

Child Development Paediatrics

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SUGGESTIONS FOR ASSISTING THE YOUNG CHILD WHO HAS BEHAVIOUR DIFFICULTIES

These are merely suggestions that may assist your child. A sensible trial and error approach is required and as a parent you will instinctively know what will work best for your child.

- 1) Never assume that your child has received the message first time. Try to keep requests simple, make eye contact with your child, even touching him/her to ensure that your message is received. Avoid yelling requests from one room to your child in another room, as they are unlikely to "tune in".
- 2) Always remember that your child's self esteem is an important predictor of his/her sense of well-being and achievement. Therefore positive encouragement and a belief in your child's abilities rather than focusing on under achievement or perceived "naughty" behaviour will go a long way to protect self-esteem. Children need to feel loved and they need to know that they are special to their parents no matter how difficult their behaviour is or how much they seem to fall short of adult expectations. Separate the behaviour from the child when dealing with difficult behaviour.
- 3) Rewards in the form of special outings or special time with their parents should be given liberally when the child is co-operative and compliant, but it should be made clear that unacceptable behaviour will be ignored or punished by means of time-out or removal of privileges.
- 4) Consistency in dealing with your child's behaviour is important and essential. The rules should not change merely because your child becomes frustrated or insistent. He/she needs to know that you are in control of the situation and that you mean business. Remain firm and ignore pleas, instead indicate that you are not going to change your mind. Avoid long-winded explanations for why you want things to be a certain way, or else you set yourself up for defeat as your child may try to outwit you. Requests are best made in a business-like, firm manner, without displaying any emotion especially if you feel that your child is unlikely to conform. Failure to co-operate with reasonable requests should result in removal of privileges or time-out as punishment.
- 5) If your child is clearly distressed about an issue try to understand what it is that bothers them, before using the "ignoring" method. Children need to feel that their desires and ideas are respected and understood by their parents and carers.
- 6) Make time to enjoy yourself with your child through special outings and/or activities. For all children, having fun with their parents is an important part of healthy development.
- 7) Where rebelliousness and challenging behaviour is extreme it may be necessary to obtain specific behaviour counselling to improve your understanding of your child and your ability to help him/her.

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