**BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES**

**One Step at a Time**

If you read through this entire book all at once, you may feel daunted at the task of doing everything described. The simple fact is, you can’t do it all, so don’t stress yourself about it. Research suggests that it takes three weeks to create a new habit. When dealing with a child’s behaviour, try the following steps.

1. Decide which, of all this child’s behaviours, is bothering you the most, or is most detrimental to his well-being.
2. Look through the book and find one or two methods for dealing with this behaviour.
3. Over the next three weeks, use the method(s) whenever the behaviour arises.
4. When that particular behaviour is under control, mark it on your calendar, noting what methods were effective so you continue to make them part of your day to day parenting.
5. Now choose a new behaviour to deal with.

**Contents**

[Normal Behaviour That May Be Annoying 3](#_Toc448921956)

[Managing Children with FASD 7](#_Toc448921957)

[Nine Keys to Developing Successful Interventions for Kids with FAS 7](#_Toc448921958)

[Strategies for Managing FASD 8](#_Toc448921959)

[Parenting Strategies 11](#_Toc448921960)

[Kids Have Stress Too! 15](#_Toc448921961)

[Ideas, Tips & Strategies for Parents of Preschoolers 15](#_Toc448921962)

[Quick Reference Behaviour Management 24](#_Toc448921963)

[1. Re-Building Self-Care and Self-Esteem 24](#_Toc448921964)

[2. Differences Between Consequences & Punishment 25](#_Toc448921965)

[3. Basic Principles of Consequences 26](#_Toc448921966)

[4. “Go ahead! Hit me!” 26](#_Toc448921967)

[5. How We Feel & Our Responses 27](#_Toc448921968)

[6. The Goals of Emotional Behaviour in Teens 27](#_Toc448921969)

[7. The Goals of Misbehaviour 28](#_Toc448921970)

[8. Parental Responses to Children’s goals 30](#_Toc448921971)

[9. Family Atmosphere 32](#_Toc448921972)

[10. Bringing in a New Child 33](#_Toc448921973)

[11. House Rules 34](#_Toc448921974)

[12. Discipline with the New Child 35](#_Toc448921975)

[13. When the Child Shows Big Feelings 36](#_Toc448921976)

[16. Boundaries, Limit Setting, & Consequences 37](#_Toc448921977)

[17. Day to Day Discipline 37](#_Toc448921978)

[18. When the Child Responds with Anger 38](#_Toc448921979)

[19. Parents’ Anger and Response 38](#_Toc448921980)

[20. Restricting the Child Can Create Security. 39](#_Toc448921981)

[21. Genuine & Consistent Effective Behaviour Management 39](#_Toc448921982)

[22. Interventions: Verbal Interactions to Share Information 40](#_Toc448921983)

[Treats And Rewards Without Food 42](#_Toc448921984)

# Normal Behaviour That May Be Annoying

“Is this normal, or should I be worried?” Parents ask this question in every changing stage of a child’s life. Just what is ‘normal’?

**18 Months**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| * Is negative, says ‘No’ Often * Does the opposite of what is requested * Does not want to share; everything is ‘my or ‘mine’ * Often hits, kicks and bites * Lacks patience, wants it now * Tests limits (can be quite exhausting to the caregiver) * May climb out of crib * Refuses to eat certain foods * Regresses to baby food or battle * Clings anxiously or walks away from parent | * Hates to see doors closed * Is afraid of strangers, including grandparents * Notices and overreacts to small differences * Resists diaper change * Sucks thumb, requires ‘blankie’ * Fears tubs and baths * Explores genitalia * Does not play with other children; plays alongside, or alone * Does not sit very long for cuddling; stiffens and slides off lap |

**2 Year Olds**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| * Has difficulty making decisions; changes her mind even when you know she wants what’s offered * Throws temper tantrums, which can be violent * Demands that things remain the same * May favour one parent over the other * Is bossy and demanding | * May start to stutter * Thumb sucking may intensify * Dawdles * Shifts from being capable “Me do it’ to incapable ‘Mommy do it’ quickly * Is easily frustrated * Does not like to be physically restricted * Is not interested in pleasing you |

**3 Year Olds**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| * Hands may tremble * Is confused about which hand to use * Stutters * May complain about problems with vision * Seems like nothing pleases him * Makes commands like ‘Don’t look at me’ or ‘Don’t talk’ * Is emotionally inconsistent; one minute shy, and the next minute bold. * Indulges in nail biting, thumb sucking, picking his nose and rubbing his genitals * Expresses fear * May be cooperative with a baby sitter and a monster with his parent * May quit napping may still wet the bed | http://www.freeprintablebehaviorcharts.com/images/tantrum2.jpg |

**4 Year Olds**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | * Talks too much * Incessantly asks ‘Why?’ * Is fascinated with bowel movements * Uses words related to elimination, like ‘poopoo head’ * Swears and cusses * Her demands can be annoyingly persistent * Excludes other children from her plan * Wants to know exact details on difficult subjects |

**5 Year Olds**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| * Tend to be brash, combative, indecisive, over-demanding and explosive * Becomes more challenging in his rebelling. “Try and make me!” is a typical stance * Once an emotional outburst has started, he may have a hard time stopping it * Has difficulty grasping a pencil and may change grasps frequently * Talks too much * Talks with his mouth full | * Has difficulty admitting he has done anything wrong * May take things that don’t belong to him * He can dress himself, but frequently refuses or says, ‘I can’t’ * May still suck thumb, pick nose, bite nails * May clear throat frequently and make clicking or smacking noises * May be fascinated by fire; may want to start fires |

**6 Year Olds**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| * Is extremely ambivalent; can’t make up her mind * Reverses numbers or letters * Wants to be the first, the best, the winner * Failure is unbearable * Has difficulty accepting criticism * Is loud and demanding * Acts ‘fresh’ * Is very sensitive emotionally * Doesn’t always tell the truth | * Frequently steals * Has bad table manners * May have an occasional toileting accident * May refuse to bathe * Battles over dressing * Doesn’t take care of clothes * Scalp is very tender and sensitive * Makes irritating, throaty noises * Is clumsy * Complains of aches and pains |

**7 Year Olds**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| * May be afraid that others don’t like him * Worries * Minor illnesses may be magnified to fatality status * Accuses parents of liking other siblings more | * Is easily disappointed * Has a tendency to do one thing too long * Is anxious to be perfect * Complains about how others treat her * Has many fears * Is easily distracted at meal time |

**8 Year Olds**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| * Does everything fast * Feels extremely sensitive to perceived criticism from others * Experiences self-doubt * Hard on himself for making mistakes * Exaggerates his problems and dilemmas * Wants a lot of communication with his primary caregiver * Frequently asks ‘What?’ | * Highly aware of others’ mistakes and points them out * Is not a good self-started * Loves to argue * Wants to wear what other kids are wearing * Is accident prone * May refuse to take baths * Has strong interest in possessions; may hoard or gloat over them |

**9 Year Olds**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| * May now seem to resent her parent’s presence * Wants more freedom * Wants much social activity * Has mood swings * Worries and complains | * Is so busy with her own activity that she seems unaware of others * Wants fairness * Bathing can still be a problem * Lays much blame and emphasis on who started what |

**10 Year Olds**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| * Anger is often violent * Plots revenge * Has difficulty taking a joke on himself * Ask person questions * May express concerns if he isn’t developing physically like others * A girl will hunch her shoulders if she’s uncomfortable about breast development |  |

**11 Year Olds**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| * Makes no effort to cooperate * Is quick to criticize * Expects perfection from others * Challenges rules and restrictions * Loves to argue * Is physically violent; may hit, kick, slam doors * Yells, swears, talks back, says mean and sarcastic things * Has intense need to be right or to know it all | * Makes references to his parents’ ‘old age’ * Needs sleep * Has difficulty with sibling who is close in age * Wants music or television on while doing homework * Is always on the phone * May cheat * May steal with peers * Has mood swings * Likes to gossip |

**12 Year Olds**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | * Doing things on weekends with friends is crucial. If he can’t he may become sullen and depressed * Expresses boredom if friends are unavailable * May not want you to purchase clothes for him anymore * May walk ahead of you or behind you * May not want to be touched in public |

**13 Year Olds**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| * Is uncommunicative * Withdraws to room frequently * Demands more privacy and accuses parent of prying * Is uncertain about himself and life in general * May be unfriendly and unhappy * Worries about body features * Does not want to be understood | * Has fewer friends * Speaks in a low voice * Shrugs his shoulders * Feels teachers are unjust * May be found crying in his room * Worries about everything * Expression of affection don’t come easily * Doesn’t often confide in parents * Is embarrassed by parents |

**14 Year Olds 15 Year Olds**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| * In public, he wants to be as far away from parents as possible * Picks at the way parents dress or look * Revolts at parent’s old fashioned ways * Picks apart social systems: school, church, law enforcement, etc * May challenge cherished family values | * Wants to be totally independent and free * Angry at parents who don’t see her as ready for independence * Age where the family is most unsatisfactory * Age where friends mean the most * Has difficulty getting along with the same sex parent * Does things which cause parent great anxiety * May withdraw all emotional contact with parent |

**16 – 18 Year Olds**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| * Teens experience anxiety about wanting to leave home and doubting their ability to make it * Feel anxious about what they’re going to choose for a career * May make life unbearable for a parent |  |

# Managing Children with FASD

🟋 FASD is permanent damage to the brain caused

by a mother drinking alcohol during her pregnancy.

🟋 Parents of children with FASD must act as an external brain for the child.

🟋 90% of the work with FASD children is PREVENTION.

🟋 10% of the work is about teaching skills.

## Nine Keys to Developing Successful Interventions for Kids with FAS

While there is no recommended ‘cookbook approach’ to working with children and youth with FAS, there are strategies that work, based on the following guidelines.

**CONCRETE** Talk in concrete terms. Don’t use words with double meanings, idioms, etc. Because their social-emotional understanding is far below their chronological age, it helps to **‘think younger’** when providing assistance or giving instructions. They are also visual learners and require the opportunity for **‘hands on’** experiences to drive the learning home.

**CONSISTENCY** Because of difficulty with FAS experience and trying to generalize learning from situation to another, children with FAS do best in an environment with few changes. This includes language. Foster parents can coordinate with other caregivers – teachers, respite providers, etc. so each use the same words and key phrase for oral direction.

**CONTEXT** Teach skills in the context in which the skills are to be used, rather than assuming the child will generalize from one context to another. The child may not be able to understand in **which situation the behaviour is appropriate and when it is not**.

**REPETITION** Kids with FAS have **chronic short-term memory problems.** They forget things they want to remember. They forget information that has been learned and retained for a period of time. For something to make to long term memory, **it will need to be re-taught and re-taught**. **Simple picture-graphs** showing the steps of a task can be helpful for the child. Be aware that this need for repetition will never stop. Teaching basic social skills, daily living skills and self-organization skills will be ongoing and life-long.

**ROUTINE** Stable routines that don’t change from day to day will make it easier for kids with FAS to know what to expect next. This will decrease their anxiety and help enable them to learn.

**SIMPLICITY** Keep It Short and Sweet (KISS Method). These children are **easily over-stimulated**, leading to ‘shutdown’, at which point no more information can be assimilated. A simple environment is a foundation. **When shutdown occurs, stop.**

**SPECIFIC** Say exactly what you mean. These children have difficulty with abstractions, generalization, and **not being able to ‘fill in the blanks’** when given a direction. Tell them step by step what you expect

them to do. This will help develop appropriate behaviour patterns. Break down tasks into small steps and **teach each step through repetition**. Do not vary the steps at different times. Be consistent.

**STRUCTURE** Structure is the glue that makes the world make sense for a child with FAS. IF this glue is taken away, the walls fall down. These children achieve and are successful because their **world provides the appropriate structure as a permanent foundation**. Create structure that includes choices within clear and predictable routines.

**SUPERVISION** Because of their cognitive challenges, these children bring a naiveté to daily life situations. They may sound and appear mature according to their age, but their understanding and ability to think critically will remain at a much younger level. They require constant supervision, as with a much younger child, to develop habit patterns of appropriate behaviour.

When a situation with a child with FAS is confusing and the intervention isn’t working:

**Stop Action!**

**🟋 Observe**

**🟋 Listen carefully to find out where s/he is stuck**

**🟋 Ask: What is hard? What would help?**

## Strategies for Managing FASD

ATTENTION DIFFICULTIES

* Use concrete reinforcements or reminders (i.e. hand signals) to help the child in the moment when a problematic behaviour occurs
* Predict outcomes from awareness of FAS to prevent problems
* Arrange environments with opportunities for calm and quiet (i.e. child is able to retreat to another room to get away from distractions)
* Establish signals to indicate frustration

TEACHING SOCIAL SKILLS

* Teach social skills by modeling behaviour
* Practice and rehearse the behaviour in safe, quiet environments
* Set limits and consistently follow them. Do not debate or argue over rules
* Establish what the child does well, and is confident in. Encourage ‘strength based’ activities.
* Help the child to feel useful
* Reinforce important social skill behaviours:
  + How to negotiate for what you want
  + How to show someone that you like them
  + How to get someone’s attention in a positive way
  + How to handle frustration/disappointment
  + How to ignore someone who is bothering you
  + Practice decision making by exploring what the potential outcomes might be

HELPING DEVELOP MEMORY SKILLS

* Provide one instruction at a time
* Play memory games
* When it appears the child has developed a rote learning skill, aim for ‘over learning’
* Always use concrete learning opportunities (hands on, rather than lectures)
* Practice information retrieval – recognition questions rather than open ended ones:
  + Use language that is familiar to the child
  + Use cuing or prompting to help the child recall details
  + Actively teach strategies for remembering (calendar, sticky notes, etc.)

TEACHING PERSONAL SKILLS

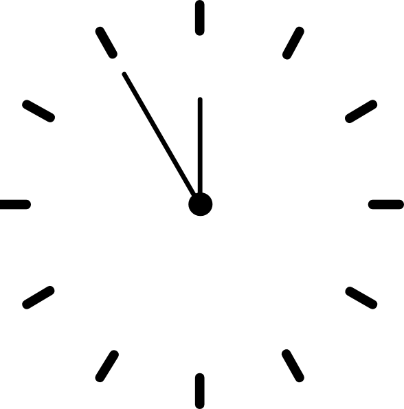
* Use lists and photos or images to help the child get organized
* Have a consistent and predictable schedule of activities (posted)
* Prepare the child in advance for any and all changes
* Have consistent routines
* Have a few simple rules that are very concrete (i.e. You hit, you sit)
* Have consistent and immediate consequences for breaking rules
* Plan for transitions
* Reduce the stress level by limiting choices
* Watch for irritability and fatigue (FAS kids tire quickly and get very tired)
* Supervise
* Set reasonable expectations

HELPING WITH LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

* Do not use figures of speech, euphemisms or sarcasm. Be concrete in communicating
* Avoid ‘why’ questions
* Practice skill building and communicating by teaching in the environment in which the child is expected to perform
* Use more than one way to communicate
* Use concrete and visual cues for language development

HANDLING TIME

Children with FAS have great difficulty telling time and understanding how much time has passed. Dealing with time involves abstract concepts, something that is very difficult for someone with FAS. A twelve-year-old child with FAS may still be unable to tell time on an analogue watch.

* Make time visual with paper chains, time-lines, or other concrete objects that will represent periods of time. For example, one link = 5 minutes. Take one link away every 5 minutes so the child can ‘see’ time pass. Hour glass times and egg timers also work well.
* Teach time using an analog watch or clock face with hands the child can manipulate. Digital watches seem to work only if the child is looking at the watch when the specific time rolls around.
* Even when a child has started to master telling time, they may still have difficulty understanding that 9:45 is the same as a quarter to ten, or that 10:30 and 10:40 are roughly the same time. The child may also have a poor sense of time. The idea of *when* time occurs has no meaning. “Dinner is a 5 o’clock” means nothing. However, “Dinner comes after Dad gets home” may be easier for the child to comprehend. Always relate events to other events to create a sense of the day and the usual order of things. The words ‘after’ and ‘before’ are helpful when referring to time.
* FAS children who are in an established routine will follow that routine regardless of the time. The fact that dinner may be delayed due to a late lunch is complicated information for the child to process.
* Do not have high expectations about handling time. It may not be reasonable to expect a child to be able to complete a certain amount of work in a specific amount of time. It is also best to send a child from point A to B with an escort if you need them there at a specific time. Give the child lots of time to get ready for an event and supervise closely.
* The responsibility for making sure FAS children and teens are where they are supposed to be at the expected time rests with the adult. Even some adults with FAS may require help in this area, although many find this skill improves with age.

TEACHING OWNERSHIP

Ownership and personal belongings are abstract concepts that are difficult for many children with FAS to understand. A child with FAS will often pick up something that catches their eye and then drop it whenever they lose interest. The child may take something they recognize as having been left by someone else with the good intention of returning it. Unfortunately, short term memory dysfunction, distractions and other problems may cause them to forget, leaving them open to charges of stealing. Work on teaching the child to ask before they touch anything that is not theirs.

* Teach the child what belongs to them by placing a colour code or an initial on all their possessions. The child then knows what to take (items with a purple ‘J’) and what not to take (everything without a purple ‘J’).
* Connect ownership to visual cues. The child may understand that a specific person owns a specific item as long as the person and object are together, but not if the two are apart.
* If the child takes something that is not theirs, do not get caught up in an argument. Simply state, “This belongs to ….” And return the object. Stealing should be dealt with firmly with appropriate consequences.
* Objects of value should not be left where a child with FAS may come across them.
* Keep in mind that malls are neither recreation centers nor suitable places to ‘hang out’. Don’t allow unsupervised trips to stores. You cannot expect store managers to understand FAS.

HANDLING MONEY

Money and the value associated with it are also abstract concepts. Not surprisingly, FAS affected children do not typically handle money well. The ability to handle money has a significant impact on the potential for independent living.

Children with FAS do not associate value to items and have difficulties making judgments about the sum of money asked for an item. For example, $10 for a candy bar or for a bicycle may both appear acceptable to a child with FAS.

* FAS children are at risk for being victimized by others. They should have very limited access to money unless it is with direct supervision. Money should be given in small amounts. Pay for school lunches ahead of time. Be at the store with the child when expensive items are being purchases. Use an account book to record every cent the child spends with the child present and helping document the spending.
* Monitor the child’s money. Where did it come from? The child may have sold a personal or household item just because someone asked them for it.
* Teach the child about money whenever you go to the store or in other real-life situations.
* Be very cautious about the use of cheques, credit cards or banking machines. Set up a bank account where cheques are not allowed and withdrawal amounts are limited. Many parents suggest that bankcards and cheques should not be used because they are open to misuse by the child and by others.

THE TELEPHONE

Telephone manners and taking messages pose problems for children with FAS because these skills require memory work as well as understanding abstract concepts and appropriate social skills. Teach by role-play.

* Have a large erasable message board next to the telephone.
* Have voice mail, or call display so messages don’t get lost and numbers aren’t mixed up.

## Parenting Strategies

**CALMING YOUR CHILD**

* Provide a cozy, calm place for the child to retreat when upset or anxious. Try a beanbag chair, big cushions, or a rocking chair. Be sure the child knows this is not a punishment. Stay with the child. If children have a calm place to help them relax when they are babies, they will learn to go there themselves when they are older and need to calm down.
* Give the child a warm bath if she is not overly sensitive to temperature.
* Let her listen to calming music through headphones.
* Stop and talk to her in a calm voice. Let her know that everything is fine. Tell her what will happen next.
* The child may not know how to stop his tantrum once it’s started. Say things like “Open your eyes” and “Close your mouth” to help them stop.

**DISCIPLINE & RULES**

* Have a few rules that are easy to understand: “If you hit, you sit”. They should apply in all situations.
* Teach them over and over. And over and over. And over and…
* Decide what is most important to be strict about, and ignore the rest. Priorities: Does it hurt or bother others? Does it hurt the child?
* Teach about consequences by acting out what could happen if the child acted in different ways. Role play what would happen if…
* Use the “When… then …” rule. “When you eat one bite of vegetables, then you may leave the table.” Always use the same language cues.

**ORGANIZATION**

* Store the child’s comb, toothbrush, soap, etc. in colour-coded plastic buckets, always in the same place.
* Store clothes and toys together by type (tops, bottoms, cars, balls, etc.) and labeled with pictures
* Use pictures to label drawers, shelves and hooks
* Jackets, boots and shoes should always be put in the same place, which is marked by the child’s name and picture
* Make different areas clear by using masking tape to mark your child’s part of a shared bedroom, or a placemat with a lot of toys and furniture. Keep furniture in the same place.
* All toys must be put away before new ones are allowed out.

**MAKE DRESSING EASIER**

* For children who have difficulty choosing their own clothing, put entire outfits on one hanger and teach the child to put the clothing on in order.
* Use Velcro or elastic coil laces if the child can’t tie their shoes
* Teach children to do up buttons from the bottom to the top to help them see if they match.
* Have extra mitts, hats, shoes, etc. in case they are lost. (Buy inexpensive ones to reduce stress.)

**CHANGING ACTIVITIES**

* Children with FAS live in the moment, so they need help changing from one activity to another, i.e. from playtime to dinnertime, from dinnertime to bath time. Let your child know ahead of time that you are going to change to another activity. “In 15 minutes it will be time for pyjamas.” “In 10 minutes it will be time for pyjamas.” “In 5 minutes… “(See ‘Handling Time’ for ways to help your child understand 15 minutes.)
* Try ringing a soft bell, setting a timer, or singing to let your child know the he has to stop what he is doing in a few minutes.

**PRACTICE SOCIAL SKILLS**

* This is what you say when you want something. “Please may I ….” Have the child practice. Make a silly game of it. “Please may I have a thousand apples?”
* This is how you show someone you like them. “Do you want to play?”
* This is how you get someone’s attention in a positive way. “Excuse me… “
* This is how to handle frustration or a disappointment: Take a quiet-time out, count to 10.
* This is how you ignore someone who is bothering you: Go talk with an adult. Don’t fight with them, but find something else to do.
* This is what to do when someone hurts your feelings: Tell someone how you feel. Count to 10.
* This is how you say no. “No, thank you.”
* Model the behaviour. “Dakota, may I please have that book?”
* Ask Dakota to practice. “What will you say when you want a drink?”
* Praise Dakota whenever she carries out the behaviour outside of practice. “Great job, Sweetie. You said please!”

**PREVENTING TANTRUMS BEYOND INFANCY**

* Avoid things your child is overly sensitive to.
* Offer quiet alternatives such as reading to them.
* Get your child involved in many one-on-one activities.
* Keep after dinner time a quiet-activity time.
* When concentrating, give your child plenty of breaks and allow him to move around.
* Alternate quiet activities with active ones, but assist the child in making the transition between the two.
* Physical activities should be controlled. Put a mattress or pillow on the floor for tumbling. Tape a circle on the floor to run around. Play music for dancing.
* If your child needs medication, give it to him regularly as directed by the doctor, rather than when they misbehave.
* Shop in the morning if your child become over-active in the afternoon.
* Have only a few guests over at a time, especially when the child is getting ready for bed.
* If anger is a problem, let her express it in a safe way, such as kicking a ball.
* Avoid video games and television.
* If your child has to be still for a long time, as in a car ride, give him a small toy to keep his hands busy.
* Reward good behaviour immediately. ‘Catch’ your child being good, then tell him what you liked about his behaviour. “I was watching you play with your friend and you were very calm.”
* Tell your child exactly what you want him to do. Don’t tell him what not to do without giving him the alternative. “Put the food in your mouth, not in your hair.”
* Use a timer: “When the beep sounds you must put your toys away.”
* Always model good behaviour. Don’t yell throw things, or otherwise lose control.
* Help your child meet other children who are good role models.
* Limit the number of choices to two: “Do you want to wear this shirt or that one?”
* Sometimes you can distract the child from bad behaviour by getting him interested in something else.
* Post the rules using pictures and remind your child to look at the rules. Teach them over and over again.
* Keep a diary of your child’s misbehaviours, the time of day, and what’s going on at the time. Is he tired and hungry around 3:00 when he tantrums? If you give him a snack and quiet time at 2:00, he may behave better.
* When your child misbehaves, try to understand why. Is he hungry, tired, cold, overwhelmed by noise, bright lights, etc.? Your child is trying to tell you something.

Learn your child’s warning signs of misbehaviour and stop it before it is out of control. Makes notes as you figure out the signs and what triggers them. On a busy day, it’s easy to react, rather than act. Having notes to go back to can help keep you, the parent, consistent.

**ROUTINES**

Children with FAS need structure to feel comfortable. When routines are used the child knows what to expect and will be happier and more willing to cooperate.

Break routines into small steps for things like dressing, eating, shopping, playtime and bedtime.

* Take pictures of the child doing each step. Post the pictures where she needs help remembering what to do (bathroom mirror, closet door). Real photos of the child are better than pictures cut from a magazine.
* Rewrite the words to a popular song such as *Row Row Row Your Boat* as a way to remember steps. “Hang Hang Hang Your Coat in the hall closet…”
* Model the actions and do them with your child as long as needed.
* Supervise and praise your child when she does each step.
* Go back to modeling if the child begins to go off track.

**MORNING ROUTINE SAMPLE**

1. The night before, an hour before bedtime:

* Lay out clothes for tomorrow (2 choices, pick one)
* Make lunch. Label it with the child’s name and put it in the fridge.
* Put homework in back pack.
* Hang back pack in its special place.

2. For children who like to count, a number can be taped to each step.

#1 where the clothes are folded on the dresser.

#2 on the bathroom mirror with a picture brushing teeth, hair, etc.

#3 where he sits to eat breakfast

#4 on the fridge where his lunch has been placed

#5 by the hook where his back pack waits

#6 on the closet where his coat hangs

#7 on the boot rack where his shoes wait

3. Waking up.

* Open drapes, turn on lamp to slowly wake her.
* Jessie, 5 minutes to getting up. (Transition warning)
* (5 minutes later) Time to get up now.
  + Rub a shoulder or pull back the covers gently to ease transition
* Your child may like you to sit beside her and give a little back rub. She may want to get out of bed herself. She may want a moment to talk about the coming day. Know her preference and make that part of your regular routine. Don’t deviate.
* Always tell her what’s coming next, even if you’ve repeated this 100 times.

***FAS is about routine, repetition, and no surprises.***

# Kids Have Stress Too!

## Ideas, Tips & Strategies for Parents of Preschoolers

**WHAT IS STRESS?**

Stress is a normal, everyday occurrence. It’s our body’s response to feeling afraid, overworked, overstimulated, threatened or excited. We tend to think of stress as a bad thing, but a certain amount of it actually helps us feel alert, energized and interested in life. However, too much stress, particularly when we don’t have any control over it, can make people unhappy and can interfere with their ability to respond to everyday tasks and challenges. Stress can also lead to health problems.



Even very young children experience stress, and it’s important for adults to recognize and help preschoolers deal with it. High levels of unrelieved stress can lead to behaviour problems and can interfere with a child’s ability to function normally. When we help children deal with stress, they begin to build coping skills they will need throughout life.

Preschool stress comes in two main forms: everyday stress and long-term or chronic stress.

**EVERYDAY STRESS**

Children can experience stress at home, in child care settings, or even in play with others. In the course of an average day, preschool children experience stress when they have to wait, when they want something they can’t have, or when they lose or break one of their toys.

Other common sources of preschool stress include:

A high level of unrelieved stress can lead to behaviour problems. It can interfere with a child’s ability to learn and to get along well with others, and can cause illness due to a weakened immune system.

• early or rushed mornings, being hurried

• exposure to new situations

• too many expectations or demands

• separation from parents

• difficulties with peer friendships

• fights or disagreements with siblings

• transitioning from one activity or place to another

• new beginnings such as starting kindergarten or child care

• frequent change of caregivers.

These experiences can be stressful, but they are also normal, preschool versions of the sorts of stressors children will face as adults. Learning how to deal with them – with our help – is the first step in developing coping skills.

**LONG-TERM OR CHRONIC STRESS**

Long-term stressors are unhappy or difficult experiences that can affect people for a long time:

• serious ongoing conflict between family members

• divorce or separation

• a serious illness or health condition

• death of a loved one

• frequent moves

• being bullied or harassed over time

• dealing with unrealistic expectations and demands (one’s own or from others).

Parents have two main responsibilities with respect to preschool stress: helping children cope with normal levels of stress, and protecting them and helping them recover from stress that is too much to cope with.

**STRESS OR ANXIETY?**

Stress in children is usually a response to one or more external events, like the stressors we mentioned earlier. Anxiety, on the other hand, is when kids become unreasonably fearful of situations which objectively aren’t dangerous, or as dangerous as they imagine them to be. Their anxiety is an extreme response to situations that they might face every day, like phobias (e.g., fear of the dark, fear of dogs), fear of being separated from their parents, uncontrollable worries (e.g., about their safety or about being in trouble at school), or being in social situations. Anxiety really becomes a problem for children when it starts to interfere in their lives (and the lives of those around them), which can then cause them to experience more stress.

Seek professional help if:

* anxiety is significantly interfering in your child’s life, stopping them from doing the things that are important
* your child is constantly seeking abnormal amounts of reassurance
* your child is showing symptoms of stress and is clearly not coping well
* as a parent, you would like to discuss parenting strategies and ways of increasing your child’s resilience.

**HELPING CHILDREN WITH “NORMAL” STRESS**

Although we can begin to teach and model healthy coping strategies with preschoolers, the fact is, they can’t cope with stress on their own very well. Parents have the ability to help their children deal with day-to-day stress using simple tools every day. It starts with three basics: helping children feel connected to parents and other caregivers, providing a stable and happy home environment, and comforting children when they are overloaded with stress.

**Connection:** When preschoolers have secure relationships with their parents, they know that someone will be there to help them deal with their problems. Strong relationships also help children to trust and listen to the adult who is supporting them.

**Home environment:** Preschoolers can handle stress better when they have a healthy, balanced lifestyle with good food, lots of time for physical activity, play and relaxation, and daily routines that make their world feel predictable and safe.

**Comfort:** In order for children to learn to comfort themselves, they first must know what it is like to be comforted. And honestly, one of the best stress-relieving tools you have is your body. Regardless of anything else you might say or do to help a stressed preschooler, the comfort of physical contact is one of the best stress relievers there is. In fact, research has shown that the positive brain stimulation children get from being touched in early childhood helps build the brain’s pathways that help people cope with stress

**WHAT ARE THE SIGNS THAT A PRESCHOOLER MAY BE OVERSTRESSED?**

When children feel stressed, it usually comes out in their behaviour.

For example, in toddlers and preschoolers, a tantrum is one common kind of stress response, often due to a combination of stressors, such as being tired, hungry or bored and then having two or three frustrating things happen one after another.

Other possible signs of too much stress include:

* recurring headaches, tummy aches or neck pain
* increased irritability, sadness, panic, anger, anxiety
* intensification of nervous habits like nail biting, hair twisting, thumb sucking
* a pattern of overreacting to minor problems, e.g., yelling, crying, shutting down
* trouble eating, relaxing or sleeping
* unusual sleep patterns or nightmares
* increased dependency or clinginess
* unusually low energy, or the opposite, very high levels of energy or restlessness
* going back to less mature behaviour
* increased behaviour problems, such as biting, kicking, poor listening, acting out, impulsiveness
* increased whining, crying, fighting
* becoming withdrawn or listless

**DEALING WITH STRESS**

It’s not always easy to tell when preschoolers are feeling stressed out, so you need to make an effort to understand what bothers and upsets your child. Don’t wait until you think your child is stressed to start thinking about it. When things are calm, encourage your child to describe his worries or fears. Listen very carefully and try not to interrupt or finish his sentences. Take his worries or fears seriously, even if they seem silly.

Help children find ways to reduce the feelings of stress by getting them involved in activities they enjoy such as playing with favourite toys, reading a book, cuddling with a stuffed animal or stomping on a rug. Even very young children can start to learn relaxation and stress-reducing techniques such as deep breathing. One way to encourage deep breathing in preschoolers is to get them to breathe in through their nose and slowly out through their mouth. Ask them to pretend they are blowing up a balloon inside their tummy and then blow the air out through their mouth. Do this with them. You can also do this yourself to calm down in stressful moments. Your children will learn by watching you.

Another fun way to encourage deep breathing is by blowing bubbles. This activity has been used in hospitals to help children cope with stressful illnesses and treatments.

No technique will work all of the time. But if something is bothering your child and you’re not sure what it is, it never hurts to go back to the basics. Pay a little extra attention to her needs. Spend extra time together and watch her more closely than usual. Offer some extra physical contact by doing things like taking her hand as you walk along the sidewalk, or pulling her up against you as you watch TV together. If your child doesn’t want the extra contact, she will let you know.

**STRESS MANAGEMENT IN GOOD TIMES**

Even when your children are not showing signs of stress, it is still a good idea to encourage everyday activities that help them feel good about themselves and show them ways to manage and reduce the impact of stress.

**Unstructured Play:** Make sure preschoolers have plenty of unstructured play time. Play really helps young children let go of some of their stress. For children 3 and under, water play can be particularly soothing. Who says baths always have to be about getting clean?

**Sleep**: Children require 10-12 hours of sleep every night to feel their best. Establish a regular bedtime routine with quiet, calming activities such as music, reading or quiet play for half an hour before bedtime.

**Physical Activity**: Vigorous physical activity is another great stress reliever for young children and key to their overall health and well-being. Experts advise that children aged 1-5 years should participate in at least two hours of physical activity every day. Read more at [www.activehealthykids.ca](http://www.activehealthykids.ca)

**Limit Electronics:** Limit TV, computer and video game time and encourage your kids to be active. Be active with them. Go for walks, go to the park, or put on some music for a family dance party.

**Practice Choices:** Allow your children opportunities to make small choices that are appropriate for their age: “Do you want to wear your red shirt or your green shirt today?” This helps them feel a sense of control in their life. Research shows that when people feel they have control over a situation, they respond better to stress.

**Love and Fun:** Show your children that you love them with words, hugs, kisses. Play and laugh together.

Model effective stress-management strategies. When you’re feeling rushed or stressed, stop yourself and say, “Wow, I’m feeling stressed. I’m going to take a few deep breaths to help me calm down.” If children see parents using stress-reduction tools in tense moments, they will learn by example.

Be sure to support children when they seem stressed. Tell them when you notice that they seem upset. Ask them how their bodies feel (tummy, tense muscles, etc.). Explain to them that there is a connection between the way our bodies feel and emotions such as worry, sadness and anger.

**CAN SOME STRESS BE AVOIDED?**

 It’s possible to prevent or avoid some sources of stress in preschool children, usually by avoiding situations that are not ideal for young children, or setting up situations to be more child-friendly.

For example, preschoolers don’t always cope well with long shopping trips. But if a trip is kept short (maybe you can do some parts of it later, without your child) or if you schedule a break that includes a child-friendly activity, the trip will be less stressful for your child. Pack a snack and a drink to avoid meltdowns from hunger.

Another example: Some children are more sensitive than others and more easily overwhelmed by exciting or stimulating situations. These sensitive children may have a better time if their birthday party is kept short with a few simple activities and three or four guests, rather than a house full of children and lots of noisy games. Also, try to keep daily routines simple, regular and predictable.

If you are dealing with an unavoidable stressful situation, like starting kindergarten or a new child care centre, do what you can to minimize stress in other parts of your child’s life. This may not be the time to try to get him to eat unfamiliar foods or learn to put himself to bed on his own. Likewise, it might not be the best time for you to take on a new volunteer commitment or go on a weekend getaway without him.

**TALKING ABOUT FEELINGS**

As much as we might like to, we can’t prevent kids from feeling frustrated, angry or sad at times. And that’s okay. Children need to experience these normal human emotions so they can learn how to manage them.

An important part of that is learning how to talk about feelings. Children who can recognize, identify and talk about emotions are less likely to reach the point where they act out their strong emotions with disruptive behaviours. Research has actually shown that when people talk about feelings, the thinking part of the brain (the prefrontal cortex) is stimulated and the “acting out” part of the brain (the amygdala) becomes less active.

The first step is for children to hear us talking about emotions. Label your own feelings. “It’s really frustrating when I can’t find my car keys.” If your child seems angry or frustrated, point it out to him and use words to help him learn to identify the emotions. “I wonder if you might still feel angry about what happened at the playground,” or “I guess you felt mad when they wouldn’t let you in the game.” These little conversations help children learn to recognize and name their own emotional states. Gradually, they will learn to express their feelings in words rather than just acting them out.

Talking to children about their emotions also shows that you understand and care about how they feel. Being understood and listened to helps kids feel connected to parents, and that in itself can alleviate a lot of stress. In short, helping children build these skills contributes to their emotional wellbeing, both now and for the future.

But don’t forget that it takes a long time for children to develop emotional control. Preschoolers can’t always talk about their emotions, or even identify them, so talking about feelings is not always a quick fix for preschool stress. Keep the conversation short, comfort your child and then, when she is ready, help her to get her mind off being upset with a new activity.

**STOP, LOOK AND LISTEN!**

****It’s important to know what bothers and upsets your child. One of the techniques from the Kids Have Stress Too!® program is called Stop, Look and Listen! It is designed to help parents tune in to their children’s stress.

**Stop** • Set the climate. You might say, “I know there are things that upset you sometimes. Can you tell me about them?” Give the child time to finish what he is saying. Listen both to his words and the feeling in his words.

• Choose the moment. What times do you find your child wants to open up and talk to you? Any quiet time during the day or at bedtime might work. Find a time when you are relaxed and not feeling rushed and can be together without interruption.

• Find “little” opportunities to connect. Some parents find that the best time to talk to kids is when they are doing some everyday activity together, such as riding the bus, washing dishes or folding laundry.

**Look** • Once a day, check your child’s face and body. Are you able to make eye contact? Does she appear relaxed or tense? Are her eyes calm or darting back and forth? Is there tension in her body?

• Pay close attention to her facial expressions, mood, body language and activity level. This can help you gain a sense of your child’s well-being and notice signs of stress.

**Listen** • Give him your full attention. Show that you are really interested in your child and what he is saying by facing him and making eye contact. Try saying things like, “We all feel worried or scared sometimes and it’s good to talk about those feelings.”

• Listen without speaking. Nod your head and give other nonverbal signs that you are interested in what he is saying. It can take a preschooler a long time to put the words together, particularly when he is trying to express something difficult, confusing or upsetting. Don’t finish his sentences, even if you think you know what he is trying to say. Give him time to put it into his own words.

**JUST BE THERE**

• Sometimes children don’t feel like talking about what’s bothering them. Try to respect that, give them space, but still show them that you’ll be there when they do feel like talking. Even when children don’t feel like talking, they often don’t want parents to leave them alone. Sometimes we can help children feel better just by keeping them company. Whether they need to talk or just be in the same room with you – make yourself available.

• Do something fun together. If you notice that your son or daughter seems down in the dumps, stressed or having a bad day – but doesn’t feel like talking – initiate something you can do together. Read a book, go for a walk, watch a movie, or bake some cookies. This teaches children that there are ways people can take care of themselves and cheer themselves up. Children will also appreciate the chance to spend special time with you.

• Give children time and space to unwind. Sometimes children need time on their own with quiet activities such as blocks, play dough or imaginative play.

**REDUCING CHILD CARE STRESS**

These days, most young children spend their daytime hours with caregivers other than their parents in home or group child care settings. Research shows that high quality, nurturing child care environments can support healthy social and emotional development in young children. Still, the child care experience comes with certain challenges for both parents and children, including getting used to new routines, new relationships with peers and caregivers, and separation from parents.

**Working with your child care provider** You and your child care provider(s) can form a partnership that helps ensure the best possible child care experience for your family. Share any information about your child that will help your provider do a better job and ask her to do the same for you. Check in with your provider regularly to find out how your child is doing in child care. Find out if the staff has special routines or schedules for checking in with parents.

**Changes in behaviour or routine** If you have noticed changes in your child’s behaviour at home (sleeping, eating, aggressiveness, relationships with other family members, physical acting out), share this information with your child care provider. The caregiver may have noticed changes as well, and you can work together to resolve any problems.

**Memories of home** When starting child care, it may help to bring photographs from home to the child care centre – pictures of the family, pets, your home or even your child’s room. The photos can be shared with staff and other children and your child will feel like he is bringing a little bit of home to child care to show to others. Security objects from home, such as a cuddly toy, favourite book or “blankie” can also be comforting to a stressed child. Ask your child care provider to let your child have the security object when he is upset.

**Spend time** Plan a visit from time to time to the child’s caregiver to either assist with an activity, each lunch with the class, or help supervise on a special outing. It will be a special treat for your child and will also help you stay in touch with how she spends her days.

**Be positive and consistent** A positive and consistent approach to discipline at home and child care is an important part of helping your child adjust to the child care environment. Talk with care providers about how you deal with particular behaviours and situations at home and find out how they are handled at child care. Remember, consistency is not the same as rigidity. Children can learn to adapt to different caregivers.

Consider incorporating some of the songs, tools and techniques that child care providers use into your home life with your child. Ask your provider about the Kids Have Stress Too!® Toolbox Activities that they have been using and how you can use them at home.

**TRANSITION TIMES**

**Remember that feeling rushed puts pressure on children.** Look for ways to make your mornings less rushed. Try getting up a half an hour earlier. Get clothes, lunches and backpacks ready the night before. Talk to your child about the day ahead – that she is going to preschool and you are going to work. Remind her that she will spend the day with her friends and that you will see her again at the end of the day.

**Drop-off or pick-up time** can be an opportunity to have a brief chat with the caregiver about how your child is doing, for example to explain that your child had a difficult morning or slept poorly the night before. At the end of the day, find out how her day went. If one parent is responsible for dropping off and picking up the child, the other parent should occasionally do so in order to get to know the caregiver. Make sure your child knows in advance who will be picking her up.

**Make time to tune in, connect and cuddle.** Try to spend the first few minutes after you return home giving your child undivided attention. Some children would love to be held or rocked for a few minutes to reconnect. Other children might just want to be near you, doing quiet things, but able to have your attention before you get involved in chores.

**Don’t be surprised** if your child falls apart shortly after you pick him up from child care. This is normal. Children often save up their strong feelings all day and let them out when they get home.

**DIFFERENT KIDS, DIFFERENT EXPERIENCES OF STRESS**

Some children experience more stress than others, some are more sensitive to stress and some are better at handling it than others.

The big challenge is to know our children, pay attention to their stress and try to ease it when possible using the tools outlined in this booklet. That’s the best way to reduce the chances that higher than normal levels of stress will start to interfere with their behaviour and day-to-day functioning. It will also give them the best chance to grow up happy and healthy.

Please remember one thing. We cannot eliminate all stress from children’s lives, nor can we always succeed in making stressed children feel better immediately. Stress is a part of life, and children learn how to handle child-sized stress by dealing with it, with appropriate help and support. By practicing stress-reduction and relaxation strategies with your children, you’re helping them build skills they will use throughout their lives.



# Quick Reference Behaviour Management

**Remember. ONE STEP AT A TIME!**

FIRST: Pick the behaviour that is causing the most distress.

SECOND: Find a few strategies that might work

THIRD: Try the strategies. Pick the one that is most effective.

FORTH: Practice it for three weeks.

When it becomes a habit. Choose the next behaviour to work on.

## 1. Re-Building Self-Care and Self-Esteem



Children in care often need help re-establishing a sense of who they are, and how they fit into their world. Foster parents can help them by incorporating simple steps into their day-to-day routines.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| * Praise and encouragement * Opportunities for success * Trumpeting success * Scheduled one on one time * Leisure time activities * Complimenting children * Engaging a child * Helping the child work alongside you * Letting the child take responsibility for chores * Encouraging volunteerism * Writing notes of thanks and gratitude * Hug the child several times a day * Ask the child for advice | * Be spontaneous * Encouraging friends and family members to celebrate the child’s birthday and noteworthy accomplishments * Encourage the child to play with animals * Verbally shore up a child’s unique strengths * Facilitate friendships with the child * Begin traditions * Honour hellos and goodbyes * Respect the child’s need for growing independence * Promote and require sound values |

## 2. Differences Between Consequences & Punishment

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **CONSEQUENCES** | **PUNISHMENT** |
| * Expresses the reality of the social order, or the situation – not of the person. **Democratic.** * Involves no element of ‘soul’ judgement * Concerned only with what will happen now * The relationship and atmosphere are friendly. Resentment is minimized. * Develops intrinsic motivation and self-discipline * No submission or humiliation * Freedom of choice within limits * Consequences are acceptable * Thoughtful, deliberate. Proactive or responsive * Child feels important * Choice given only once * Uses action * The child accepts responsibility for his own actions * Based on the concept of equality of worth between children and adults. Is not based on fear * Implies that the child can work out his own problems * The adult is disengaged from negative involvement with the child * Logically related to misbehaviour | * Expresses the power of a personal authority. **Authoritarian.** * Involves ‘soul’ judgement * Deals with the past * Often anger is present either overtly or covertly. Resentment is frequent. * Depends on extrinsic motivation * Often requires submission or humiliation * No alternative or choice * Punishment is at best only tolerable * Often impulsive, reactive. * Child feels belittled * Often involves endless nagging * Uses talking and coercion * The adult takes responsibility for the child’s actions * Based on superior-inferior relationships between children and adults. Fear of punishment from a superior * Implies that only an adult is capable of solving the child’s problem * Involvement is always negative * Not logical, only an arbitrary connection between the misbehaviour and consequence |



## 3. Basic Principles of Consequences

1. Understanding the child’s goals, behaviour and emotions.

* 1. Natural consequences are effective regardless of the goal
  2. Logical consequences work best for attention seeking.
  3. When other goals are being met (revenge, power) often the relationship needs to be strengthened first.

1. Be both firm and kind.
   1. Most parents are either form or kind; not both.
   2. Tone indicates ‘kind’. Follow-through shows firmness.
   3. Firmness is neither strictness or harshness.
2. Separate the deed from the doer.
3. Don’t try to be a ‘good parent.
4. Become more consistent in your actions.
5. Encourage independence.
6. Avoid pity. It leads to overprotection.
7. Refuse to become over concerned about what others think.
8. Talk less, act more.
9. Refuse to fight or give in.

## 4. “Go ahead! Hit me!”

A *counterphobic behaviour* is a clinical term used to describe the actions of people who bring on the situations they are afraid of.

A child who screams, “Go ahead and hit me!” or something similar is actually attempting to control the situation.

1. Help the child understand why his parents mistreated him. Try to explain that his parents were good people whose mistakes may be due to a combination of bad luck and problems of their own. This explanation can give a troubled child a way of still loving his parents without blaming himself.

2. help the child deal with the sadness and anger that is going to inevitably come. Such feelings in a child can be another underlying reason for a child’s misbehaviour.

## 5. How We Feel & Our Responses

If we feel …

Tired, cross, or irritated,

*we may misuse our behaviour management tools.*

If we feel…

Inadequate in our parenting instinct and psychologically attacked by the child,

*we may respond poorly by intimidating, inappropriately disciplining,*

*or misusing our power.*

***IT IS IMPERATIVE WE DO NOT TAKE***

***CHILDREN’S BEHAVIOUR PERSONALLY.***

It is essential that their behaviour is not seen as a reflection of *who we are*, but rather as a reflection of *how distressed the child is*, or how difficult a time they are having coping with what life has required of them.

## 6. The Goals of Emotional Behaviour in Teens

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **EMOTION** | **POSSIBLE PURPOSE(S)** | **STEPS FOR REDIRECTING** |
| Anger | To win  To control  To get even  Often learned behaviour | Refuse to be intimidated  Don’t fight or give in  Offer to discuss problems later, in calmer atmosphere |
| Apathy | To demonstrate power  *I have no say in anything that affects me so I’ll only do what it takes to get by.* | Invite participation in decision making  Demonstrate that their ideas, opinions and contribution are needed and respected in the family  Ask a teen to handle a responsibility using handled by you  Show interest in teen’s interests |
| Boredom | To avoid participating in life  To avoid getting involved with others | Invite teen to explore ways to make life more interesting  If teen’s behaviour indicates he wants to stay bored, respect that decision  Let teen work it out himself |
| Sadness & Depression | To control others  To avoid responsibility  To gain pity  To get revenge | Show teen that you are willing to understand his feelings  Invite him to explore ways to solve the problem  If he wants to remain sad, respect that decision  Let him work it out himself  Avoid pity  Avoid taking over the teens responsibilities  Avoid guilt  Avoid cheering him up  If persistent, seek professional help |
| Guilt | To control others goodness’  To punish self  To gain pity  To prove ‘good intentions’ | Avoid being impressed or intimidated by guilty feelings  Avoid letting her evade responsibilities for actions  Show her that you can understand feelings (LISTEN)  Respectfully ask what she intends to do to rectify the situation |
| Fear & Anxiety | To demonstrate ‘to protect self from perceived danger  (threat to core-self, or esteem) | Show understanding of her feelings  Invite discussion of ways to handle the perceived problem  Express confidence in her ability to handle the situation |
| Stress | To convince self of inability to handle responsibilities  *It’s too much for me.* | Help him see what is contributing to stress  Usually he will be overwhelmed by the pace or a series of events  Often disorganized, taking on too much, not taking time for himself  Help him arrange priorities  Help him learn to relax and pace himself |

## 7. The Goals of Misbehaviour

***Truisms***

1. Everything we do has a purpose.

2. We choose what we do.

3. What I do has meaning for me.

4. Reality is what I perceive it to be.

5. People need other people: We need to belong.

6. People are more alike than different,

and therefore we can help each other.

**GOALS OF MISBEHAVIOUR**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **GOAL** | **Your Feeling Cue** | **Your Impulse** | **Child’s Response** | **Your Strategy** |
| **Attention** | Annoyed  Irritated  Worried  Guilty | Reminding. Coaxing.  Doing things for the child he could do for himself. | Stops behaviour temporarily, but soon resumes with the same or another annoying behaviour.  [**Hear:** Notice me-involve me. | Ignore misbehaviour. Attend to desired behaviours. Avoid special service. “Say it” only once and then act. Set up routines. Plan special time. Redirect by involving the child in a useful task. Touch without words. Set up nonverbal signals. |
| **Power** | Anger  Provoked  Challenged Threatened  Defeated | To push back.  To fight back.  Thinking: “You can’t get away with that” or  “I’ll make you behave” **or** Giving (i.e.,  caving) in. | Intensifies the misbehaviour.  Complies but defiantly.  Feels he’s won if the adult appears upset.  Exercises passive power.  [**Hear:** Let me help-give me choices.] | Don’t escalate. Defuse. Take a time out. Model good anger management. Suggest a time for a rational discussion. Acknowledge that you can’t “make” him, and ask for his help. Offer a limited choice. Be firm and kind. Act, don’t talk. Let routines “be the boss”. Get help from the child to set a few reasonable limits. Follow through on agreement. Redirect to positive power. Hold class/family meetings. |
| **Revenge** | Hurt  Disappointed  Disbelieving  Disgusted | To retaliate.  To get even.  Thinking: “How could you do this to me?” | Retaliate  Hurt others  Damage property  Get even  Escalates the misbehaviour or  Chooses another ‘weapon’. [**Hear:** Help me – I’m hurting.] | Refuse to feel (your) hurt. Don’t retaliate (passively or aggressively). Acknowledge their hurtful act and link it to the likelihood that they must be hurting. Explore their hurt. Use “reflective listening”. Share your feelings. Apologize. Avoid punishment and retaliation. Show you care. |
| **Inadequacy** | Pity (i.e., I agree, you are)  Hopeless  Helpless  Inadequate | Over-helping.  Expecting nothing.  Giving up.  Doing the child’s tasks. | Retreats further  Acts passively  Doesn’t improve  Doesn’t respond  [**Hear:** Have faith in me – don’t give up.} | Don’t pity. Use “encouragement”—notice strengths, find successes to celebrate, and draw attention to how the accomplishment makes the CHILD feel good. Take time for training if necessary. Break the task into smaller steps until child is successful. Don’t give up. Build on his interests. Encourage, encourage, encourage. |

Dr. Bill Nodrick © 2004

## 8. Parental Responses to Children’s goals

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Child’s Goal** | **Parent’s Belief** | **Parent’s Purpose** | **Parent’s Emotion** | **Parent’s Behavior** |
| **Attention** | **Irrational:** *You should STOP distracting me!*  **Rational:** I wish that you would stop distracting me. I understand that this might be the only way you feel you can belong. I’ll help you change this by GIVING attention to your contributions instead of your misbehaviour. | *Stop the distraction*  Stimulate self reliance | *Determination*  Determination | *Reminding and coaxing*  Don’t give attention to behaviour.  Don’t give attention on demand.  Do the unexpected by ‘catching’ him being good. |
| **Power** | **Irrational:** *It’s awful when you take control. I can’t stand it! I have to be in control. You must obey me! Otherwise I’m a bad parent and a worthless person.*  **Rational:** It’s frustrating when you challenge me. It’s not awful, and I can stand it.  I’d like to be in control, but I can’t. To not be is discouraging, but I’m still a good parent, a worthwhile person. I’m going to work on mutual honouring and respect. | *Take control.*  *Get even.*  Win cooperation.  Feel regret for the child’s suffering. | *Anger*  Determination | *Fighting, or*  *Giving in*  Withdraw from the conflict.  Let the child learn from consequences.  Enlist the child’s help to teach how to use power effectively. |
| **Revenge** | **Irrational:** *You attacked me and it’s terrible. I feel worthless, or you wouldn’t have attacked me. Hey! Why am I blaming myself? I’ve been fair to you, but you’ve attacked me. I’ll fix you.*  **Rational:** Although it’s been unfair, it is NOT the end of our relationship. I may not like it, but I’m still okay. Your behaviour is frustrating and unfortunate, but I do love you. You are NOT a horrible person. You are discouraged. This must be tough for you. I’ll help. | *Parent takes permission to get even.*  To show compassion | *Hurt, then*  *Anger*  Regret  Empathy  Determination | *Retaliating*  Avoid being hooked into pity, hurt feelings or revenge  Build a trusting relationship through understanding and acceptance. |
| **Inadequacy** | **Irrational:** *How horrible! I’ve failed you. I can’t bear to fail. I am an inadequate parent. I guess you’re right. You are incapable.*  **Rational:** It’s very difficult to help you, and I fail sometimes. That’s frustrating and unfortunate, but not horrible. I can accept it. I’m still competent and able to choose to help you. I may be tempted to give up, but I won’t because I believe you can handle this. | *Parent takes permission to give up.*  Parent shows confidence. | *Despair.*  Faith  Determination | *Agreeing with the child.*  *It’s hopeless.*  Avoid criticism  Avoid pity  Encourage positive efforts  Arrange success experiences. |

HOW DO I CHANGE MY RESPONSES?

1. Admit your feelings, accept yourself and commit to change.
2. Identify the purpose of your negative emotions.
3. Watch your TONE of voice. This is one of the clearest signs of your true attitude.
4. Watch your non-verbal behaviour.
5. Distract yourself. Take a break. Talk to yourself. Go out.
6. Avoid your first impulse (the behaviour the child expects) and do the unexpected.
7. Learn to relax. Practice asking yourself “What does this really mean” before acting.
8. Use your sense of humour. Life is too important to take seriously!
9. Work directly on changing your irrational beliefs. Concentrate deliberately on this.
10. Accept challenges not as disasters, but as learning experiences.
11. Tell yourself to STOP and practice ‘changing channels’.
12. Take charge. Search to be sure you aren’t doing any of the 4 Cs”

\* commanding \* catastrophizing \* condemning \* can’t-stand-it-itis



## 9. Family Atmosphere

The ongoing atmosphere in the home is essential to not only allowing healing to occur in the child, but to maintain the integrity of the family.

When we as foster parents bring a foster child into our home, we need to have a fairly good idea of what kind of family atmosphere we want for ourselves and our children. We also need to be fairly skilled and successful in maintaining this tone of family living in day to day life.

CHILD’S UNCONSCIOUS GOAL: The foster child child’s unconscious efforts will be to change the family to correspond with the atmosphere the child has experienced in their previous home(s).

PARENT’S FAMILY GOAL: The parents’ first goal, when a special needs child enters the home, is to immediately implement a system which will protect the atmosphere in the home from the child’s unconscious goal.

ATMOSPHERE TO PROMOTE HEALING & ATTACHMENT

Relaxation Tone Sharing Fun Predictable Security Protection

***The experience of being nurtured must be consistent and habitual***

*The minute by minute*

*hour by hour*

*day by day*

*experience in the home*

*is what will ultimately be responsible*

*****for change to occur in the child.*

## 10. Bringing in a New Child

Before bringing a foster child into your home, it is imperative that you set up a Basic Disciplinary structure in your home and that all family members are consciously aware of it.

If you find your family atmosphere is deteriorating after a child enters your family, have a Family Meeting and go over each of the following steps. Then put them into practice.

1. Setting Up the Home

Tone Setting – remember the power of an Invitational Home

Be strict and warm

Environmental activities – have family rituals and activities in place

2. The Environmental Base

Encouragement

Caring

Consistency

3. House Rules

Decide and put in place the supporting structure BEFORE the child arrives

House rules – in place, visible, enforced

4. The Supporting Structure of Discipline

Establish clear thresholds for a basic behavioural system:

Two week training camp

* plan for this with each new child

Increase level of supervision

* expect this with each new child

Teach behaviour – plan to do this with each new child

(Don’t assume they know even the basic rules. Explain manners, taking turns, taking off shoes, hanging up coats, etc.)

Structure must be positive

Encouragement

5. The Behaviour Management System

Plan for transitions. Don’t let things just ‘happen’.

Ticket System

Problem Solving Plan

## 11. House Rules

**OUR HOUSE WILL BE A PLACE OF**

**ABSOLUTE SAFETY**

NO ONE MAY CAUSE A PERSON TO BE HURT!

This means we won’t hurt others OR ourselves.

🗹 No physical hurting

🗹 No lying

By speaking By withholding information

🗹 No sexual interaction in

Play Talking Touching Teaching

🗹 No exclusion play (leaving somebody out)

Privacy can take place in one’s own bedroom, by oneself

🗹 No handling of other people without permission

This includes hugging and lifting, as well as hitting or hurting

🗹 No verbal meanness

No name calling No swearing No mean talk No put downs or negative talk

🗹 No demonstrated disrespect

To babysitter To neighbours To teachers To siblings To friends

To grandmas To grandpas To parents To visitors To other children

**These core essential house rules must be followed**

**by all children and adults on the property.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| * We ARE kind honest, hardworking people. * We focus on GOOD things * We RESPECT others * We keep things TIDY * We RESPECT our belongings and the belongings of others * We TALK out our feelings respectfully. | * We DON’T complain * We DON’T waste stuff * We DON’T focus on meanness or grudges. * We are NOT a selfish family.   When feelings are too big, we WRITE THEM DOWN and arrange for a special time to talk alone. |

## 12. Discipline with the New Child

Discipline with the new foster child must be:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| * Relaxed * Thorough | * Engaging * Matter-of-fact | * Instructive * Consistent |

Discipline has to fit into the family atmosphere of mutual enjoyment and respect.

To be firm, it is not necessary to be intense, serious, or even mildly annoyed to get your point across.

On the contrary, we can be very firm, and at the same time

🟋 Very supportive

🟋 Very warm

🟋 Very compassionate

The child will likely be thinking:

*You like me when I’m good, but what if I’m bad? Will you like me then?*

The parent can say out loud:

*I love you, and I feel really sorry that you’re in this spot. I wish I could help you differently here, but this is the problem and this is the consequence.*

Affection and love shown to a new child is only slightly effective in the beginning. The child needs to know how the parent will respond to his ‘bad side’. This will create the basis of trust and security for him. Empathy for his feelings is essential in the process.

Often foster children will be well-behaved for the first few days or even weeks. At some point, however, they’ll need to find out how you, the parent, really feels.

|  |
| --- |
| *When the child presents you with HOSTILITY AND DEFIANCE*  *The parent responds with EMPATHY AND UNDER-REACTION* |

|  |
| --- |
| *Nurturing a child who is showing hostility and defiance is a difficult challenge.*  *Nurturing a child who seems to give nothing back is even more of a challenge.* |

If we truly want to intervene with these children, it is essential that we nurture when we don’t feel like it, and nurture when the child doesn’t seem to want any part of it. It is crucial that the parent does not respond to the child’s hostility with their own hostility. In such instances the parent needs to respond with empathy or by under-reacting.

Nurturing means:

* Not personalizing a child’s misbehaviours or rejection
* Seeing it as his problem and his pain
* Helping the child ask for help by practicing with them 100 times, and then 100 more.

**Practice! Practice! Practice! with the child:**

🟋 How to live with consequences

🟋 How to trust somebody

🟋 How to feel intensely and still be safe

🟋 How to live in and be part of a healthy family

## 13. When the Child Shows Big Feelings

****

When a child is expressing big feelings, we need to create an **Emotional Bridge.**

**INTENSITY OF FEELING INTENSITY OF NURTURE**

Even if we feel what the child is going through is rather silly, for instance crying and screaming because they bumped their knee, our nurturance needs to be at the same level of intensity as their feelings.

It is important that we **do not simply ignore the child’s feelings** because we don’t feel they are warranted.

To create emotional bonds with the child, we need to COMMUNICATE EMPATHY.

*Even if we hope that in the future the child will not respond in such an exaggerated manner to a similar situation, we can accept that this is exactly the feeling the child is experiencing right now.*

**DON’T minimize the child’s experience** by saying things like:

* That didn’t hurt
* You’re not afraid
* You’re a big girl
* You can get another one
* Tomorrow you won’t care about this anymore

**To communicate empathy:**

**1. Observe** the child’s

* Movements
* Emotions
* Behaviours
* Gestures
* And the current situation

**2. Verbalize** what you think the child is feeling, accepting that we may be completely wrong, completely right, or somewhere in the middle.

Your verbal observation must be non-judgmental if you want to communicate warmth and build an emotional bridge. If the child disagrees, ask for more information.

**3. Follow-up.** Remain involved until the child’s feelings dissipate. Help her transition to another activity with a hug, a warm glass of milk, a blanket, a band-aid, or any other symbol of feeling better.

## 16. Boundaries, Limit Setting, & Consequences

Limit setting provides security.

Secure kids are easier to live with.

Plan the limits you will set before you need them.

Set limits from the beginning.

NATURAL CONSEQUENCES occur naturally, as a result of a child’s behaviour. They are VERY EFFECTIVE. Don’t, however, step in and take away the natural consequence to protect the child, or because you feel sorry for him. Let him experience it.

*Jamie consistently forgets to take his homework to school.*

*Don’t take it to him. Allow him to get a bad mark on the assignment.*

LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES are the next best thing. They must be related to the behaviour, however.

Ali leaves her toys lying around the living room.

NOT LOGICAL: No TV for 2 days. (This is a punishment.)

LOGICAL: Toys are put away for 2 days. (This is a related consequence.)

Examples of logical consequences:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| * Redoing * Doing a kindness * Restriction of privileges * Removal of tempting items | * Close supervision * Earlier bedtimes * Talking it through * Reintegrating | * Directed chat (not lecture) * Time-outs * Grounding * In-home suspension |

## 17. Day to Day Discipline

*How our choices and consequences are applied with empathy in our daily life*

CHOICES & CONSEQUENCES

DON’T try to control the child’s choice.

DO give the child clear choices and consequences.

**During a tantrum in the store:**

*You can take my hand and we can walk out together, or I can carry you out. Which would you prefer? I don’t mind either.*

If the child continues to tantrum, then he has made his choice and the parent immediately intervenes by carrying him out.

**Another day, the choice may be:**

*You can come to the store with me and have no tantrums, or you can choose not to come to the store.*

If the child has a tantrum, he has made his choice not to come to the store next time.

Options for choices and consequences provided to the child need to incorporate the parents’ values, obligations and wishes so that **whatever choice he makes is acceptable to them**.

**A teen comes home an hour after curfew:**

DON’T ground her for a month if you can’t live with having her mope around the house for that long, and having to take her everywhere with you.

DO create an acceptable consequence: Move curfew an hour earlier for one month for each hour she is late.

It’s important to emphasize to yourself and to the child that choices and consequences are not punishment, but normal experiences of life.

*If Dad drives too fast, the consequence will be a speeding ticket.*

*If Mom doesn’t get around to picking up bread, she’s stuck baking biscuits for everyone’s lunches.*

## 18. When the Child Responds with Anger

When a child becomes angry in response to a consequence, that anger can be used as an excellent opportunity to foster attachment.

If you are able to offer empathy at the time of anger, even if it’s direct at you, he will end up feeling closer to you through this positive emotional engagement. (See # 13 Big Feelings and Emotional Bridges.)

Offering empathy to a child when he’s angry gives the message that:

1. You believe he can manage his emotional response and concerns, possibly with parental help.

2. You believe the relationship is more important than any conflict.

3. His anger will not drive you away.

4. You believe the relationship is strong enough to incorporate anger and discord and work through it.

## 19. Parents’ Anger and Response

When a parent becomes angry over a child’s behaviour choice, they should admit it and accept responsibility for their own emotions. This reinforces that the family atmosphere is everyone’s responsibility. It also models how to behave after you’ve over-reacted.

A clear delineation between anger about what happened and anger at the child needs to be stated.

*“I’m angry about what you did”*

*“I’m irritated about the big mess here on the floor”*

Parents need to model wise behaviour and effective ways to problem solve.

*“I’m angry now, so we’ll talk about this later when I’m calm and can make good decisions.”*

If a parent does impose a consequence (*You’re grounded for a month*) and then considers it to be too harsh, or unreasonable, he needs to change it by going to the child and telling him, “I’ve reconsidered. I’ve decide the consequence is too harsh. This is what we’ll do instead.”

However, the parent should NEVER change a consequence as a result of the child screaming about it, or stomping around being resentful. Such a decision needs to be based on the parent’s judgment and not on the child’s response or anger.

## 20. Restricting the Child Can Create Security.

Greatly limiting a child’s activities can actually create a strong sense of security for a child who is repeatedly making poor choices across all settings. An outside might see this as punitive when the child’s activities are restricted and she has to have constant supervision.

However, this has been done in many situations with excellent responses on the part of the child. Parents report the child is happy and relieved to no longer have to figure out what the best choice is, how to get along in any given situation, and to leave those decisions to the parent. Now the child has energy to relax and play, instead of waiting to get into trouble. The child doesn’t need to become upset with receiving consequences for bad choices he isn’t ready to make effectively yet.

In these restricted settings or restricted involvement phases the parents removed from the child the burden of making choices that would normally be age appropriate, making choices for him as they would a younger child. As a result, the child will sometimes regress and allow the nurturance more easily.

Restrictions may involve keeping the child within the sight of a parent, or within touching distance.

## 21. Genuine & Consistent Effective Behaviour Management

Choose techniques that work for you, for the child, and for your family. Try different ones and find the best fit.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| * + Physical cues and prompts   + Move around. Establish a presence   + Genuinely reinforce positive behaviours   + Ensure you have the child’s attention before giving directions   + Modulate your voice (watch your tone). Talk differently when needed   + Challenge kids to beat the clock   + Keep the child’s life well-paced.   + Keep expectations appropriately paced   + Have ‘sponge activities’ available (things that can soak up undirected time)   + Use delayed instruction. Discuss the situation later, without an audience.   + To save the child’s embarrassment, say “Take 5” or “Stop. We’ll talk about why later.”   + Remove tempting objects   + Have kids repeat your directions back to you   + Have an easy to read Behaviour Chart | * + Use humour to diffuse tension. This models how to relieve stress in everyday life.   + NO SARCASM. It’s always a put down for someone.   + Discuss short term planning   + Reward improvement   + Use incentives and rewards   + When doing a behavioural contract, keep it simple and easy to administer   + Review what you’re doing, and make adjustments   + Follow through   + Provide the child with lots of information in small time increments if behaviours are extremely troublesome   + Be flexible   + Set a time limit for an expectation to be carried out   + Slowly raise expectations, and back off if need be |

## 22. Interventions: Verbal Interactions to Share Information

YES, it takes a great deal for time to go through a careful pre-talk routine. However, sometimes it’s essential as preventative discipline. This strategy can significantly reduce the amount of time, energy and frustration wasted in reacting to behavioural problems, or re-enacting the same circle of events over and over.

**BEFORE** attempting to verbally connect with a child to share information, PLAN THE DISCUSSION.

* How can you engage the child?
* How can you create and empathic bridge linking your feelings to his? What will make him responsive and more receptive to what you say.
* Examine what is on your mind and any personal issues you may be dealing with. Try to keep unwanted contact out of your interaction.
* Be aware of how you’re feeling about the child right now. It’s tempting to speak harshly to a child who is angry, or who has hurt you.
* Be aware of your feelings. If they aren’t positive, counter them as much as possible before dealing with the child. (Discuss the situation with a trusted friend, or support worker first.)
* ESSENTIAL: Know the child’s side of the story. Find out from the child, not a 3rd party.
* ESSENTIAL: Hear the child’s point of view without interruption. If you begin your conversation without listening, you run the possibility of being wrong, making yourself look foolish, and handling the situation poorly.
* Think through your own non-verbal messages. How you stand, how you advance towards a child, where you place your arms and hands, etc.
* Plan how you will cope with a defensive action on the child’s part. Defensiveness is the child’s protection against being hurt. Anticipate resistance, perhaps even a nasty response. Use your strength of will and character to look past that and avoid descending to the same level. Remain stable in your tone and approach.
* If consequences may be necessary, plan ahead what relevant ones you might implement.
* If a consequence is required, but you don’t have one in mind, it’s acceptable to delay setting out the consequence.
* Allow the child to help you define or decide on the most appropriate consequence.

**SELF EXAMINATION:** When you’re done dealing with the child verbally, examine your own role in the incident or problem to see if you had any responsibility, or if there was something you might have done differently to prevent it.

Children often act out when their calls for help are ignored or when they are in uncomfortable situations. If you can identify the child is acting out because of an oversight on your part, and they aren’t able to cope with a situation or feelings that are beyond their control, accept responsibility for the part you played and openly admit it. Make plans to avoid feeding into the child’s misbehaviour in the future, or setting up a scenario in which they may misbehave.

*Mrs. G took the kids to the park for an afternoon of play. 6 year old Ellis did well for a time, then became aggressive, hitting and chasing other children. As a consequence, Mrs. G made Ellis sit with her for the rest of the afternoon. Both were unhappy, but the other children didn’t deserve to miss their play time.*

*Upon arriving home, Mrs. G planned a talk with Ellis. Remembering to get his side of the story first, she asked him why he had had such a problem at the park. Ellis explained readily that a boy who picks on him at school had showed up with another family. He was afraid of being picked on. Mrs. G remembered noting another family that looked familiar, and remembered that one of the boys had teased Ellis at school. She realized that if she’d called Ellis over at that moment and talked to him about it, assuring him she would keep an eye on the to ensure the boy didn’t pick on him, Ellis may have been able to enjoy the rest of the afternoon.*

**OPTIONS FOR VERBAL COMMUNICATION**

**Empowering Message:** Asking the child for his opinion and giving him choices empower the child. Such messages can gently nudge an insecure child to take more responsibility for his life. They show you trust him and credit him with competence.

**Surface Clarification:** When an altercation begins, stop and gather all the missing pieces of information to gather the details leading to the situation. This eliminates confusion and serves to slow everyone down to prevent over-reacting, and reacting too quickly.

**Reframing:** Reframing takes a negative behaviour and looks at it with a wider or different lens, on more positive terms. It counteracts the effects of negative labeling and helps a child examine behaviours in a more positive light. It doesn’t condone the misbehaviour, but helps to put it into a larger context so the child can understand the pieces of what they are doing.

**The Hydraulic Squeeze:** This is an intervention that takes a difficult behaviour and allows it in a smaller, more clearly defined arena where the child can empty it out through venting. Rather than let the behaviour rage out of control, it assumes the behaviour is a message that needs to be expressed.

“I resent…” The child is given 2 minutes to say out loud everything they resent, allowing her to empty her whole list. The listener records everything without comment. Children often find it hard to fill up the 2 minutes.

“Yes-No” Arguments: Small children can have a safe argument by taking either ‘yes’ or ‘no’ and shouting back and forth with the parent. Use different tones, soft, loud, goofy, as the child vents.

Swearing Time: Allow the child to swear and discharge their angry feelings, or write letters, or have the listener take dictation of them swearing.

It is important when using the Hydraulic Squeeze to not allow children to act out aggressively. Allowing her to punch, bang or smash can encourage a troubled child to strike out at an object. This reinforces the perception that they can’t control themselves without being physical.

**Acknowledge Incremental Improvement:** This soft touch approach opens a small hole in the shield of a child who is reluctant to disclose information or accept responsibility for fear of increasing vulnerability. Place your index finger and thumb a little bit apart and ask, “Do you think it is slightly possible that you might…” to allow the child to accept a tiny amount of responsibility. This may help dissolve some of the frustration the adult feels when conversing with a child who refuses to own his actions. It also helps the child accept a miniscule amount of responsibility, helping to move forward to greater responsibility for their actions.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Words you might use include:  *Do you think it’s remotely possible…*  *Do you think it’s slightly possible…*  *Is there even a little bit of a chance that...*  *Could you have been a tiny bit…* | Above all: STAY GROUNDED  Sometimes nothing helps as much as talking to  …YOUR SPOUSE  …A FRIEND  …YOUR SUPPORT WORKER |

# Treats And Rewards Without Food

Doctors, dentists and nutritionists are giving much attention to the fact that in recent years our children are becoming more overweight and less physically active than ever before. Many children consume high-fat, high-sugar diets that contribute to a variety of health concerns such as obesity, cardiovascular disease, nutritional deficiencies, and last but not least, tooth decay.

Many of the children who come into our care have a great deal of anxiety around food and are unaware of good eating habits. As we work at teaching them about good nutrition, we can also work at re framing such concepts as ‘treats’ and ‘rewards’ into non-food items.

Here are a few suggestions you might try.

 ·  Read an extra story together at bedtime

 ·  Make a phone call to a special friend or loved one

 ·  Take a brief trip to the playground for some physical activity together

 ·  Place a sticker on the calendar to remember the child’s special achievement

 ·  Give an extra hug or cuddle time

 ·  Create a special hand shake or ‘congratulations’ dance to do together

 ·  Light a special candle

 ·  Share some very special hand cream

When you consider each child, you will probably think of more that are specific to him or her. It may help to keep a list of what is special for each of your children, as well as yourself!  Everyone, including parents, needs a treat or reward every once in awhile!