

2-Minute Tip Sheet

Catch your teen doing good!

It can feel like you and your teen are stuck in a cycle of animosity, power struggles, and negativity. It can help to create some positive interactions to start to tip the scales back in favor of your relationship. How can you do that? Use the acronym NAP to “catch” them doing something good!

This skill comes from Chapter 10 of Dr. Z's book, Parenting a Troubled Teen.

1. Notice: Describe the behavior

This is simply about describing a specific behavior, such as your teen picking up his clothes from the floor. Noticing is the first step to also letting down your guard and starting to trust that your teen does praiseworthy things. The more that you are only watching for “bad” behavior, the more you will only notice that!

*“Researchers have found that long-lasting relationships in couples have about a **5-to-1** ratio of positive to negative statements! “*

2. Appreciate: Recognize the value

Your teen's behavior may not be the most groundbreaking achievement of all time, but little things also deserve merit and appreciation, and can lead to bigger behaviors. It can be saying “thank you” or turning their phone face-down on the table during a meal, or asking politely for something.

3. Praise: Let them know you like it

This is telling your teen know as soon as possible that you see the value in their behavior. The more specific it is, the more you are creating opportunities for your teen to engage in effective behaviors. Providing sincere praise for behaviors you'd like to see more often may not only increase the frequency of these behaviors, but also begin to repair your relationship.

Try specific statements that call out exactly what your teen did and what its effect was for you. For example, praise statements can start with “I like that you...,” “I appreciate that you...,” or “It makes me smile that you...”

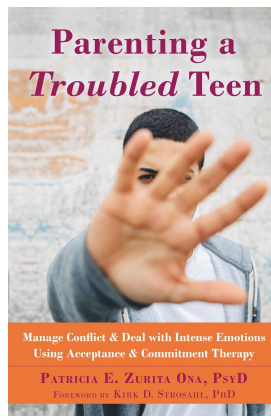
Examples of NAP skills:

- “It makes me smile that you did the dishes without my asking”
- “I enjoyed it when you included your cousin in every game you played last night after dinner”
- “I appreciated that your science homework was really carefully printed this morning”

What ISN'T an example of NAP skill:

- “Thanks for doing your chores”
- “That was great”
- “I’m glad you finally did what I asked you to do”
- “You’re awesome”

These were either unspecific or insincere, making them ineffective!



Want more?

These ideas, and strategies can be found in more detail in Dr. Zurita Ona’s book, *Parenting a Troubled Teen*.

*** Tip Sheets are not psychological advice, and use does not constitute or imply a professional relationship with Patricia Zurita Ona, PsyD. The ideas, procedures, and suggestions contained here are not intended as a substitute for consulting with a professional.*