



# Building Blocks

## for Parents

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### Ignoring

#### What:

Ignoring is a technique to reduce or get rid of behavior you don't want. When you ignore a child's behavior, you purposely pay no attention (in words or actions) to what he/she is doing. **NOTE:** You do NOT ignore the child, only the irritating behavior. He soon gets the message that even though you love him, you do NOT like and will NOT give him satisfaction for the unwanted behavior.

#### When or Why:

Use "Ignoring" for many MINOR negative behaviors, such as interrupting, quarreling, nagging, whining, commanding adults.

#### How:

1. Decide what minor behaviors you want decreased.
2. Decide whether you can tolerate this behavior without having to remove the child from the area; if you can, use "ignoring" as in 3, 4, 5, and 6 below.
3. Decide what behavior you DO want to see. Be sure both parents know what the child SHOULD do. For example, if Johnny has been noisy at the dinner table, you might decide that after Johnny sits quietly at the table, he will be able to go out and play.
4. Either tell the child what behavior you expect or let him/her know what you expect by telling someone else as he/she listens.
5. Continue what you are doing; do not look at or talk to the child.
6. When the child finally does what you told him/her, praise him/her for doing what you directed and let him/her continue as a part of the family.

#### Examples

Mother is talking with a neighbor. Five-year-old Cindy repeatedly interrupts the conversation by calling "Mom" again and again and pulling at her arm.

##### How Not To:

Mom: "I'm talking, Cindy."

Cindy: " Mom, Mom!" and pulls on Mom's arm.

Mom: "Be quiet!"

Cindy: Repeats, "Mom" in a louder voice.

Mom: "Stop pulling my arm" and pushes Cindy's arm away.

Cindy: Starts yelling at Mom in a loud voice, stamping her feet, pushing Mom away from neighbor, etc.

Mom: "What's the matter, Cindy?"

**How To:** Mom decides to ignore Cindy's interrupting behavior. She tells the neighbor that she wants Cindy to learn to wait and asks her not to look at or pay any attention to Cindy's interruptions.

— continued on reverse —

Spec: 26-82, 1 of 2; GA 9221-11-12/4-91



Conversation continues between Mom and neighbor. Cindy stops pulling at Mom's arm and stands quietly, looking confused. When there is a break in the conversation, Mom says "Good waiting, Cindy!" and attends to Cindy's problem.

**Follow-Up:**

1. Ignoring may be very difficult and at times it is necessary to physically remove yourself from your child's sight.
2. Remember - any attention to the child's minor negative behaviors will only strengthen and probably increase this unwanted behavior.

— *Home and Community Treatment Project*  
*Mendota Mental Health Institute*