



'I don't mean to upset you, but sometimes I do. Please help me'.

Dealing with challenging moments!

Staying positive! (positive behaviour management).

Children have an inborn desire to please the people they love and care for and seek approval from them.

If you tell children when they are doing well and offer them praise for what they have done they will become self-confident and happy children.

If you give them lots of attention and praise when they do 'something well', they will be more keen to repeat these actions than focus on 'challenging' actions, which test your patience! So.....

'I like the way you gave your brother some fruit'

'You came to the table when I asked you first time. That made me really happy'.

Try to label 'what they did' rather than just 'good boy', 'good girl', etc.



Let children know they are getting it right by using:

- positive and warm body language
- a calm tone of voice
- gentle physical touch
- praise and compliments
- encouragement
- one to one attention
- treats, rewards and privileges.



Dealing with 'challenging' behaviour!

Pre-planning

Think up front. What might upset 'the apple cart' today? If there is a change to their routine they may feel insecure and then misbehave. So act before it happens, explain to them exactly what is happening before any change in routine.

Distraction

If you can see them 'about to lose' it, distract them with something else before they have a chance to!

Soft 'No' and stay calm

Don't get into an argument, speak with a quieter voice and stay calm. Try to stay relaxed and be aware of your body language. Give parallel eye contact at the child's level, be direct and be clear - 'I said "no" and "I meant it.'

Choices

Give a clear choice, "You can eat your lunch now and have time to go in the garden or you will miss the garden. What do you want to do?"

1, 2, 3, magic

When asking your child to do something say: 'I will count to three and then...'
Give an offer of a positive reward or alternatively a boundary. This works best when it is a consistent between carers.

Time out

This should only be used for the most challenging of behaviour. It is based on the idea that all children seek approval and have a need for attention from the adults around them.

You need to remove the child from whatever they are doing and insisting he/she sits or stands in a safe place for a period of time. You should ignore the child and offer no eye-contact or conversation. This is an opportunity for the child to calm down - to think and reflect on his/her behaviour.

The length of time out should match the age of the child, for example, for a three-year-old child use three minutes. An egg-timer can be helpful in this situation.

It is vital to remember to give the child an 'invitation to return' and ask him/her why he/she had time out, and then to get a firm commitment from the child to modify their earlier behaviour.

Four-part challenge

- Describe the offending behaviour: 'When you do...'
- State your feelings: 'I feel...'
- State the effect: 'When you do that it...'
- Ask for input: 'What can we do about it? 'How can you help...?'

Prioritise

Don't pick every situation as a 'battle'. May be best to ignore some negative behaviour and focus more on the positive.

Negotiation and compromise

From about the age of three, children become much more able to negotiate and compromise and will be less likely to resort to tantrums or stubborn refusal if they are given some chance to gain 'power' through negotiation. Through this process, the adult is also building valuable skills of 'either/or' thinking.

Modelling behaviour

Children learn from what they see! So be aware of how you react to situations.



Meeting emotional needs

Human relationships are built on meeting the emotional needs that we all have for attention, acceptance, approval, comfort, security, encouragement, support, respect and affection. When our primary needs are met we feel happy and secure. When they are not met we can feel anxious, insecure and unhappy.

Have we missed a 'need' they may have, for example, do they need an earlier bedtime, are they getting enough sleep? Do they need help with toileting still?



Structure and routines

Children need to have a few simple 'rules' 'boundaries' and a routine.

These encourage 'good' behaviour to become a matter of everyday life and just 'what we do'.

Young children find routines safe and reassuring and are more likely to behave appropriately within structures they feel comfortable with.

Just 3 or 4 simple rules at home will be fine at this age. For example we eat our breakfast before we play with our toys etc.

As adults we have to make it quite clear to children that we care enough about them to act and do something to stop their inappropriate behaviour. This makes them feel safe and secure within set boundaries.



Fighting and conflict

Children gradually learn to 'self regulate'.

They learn that they can't have the toy another child has right now or that they are ok to wait five minutes for a snack even though they are hungry now.

When you spot them 'self regulating' offer immediate praise. Well done for waiting your turn etc.

To help them get to this stage offer a non-judgemental commentary, along the lines of: 'You really wanted the toy, and when you grabbed it, Izzie hit you, and now you are so mad you want to hit her back! I can't let you hit Izzie, but I can help you talk to her about what you'd like.'

As children learn to tolerate some frustration and anxiety, they will be less reactionary, and impulsive. Be ready to step in and model for children how to wait for a turn: 'Let's wait here by the table; until they're finished, then we can have a go.' The key is to be a child's ally in these situations, rather the rule maker who says: 'Stand there and wait your turn!'

How can we help?

Recognise how children are using their body - if they are kicking out and throwing things around, be positive give them a football or some bean bags etc. to throw.

Can they sort it themselves?

As long as children are not hurting each other, it can be useful to wait before stepping in - to see if they come up with their own solutions, however small. Praise them if they manage this.

How to share?

Young children are not always ready to share, you could try to encourage this by:

- encouraging turn taking, but rather than saying, 'Good boy or good girl', say 'I like how you're taking turns, well done!'
- Help children to join in and develop friendship skills, 'Could you deliver this "letter" to Mina in the house?' or, 'I think they need some more blocks for the train they're building... here are some.'



Tantrums

A child's screams and hitting can be alarming, but tantrums can be common in many young children under the age of five. Remind yourself this is normal development and stay calm!

If a tantrum occurs:

- Make sure child is safe and keep other children 'out of the line of fire'.
- It may help to avoid eye contact.
- Reassure yourself that this is normal and the child needs to express some strong feelings.
- Do not try to reason with or have a conversation with a child in the throes of a tantrum.
- You may, depending on the child, be able to hold him, rock him or reassure him to help him calm down.
- If appropriate talk to the child when calm about 'why' and 'how' they could avoid this in future.

