

Coping with Your Child's Behaviour

1. 'Catch' your child being good and give a reward right away. Reward behaviours you want to see again.
2. With your actions and words, let your child see how proud you are of him or her. Show pleasure in your child's steps towards learning self-control.
3. Don't haggle or argue about small things. Once you have made a decision and shared it with your child, stick with it. For example, don't let your child argue with you about watching one more television programme or staying up past bedtime.
4. Accept that your child will be absent minded. It may seem that you are always reminding your child about something, but try not to get annoyed and say things like. 'If I have to tell you one more time!'. Repeat directions as if you were telling the child for the first time. Try to state the directions in a different way, and try to use things your child can see and hear as reminders.
5. Make directions brief. First, get your child's attention, then state what to do slowly, with simple words and short sentences. Start with one thing and gradually give longer directions as your child is able to remember them. Keep your voice calm and avoid sounding sarcastic or annoyed. Ask your child to repeat what you said. Not only does this help your child remember, but you can also make sure you have understood each other. Reward your child immediately with verbal or physical praise.
6. Make rules specific. State briefly and precisely what you expect. For example, 'Take turns talking', 'Put your feet on the floor'. Avoid vague rules such as 'Be nice to your sister'.
7. Post rules in your home. Decide as a family what the rules are and post them where they are easily seen. If you must punish the child, make it clear that the punishment is for breaking the rule, not because you are 'being mean'. For example, you might post these dinnertime rules on the fridge:
 1. Use your fork to eat
 2. Chew with your mouth closed

8. A rule at home should be a rule in a public place. The child needs to expect the same consequence.
9. Help your child learn to make good choices and not to act before thinking. When you can, give the child a chance to make choices. Give the child two clear choices, both of which you will accept

Try this:

Parent: We're going to visit Grandma. You may wear your blue shirt or your red shirt. Which one do you choose?

Not this:

Parent: What are you going to wear to Grandma's?

Child: My cowboy suit.

Parent: Oh no you won't!

10. Respond immediately to a behaviour, whether it's good or bad. Show your child that behaviours have immediate consequences.
11. Reward the child for a particular behaviour, not for generally 'being good'. Make sure the child knows exactly what the reward is for. This way, your child will learn 'this is a good thing I can do by myself, without mum or dad telling me'.

Try this:

'You were really thinking when you turned that tap off so quickly'

Not this:

'You are the cleverest kid around!'

12. Be tolerant and ignore some behaviours. Some active children develop habits such as tapping their fingers or humming. By not reacting, you are not rewarding the behaviour.