



**Parklands**  
CHRISTIAN COLLEGE  
*Foundations for life*

## Tips to use RTP @ home

### TIP # 1 ROLE MODELLING

Children copy behaviour they observe. Do you use encouraging words? How do you respond when you feel angry or excited? Do you hear yourself using ultimatums or excuses? Do you take responsibility for your choices regardless of the other person involved? Do you listen or interrupt conversations? Do you respond with negative words or action? Do you call out to your partner or children from another room? Spend this week noticing the way you interact with people in your life and consider whether your child is mimicking learnt behaviour – if necessary take some time to consider what different choices you will make in the future.

**Example:** Consider a family where a child hits their brother, the parent then takes the child's hand and smacks it explaining 'we don't hit people'. What does the child learn from this example?

**Alternative:** When a child hits their brother, the parent takes the child aside and asks 'what were you doing?' 'what are our family rules?' 'what happens if you are unsafe?' At this point there might be a consequence applied. This is a good opportunity for the parent to take a minute to think about what consequence to use and how they will explain the consequence to their child.

### TIP #2 LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES

A consequence is a non-emotive logical response as a result of an unwanted behaviour. By using the responsible thinking process one is able to remove any anger or insult from the situation and calmly apply the process to help the student to redirect the way they think in order to choose different consequences (positive or negative) in the future.

**Example:** "If you don't go to the RTC today I will take you to see a movie."

Reward or punishments are generally given as an emotional reaction to stimulate a certain behaviour. The way in which we word or explain why we reward or punish generally sound like a threat or bribe 'you will get a lolly' or 'I will ban you.' Students who are aware that their behaviour will result in a reward or punishment are often distracted by this and are therefore restricted from learning and making long term positive behaviour changes due to this preoccupation.

**Alternative:** When the parent picks the child up from school allow the child an opportunity to explain the choice they made that resulted in them going to the RTC and the plan that they made. Take some time to celebrate the great ideas that they have come up with. Next, take time to consider how you will word/explain the consequence of not going to the movies. You may say 'I am very happy that your goal tomorrow is to 'say kind words, today however I am going to help you remember your goal so we won't be going to the movies tonight'.

**Follow up:** On another unrelated day, when you hear positive feedback about your child's positive behaviour choices celebrate this milestone with by surprising them and going to the movies. Tell them 'I heard you used kind words today, I felt very proud and thought tonight would be a great night to celebrate the good choices you made.' This type of consequence is not a reward that the child has been bribed/threatened with as it is unexpected and unpredictable.

**Note:** Children who know they will be rewarded for 'not going to the RTC' are often distraught when they get a referral. It never comes as a surprise to us when a student who has been threatened with a reward or punishment doesn't meet the standard set, why? Because the child has spent the day using their brain power to focus on the reward rather than focusing on their goal which should be 'listening to the teacher, doing their work, being quiet etc.' Thus



when the child comes to RTC, usually in tears they are unable to engage in the responsible thinking process due to being distracted by the 'reward' or 'punishment'. This type of distraction can have an adverse impact on the child's academic engagement; consider, if they not concentrating on 'listening to the teacher' they are probably not concentrating on the new concepts the teacher is teaching them.

*By using the responsible thinking process we aim to focus the child's brain power on the behaviours we want them to learn. These behaviours then refocus the child academically and allow them to make positive choices about their own learning goals*

### TIP #3 WORDING

If you choose to have consequences at home the wording used to explain why the consequence is being applied is very important. The key is to focus the wording on the positive behaviour rather than the consequence. This is specifically important when referring to the responsible thinking process, students who are constantly encouraged to think of RTC as a negative environment are more likely to be fearful and shut down when they are referred. Fear equally results in the student being unable to focus on the new skills being taught. In short, fear may motivate a response, but seldom does it motivate long term positive change.

**Example:** "I am disappointed that you went to the RTC today, now you will have to sit in your room for the afternoon".

**Alternative:** "This afternoon you need to sit in your room because you chose to call out in class. I am pleased however that you did an excellent job in the RTC coming up with a plan for tomorrow, I look forward to hearing how you went."

### TIP #4 EMOTIONS

One of the goals of using the responsible thinking process is to remove the negative emotional response from the situation. This means that the teacher is able to calmly question the child, redirect their focus and if necessary refer the student to RTC. When the student returns to class they know that they are going back into a supportive and safe learning environment.

Interestingly, many parents find it difficult to equally separate their emotional response when they learn of their child's referral. Take some time to ponder whether you react emotionally or proactively have a plan to reinforce future positive behaviour choices. Many parents have shared with us that they feel responsible for their child's behaviour; this is not true. Yes children do copy behaviour and it is important as adults to use the responsible thinking process to constantly reflect on our own behaviour. However, at the end of the day each person is only responsible for themselves. Your child is on a journey of growth and maturity; our role in the RTC is to guide them on this journey for the 12 years that you entrust them into our care. Every student will learn these responsible thinking concepts at a different pace and point in their life – we ask that you celebrate the tiny steps forward (even if at first it is making great choices in class and therefore only going to the RTC once instead of twice a day) and remove as many distractions from your child's academic and emotional/social learning as possible.

### TIP #5 QUESTION, QUESTION, QUESTION

The key ingredients to a quality conversation are

1. Questioning and
2. Actively Listening – allowing your child to share their thoughts

Parent: how was your day?

Student: good

Parent: did you make good choices today?

Student: I called out in class and had to go to the RTC

Parent: what were you learning in class?

Student: ancient Egypt

Parent: how did calling out effect the class?

Student: the teacher had to stop the game we were playing



Parent: how did you feel about that?

Student: *bad, it was fun*

Parent: did you come up with a plan for next time?

Student: *yeah, I am going to try to remember to put my hand up. Mrs B suggested that I write the answers down in my note book plus I asked Johnny to sit next to me and remind me of my goal.*

Parent: what is your goal?

Student: *to put my hand up and wait for the teacher to talk to me*

Parent: that is an excellent goal.

The following afternoon

Parent: how did you go with your goal today?

Student: *good*

Parent: how did you feel?

Student: *the class got to play the game again and it was really fun.*

Parent: well done, I am sure it was not easy

Student: *no but Mrs B told me she was impressed.*

Parent: that's so good to hear, good job.

## TIP #6 RESPONSIBILITY

Taking responsibility doesn't come naturally for many people; this is true both for adults and children alike. We tend to want to focus the attention on other people's behaviour in an attempt to take the attention off of our own. In breaking from this mould the responsible thinking process specifically teaches children to focus on what they were responsible for during the incident.

This task is equally difficult and important for parents as well. When speaking with the student or even other adults about incidents that occur at school does your language reflect the principle of taking responsibility or do you notice yourself shifting the blame?

We understand that many incidents occur as a result of retaliation; when we work alongside a child we take the context of the incident into account. However, even a child who hit in retaliation is responsible for their own actions. Thus when speaking with a child we help them to focus their ownership and plan development on their own actions and behaviour choices for the future.

**Example:** Parent phones RTC "why is my child going to RTC for hitting when I saw Joe Blogs hitting someone before school and he didn't get sent". RTC response would include 1. We are unable to discuss other student's or their referrals; 2. RTC is about taking responsibility for one's self, thus we spoke to your child ONLY about their own choices and actions; specifically focusing on what they can do in the future if someone upsets them.

**ALTERNATIVE:** Parent received RTC email. Parent picks up their child after school and uses Tip #5 to discuss incident. Each morning parent reminds child of their goal and their own responsibility as a student at Parklands to "be safe and keep others safe."

As far as we are concerned, once a student has worked through their responsible thinking plan and negotiated their return to class with the referring teacher the plan is filed and the incident is considered 'over'. When students return their plans to the RTC we remind them that they now have a 'fresh start' to try the strategies that they have agreed to as part of their plans. We encourage students to talk to their parents about their referral and the plan that they created including the strategies that they agreed to implement.

If you choose to apply some or all of these tips I encourage you to set yourself at least a month to work towards your goal. Using these techniques may not come naturally or easily at first so please don't be too hard on yourself if you make a mistake. Keep trying, review these tips as often as you need and you are welcome to come in and speak with any of the RTP Facilitators if you would like further ideas or explanations.

Lastly, we would love to hear any examples of how you have implemented any of these tips at home.