



Positive Behaviour



This booklet aims to give you some ideas about what you can do to promote your child's positive behaviour and some strategies to manage inappropriate behaviour.

Understanding your child's needs

Children's needs and behaviours change as they get older, and understanding these needs will help you better understand your child.

All young children test limits and have tantrums. Research shows that a child's brain is still developing during this period so there are limits to how much they're able to control their emotions.

Remember that behaviour in young children which is often seen as naughty is actually quite normal and part of growing up.



What can I do?

Set firm boundaries

All children need love, guidance and to have rules and boundaries. Rules and boundaries help families to understand how to behave towards each other, and what's OK and not OK.

Family rules

Have a few clear rules and always follow through on them.

Make sure your child has enough sleep

Create a calming bedtime routine for your child, with a bath, story and bed at around the same time each night.

Remember that the light from TVs and electronic devices disturbs sleep, so keep them out of the bedroom.

Note the NHS recommends that
2 year olds need around 11 ½ hours sleep at night and a 1 ½ hour nap
3 year olds need around 11 ½ hours sleep at night and sometimes a nap during the day.
4 year olds need around 11 ½ hours sleep at night

Develop good routines

Children like to know what to expect so a predictable routine helps them feel secure.



One to one time

Young children need positive attention and emotional connection. Sometimes when they are not getting positive attention, they will seek attention in negative ways.

Read a story together, play together with their favourite toys, do a jigsaw, go for a walk, make a cake or anything else you enjoy doing together!



Resolving conflicts

Encourage children to resolve their squabbles between themselves and help them to come to a solution together.

This is the approach we use at nursery, where we ask the children what has happened, listen to both sides of a disagreement and help them to agree on a solution that they are both happy with.

Rewards and discipline

Different parents will have different views about the best ways to encourage children to change their behaviour. Only you will know what works for your child but here are some helpful points to think about.

- Praise children, even for the little things they do.
- Reward positive behaviour.
- Avoid making rash decisions when you're angry.
- Talk to your child about the rewards and consequences of their behaviour, and do it before rather than after.
- Take time to really listen to what your children are saying and explain to them what you are feeling.
- Be a role model and don't do things that you wouldn't want your children to do.



Keeping Your Cool

It's important to find ways to relieve your stress and manage your anger. Lots of things, not only your child's behaviour, can make us feel stressed - from family relationships to managing a work-life balance, health, housing, unemployment and much more. You want to be the best parent you can but being stressed is stressful!



Responding to challenging behaviour

This could be: Kicking, biting, hitting, spitting, pulling hair, head-butting, head-banging, trashing spaces, throwing.

- Try to identify the triggers for these behaviour and avoid situations where behaviour may be affected.
- Make eye contact and get your child's attention before saying anything
- Use simple direct language, such as, 'Stop!'
- Use a sign or symbol to reinforce language.
- Allow time for the child to think and process your command or instructions
- Speak calmly and don't raise your voice
- State positively what you want to happen e.g. 'I need you to come down from there, it's dangerous.'
- Be firm and clear and avoid a power struggle e.g. by saying 'I can wait one minute for you to give that to me' giving the child time to adjust to what is being asked
- Find out what soothes your child and use this strategy consistently
- Remember that every day should be fresh start!



What might cause challenging behaviours?

Challenging behaviour can be a result of a child's stress or anxiety. This is often called a '**trigger**', something that has happened that has caused the behaviour to change.

Common triggers can be:-

Unexpected changes in routine

- Let your child know about any changes before they happen so that they know what to expect

Changes to the environment

- Involve child in making changes to the environment and try to maintain an uncluttered and tidy space at home. Teach your child where toys and equipment goes and involve them with tidying up.

Noise or light levels

- Be mindful of background noise and the lighting in your home.

Inconsistent approaches and responses

- Sometimes different parents (or carers) use different responses in managing behaviours. Always try to remain calm. Be consistent in your responses and make explanations clear and concise.

Difficulties in expressing emotions

- Notice and comment on your child's emotions so that they can start recognising and naming their own emotions, for example 'I can see that you are feeling cross.' Provide a quiet place for them to go to 'unwind'.

Remember

Some strategies need time and repetition to become effective.

Try to stay calm and don't give in!

Useful websites

NSPCC: nspcc.org.uk/help

Family Lives: familylives.org.uk

Cry-sis: cry-sis.org.uk