Encouraging Good Behaviour for your child

Gateshead Primary Care Trust
South Tyneside Primary Care Trust
Sunderland Teaching Primary Care Trust
Behaviour

Being a parent can be hard work, yet we get no training on how to be a good mam or dad.

We all have different ideas about good and bad behaviour. What is bad behaviour to one might be accepted as normal by others.

Most parents find that their child’s behaviour gets them down or worries them sometimes.

There may be times when whatever you do doesn’t seem to work. This leaflet gives some general suggestions to encourage good behaviour.

Understanding your child’s behaviour

There may be several reasons why your child’s behaviour is difficult. Any small changes to your child’s daily life/routine can cause distress. e.g.:

• Moving house
• Birth of a new baby
• Starting playgroup
Be positive, show what is good behaviour

Responding positively when your child is being good e.g. “Good boy, you are eating your dinner really nicely,” tells them they are behaving well. Responding positively includes giving your child attention, smiling, making encouraging comments or giving a hug etc.

Be consistent

It is important to be consistent so your child learns what behaviour is acceptable and what is not. Try not to over-react if your child still does not do as you ask.

Each time your child does something wrong you must respond in the same way. If you give in once, the next time you respond differently your child will get confused.

If there are two parents, both should respond in the same way and try to support each other. A child will learn to go to the softer parent which could cause an argument.

If, as parents you disagree about how to discipline your child, discuss this calmly when the child is not there. Never argue about how you will deal with your child in front of them.

It takes time for your child to learn rules. If your child is to learn these rules you must teach them clearly. Children generally behave better when they understand rules.
Say what you mean

Always tell your child what you want them to do e.g. do not say “Will you stop hitting your sister?” This is a question, therefore you are giving your child a choice about whether to obey you or not. “Stop hitting your sister” would be a more appropriate comment.

In some cases a parent can tell a child to do something repeatedly then end up doing it themselves. It would be better to tell the child what you want, repeat your request in a firmer slightly louder voice.

It is important not to give up too quickly, your child will learn that you mean what you say.
Tantrums

Almost all young children have had temper tantrums at some stage. One reason is that children often want to express themselves more than they are able. They feel frustrated and the frustration comes out as a tantrum. Once a child can talk more, tantrums often lessen.

If you think your child is building up to a tantrum try to distract their attention before the tantrum happens. Try to find an instant distraction when a tantrum is starting, e.g. express surprise and interest at something else.

If distraction has not worked don’t lose your temper, stay calm, ignore the look you get from people around you and don’t give in.

Tantrums often happen when shopping, this can be very embarrassing and hard to cope with, try to stay calm. Shopping can be boring for children, keep shopping trips short. Involve your child in the shopping e.g. “Can you help me find the beans?” With encouragement shopping trips can be fun.

There is a difference between praising/rewarding good behaviour and bribing a child to be good. Buying sweets to stop a tantrum is bribing a child and will not encourage good behaviour.
Smacking

Children who are treated aggressively by their parents are more likely to be aggressive themselves. They may take out their angry feelings on others who are smaller and weaker than they are. It is better to teach by example that hitting is wrong.

Is it funny?

Occasionally children do things which are naughty but ‘cute’. The first reaction may be to laugh. If you laugh or smile at your child, you will encourage them to repeat this behaviour. This “cute” behaviour is then more likely to become unwanted and annoying.
Remember

1. Praise good behaviour
2. Distract temper tantrums
3. Stay calm
4. Don’t smack
5. Be consistent

If you feel that things are getting out of control, get help. Talking to someone who understands what you’re going through may be the first and biggest step towards making things better.

If you would like further help, contact your Health Visitor or GP.
NHS South of Tyne and Wear is committed to raising the standard of written information to patients, their carers, people who use the NHS and general public.

This information can be made available in another format or language on request. Please contact the Communications and PR Team Tel: 0191 529 7118 Email: mopil@sotw.nhs.uk