

## **WHEN DIFFICULT BEHAVIOR OCCURS**

Work hard to remain calm and in control when the child is not. Breathe deeply a moment and “take a step back” from the situation.

### **DO NOT THREATEN, ARGUE, LECTURE OR SPANK**

Do be clear in stating your expectations of the child, and be consistent in following through with things. Children do not listen to lectures. Spanking creates pain and anger in the child. This anger will have to be dealt with sooner or later, and it can be avoided by **NOT** spanking the child.

### **CHANGE HAS TO START WITH THE ADULTS**

Adults usually have more ability to control their behavior than children. Changes in the child’s behavior follow changes in the adult’s behavior.

### **TAKE CHARGE, BE OBJECTIVE BUT IN CONTROL**

When a child does something that is not allowed, don’t ask if they did it or ask why. Say for example, “I see you left the blocks in the hall. Please put them away now” - and follow through.

“I see that you hit Angela. I cannot allow you to hurt her. What were you trying to tell her?” not “Why did you hit her”?

### **TEACH CHILDREN TO ASK FOR WHAT THEY NEED**

When children disagree let them try to work it out between themselves. If they are unable to do so, **HELP** them (don’t take over). For example, Emily hits Tim because he won’t give her the Play dough. Pay attention to Tim’s injury, and then bring Emily over to him. Say to Tim “Tell Emily how that felt when she hit you”. He will (hopefully) say “It hurt” or “I didn’t like it”, etc. If he can’t say anything, you may say something like “It looked like it hurt, you cried”, etc. Ask Emily what else she could have done to get what she wanted.

Have her come up with a solution if possible. If she can’t, give her some ideas “You could have asked him for a turn”, “You could have asked if he would let you have a piece”, etc. Encourage children to handle these kinds of issues themselves rather than always having to have an adult handle problems for them.

### **REDIRECT BEHAVIORS FIRST**

Redirect behavior whenever possible instead of giving consequences, such as time-out. When consequences are used too often, they become ineffective.

### **WHEN THE RULES CHANGE, MISBEHAVIOR INITIALLY MAY INCREASE**

Expect this. Children are persistent creatures - they learn what the rules are by testing them. When rules are inconsistent a lot of testing is required to find out what rules are in force. When the child is convinced that the rules are stable and permanent, testing can decrease dramatically. It probably will never stop all together.

## **WHEN CONSEQUENCES ARE NEEDED THEY SHOULD BE:**

**Immediate** - happens now, not tonight or “when your father gets home”.

**Logical** - are connected to the misbehavior. If a child rides his tricycle in the street, he/she loses the privilege of riding the tricycle for a short period of time (very brief, 15 - 20 minute. This is more appropriate than losing the privilege of watching TV that night.

It's important to “shape up” the behavior you want by having the child do the “right thing”. Give the tricycle back after a brief period. “You may go out now and ride your tricycle. Remember to stay in the driveway”. Be sure to supervise closely first. After a few times of briefly removing the privilege, the child will usually learn to stay in the driveway and becomes more aware of the limits and boundaries.

**Be short and sweet** - children do not listen to lectures. It is important to explain to children why something is being done - in one or two sentences - then that is it! Don't be pulled into conversations or debates over an issue. “You rode the tricycle in the street and that is not safe, so it must be put away now”.

## **BE CONSISTENT**

When a new behavior technique is being used, be sure to be **very consistent** with it, even when it doesn't seem to be working. When the child learns that this new “rule” is here to stay, the testing will decrease. It can take 2 to 4 weeks of consistent use of a new method, before the testing behavior stops.

## **BE PATIENT**

It took a long time for patterns of misbehavior to become established and it will take time to extinguish them.

## **TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF**

It is important for you to spend time away from your children, and **HAVE FUN** with other adults. Parenting is an exhausting demanding job, and to do it well, you have to take care of yourself. Many parents, particularly single parents, spend a lot of time nurturing their young children, but receive little nurturing themselves. It is similar to being in a state of perpetual need - like never getting enough sleep. We can go for short periods of deprivation without much harm, but over a period of time it wears on the individual, making that person tired, depressed, short tempered, feeling very needy and empty inside. In this state it is impossible to give to children the things they need. **YOU MUST TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF. HAVE SOME FUN!!**