



Happy children, Happy parents

Feelings drive behaviour - remember your child's behaviour is a way of communicating to you how they're feeling. Help your child to recognise and name their feelings: "you're sad because your favourite car/doll/toy is broken."

- All feelings are acceptable; but all behaviour may not be. It's confusing for your child to have their anger, sadness or jealousy denied so it's important that your child understands that all feelings are acceptable. Children need parents to acknowledge all their feelings, both positive and negative.
- All behaviour has a reason. Track back an incident and you will be able to work out how your child might have been feeling.
- What we pay attention to is what we get more of. Ignore the behaviour you don't want, but don't ignore your child. Distraction is a good way to prevent difficult behaviour escalating; for example, if your child is whining, they may be hungry, so you could distract your child by asking them to help you prepare dinner.

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For additional fact sheets see www.ihv.org.uk

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- **Praise is magic.** Noticing your child's good behaviour, and commenting and praising them when they are behaving nicely works wonders! Describe the behaviour: "that's a fantastic drawing. I love the green you've used for the tree." Or: "I really like your sense of humour; you're special."
- **Communication is key.** Remember that most of our communication with our children is non-verbal - we communicate more by our behaviour and tone of voice than we do with our words. Praise your child with body language, smiles or a warm tone of voice. Your child will copy you.
- **Children need consistency.** Children feel safe when parents establish clear boundaries and they understand what is likely to happen next. Making sure there's consistency amongst the adults in your house (including grandparents, too).
- **Young children need adult help to calm themselves.** Babies and young children are unable to reduce their stress levels - they need a calm, loving adult to soothe them. When your little one is having a tantrum, they will be overcome with stress hormones - this can be a frightening and overwhelming experience for your child, and one they cannot bring under control on their own. A soothing touch from mum or dad helps to release oxytocin (the love and trust hormone) in your child's brain, making them feel calm, safe and warm. A 'calming cushion' is a much better way to help your child than putting them on the 'naughty step'.
- **Nurture yourself.** Remember that parents have needs and feelings too! It's very difficult to be a calm, patient parent if you're feeling stressed or your own mental or emotional health is poor. Parents are people too. Have a cup of tea and a chat, take a bubble bath or go for a run.

Do also remember that it's a sign of strength - not weakness - to ask for help if you need it.

- Empathy is your ace card. Always try and empathise with the feelings your child is showing you through their behaviour. If in doubt, try to name out loud the feelings you think your child is showing you with his/her behaviour.

More information

Top Tips for parents are available to download free from:
bit.ly/1lwLRq7