

Nine Ways to Reduce Challenging Behavior

After you have identified what triggers challenging behavior in your child, you can use that information to respond more positively to your child's needs. Here are some tips for how to get started:

1. **Change the setting.**

Change the room, activity, or people involved, so your child feels supported. For example, if your child becomes over-stimulated when playing games with her friends, you might recommend she limit the number of activities going on at one time ("Why don't you turn off the TV while you're playing your game?") or try a different activity (such as painting or playing outside).

2. **Respond calmly.**

Respond to the situation calmly and without your own anger — adults may need quiet time too. If your child's behavior has made you angry, take a few minutes to calm down before deciding how to respond.

3. **Teach alternate behaviors.**

Teach your child alternate and more socially appropriate ways of expressing what he wants or needs. For example, if your child fights over sharing toys with friends or siblings, teach him how to ask to borrow ("Can I play with your puzzle for a little while?") and trade ("If I loan you my book, can I play with your puzzle?")

4. **Offer choices.**

Offer choices and opportunities for your child to have more control over her environment. For example, if your child is a fussy eater, ask her what she'd like to eat, provide her with one or two options ("Would you like a peanut-butter or tuna-fish sandwich?"), or make her part of the planning ("Why don't you help me cook dinner/pick out groceries?").

5. **Notice the positive.**

Notice positive behavior when it occurs and provide genuine praise. For example, "That was very nice of you to let your brother play with your toy." Noticing your child when she is using positive behavior lets her know that you respect her.

6. **Be consistent.**

Make sure there are consistent and predictable routines. "We wash our face, brush our teeth, and put on our pajamas every night before we go to bed." Make sure that you are consistent in what you ask and that you follow through on what you say. If you say "you can watch TV after you finish cleaning up" make sure there is enough time for this to happen.

7. **Avoid surprises.**

When there is a change in a routine or schedule, prepare your child ahead of time so he knows what to expect. For example, "Mommy and Daddy are going out tonight, so we won't be able to read you your bedtime story. But why don't we pick out a book together for us to read before we go out?"

8. **Have fun.**

Make sure there is joy and fun in your child's life every day. Many parents find it helpful to play with their children before they have to do housework or errands. Think of what brings a smile to your child's face and make time each day to smile together.

9. **Practice yoga.**

Yoga has many wonderful benefits for kids (and adults!). Some of these include feeling more relaxed, focused and energized. For more information or how to get started, read [Let's Practice Yoga](#).

Real Life Story: *Read how a mother helped her child learn positive ways of behaving.*

[NEXT: Addressing Persistent Behavior](#)