

# Planned Ignoring

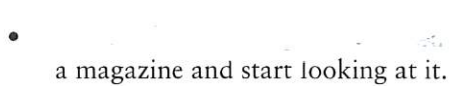
## What is the concern?

Some childhood behaviors are not harmful yet they can be very annoying and frustrating for parents. Many of these behaviors occur often. You probably know what it feels like when a child whines a lot, interrupts adult conversations, or misbehaves while you are on the phone. Parents usually respond to these behaviors by correcting or yelling at the child. However, a much more effective and powerful approach is to ignore your child's behavior.

## What is planned ignoring?

Ignoring is the opposite of paying attention. It is taking away your attention on purpose. Use ignoring along with praising and paying attention to shape or change your child's behavior.

## When should I use ignoring as a strategy?

- Use planned ignoring for annoying but harmless behaviors. Do not use planned ignoring for behavior that is harmful like hitting or biting.
- Ignore minor misbehavior by taking away your attention. Remember that paying attention to misbehavior can accidentally reward your child and can encourage him to misbehave again.
- To ignore, you should act as if he is not there. Do not look at or talk to him. Do not laugh at him if he is being cute or funny. These actions are considered accidental rewards.
-  It also helps sometimes if you pick something up like a magazine and start looking at it.
- You can practice ignoring during "special play time" sessions with your child when minor misbehavior occurs.
- It is important to try to remain calm. Provide positive attention as soon as your child stops the undesirable behavior and behaves appropriately.

Often when you start ignoring, undesired behavior will increase before it decreases. Be aware that you will be tested from time to time to see if the behavior remains undesirable. Be prepared to ignore it again.

Ignoring is the simplest strategy to deal with behavior problems, but in practice, it is one of the most difficult to carry out. To ignore means that you have to have good control, patience, and faith that things will get better. Try to avoid yelling at or correcting your child. If you feel you are about to raise your voice or you cannot walk away, try cooling off by counting to 10 or singing a song in your head. It may help to have another parent or caregiver watch you use planned ignoring and tell you how it went.

You do not want to ignore your child's behavior if it becomes harmful to himself or others. Respond to harmful behavior and help your child calm down with a time out. If dangerous behavior continues, you may need to consult with your pediatrician.



## Tips to Remember:

- Use ignoring when your child is showing annoying but harmless behaviors that occur often.
- Planned ignoring takes patience. Remain calm and provide positive attention as soon the undesirable behavior stops.
- Accidental rewards given because of bad behavior usually make it worse.
- Use time out when behavior becomes harmful or your child needs to calm down.
- If these suggestions do not work, please talk with your pediatrician for more ideas.

By Erin Carroll, MS  
Doug Tynan, PhD  
Meghan McAuliffe  
Lines, PhD