



Family Behavior Toolbox

Welcome to the Family Behavior Toolbox

This software is intended for parents and family members who wish to deal with some of the challenges in raising children between the ages of 2 and 12. While it is our hope that you will find the strategies helpful, they are not meant as a replacement to seeing a qualified mental health professional.

Some things to consider when approaching challenging behaviors

There may be many possible reasons for the difficult behavior.

- They may include transitions in the child's life such as a change in teachers at school or a change in routine at home.
- The problem could be social skills based. Younger children may have difficulty putting into words what they want or need. They also may have difficulty expressing feelings and act them out instead.
- Some problems are more likely to occur at certain times of the day. Usually behavior is the most difficult in the late afternoon, when children are tired and hungry. The child could also be just plain bored.
- The difficulty could be due to lack of structure. Children will behave more appropriately when they know what to expect such as meal and bed times, when they are expected to do their homework, or when they can watch their TV.
- Your child may also have found out that if they have an angry outburst they will almost always get what they want.
- Temperament may play a strong part. The child may always have had a strong need for attention and control. Each child in your family likely has a different temperament and will likely need a different approach.

Make sure that you have appropriate expectations of your child

- Is my child going through a stage that is relatively normal for his age and will pass in time?
- Am I expecting too much? Expecting a five year old to wait patiently for an hour to see the family doctor may be asking a bit too much.
- Is the problem more one of my own than that of the child's? For example, a parent may feel embarrassed in a grocery store when their child speaks loudly.
- Sometimes it is best to let the behavior go, especially if it has occurred only once or twice and is not affecting others. If the behavior is disruptive and is having a significant impact on you and/or others, then there may definitely be a need to implement some new strategies.

Components of success

- When reviewing strategies in your area of concern, and knowing your child, you will come across approaches that are more likely to work than others. Trust your judgment and use the ones that you feel the most comfortable with, as they will probably be the most successful.
- Whatever strategies you choose, stick with them and be patient. Avoid giving up on one set of strategies too quickly before moving on to the next. It may take at least two to three weeks to give you enough information as to whether the approach is working.
- Be consistent in how you apply strategies.
- Be positive with the child about any changes they are making.
- Stay calm and avoid over-reacting when problems present themselves.
- One of the most important things is to continue to build your relationship with your child. Do things with your child, which you both enjoy, on a one-to-one basis.

Looking after yourself

- If you find your child's behavior extremely demanding and difficult to manage, talk to your family physician who can refer you to an appropriate professional such as a developmental pediatrician. You can also enlist the help of a psychologist available through local agencies or in private practice. Together, you can work out possible solutions.
- When possible take breaks from your child, even for a few hours.
- Join a support group. Meeting with other parents can be extremely helpful.

We hope you will find the Family Behavior Toolbox helpful in your home. We have every confidence there are ideas that will make a difference. Your comments are also very much welcomed.

David Erickson PhD. R.Psych