

Check yourself!

Negative to Positive interaction ratio

Sticker charts, rewards, and positive reinforcement systems are commonly used to 'shape' children's behaviour into complying with adult expectations. While these can be effective in the short term, and create some behaviour change while the system is in place - there is little research to suggest these systems actually teach children to make reasoned judgements about their own behaviour in the long term.

What we do know, however, is that these systems increase the likelihood that an educator will have more positive interactions with a child than negative ones. The "magic ratio" (Gottman 1999) is said to be about 1:5 negative:positive interactions. It's a no brainer that a relationship with more positive interactions is going to create a more positive tone in the relationship and the learning environment. Knowing that we are supporting children's behavioural and social learning - how do you think a positive relationship will impact on the teaching and learning of behavioural expectations?

So, what would happen if we ditch the rewards charts and just focus on our interaction ratio? Firstly, let's think of a child who is currently challenging us with their behaviour. Tick off the types of interactions you are having with this child and estimate how many of those interactions you might have in an hour, a session, or a day.

Type of Statement	Example - Tick if these interactions are occurring	✓	Frequency (e.g. 4/hr)
Corrective	"Walking feet inside"		
Directive	"Put your hat on"		
Reprimand	No, Don't, Stop, etc		
Raised voice	Calling out in a loud tone, "Jayden - enough!!"		
Threat	"Play nicely on the slide or you will have to go inside"		
Thinking time	Child is sent to another space such as the office.		
Denying requests	Shake head or deny a child something they ask for		
Criticism	"Uh oh, that's not how we use that"		

Negative physical contact	Forcibly taking an object off a child, or blocking / holding them, etc.		
Negative gestures / facial expression	Pointing, frowning, snapping, clapping, etc.		
Rule reminder	"Jaxon, remember to keep your hands to yourself"		
Totals			

Time to do some math...

Considering the above guesstimates, approximately how many negative interactions are you having with the child in a day? -----

Now times that by 5 = ----- . This is the number of positive interactions required with the child to balance your interaction ratio to ensure a supportive and constructive relationship in which learning can occur.

Is that achievable? Awesome! Keep up that great work. OR Is it impossible, given your environment, ratios and workload? If that is the case - we need to keep working on it. Let's continue.

Obviously if your number of positive interactions required in a day is 268 (for example), you are going to struggle to get there. So - we need to work on reducing / neutralising the negative interactions at the same time as increasing the positives. Using the strategies on the Connection Seeking Plan, it's time to shake up your interaction ratio. Let's try that then observe your interactions using the scales on the following page.

This tool can be used flexibly to meet your needs and style. You could use it to simply mark a tally, or write comments / interactions in each stone, or colour / cross a stone when you have an interaction. We can't wait to hear how this transforms your interaction ratio. Join our Facebook Group - The Phoenix Cups® Community - to share your success and discuss more cup-filling strategies!

Date and Time:

Context and people involved:

Comments:

Positive : Negative interaction ratio

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