

PDA and PDA Plus: Tips for Implementation

Positive, descriptive acknowledgement (PDA) and PDA Plus take practice. It's important to give yourself time to change the way you speak to children and to think about "why" PDA/PDA Plus are more effective in supporting children's social and emotional development than praise. Adults often ask for tips on how to ease the transition from praise to PDA/PDA Plus.

Try the following and see how they work for you:

1. Remind yourself to scan for appropriate behavior *throughout the day*, not just for problems.
2. Pretend to be a camera and capture, or say, exactly what you see the children doing. Don't add any value judgments, e.g., that's great, muy bien, awesome, etc.
3. Avoid saying "I" when you are describing what you see, e.g., "I see...." or "I like the way...." or "I notice..." Try starting your PDA/PDA Plus statement off with the a) the child's name, b) "Wow...", or c) "You..." in order to avoid the "I" at the beginning of your descriptive phrase.
4. Try to acknowledge effort vs. outcome if you can. This means you give the PDA/PDA Plus while the child is doing something positive, not after they are done. One way to make sure you are doing this is to keep your verbs in the active tense, i.e., "You **are sharing** the crayons!" vs. "You **shared** the crayons."
5. PDA Plus involves linking the child's behavior to positive outcomes. These outcomes can vary:
 - a) Link the behavior to the program-wide **expectations or ANY character trait** you would like the child to develop e.g., "Emilio, you are taking turns on the bike. You are being so **respectful.**"
 - b) Link the child's behavior to the **impact on others**, e.g., "Emilio, you are taking turns on the bike. **Now Alexis can enjoy riding it, too!**"
 - c) Link the child's behavior to his/her **feeling state**, e.g., "You are taking turns on the bike. You look proud!" or "You took turns on the bike. You seem **proud.**"
6. Try to decrease or eliminate the number of times you start out your PDA/PDA Plus statement with "Thank you for..." i.e., "Thank you for sharing your crayons with your friends." This is a form of praise because you are implying they did it for you when, in fact, we want them to be intrinsically motivated; to choose appropriate behavior because they see the value in it.
7. Reminders are **NOT** the same as PDA's or PDA Plus, and they are not the best way to teach, e.g., "Remember, you need to be safe," or "Remember, we need to share our toys."
8. Have fun, laugh, and be patient with yourself! Changing the way you speak takes some practice. Remember this is the most important tip!!