

Use

“SPECIAL TIME”

with Kids
to Change

MISBEHAVIOR

to

GOOD

BEHAVIOR

It's not possible to control our children. We cannot make them do anything. Instead of trying to control kids with punishment, threats, rewards or bribes, we can influence them and coach them to make better choices. One of the most effective ways to accomplish this? Special Time!

Dr. Laura Markham, clinical psychologist and bestselling author of *Peaceful Parents, Happy Kids*, explains the importance of our relationship with our children. **When a child feels safe, heard, and acknowledged, they are more likely to cooperate.**

Children use play to work out whatever may be going on with them. To help your child, play with them using Special Time.

Special Time is 10-20 minutes of one-on-one, completely focused and dedicated time with your child where you set the parameters, but the child takes the lead and chooses what and how to play with you.

Special Time helps:

- Fill their emotional bank
- Make them feel safe and loved and understood
- Reestablish connection after a fight or disagreement

In the moment of misbehavior, respond to children with empathy. In order to be able to do this, we *must first regulate ourselves*. Stop and breathe, recite a mantra that can defuse our trigger (e.g., "this is not an emergency"), and then look to acknowledge our child's grievance. Showing children empathy tells them that they have someone who is listening to them, who understands and is in their corner. When we help our child feel their emotions in our loving presence, they develop persistence, grit and emotional intelligence. A great follow-up to these difficult moments is, of course, a bit of Special Time to reconnect!

NOTE: Need help implementing Special Time effectively? Print out the next two pages and post them where you'll be sure to see them so they can help guide you!



Remember

When your child is misbehaving, remember that they aren't giving you a hard time, they are *having* a hard time. Empathize, connect and be their coach so they can unload their emotional backpack and move on.

Additionally, implement Special Time as an effective tool to prevent *future* misbehavior! Special Time is like a "connection tune-up" with your child; the more you can do it, the more connected and cooperative your child will be with you!



To learn more about Special Time and for many more ideas for eliminating misbehavior without harsh punishment, please take a look at Dr. Laura Markham's Peaceful Parenting Masterclass available in The AFineParent Academy at: <https://afineparent.com/academy>

TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE SPECIAL TIME

Special Time is Preventive Maintenance.

Just like a car needs preventive maintenance so it doesn't end up in the breakdown lane, our kids need proactive attention so they don't have to seek it using misbehavior. Special time is one of the best preventive maintenance tools in the Positive Parenting tool kit.

Special Time is an Investment.

You may have other pressing things that need attention, but setting aside 10-20 minutes for Special Time pays off in oodles in the future in terms of how cooperative your child is. **Your productivity at this moment is love and connection!**

Special Time is Distraction-Free and One-on-One.

No one likes talking with someone who is staring at their phone, or busy paying attention to someone else! So put the phone away and make arrangements for other siblings to be taken care of. And, open yourself to fully embracing the playtime with your child for those few minutes.

You Set the Parameters for Special Time, Your Child Chooses What to Play

You get to decide the boundaries for Special Time (e.g., no baking, no sugar, no screens, etc). And then follow your child's lead on what to play and how. This allows them to process anything they have going on, and if you really get into it, you may start to discover a theme or message your child may be (unknowingly) trying to convey!



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TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE SPECIAL TIME

Special Time Has a Clear Start and End Time.

Set a timer when you start Special Time so both you and your child know exactly how long it will last. And when the timer rings, gently but firmly end Special Time.

It's OK for Special Time to End in Sadness and Tears!

It is perfectly normal for your child to feel sad or even cry at the end of Special Time because it was so much fun for them! Be prepared to spend some extra time to lovingly guide them through this sadness assuring them that you will do this again soon (it may help if you have your next Special Time already scheduled). You can also discuss with your child beforehand what they want to do when Special Time ends (eg. pick out a bedtime book to read).

It's OK for Your Child to Be Angry At the End of Special Time!

Stay calm and acknowledge their feelings. No matter what they say, do not threaten to take Special Time away. In fact, do the opposite! Empathize and reassure them with sentences like "When we have to stop it's so hard! Wouldn't it be great to do special time all night and never sleep? Let's do it again next weekend!" This doesn't mean you're giving in to them or being permissive. This is the way to coach for emotional intelligence!

It's OK For You to Dislike Special Time.

Tell yourself that this is what your child needs right now, this is the work they must do to process things, and this is important. Then work on surrendering yourself to this important work for the benefit of your child. You will soon find your rhythm with your child and before you know it, you may even begin to enjoy these moments immensely!



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Great Parents are Made, Not Born

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Here is a quick preview clip
of this masterclass:

If you cannot play this clip, please
copy-paste this link in your
browser:

<https://afineparent.com/lm-preview>



Here's what a mom in our AFineParent Academy community had to say:

“

I have been a part of the afineparent academy for a little while now and wanted to take a moment to express my appreciation and gratitude for such a great resource and community. As a mum myself and in my work as a child psychologist it has been invaluable and very inspiring for me. I've learned so much from all the masterclasses and expert calls and I love the way you lead those. A big heartfelt thank you from me 🙏

- Merel D.



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