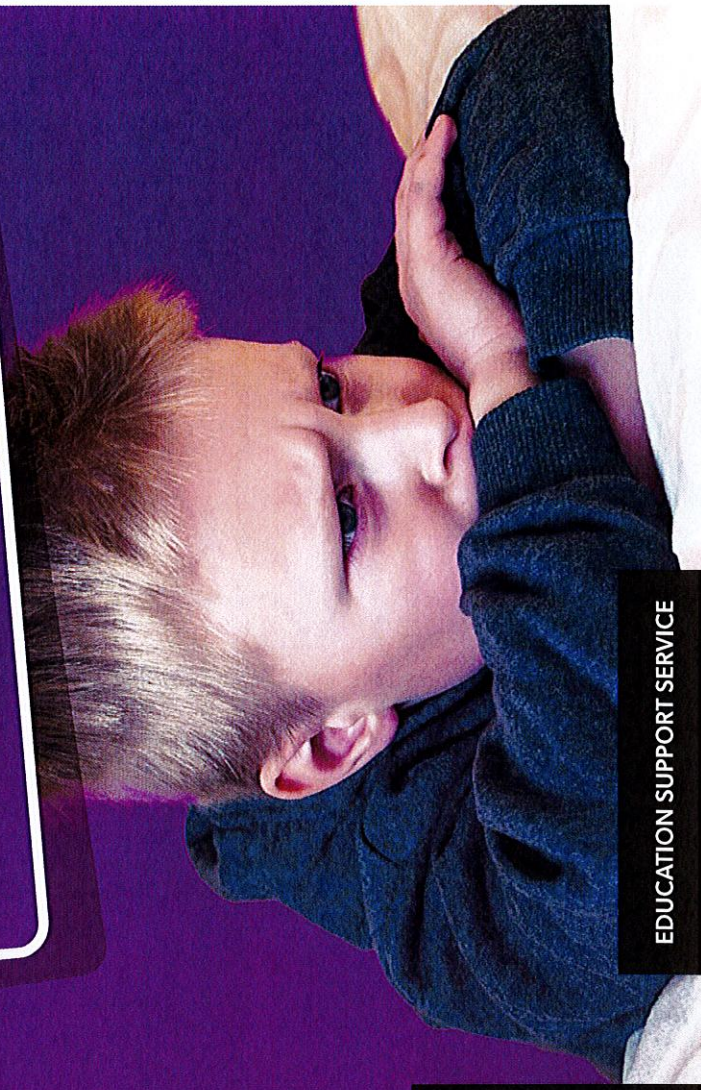


## Primary Behaviour Support for Parents

**Common Behaviour  
Problems:  
Tips for handling common  
behaviour issues at home**



**Some children and young people are particularly prone to acts of disruption, aggression, defiance, or anti-social intent. (what psychologists call, externalizing behaviour), even after early childhood when parents often have to manage “temper tantrums”.**

How should we handle these behaviour problems? There isn't any single answer. Children are individuals. What works for one child might not work for another. But research suggests a number of general principles we can use to encourage cooperation and keep aggression under control. Here are some evidence-based tips to help with some common childhood behaviour issues that parents and carers may experience.

## Lying and Blaming Others

There are three main reasons kids lie: to get attention, to avoid getting in trouble, and to feel better about themselves. Distinguishing the reason for the lie can help you determine the best course of action.

When your child misbehaves, are they quick to blame others? It's normal for children to want to avoid getting in trouble, but this will be much more noticeable if becoming a problem which needs to be addressed.

**“It wasn't my fault”** and **“he made me do it”** are phrases children like to put on repeat. A parent's job is to help children learn to take responsibility for their actions, both because it's right and because it helps teach them cause and effect.

**A lesson that will serve them well for life.**

- ✓ When you catch your child in a lie, ask, **“Is that what really happened or what you wish would have happened?”** Give your child an extra consequence for lying.
- ✓ Emphasize the importance of honesty by creating a household rule that says, **“Tell the truth.”**

✓ Praise your child when they tell the truth-especially when the truth could get them in trouble. Say something like, **“I'm so proud of you for being honest about eating that cupcake after I said no. I'm still going to take away your video games today but because you told the truth you won't lose your game for tomorrow too.”**

✓ Hold each child accountable for their actions, not the one who **“started it.”**

✓ Notice when your child fails to take responsibility for their actions and gently remind them where the responsibilities lie.

✓ Help your children own age appropriate tasks and chores by enforcing consequences if they go undone.

✓ Help your kids learn to problem solve and ask questions when they feel powerless.

✓ Discourage self-pity by having them think outside themselves.

## Defiance

Whether your child ignores you when you tell them to pick up their toys or says **“No!”** when you tell them to stop banging a toy on the floor, defiance is difficult behaviour to address. But it's normal for kids to test limits at one time or another.

✓ Establish Absolute Ground Rules - Make sure your child knows your family rules. For instance, if talking in a disrespectful manner is an absolute no-no in your house, make it clear that there will be consequences for it-no compromises or second chances. Be sure to choose a consequence you're willing to enforce, such as no TV for the rest of the day or doing an extra job, so your child doesn't ignore your requests and undermine your authority.

✓ When your child is defiant, offer a single when... then warning. Say, **“When you pick up your toys, then you will be able to watch TV.”**

- ✓ If your child doesn't comply after the warning, follow through with a consequence. With consistency, your child will learn to listen the first time you speak.
  - ✓ Set your child up for good behaviour - try to avoid situations in which a child may be more likely to be defiant. For instance, if you know your child tends to get cranky if he has too much on his plate, try not to schedule too many things after school or on the weekends.
  - ✓ If your kid hates abrupt transitions, try to allow a bit of extra time when you go from one thing to another.
  - ✓ Take advantage of your child's verbal skills if they are KS2 - talk it out. Calmly discuss with your child what they want, and then try to work out a solution that works for both of you.
  - ✓ Compromise When You Can - Is your daughter insisting on wearing her pretty summery skirt on a cold Autumn day? Rather than engaging in a battle, try to come up with a compromise, such as asking her to wear tights or leggings with the skirt.
  - ✓ Generally speaking, it's a good idea to give in when your child wants to exert control over something minor so that you can stay firm when it comes to the bigger stuff.
  - ✓ Discuss Options - Sometimes, a child may exhibit defiant behaviour because they want more say in when or how they do things. One way to help children feel like they have more control is to give them choices.
- For example, once you set up the parameters "**The toys must be put away**" work out with your child when they will do the task. For instance, toys can be put away any time before bed.

## Too Much Screen Time

Another common child behaviour problem is resisting screen-time limits. Whether your child screams when you tell them to shut off the TV or plays a game on your phone whenever you're not looking, too much screen time isn't healthy.

- ✓ Establish clear rules for screen time. If your child becomes too dependent on electronics for entertainment, dial back the screen time even more.
- ✓ Take away electronics when your child breaks the rules
- ✓ Be a healthy role model - Before you binge-watch your favourite Netflix series, remember that you are setting an example for your kids with your own time spent in front of a screen. Keeping the TV on for background noise all the time or scrolling through your phone any time you have a spare minute may not be modelling the screen-related behaviour you hope to see in your kids.
- ✓ Consider establishing a periodic, family-wide digital detox to ensure that everyone is able to function without their devices. Encourage Other Activities - with a wealth of apps, games, devices, and content, it's easy for kids to become reliant on electronics for entertainment. Encourage your child to seek out and get involved in activities that don't need a screen. Playing outside, reading a book, or even digging out an old boardgame are just a few ideas.
- ✓ Keep electronics out of the bedroom and ensure they are turned off at least an hour before bedtime to allow the brain to power down for sleep. You may also want to keep electronics out of the kitchen or dining room and keep that space for enjoying dinner time with conversation together.
- ✓ Use Parental Controls - There are tools you can use to protect your kids from accessing explicit content on the Internet. Most routers, web browsers, and TVs have parental controls that you can set up to filter or block unwanted content.

- ✓ Explain Why You're Limiting Screen Time - If your kids understand that you're limiting your family's screen time because too much time spent on screens has downsides, they're much more likely to follow the rules you set. If your kids just think you're "**being mean**," they might be more likely to resist or break the rules you are trying to enforce.

Based on what's appropriate for your child's age, explain why violent videogames, TV shows, and movies can be harmful. If your kids use the Internet, make sure you have a conversation with them about the dangers of online predators.

Make sure that every member of your family is included in the discussion about screen time and are part of creating a set of boundaries that everyone can follow.

## Food-Related Problems

You may be dealing with a picky eater. Or perhaps your child claims to be hungry every 10 minutes, or sneaks food during times when it is not allowed. Food-related behaviours can lead to power struggles and body image issues, so it's important to handle them carefully.

- ✓ Proactively work to help your children develop a healthy attitude about food. Make it clear that food is meant to fuel your child's body, not to comfort them when they're sad or entertain them when they're bored.
- ✓ Avoid saying things like "**vegetables are healthy**." Kids tend to think healthy food tastes bad. Instead, talk about how delicious vegetables and other nutritious foods are.
- ✓ Instead of trying to please everyone at every meal, serve one balanced meal that is healthy for everyone, and set limits on snacking.
- ✓ Cooking healthy and tasty meals together can also encourage a positive attitude towards food and eating as can growing food and helping to choose ingredients and food with you at the supermarket. You also can involve your child in the preparation of dinner. Depending on their age, allow them to set the table or tear lettuce up for the salad.
- ✓ You could even allow them to help plan a fun menu and then encourage them to invite their favourite toys, like the teddy bear they still cuddle with at night.
- ✓ Offer New Foods - when working on getting your kids to expand their palate, it's important to consistently introduce new foods. But doing too much too soon is a recipe for overwhelming your child. As a result, serve one new food at a time, and serve it alongside a food that's a familiar favourite.
- ✓ Make Food Fun - Playing with food doesn't have to be a bad thing. A child is more likely to eat foods that are colourful, cut into fun shapes, or paired with a dip. Of course, this often means more work for mum or dad, but if you're desperate to get some variety into your little one, it might be worth it. Invest in cookie cutters that can create fun shapes out of sandwiches, or create ants on a log with celery, peanut butter, and raisins. Or try creating a rainbow out of brightly coloured fruits and vegetables. Award points for each different colour food they try and reward them with a small prize at the end.
- ✓ Add Condiments - sometimes, all your kid needs to eat broccoli is a little bit of ranch dressing or a melted cheese sauce. Likewise, sweet potato fries might need some ketchup or a sweet dipping sauce. So, try adding a tasty condiment if you keep striking out when introducing new foods.
- ✓ Serve Small Portions - Giving your kids small portions serves a dual purpose. First, your kids might be overwhelmed by large portions of foods that are unfamiliar or not their favourite. Second, you'll waste less food.

- ✓ Refrain from Forcing Them to Eat - There are many adults who have suffered long-lasting emotional and physical consequences as a result of being required to clean their plates. For instance, they now may struggle with obesity, food addiction, or an eating disorder.
 

Encourage your child to eat, but don't require them to sit at the dinner table all night before they've been excused from the table. Instead, recognize that your job is to prepare healthy options and their job is to determine how much they will eat.
- ✓ Be a Role Model - Every person has certain food preferences. But, if you don't like cauliflower and your child doesn't like cauliflower, why would they even try it if you're not willing to do the same? As a result, you need to model the behaviour you want to see from your child.

## Disrespectful Behaviour

- Name-calling, throwing things, and mocking you are just a few of the common behaviour problems that show disrespect. If disrespectful behaviour is not addressed appropriately, it will likely get worse with time.
- ✓ If your child's intent is to get your attention, ignoring can be the best course of action. Show your child that sticking their tongue out at you doesn't result in the reaction they're looking for. Ignoring is about refusing to let your child's disrespect derail you from the task at hand.
 

If you tell your child to clean their room and they roll their eyes, don't engage in a lengthy argument over the disrespectful behaviour.

Each minute you spend in a power struggle is 60 seconds they'll put off cleaning. Give a warning about what will happen if they don't get to work.

If eye-rolling is a common problem, address the issue at a later time when both of you are calm. Say something like, "Earlier today when I told you to clean your room, you rolled your eyes. Are you aware that you do that when you're mad?" Talk about the potential consequences of disrespect. Ask, "Do you think that you roll your eyes when your friend says something you don't like?"

Engage in a discussion about how other people feel when they witness rude behaviour. Explain the natural consequences for disrespectful behaviour such as, "Disrespectful children often have trouble making friends."

- ✓ If your child calls you a name, for example, firmly and calmly speak to them about using kind words. Make clear that you will not allow them to use that language at home.
- ✓ Ensure you remain calm and respectful and model how to behave. Never shout but be firm and assertive. Say something like, "I'm not speaking to you like that and I certainly don't expect you to speak to me like that."
- ✓ Grandma's Rule of Discipline - Grandma's rule of discipline is a simple but effective way to get your child to comply. Instead of telling your children what they can't do, tell them how they can earn a privilege.
 

Rather than saying, "If you don't pick up right now, you won't be able to play outside," say, "You can play outside as soon as you are finished picking up your toys." Then, walk away and leave it up to your child to respond. You also might try saying things like, "When you lower your voice and talk calmly, I'll answer you," or "I'll play with you when you stop being bossy." Teach your child that polite and kind behaviour yields positive results.

- ✓ Use a When/Then Notification - Frame requests in a positive way. Use **"when... then"** statements to notify your child what will happen after they choose to change their behaviour. Say, **"When you wait your turn while I'm on the phone, then I can take the time to answer you."**
- ✓ This gives your child an opportunity to change their behaviour. Just make sure you're fully prepared to follow through with a negative consequence. Avoid repeating your warnings over and over again. Otherwise, you'll be training your child not to listen.
- ✓ Provide an Immediate Consequence - Most disrespectful behaviours should result in an immediate consequence. Take your child's age and the seriousness of the offense into consideration when determining the consequence.
- ✓ A calm-down corner can be an effective consequence for young children. If a 6-year-old screams in your face when they are angry, for example, immediately explain to them why this behaviour is inappropriate and provide them an opportunity to correct it.
- ✓ Use Restitution - If your child or teen behaves in a disrespectful manner, restitution may be necessary to discourage it from happening again. Restitution is about doing something kind for the victim or doing something to make reparations for the damage that has been done.
- ✓ If your child hits their sibling, have them do their sibling's chores for the day. Or if your teen breaks something out of anger, they can fix it or pay to get it fixed. Teach your child that saying **"I'm sorry"** doesn't always fix things. Restitution helps them take responsibility for disrespectful behaviour while also working to repair the relationship.

## Whinging/Whining

Whining can be a bad habit-especially if it helps your child get what they want. It's important to curb whining before it becomes an even bigger problem.

- ✓ A good first course of action is ignoring. Show your child that whining, or whingeing won't get you to change your mind.
- ✓ As soon as the whining stops, provide your child with positive attention. Praise your child by saying something such as, **"I like the way you are playing quietly right now!"**
- ✓ Additionally, teach your child more appropriate ways to deal with uncomfortable emotions, like disappointment. Show them that saying, **"I'm sad we can't go to the playground today,"** will get them much better results than repeatedly whingeing about how unfair it is that you won't take them to play in a thunderstorm.
- ✓ Establish a Household Rule about Whining - Establish a household rule about whining, such as, **"Ask nicely for something and accept the answer calmly."** This helps kids understand that their attempts to change your mind won't be effective. Make sure other caregivers are on the same page about your whining rules. If your spouse or a grandparent gives in to whining, it will undermine your efforts. You may need to remind your child about the rule from time to time. **"What's our rule about how we ask for something?"** or **"What's an appropriate way to respond when someone tells you no?"** These responses help your child see that whining is a problem, not a tool for them to use.
- ✓ Remain Calm and Don't Give In - Listening to a child whine can be worse than nails on a chalkboard. However, it's important for adults to remain calm. Take deep breaths, leave the room, or put on some music if it will help you keep your cool. Whatever you do, don't give in. If out of frustration you end up saying, **"Fine, have another packet of crisps!"** you'll have taught your child that whining is an effective way to get what they want.

- ✓ Prevent Whining in the Future - Give your child the skills they need to handle uncomfortable emotions like frustration, disappointment, and sadness without whining. It's important to teach your child about feelings so they can recognize how they feel and learn how to deal with upsetting feelings. For example, if your child is angry because you told them they can't go outside to play, encourage them to deal with those angry feelings by doing something like colouring or doing jumping jacks. Coping skills will help your child deal with their feelings in a positive way. Your child will also need problem-solving skills to deal with their feelings. If your child feels sad because it's raining and your trip to the beach got cancelled, help them find an indoor activity. Empowering your child to solve problems on their own will help them do so without whining.

## Bedtime Behaviour Problems

Whether your child refuses to stay in bed or they insist on sleeping with you, bedtime challenges are common. Without appropriate intervention, your child may become sleep deprived. Lack of sleep has been linked to increased behaviour problems in young children. Sleep deprivation can lead to physical health issues, as well.

- ✓ Establish clear bedtime rules and create a healthy bedtime routine. Consistency is key to helping kids establish healthy sleep habits. So even if you have to return your child to their room a dozen times in an hour, keep doing it. Eventually, their bedtime behaviour will improve. Don't Give In - If your child gets up for that third drink of water and fourth trip to the toilet, you may be tempted to let them stay up or to let them sleep in your bed. You may feel guilty about making your child go to bed when they haven't had a lot of time with you after you've come home from work. But if your child doesn't learn how to be restful and fall asleep in their room, you will only be prolonging sleep problems.

- ✓ Have them get back into bed when all their needs are met and tell them that they must stay there. Turn on the night light, leave the door open a crack, and let your child know that you will check on them every few minutes, but tell them that they must stay in bed. Be gentle, soothing, and calm, but be firm.
- ✓ Have a Consistent Bedtime - Try to keep bedtime consistent, even on the weekends and during the summer. It can be hard to get kids to bed by 9 p.m. when the sun doesn't begin to set until after 8:30 p.m., but it's a good idea to prevent bedtime from sliding toward 10 p.m. or 11 p.m., only to have kids adjust to a new sleep schedule once school starts.
- ✓ Sometimes there may not be enough of a transition between activity and bedtime. If kids are revved up from watching videos, playing, or doing homework, it can be tough for them to make a sudden transition to going to bed and falling asleep. You're likely to have more success getting your child to sleep if you make sure they have some quiet downtime before they go to bed. You already know that bath and Storytime are great ways to get your child settled.
- ✓ Remember to turn off the TV and any other electronics at least an hour before bed. If your child absolutely insists that they are not tired, have them read quietly in their room (or read one or two short chapters to them if your child can't read on their own) or listen to soothing music. The screens in our devices have a higher concentration of blue light than any other light. Blue light is known to affect your levels of melatonin - the hormone that causes you to fall asleep - more than any other light source.

- ✓ **Overtired** - Between homework, play dates, and after-school activities, school-age children can be up way too late. Being overtired can actually lead to hyperactivity in many kids, which can make it even more difficult to fall asleep at bedtime. If your kids are regularly up past their bedtime working on homework, find ways to manage other after-school activities to make more time for homework, or talk to the teachers about how to help with the workload. You can also try to schedule homework for right after school so that kids finish schoolwork before they have an extracurricular activity.

- ✓ **Not Tired Enough** - If your child is taking a nap late in the afternoon after school, it may be interfering with bedtime. Skip the nap, do schoolwork early, and serve an early dinner so that you can try an earlier bedtime. On weekends or in the summer, make sure your child is active and has a busy day so that they are tired by bedtime.

- ✓ **Growing Independence** - School-age kids are constantly flexing their newfound independence muscles, and bedtime can be one of the areas over which they want to exercise control. Try to give choices between specific things as much as possible (“**Would you like these pajamas or these other pajamas?**” or “**Would you like a bubble bath or a bath without bubbles?**”), but make bedtime a firm and non-negotiable rule.

- ✓ **Make the Bedroom Comfortable** - Get the TV and computer out of the bedroom and make sure it's not too hot, which can interfere with sleep. If your child doesn't like the dark, pick out a nightlight together. Try using another area, such as the kitchen table, as a homework workspace so that the bedroom is only for relaxing and sleeping.

## Mastering getting your child “up and out”

- ✓ A week before school starts, begin to adjust bedtime back. While explaining that we are making sure they get enough sleep for school.
- ✓ **Limit Device Use** - As above. Kids need plenty of sleep if they are to get up early and won't fall asleep easily with electronics. A bedtime book is much better to fall asleep to.

- ✓ Do what can be done the night before - bath, lay clothes out ready, pack school bag.

- ✓ **Start a New Morning Routine** - The term “**getting ready**” can be such an abstract term. What does it mean to “**be ready**” for school? We know what we want from our kids, but do they know? That's why we need to plan new morning routines with our children. It helps to sit down before school starts and plan out exactly what your child needs to do every morning. Some items on the list can be:
  - the bed
  - eat breakfast
  - take a shower/have a wash and brush teeth
  - get dressed
  - make pack lunch
  - put on shoes

By knowing exactly what needs to get done before leaving for school, the brain can better plan out the amount of time it will take to get ready.

- ✓ Since many kids detest transitions, it also helps to address reluctance to get changed or leave home. Say something like, “**I know you don't want to take off your pj's - they're so comfy. Here, can you please hold your book while I help you put on your pants?**” This way you've empathized with them and then used a fun distraction to get the job done.

- ✓ Children often don't respond well to being hurried, so if it's at all possible, try not to make mornings a big rush. Instead, wake her up half an hour earlier, or let them help you lay out their outfit the night before so there's less opportunity for dawdling and conflict in the morning.
- ✓ Dressing is a good arena for your child to assert their independence, so don't let getting dressed become a battle between the two of you. Instead of letting them see that their behaviour is ruffling your feathers, stay calm.
- ✓ Let Natural Consequences Take Over - At some point during the first week of school, or maybe the second, your child may start sleeping in again. We can only do so much for our kids. While we can help them plan and show them the way to be successful, it's ultimately up to them.  
After we've set the groundwork, we need to step back. If your daughter doesn't get out of bed and then lacks the time to brush her hair, she will have a tangled mane the entire school day. If your son sleeps in, he won't have time for all the breakfast options and will have to have a plain slice of toast on the way.  
You might also try telling your child that if they don't get dressed soon, they are going to be late for school and then will miss free-play time or whatever else. (You may want to ask your school to give your child a special morning job or activity they love on arrival to help you get your child motivated to be there on time)  
We need to let our kids make these mistakes and feel the consequences. That is the only way we stop nagging. By letting them experience the consequences, our kids will be more self-motivated to get out the door in time.
- ✓ By providing a groundwork of adjusting their bedtime, making kids aware of expectations and giving morning incentives, we are doing our job as parents to make the transition to school as easy as possible. Now, it's up to our kids to take it from here with gentle reminders from us.

## Aggression

Your child's aggressive behaviour might mean throwing a maths book when they're frustrated with homework. Or it could lead to outright punching a sibling or parent when they're mad about some other situation. Some kids become aggressive because they don't know how to handle their feelings in a socially appropriate way. Others are perfectionists who melt down every time things don't go the way they planned. Aggressive behaviour is normal for toddlers and pre-schoolers.

But aggression should decrease over time as your child grows and gains new skills.

- ✓ Give your child an immediate consequence for any act of aggression.
- ✓ Time-out. When used appropriately, time-out teaches children how to calm down. The ultimate goal of time-out should be for children to put themselves in time-out before they lash out aggressively. In this case, the time-out is not meant to punish the child for the behaviour, but rather, to give them the chance to practice calm-down strategies in the moment. Initially, the parent will most likely need to be present with the child to teach them these skills and ensure that they can effectively use them in the future.
- ✓ Restitution. If your child hurts someone, restitution should be part of the consequence. Restitution may involve loaning a favourite toy to the person that they hurt or doing extra chores to pay for the damage. Restitution can help repair relationships and give your child an opportunity to make amends.
- ✓ Loss of privileges. Take away your child's favourite possession or activity for 24 hours. Losing electronics or the chance to go to a friend's house can be an effective reminder not to hurt others.

- ✓ Natural consequences. If your child destroys their own property, a natural consequence might be the most effective. If your older child throws their phone and breaks it, don't buy a new one. Going without a phone and then having to buy their own replacement can serve as a valuable life lesson.
- ✓ Reward systems. If your child exhibits aggression often, establish a reward system. Provide positive reinforcement for desired behaviour, like gentle touches. A token economy system can also eliminate aggression in some children.
- ✓ No matter which type of consequence you choose to use, you need to make sure that it constitutes discipline and not punishment. Embarrassing or shaming your child can backfire and may lead to increased aggression.

### Teach New Skills

- ✓ Aggressive behaviour indicates that your child lacks the skills they need to manage their behaviour appropriately. Teaching children new skills should be part of the discipline process.
- ✓ Social skills, problem-solving skills, and conflict resolution skills will reduce aggressive behaviour.
- ✓ Ensure that your discipline teaches your child what to do instead of acting out or becoming aggressive. Help your child see the alternative choices that don't involve aggression. For example, instead of telling a child, "**Don't hit,**" try saying, "**Use your words.**"
- ✓ Seek Professional Help - If aggression doesn't get better over time, seek professional help.

## Temper Tantrums

Temper tantrums are most common in toddlers and pre-schoolers. But they can extend into grade school if they aren't addressed swiftly. When kids struggle to get a grip on what's going on for them emotionally, they often show their frustration through their behaviour.

A child who isn't sure how to deal with uncomfortable emotions like anger, sadness, and disappointment, may throw a fit. Screaming and kicking is their way of saying, "**Help me, I'm out of control.**"

The other main reason kids have tantrums is because they want to take control of the situation. Their goal is to get their way and hope that screaming will get you to do what they want.

- ✓ Ignoring can be one of the best ways to handle tantrums. Teach your children that stomping, screaming, or throwing themselves to the floor won't get them what they want. Look the other way, pretend you don't hear anything, and act as though you aren't bothered by your child's temper tantrum. Although the screaming may get louder at first, your child will eventually learn that throwing a temper tantrum won't get your attention.
- Sometimes, a timeout is warranted as well. If your child's behaviours are too disruptive for her to remain in a store, for example, take her to the car for a timeout. Then continue your shopping trip when she is calm.
- ✓ Prevention - Although not all temper tantrums can be prevented, a few proactive steps can stop many of them before they start. Take a look at when your child is most likely to exhibit temper tantrums: Is it when he is hungry or too tired? If so, plan ahead and don't schedule tasks that will be difficult for your child unless he's had a nap and a healthy snack.

- ✓ Pre-teaching can be a great way to help kids have realistic expectations. Before you go into the shop, explain what he can expect will happen. Say something like, "**We are going to buy some food and then we are leaving. We aren't looking at the toys today and we aren't buying any toys.**"
- ✓ Establish rules before you enter new situations. Explain what you want your child to do by saying, "**Walk next to me and keep your hands to yourself.**" Warn your child about the consequences if he/she doesn't follow the rules.
- ✓ It's also important to show them better and more effective ways to express their needs and get those needs met. Show your child healthy ways to manage uncomfortable feelings so he knows what to do instead of having a tantrum. Teaching your child about feelings can help him learn socially appropriate ways to deal with them. You can do prompt him to say, "**I'm mad,**" or show him how to take some deep breaths to calm down.
- ✓ Don't Give in to Stop the Temper Tantrum - Make sure temper tantrums aren't effective for your child. If she throws a fit in the store because she wants you to buy him a toy, don't buy her one. Giving in might make things easier in the short-term because it will make the tantrum stop. In the long run, it will only reinforce to your child that tantrums are a good way to get what she wants.
- ✓ Reward Kids for Managing Feelings Appropriately - Provide positive consequences when your child behaves appropriately. Praise him for managing his feelings well and point out good behaviour. Say something like, "**Johnny you did so well in the store today with listening and following directions!**" Reward your child for behaving well. Offer a sticker if he makes it through the shop without crying. If he's unable to wait until the end of the shopping trip, offer stickers every couple of minutes during the trip if he is behaving. These positive discipline strategies take some more effort upfront but can prevent many behavioural issues.

## Inattention

All kids struggle to focus from time to time, especially when they are disinterested. If, however, you notice that your child struggles to concentrate, or they continually move from one task to another without completing any, this may be more difficult to manage.

- ✓ Create structure - Make a routine for your child and stick to it every day. Break tasks into manageable pieces and try using a large wall calendar to help remind a child of their duties.
- ✓ Simplify and organize your child's life. Create a special, quiet space for your child to read, do homework, and take a break from the chaos of everyday life. Keep your home neat and organized so that your child knows where everything goes. This helps reduce unnecessary distractions.
- ✓ Television, video games, and the computer encourage impulsive behaviour and should be regulated. By decreasing time with electronics and increasing time doing engaging activities outside the home, your child will have an outlet for built-up energy.
- ✓ Physical activity burns excess energy in healthy ways. It also helps a child focus their attention on specific movements. Exercise may also help to improve concentration.

## Impulsive Behaviour

Young children tend to be physically impulsive, so it's not unusual for a 4-year-old to hit. Older children are more likely to be verbally impulsive, meaning they may blurt out unkind statements that hurt people's feelings.

There are many things you can do to teach your child impulse control skills.

- ✓ One simple way to reduce impulsive behaviour is by praising your child each time they think before they act or speak. Say, "**Great job using your words when you felt angry today,**" or "**That was a good choice to walk away when you were mad.**"
- ✓ Teach anger management skills and self-discipline skills as well. Gaining control over emotions will help your child control behaviour too.
- ✓ Children with impulse problems can lack self-control. This causes them to speak and act before thinking. Ask your child to verbalize their thoughts and reasoning when the urge to act out arises.  
It's important to understand your child's thought process in order to help him or her curb impulsive behaviours.
- ✓ Promote wait time - another way to control the impulse to speak before thinking is to teach your child how to pause a moment before talking or replying.  
Encourage more thoughtful responses by helping your child with homework assignments and asking interactive questions about a favourite television show or book.

## Swearing and Abusive Language

Children scream and yell when they are angry. But if they start swearing even before they are all of ten years old, you should be worried. They may start yelling or using abusive language to bring you into an argument or simply to get their way.

When your child uses offensive language and swears, here is what you should do.

- ✓ Make sure you are not using such language in front of children.
- ✓ Have zero tolerance for verbal abuse at home. There is no excuse for swearing or cursing. So, if they use such language, there is a consequence.
- ✓ Explain the consequences clearly and ensure they are in place. So, if your nine-year-old is grounded for one day for abusive language, they will have to miss their football practice or music class. There should be no two ways about it.
- ✓ If your child is using such language, correct them immediately. Tell them it is a "**bad word**" and people do not like that word or children who use that word.
- ✓ If you have used that word in front of your child, apologize immediately. You can even ask your child to remind you that it is a bad word, should you ever say it in front of him.

## Lack of motivation and laziness

Your child doesn't seem interested in doing anything at all. Be it schoolwork, art or music practice or even playing, they refuse to participate. Motivating kids is not easy, especially if they are lazy and tend to find an excuse for not doing anything.

When your son or daughter is unmotivated, here is how you can help.

- ✓ Don't get anxious by your child's behaviour. When you do, you may be seen as pushy, and that can encourage them to resist you.
- ✓ You can tell them the stories about your childhood and share your experiences to inspire and encourage them to try something new.
- ✓ Do not force your child to take up a hobby. Give them options and let them choose. Kids are more interested in something that they choose.
- ✓ Take a step back and check: are you forcing your kid to do something? Ask what your child really wants and what motivates him? See your child as a separate person to identify what motivates them.
- ✓ Try to find ways to get your kids motivated on their own. Self-motivation is more powerful than being driven by others.
- ✓ Encourage younger children to take up daily chores by making them fun. You may set a competition of who picks up the greatest number of toys or bits of paper from the floor or who makes their bed first.
- ✓ For older children, making them responsible for tasks such as washing the dishes, setting the table or cleaning up to set the expectations clear. Set limits like we will watch a movie once you have finished your chore.

## ADDITIONALLY

### Look after Yourself

No matter what the behaviour difficulties are you are facing with your child, you can't be supportive 100 percent of the time. It's normal to become overwhelmed or frustrated with yourself or your child. Just as your child will need to take breaks while studying, you'll need your own breaks as well.

Scheduling alone time is important for any parent. Good break options include:

- going for a walk
- going to the gym
- taking a relaxing bath

### Calm yourself

You can't help an impulsive, angry or anxious child if you yourself are aggravated. Children mimic the behaviours they see around them, so if you remain composed and controlled during an outburst, it will help your child to do the same.

Take time to breathe, relax, and collect your thoughts before attempting to pacify your child. The calmer you are, the calmer your child will become.

## Praise and positivity

Praise is a simple but effective discipline strategy that increases good behaviour. Pointing out when your child is following the rules or telling them that you appreciate their compliance will motivate them to keep up the good work. Catch your child being good and point it out.

### Make Praise Effective

Praise and positive attention are healthy when given appropriately. Here are some ways to make your praise particularly effective in encouraging good behaviour:

#### Offer Immediate and Frequent Feedback

Offer frequent praise if your child is playing quietly for an extended period of time or if they're working hard on a project for a whole afternoon.

#### Make Praise Specific

Instead of saying "Good job," say, "Great job putting your plate in the sink right when I asked you to." This makes it clear that you are praising their immediate compliance.

#### Frame Your Praise Positively

Instead of saying, "Nice job not whining," say, "I'm proud of you for staying calm when I said that you couldn't go outside." Point out the behaviours you want to see more of, not the behaviours you hope to diminish. Never mix praise with criticism, or it will lose effectiveness.

#### Praise Effort, Not the Outcome

Praise can build healthy self-esteem when you use it to point out your child's effort. Rather than praise your child for getting a 100, praise their willingness to study for the test.

#### Offer Genuine Praise

Rather than say, "You're the smartest kid ever," or "You're the best football player in the whole school," offer realistic praise. Say things like, "You're a good runner," or "You do a great job of getting your homework done."

