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## Parent Coaching Guide: Routines, Consistency, and Positive Reinforcement

For Parents of Young Children (Ages 4–7)  
*Tools to reduce daily stress and support positive behavior*

### Why These Strategies Matter

Young children thrive on predictability and positive connection. When routines are clear, responses are consistent, and positive behavior is reinforced, children feel safer, calmer, and more capable of meeting expectations. This handout outlines the core strategies your therapist will coach you on and practice with you so you can confidently use them at home.

### 1. Establish Predictable Daily Routines

Routines help children know what to expect next, reducing anxiety, power struggles, and emotional outbursts.

#### Key Times to Use Routines:

- Morning (getting ready for school)
- After school
- Mealtime
- Bedtime

#### How to Build a Routine:

- Keep it simple and consistent
- Use the same order each day
- Add visual supports when possible (pictures or charts)
- Practice the routine when your child is calm

#### Example Bedtime Routine:

1. Bath
2. Pajamas
3. Brush teeth
4. Story
5. Lights out

**Tip:** Children do better when routines stay the same—even on weekends.

### 2. Practice Consistency (Even When It's Hard)

Consistency teaches children that rules and expectations don't change based on mood or moment.

#### What Consistency Looks Like:

- Following through with directions
- Using the same consequences and rewards
- Responding calmly and predictably

#### Helpful Guidelines:

- Say it once, then give wait time
- Avoid long explanations during emotional moments
- Follow through calmly—without arguing or negotiating

**Example:**

"If you choose not to clean up, the toys will be put away for today."

Then calmly follow through.

Tip: Consistency builds trust—even when children protest.

### **3. Use Positive Reinforcement to Encourage Correct Behavior**

Positive reinforcement means noticing and rewarding behaviors you want to see more often.

**What to Reinforce:**

- Listening the first time
- Following directions
- Using calm words or body
- Trying, even when it's difficult

**How to Reinforce Effectively:**

- Be specific ("You cleaned up when I asked—great job!")
- Reinforce immediately
- Keep praise short and sincere

**Simple Reward Ideas:**

- Stickers or points
- Extra playtime
- Choosing a game or activity
- Extra bedtime story

**Tip:** Praise works best when it outnumbers correction (aim for 3–5 positives for every correction).

### **Putting It All Together**

Routine + Consistency + Positive Reinforcement = Success

**Daily example:**

1. Follow the routine
2. Give a clear instruction
3. Follow through consistently
4. Praise effort and success

Over time, these strategies help improve listening, emotional regulation, and confidence.

**What to Expect**

- Progress takes time
- Some days will be harder than others
- Consistency matters more than perfection

You are teaching lifelong skills—not just managing behavior.

### **How Therapy Helps**

Your therapist will:

- Coach you through these strategies
- Help you problem-solve challenges
- Adjust strategies to fit your child's needs
- Celebrate progress with you