

How to Deal with Children with Behavior Difficulties

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Be Positive

- Avoid negative. Tell your child what you want him to do.
- Praise positive behavior; be specific; be immediate.
- Acknowledge little steps.
- Keep child positively engaged.
- Give your child the opportunities to make choices you can live with.
- Don't ask questions you are unwilling to honor.
- Remove items, excessive toys, and distractions that will automatically lead to a battle or loss of attention to what you want to say.
- Repeat rules as reminders. Post pictures as reminders if needed.
- Choose your battles wisely.
- Don't forget to remind your child of something that he did which pleased you.
- The time to reason with your child is when he is calm, not in the middle of a tantrum.
- Time out is a break, not a punishment. It's a time to think about what he did wrong.
- After time Out: review ("No biting, pushing...").

Be Simple/Be Specific

- Keep instructions clear and in simple sentences. Don't ramble.
- Break a large task into smaller steps and don't use broad descriptors.
- Review what is expected before the task.
- Add gestures to directions.
- Don't ask when you have already decided the answer. If you ask, be prepared to accept the answer. ("Do you want to ____?" implies there is a choice.)

- Be specific with your praise so he'll know EXACTLY what it was that pleased you.
- Be short and specific with your criticism. (No biting!)
- When your child is calm, discuss (in simple terms) what the consequences of his actions are.

Be Concrete

- Make sure you have your child's full attention before giving instructions.
- Speak slowly.
- Describe exactly what you would like to see, not "just good."
- Work on one or two behaviors at a time. Choose "do-able" behaviors.
- Modify difficult situations.
- Break difficult activities into small steps and reinforce these little steps.
- Prepare your child for the day ahead- pictures help.
- Review your day at the end of it.
- Use visual aids to assist comprehension.
- Use a firm voice and a stern expression to enhance understanding of your intent.
- Provide warning of the next consequence (but not a threat).
- Use a timer.

Be Consistent

- Provide a regular routine that your child can count on.
- Provide regular special times with your child that is hassle-free.
- Give short explicit directions twice if needed. After 2 times, the child should be expected to comply. Consistent but calm consequences should follow immediately if he disobeys. You may want to assist him comply (errorless instruction).
- Help the child finish one thought or activity before starting another.
- When your child is able to do something it should be expected that he will do so.

Be a Model

- Encourage and MODEL politeness.
- Encourage, MODEL, and teach appropriate ways to express anger.
- Encourage, MODEL, and teach appropriate ways to “Calm Down”.
- Encourage, MODEL, and teach appropriate ways to “Stay Cool”
- Encourage, MODEL, and teach how you want toys put away.
- Rehearse social skills. Provide successful opportunities to practice them.
- Allow enough time for activities so you and your child won't be overstressed.
- Encourage and MODEL ways to express feelings.
- Encourage, MODEL, and teach ways to find solutions to problems and alternative ways to behave.
- Encourage and MODEL ways to “burn off” excess energy,
- Encourage and MODEL loving behavior, smiles, and hugs!!

Additional Points to Remember

- Don't say “Good boy/girl” if you had to help your child follow through with a behavior. Merely say “Thank you.”
- Take 15 minutes a day and just enjoy your child, following their lead/interest. This will help you slowly help you change your pattern of interaction with you child: from all negative (“Don't. No. Stop.”) to positive interaction!