

## How to Make a Behavior Contract to Help With Parenting

**Step #1. List out all the ways your child is doing great.** We always want to focus on the positives.

**Step #2. List out all the ways your child is struggling.** In what areas are you currently really having trouble with your child? After you've identified all of the ways that your child is struggling, identify the top 3 areas where you should concentrate your efforts over the next 3 or 4 months. Do not work on more than 3-4 weaknesses as a time as that will be exasperating for the child and almost impossible to implement consistently for the parents.

**Step #3. List out everything your child likes and finds rewarding.**

**Step #4. List out everything your child hates and finds distressing.**

**Step #5. Write the 2-3 areas you'd like to work on helping your child as positive goals. Goals must be clear, identifiable, and measurable.**

**Step #6. Connect a positive reinforcement to each of those goals.**

**Step #7. Connect a negative reinforcement to each of those goals.**

**Step #8. Review the Behavior Contract together and make sure it seems like it will fit.**

**Step #9. Daddy teaches the Behavior Contract to the family.** Make sure it is clear what is expected and what positive consequences they will get when they obey and what negative consequences they will get when they don't obey. Everyone signs the Behavior Contract to show that they are agreeing to the terms of the Contract. Your kids will be excited to participate, because they love the positive consequences you've picked for them. Post a physical copy of the Behavior Contract in a room of your house where you will see it frequently and be reminded of it. You should plan to read it every day.

**Step #10. Practice the Behavior Contract for one week. Read the expectations, reward, and consequences to your family daily.** Practicing means that you may remind the children one time about the expectations you've set for them. **YOU MUST "INSPECT WHAT YOU EXPECT."** Behavior Contracts are often a tool to help parents be consistent and follow through. Expect it to be as hard on the parents as it is on the kids learning to live this new way. You will need to carve out extra time for parenting in the first weeks of applying a new Behavior Contract, because there will be more discipling, coaching, and correcting at the beginning.

**Step #11. Implement the Behavior Contract.** Implementing means that you may not remind the children of the expectations. It is their job to know the expectations and to abide by them. It is your job to give them the positive and negative consequences **every single time**. Consistency is super important. "Inspect what you expect." Parenting with a Behavior Contract requires extra time, so make sure you carve out extra time in your schedule for both coaching and counseling as well as positive and negative rewards.

**Step #12. Evaluate after 3-4 months.** You'll know it's time to reevaluate when you're barely ever giving out negative consequences. Do the whole process all over again, so you can work on the next items that your children need to work on.

Scripture that guides this tool:

- James 4:1-10
- Eph 6:1-4
- Deut 30:15-20

Remember that the goal is heart change for our kids as seen through the evidence of their behavior changes. Behavior change isn't the ultimate goal, and, if you're not careful, simply focusing on behavior can result in Little Pharisees who handle God's word pridefully.

The family is working together to grow in all ways spiritually, mentally, emotionally, physically, and relationally. Both parents and children need to grow in the knowledge and love of Christ all the time. Biblical family unity and teamwork is built as you all work on the goals.

- Parents goal: Love and honor Jesus Christ by the way you coach and counsel your kids using the wisdom of the Lord. Your goal is NOT ultimately to produce godly children. Only God can produce those results.
- Kids goals: Love and honor Jesus Christ by they way you obey (submit to) and honor (see the value of) your parents and the authority given to them by God. Scripture promises a good, long, happy life to those who honor their parents, so we can expect that as children complete this biblical goal their joy will increase.
- Family goal: Love and honor Jesus Christ by making it as easy to obey God and as difficult as possible to establish sinful patterns, so that everyone will enjoy the blessing of walking on the path of wisdom as found in God's Word and be kept safe from the curses promised to those who ignore God and his standards.