

Tips for Parents

Children need a supportive, nurturing environment in which to learn and develop their skills.

Spend time with your child

When your child approaches you, stop what you are doing and spend time with them if you can, small amounts of time are more valuable than longer periods. Show an interest in what they are doing, show them that you like what they are doing as they are more likely to do it again. Be available for them when you are together.

Speak Nicely

Speaking to children in a nice voice is very important as this conveys respect and teaches them how to speak respectfully to others.

Chat and Listen Often

Ask your child about their day and listen to their stories. Children learn to express themselves through conversations. Keeping communication open and honest builds family relationships.

Share Your Own Experiences

Children need to practice listening as well as talking. Share a highlight of your day and talk about things that they may be interested in.

Arrange Activities

Make sure your child has something to do such as bringing activities with you for times when there is little for children to do. E.g. Doctors visits, family outings to a restaurant etc.

Prepare in Advance

Problems can be avoided by thinking ahead and planning. To avoid last minute rushing, be organised and get everything you need ready early.

Be Affectionate

It's important for children to know they are loved and cared for. Hugs, kisses and cuddles make children feel wanted and loved. Tune into the level of physical affection you child is comfortable with try to match it.

Assertive Discipline:

Using assertive discipline involves being consistent, acting quickly when children misbehave and teaching them how to behave in an acceptable way. This involves **staying calm** and using fair predictable consequences which match the problem behaviour. Discipline helps children to accept necessary rules and limits to develop self control. Through discipline children learn to consider others and to express their feelings in ways that respect the needs of others. Discipline also helps children to accept responsibility for their own actions. Discipline works best when children live in a predictable world and receive plenty of attention for good behaviour. Sometimes problems can be avoided by thinking ahead and planning.

Setting Ground Rules:

Discuss two or three simple rules with children; **rules should state what you want them to do** rather than what not to do e.g. "sharing nicely", "using walking feet", "keeping your hands to yourself" etc.

Praise Good Behaviour:

When children behave well and follow the rules ensure that they are given plenty of praise for this. It is sometimes better to ignore minor misbehaviour, especially if it is being used to gain attention, provide the attention when the children are doing something you want them to! E.g. "I really like the way you waited for me". Use your voice effectively, making what you say warm and genuine.

Use Directed Discussion:

If a child misbehaves or forgets a rule, **check they know what the rule is**. If not remind them and get them to practise what they should have done.

Give Clear Calm Instructions

Let the child know what you want them to do. Get close, say the child's name **and tell them in a calm firm voice what you want them to do**.

Start instructions tell the child to start doing something e.g. "Taylor, pick up the cars now, please".

Stop instructions are used when you want the child to stop doing something e.g. "Taylor, stop hitting David and keep your hands to yourself".

Try to only repeat a start instruction once, and do not repeat a stop instruction at all. After you have given the instruction, wait five seconds to see if the child does what has been asked, if not use a back up consequence. **Remember to use a quiet calm voice, shouting at children only teaches them that you have to raise your voice to get what you want.**

Take away a Problem Activity

If a toy or activity is causing a problem remove it for a short time (5 – 30 minutes) return the activity after this period so that the child has an opportunity to play with it correctly. Explain to your child why you have removed it! And tell them they can try again later.

Back up Instructions with Quiet Time

Quiet time is a brief, mild and effective way of helping children to learn more acceptable behaviour. Use quiet time if the child has not done as you have asked.

Quiet time involves removing the child from the activity where the problem occurred and having them sit quietly on the side for a short period of time. When they are in quiet time **do not give them any attention**. This is the time when the child should be quiet, not a time to talk or attract attention. Once the child has been quiet for the allocated period of time, they can rejoin the activity. Short periods of quiet time are more effective than longer ones, 1 minute to start with but no more than 3 minutes. This is not always an easy strategy to use at first and will need, quiet calm perseverance for it to be effective.

Ideas from Triple P Positive Parenting Programme.