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COMPLIMENTS TO START YOUR DAY

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- A tool for building positive interactions when the parent-child relationship needs help. Works great in foster and residential settings.
- Appropriate for preschool through elementary clients.
- Includes instructions and alternative adaptations for older children.

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COMPLIMENTS TO START YOUR DAY

Build positive interactions and warmth when
you're really frustrated with a child

USING SPECIFIC PRAISE
TO CHANGE YOUR RELATIONSHIP.

ASHLEY FIORE, MSW, LCSW



HOME PRACTICE ASSIGNMENT FOR FRUSTRATED CAREGIVERS

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Background

I created this for a cottage parent at a residential facility who had been struggling to specifically praise a child whose behavior had been challenging. When providing residential or foster care, sometimes it can be particularly difficult to find opportunities to connect in a positive way when you feel like you are constantly "putting out fires."

Discuss with the caregiver that there are three golden opportunities during the day to connect with children which are especially powerful for them – at bedtime, waking up in the morning and when greeting them after school. Decide which of these times might be most effective for the caregiver, and adjust the title of the intervention accordingly.

3 compliments to start your day
3 compliments for after school
3 compliments to end your day

Instructions for Caregiver

1. Identify 3 specific compliments/praises you want to give the child in advance. At least one of the three should be something that is intrinsically good about the child that you value, NOT something he/she is working on (for this kid, it was how he is kind and gentle with babies, but it could be as simple as I love seeing your smile when I pick you up at school because I've missed you.) The others can be behaviors you want to shape/see more of, but where you can give a positive example of this to praise.
2. Pair each praise with a specific example in which the caregiver noticed the child doing this.
3. Role play with caregiver sharing this praise paired with the example, keeping it purely positive praise and without evolving into any negative discussions.

4. Introduce this as an “experiment” to see how this impact's the child's behavior and their relationship. Predict for the caregiver that the child will eventually share a praise/compliment in return for them (but do not tell child this part).

5. Bring the child into the session. Explain the plan to start each day with 3 compliments from the caregiver who will wake the child 5 min early if they agree to the plan. Orient the child to the “rules” - purely positive praise with no lecturing about what to change. Predict that child can go to sleep at night wondering what the compliments will be in the morning. (Many children also start to do positive behaviors and ask the caregiver if they'll be adding that to the compliments the next day.)

6. Ask the caregiver to start with 3 compliments for today to get the idea. Coach as needed, including coaching the child on how to accept compliments by saying thank you.

7. Check in with the caregiver on the impact this has on the child, including their own experience of looking for things to praise during the day, how it impacts the behaviors they are trying to shape, and how it impacts their relationship with the child.

Bonus Points

The cottage parent I did this with had a lot of frustration built up from past negative experiences, so he was very negative about the child for much of the session. However, he was able to identify praises when he had time to plan them in advance. This time to reflect in advance is a critical part of the plan. The child responded positively to the specific praise and immediately gave three compliments right back to the cottage parent, who also responded positively. The child was then noted to say this would allow him to get an early start on his chores and lead to him having a good day, which he did.

Adaptations

Consider providing a small homework pad which the caregiver can decorate with stickers. They can jot down "compliments" for the child that they observe during the day. Then, they can draw on this when they are planning compliments for the next day.

You can alternatively (or additionally) leave "sticky notes" on a child's door with your compliments. * This is a good option for teens.

