successful experiences for the 4 segments of the task beat his endless dreading and failure. The 4 additional successful experiences add so many points to a child's success paradigm and confidence level - "I CAN get this done." "I CAN do it!" "I can be successful!" The experience is priceless! This little win strategy here is in fact another way to implement your little win #1.

No matter what you do, do not ask your child to do more than he can easily handle during this period that you are trying to give your child this paradigm shift by building a success paradigm. Instead of reinforcing the non-success, spend your time building and celebrating little successes.

## **Today's little action for big results:**

Take one thing you would like for your child to complete today or this week. Break it up into baby steps and insert small things to look forward to in between each baby step. Write the steps down as in above example. Keep him focused on one baby step at a time and celebrate the success after each baby step.

# Little Win #5: Unharnessing your child's best behavior with the simple secret of paying attention to *when* you pay attention

**The Trick: Be absolutely intentional about where and when you put your attention.**

Picture this scenario. You are making dinner and your children are playing well together getting along with each other perfectly in the playroom. As a result of their harmonious play, you finished your dinner prep and you decided to go check your email because they were doing so well and you just wanted to read your email. Suddenly one child screams while another child yells. You know that someone has gotten onto someone else's case and you fly all the way across the house into the playroom attending to what's going on, giving them your undivided attention. What is wrong with this picture?

This is what's going on in the child's head, "when I play well with my siblings and don't pick any fights with them my mom doesn't notice me. When I pick a fight with a sibling my mom rushes over to me pouring out undivided attention to me.....hmmmm...." How do you suppose the next dinner prep play time is going to go if the child has learned anything from this experience? Surely there will be screaming, yelling and fighting amongst the children as soon as you step foot into the kitchen!

Children love your attention. Even if they don't say it, they desire as much of your attention as you can give. As a result they *learn* how to get your attention and you *teach them* how to get your attention by your actions including the way and the timing of your response to them. Too many people make the mistake of not attending when they are supposed to, and giving undue attention when they are not supposed to.

Where and when we put our attention has a lot to do with how our children choose to behave. In the above dinner prep example, the children are unconsciously conditioning themselves to create issues to hold their parent's attention. When those children were playing well, the parent really should have showered the children with lots of attention right in the middle of her cooking before she was done preparing dinner instead of starting another task of email reading and leaving the children alone. The moment she realized that the children were playing well together, she should have immediately dropped what she was doing, ran over to the playroom as urgently as she would have at the sound of a child's scream, and heaped incredible praises at every child for their great behavior before getting back to her cooking. In this case, she is conditioning the children to play well together by choosing to give her attention when they are actually playing well together.

Pay attention to *when* you pay attention. Choose carefully where and when to give your attention and be intentional about it.

Also, do not wait until your child does something good before you give him your attention; instead, notice him when he is NOT doing something bad, meaning that he could just be lying in bed doing nothing (but he is not doing something bad). A behaviorally challenged child may take until the blue moon before he does something really "attention worthy" so you can't wait for that moment. If he is not in trouble in any particular moment, that is big enough that you should honor it with your precious attention.

## **Today's little action for big results:**

Look out for a moment today when your child isn't in trouble and notice him in that moment. Use your Little Win #3 to comment on that good choice. Sit with him for a minute and let him know you noticed him. Your timing is so important here.