Awareness

PRESENTED BY
Connect Counseling

VOLUME ONE: EPISODE TWO

A research primer for parents

About Awareness. We publish Awareness because parents deserve to know what the research on children does and doesn't show (whether or not they ever need a counselor). Each episode gives one idea, what the research shows, what you can do, and how strong the evidence is. It is education, not treatment or diagnosis.

Attention is a reward

Children repeat what gets them noticed. A scolding is still attention (and on a busy day it may be the only attention you have to offer).

WHAT THE RESEARCH SHOWS

Picture a dark winter evening. Two parents come home with little time or energy left. A child acts out, and a tired parent snaps. Even a scolding is attention, so it can reward the very behavior it was meant to stop. So it happens again the next evening.

Behavior that pays off tends to repeat, and a parent's attention is a payoff children value. The same principle underlies mainstream parent training.

A review of 77 evaluations found larger gains when parent-training programs taught positive parent-child interaction, which usually includes regular child-led time together. A child who is given attention intentionally has less reason to act out for it.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Intentionally spend 15 to 30 minutes one-on-one with each child most days.
- Let your child choose the activity.
- Keep the time, even after a hard day.
- Notice the behavior you want and name it: "You waited your turn. Thank you."
- Keep your response to unwanted behavior brief, calm and predictable.

Evidence: Strong that attention reinforces behavior and that parent training helps. Daily time with each child is clinical practice that fits this research but has not been tested on its own.

References. Kaminski, J. W., Valle, L. A., Filene, J. H., & Boyle, C. L. (2008). A meta-analytic review of components associated with parent training program effectiveness. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 36*(4), 567–589. Patterson, G. R. (1982). *Coercive family process.* Castalia. Skinner, B. F. (1953). *Science and human behavior.* Macmillan.