

Serious behavioural difficulties: Suggestions for families

Dealing with children's behaviour problems is stressful and sometimes provokes anger in adults. Finding ways to reduce your own stress levels will help you deal more easily with your child. It may require extra effort at times to stay tuned in to your child's good points. Ensure that you have lots of fun time with your child. This enables the relationship to remain a positive one even though you need to set firm limits on your child's behaviour.

How you can help

Use positive strategies

Responding positively to your child's appropriate behaviour is essential. Both praise and incentive programs (star charts) can be very useful in encouraging positive behaviour.

Have reasonable expectations

Expectations need to be reasonable and appropriate for the individual child. For example, even though one child may have been happy and able to keep their room neat and tidy by the time they are seven years old, another child of the same age might find it too hard and become defiant when his or her parent insists on it.

Have clear and consistent rules

Ensure rules are clear, well-known by all of the family, and consistently enforced. It will help if all members of the family follow the same plan. It is very important to manage your own frustration and stick to the rules, even when your child is at his or her most annoying and disobedient.

Avoid power struggles

Getting involved in arguments and power struggles only makes oppositional behaviour more likely. Stating expectations calmly, clearly and reasonably is much more effective. It also helps to reduce your stress levels and those of your child.





How you can help – continued

Use punishment sparingly

Building appropriate skills is more effective than trying to stop bad habits with punishment.

Help children to manage emotions

Learning ways to manage emotions is very important for these children. Show them by your example ways to cool down and walk away when emotions are running high.

Help children develop a sense of care and responsibility

Talking with children about the consequences their behaviour has for other people helps them learn to consider the feelings of others.

Monitor your child

Keep track of your child's whereabouts, what he or she is doing and with whom. This is important especially as your child gets older, as his or her impulsiveness may lead him or her into trouble.

De-stress

Manage your own stress levels by scheduling time to do something you enjoy.

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This resource is part of a range of KidsMatter Primary information sheets for families and school staff. View them all online at www.kidsmatter.edu.au



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Department of Health and Ageing

