

Parenting for Success Class #9

Intensive Teaching



Introduction

The Final Resort

One of the most frustrating aspects of parenting is dealing with an angry, defiant child who simply refuses to do what you ask. The child may be yelling, hitting, arguing, throwing objects, or threatening you. Your child's behavior can make you feel powerless, emotionally drained, or just plain furious. This is when you need to use Intensive Teaching.



Introduction

The Final Resort

- The best choice for managing your children's behaviors is Preventive Teaching—teach children appropriate skills and behavior before problems occur.
- The second choice is Corrective Teaching—deliver consequences to negative behaviors as soon as they occur.
- The final resort is Intensive Teaching—when negative behaviors persist or escalate, you need to use Intensive Teaching.



When to Use It

- **The “Third Strike” Rule**— at the first sign of any negative behavior, you should always use Corrective Teaching first. If the negative behavior continues, you still respond with Corrective Teaching. However, if the behavior continues after the “third strike,” you should handle the behavior with Intensive Teaching instead.
- **Sudden or severe behaviors**— any time your child engages in sudden outbursts or behaviors that could be considered severe or dangerous, you should use Intensive Teaching.
- **Past history**— if your child has a history of acting out in response to specific situations or people, it is wise to use Intensive Teaching as soon as you see problem behaviors start to occur.



Out of Instructional Control

This term describes a child who is acting out, with behavior that has escalated to the point that they require Intensive Teaching.

Intensive Teaching

Intensive Teaching is not an “exact science.” When and how to use it takes practice and experience. Don’t get discouraged if you struggle with this aspect of parenting.

Things to remember:

- Avoid power struggles—discuss the behavior, not the issue that led to the behavior; clearly explain how the child can resolve the situation.
- Use Corrective Teaching to deliver the consequence for being out of instructional control before beginning Intensive Teaching.
- Intensive Teaching can take a long time—parents can act as partners and trade off as necessary, but make sure the parent who initiates Intensive Teaching is also the parent who finishes it. Also, don’t “gang up” on the child.



Intensive Teaching

More things to remember:

- It's okay for you and the child to take a "time out" during Intensive Teaching. These breaks can help you both calm down.
- Remind the child that it is their choice and that they can choose to end the confrontation by accepting the consequences.
- Remind the child of the opportunity to earn a reduced consequence if they follow your instructions.
- Prompt the child to give you verbal or physical cues of when they are calmed down.
- Allow the child to have personal space. Don't crowd them.



Intensive Teaching

The goals of Intensive Teaching are to help you and your child to calm down during emotionally intense situations and to teach your child how to control their behaviors when they get upset. To this end, there are two key parts to Intensive Teaching—getting your child to calm down and follow-up teaching.



Intensive Teaching

The Steps to Intensive Teaching

The steps to Intensive Teaching are in many ways very similar to Corrective Teaching. The key difference here is to be patient and allow enough time (and repetition) for improvement to occur.

- **Express empathy**— this helps you focus your attention on your child’s behaviors and emotions rather than your own.
- **Describe the child’s negative behavior**— be brief, and talk in a calm, level voice. Do not use vague statements. Remember to describe only observable behaviors (as we discussed in Class #2). Vague statements like “you’re acting like a baby” typically only provoke more anger.
- **Give a small instruction**— describe what your child needs to do to begin calming down. Make the instructions simple and don’t give too many.



Intensive Teaching

The Steps to Intensive Teaching (continued)

- **Allow time**— this lets your child feel like they have a choice. This is time for children to decide what choices they are going to make when teaching continues. It is also a good time for both parents and children to begin to calm down.
- **Praise for any compliance or positive behaviors**— praise approximations. If you child doesn't fully follow instruction, praise areas where they followed part of the instruction. If they don't follow any part of the instruction, but are doing something else positive, praise that behavior.
- **Repeat steps 1-5 as necessary, until your child is calm enough to accept a consequence for his or her behavior.**



Reminders

- Be calm and in control of what you say and do.
- Take your time.
- Your children may be calm and then start yelling, swearing, etc. again. Be patient.
- You may have outside distractions during this time (phone calls, other children, visitors, etc.), but do your best to continue teaching.



Follow-up

Once your child is calm, use these follow-up steps to Intensive Teaching to help keep things on track.

Follow-up steps

- Continue to use praise and empathy.
- Thank your child for calming down.
- Move to Corrective Teaching to deliver consequence for your child's intensive behaviors.
- Deliver a large consequence for the intensive behaviors as well as a large positive correction for calming down or role playing positive behaviors.
- Allow the child time to express feelings appropriately about the situation after they have accepted the consequence. If parents and children can learn to talk about how they feel in situations, they will be more successful attacking the problem than each other.
- Don't forget to follow through with the original consequences that the child earned before becoming intensive. It's important that the original behavior is not ignored just because things escalated.



Praise and Empathy

It can be extremely difficult to continue using praise and empathy during an Intensive Teaching interaction, but it's very important nonetheless. It's also important to remember to thank your child when he or she begins to calm down.

Here are a few more examples of how you might do this:

- “Thank you for sitting on the couch and taking a deep breath.”
- “I understand that what your brother did to you was not appropriate.”
- “You’re doing a great job giving me eye contact.”
- “Way to go! It looks like you are pretty calm now.”



After Intensive Teaching

Now that your child is calmer, and the Intensive Teaching interaction has concluded, it's important to follow-up with more Corrective Teaching to deliver the consequences for their intensive behaviors.

Return to Corrective Teaching

- Describe the inappropriate behavior.
- Deliver a large consequence for the intensive behavior.
- Describe the appropriate, alternative behavior.
- Give a reason why the alternative behavior would be a better choice.
Remember to make it personally relevant to your child.



After Intensive Teaching

Offer a large positive correction

- Now that your child has earned a large consequence for their intensive behaviors. Give them a chance to reduce the consequence by offering a large positive correction.
- Offer a positive motivation statement—“Now you have the opportunity to earn...”
- Practice the appropriate, alternative behavior.
- Praise your child and reduce the consequence. Remember not to reduce the consequence by more than half.



Listen to Your Child

Once your child accepts the consequences for both the original behavior and their intensive outburst, allow them some time to appropriately express their feelings about the situation. This can be a great way to encourage your child to think carefully about what has happened and may help them avoid similar outbursts in the future.



Power Struggles

Earlier in this class, we talked about trying to avoid power struggles. This can be particularly difficult during Intensive Teaching because emotions are running so high.

Examples of what you might hear

- “I’m not going to do it, and you can’t make me!”
- “You don’t love me as much as you love Tommy!”
- “You’re a bad mom! It’s your fault that I’m acting this way!”
- “I hate you! You’re not my mommy!”



Power Struggles

Engaging parents in a power struggle is a common way for children to try to deflect attention away from their negative behaviors. Children have many tools they can use to try to influence your behavior. Provoking parents emotionally is often their tool of choice.



Power Struggles

Avoiding power struggles

- Stay focused on the child's behavior, not the issue or situation that started the power struggle.
- Even if your child says something hurtful, don't get drawn into the content of what they say. You can always talk about this once that child has calmed down and accepted the consequence for their behavior.
- Avoid the "snowball effect." Give only 1 or 2 consequences. Don't keep piling them on.
- Praise any good behavior, even if they are approximations.
- Monitor your own behavior. If you start to respond over-emotionally, take a break.
- Remove the audience. Other children and outside distractions can seriously complicate an intensive interaction.
- Explain how the child can choose to resolve the situation.



Conclusion

Intensive Teaching may be one of the most difficult aspects of parenting, but with some practice, you will discover that it can be a great tool in helping to manage your children's behavior.

Next Class

In class #10, we'll discuss how we can help our children learn to evaluate and solve problems on their own. As they begin to understand that their actions have definite, and consistent, consequences, they will eventually learn to accept those consequences. And if they know that intensive outbursts will not deflect attention away from their primary behaviors, they will be less likely to go out of instructional control.



Thank you!

We hope this class was useful to you.

For more free parenting resources, including additional classes in this series, please visit:

www.youthvillage.org

