CF PSYCHOLOGY PARENT RESOURCES

TIPS FOR MANAGING BEHAVIOR IN CHILDREN:

- Be firm, consistent, and kind. Remember the power of praise and reward. Use a positive attitude toward your child. Establish clear ground rules when the child is young and keep those rules, adjusting them as they get older.

- Be a good role model. Help your child to be organized and to stay calm by being organized and calm yourself. Regular routines and schedules (e.g., daily chores, regular dinner time, regular bedtime, etc.) can help your child know what to expect and to stay calm himself.

- When children are tired, they have a harder time with self-control. Rest, relaxation, and regular routines will help your child do his/her best.

- Provide outlets for children to burn-off excess energy. Children need daily activities where they can choose what to do without getting into trouble for being too noisy or active. For example, playing ball in the yard, riding bikes around the block, playing cars noisily in the bedroom or playroom.

- Provide rewards when your child behaves well. If you see good behavior, make sure your child knows you’ve seen it and appreciate it; this will increase the likelihood that it will happen more often. Reward appropriate behavior with such things as special time with parents or special privileges. Rewards such as money, toys, and candy can be used as a starting place to get the child’s attention; they should soon be replaced by social and personal rewards.

- Create a list of behaviors (e.g., chores) that you expect your child to do on a daily basis (e.g., make the bed, feed the dog, wake-up on time, etc.). Also list the consequences that will happen if these behaviors are not accomplished every day. For example, if the dog is not fed by dinner time, your child does not get dessert that evening. Provide praise or punishment right away.

- Help your child remember. Many children are easily distracted and forgetful. Keep short lists of tasks so your child can check off tasks as they are completed. For example, have a list ready for your child when s/he wakes up in the morning; you could include items such as: get dressed, eat breakfast, brush teeth, get backpack, etc.

- Make sure you have the full attention of your child before making requests. Also, watch to see where your child puts his things when finished with them. If toys are not returned to their proper place, gently remind the child where they go.

- Ask your child to repeat back to you what you have asked them to do. As soon as your child does what you ask, simply say, “Thank you, I appreciate your doing what I asked.”

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TIPS FOR MANAGING PROBLEMATIC BEHAVIORS IN CHILDREN:

- Be firm and consistent. When implemented, behavioral strategies should be consistent across parents and family members as well as school personnel.

- Develop a behavior plan that outlines expectations of the child. The plan includes rewarding the child when he/she behaves well. People are more likely to repeat a behavior that is reinforced or rewarded and less likely to repeat a behavior that is ignored. Sticker charts are often used for younger children. The sticker chart is a nice visual and the child can earn stickers for desired behaviors.

- Make sure to reward specific behavior. Rewards and consequences need to be appropriate to the behavior and the child's age and abilities. Rewards and consequences need to occur soon after the behavior in order to be effective and reduce the behavior in the future.

- When talking to a child about what he or she did wrong, it is important to focus on the behavior and not to criticize the child as a person.

- In addition to rewards, parents should praise their children for desired behaviors. Try to catch the child doing good things. Having a positive attitude toward the child is also helpful.

- To help ensure that expectations are clear, parents can create a list of rules (i.e. Keep hands to self, Use nice hands, Touch gently).

- Time out is another useful strategy. A child should stay in time out for the number of minutes that corresponds to their age.

- Try to avoid saying the word no because this word is a trigger for many kids. Say something like “We can’t do that now because…”

- To increase the likelihood that a child will comply with a request, give the child choices. Also, use if, then statements - “If you do this, then you can…”

- Encourage the child to use coping skills to help them calm down (i.e. deep breathing, squeezing a stress ball, drawing, listening to music). Parents can practice coping skills with their children.

- Often times poor behaviors are a way to get attention, despite being negative attention. Because of this it is sometimes helpful to ignore the problematic behavior.

- For younger children, it is helpful to redirect them and ignore the problematic behavior.

- Spending some extra one on one time with the child can help them feel important and in turn reduce the problematic behavior.

- It is important that parents remain calm when disciplining. If parents find themselves getting annoyed, they should do something to actively help themselves calm down such as walk away, take deep breaths, count to ten, etc.

- Encourage parents to seek professional help when you think it is necessary. Parent management training can be very helpful. It teaches the parent ways to better manage the child’s behavior.

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