

SURVIVING PARENTHOOD

*Simple Solutions
for Typical
Behavior
Problems*

By Maria Sargent



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INTRODUCTION

When to Begin



It may be difficult to determine when you should use a formal program to manage a behavior. After all, they are just children, aren't they?

So, when SHOULD you say "enough is enough" and consider running a program?

Well....

1. Is the behavior causing a chronic problem for you or your family?
2. Is the behavior causing chronic problems for the child?
3. Is the behavior getting the child a lot of attention?
4. Is the behavior becoming a habit?

If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, then yes, it is time to consider running a program and getting rid of the behavior. It will take time, but you are probably already spending a great deal of time dealing with the behavior anyway. It is better to spend a little bit of extra time and get rid of the problem once and for all.

In this manual we will walk through the basic ways to run a behavior program. For serious problems, you can get more ideas in the manual titled, *The Challenging Child: Assisting Both Your Child and Your Family in Difficult Situations*".

Managing Your Life

So, how do you deal with a behavior problem AND manage everything else you have to do in your day? Well, you take an honest look at your life and then plan!

1. *How bad is the behavior problem?*
2. *How long do you think it will take to really deal manage the problem?*
3. *What is the schedule of your typical day?*
4. *When do you have extra time so you can really focus on the problem?*
5. *Do you have anyone to help you and/or manage the other demands/children in your home?*

Once you have the answer to these questions, then you will know how to start. For example, if you work a great deal, you might want to wait to start the program on a long weekend. If you have been stressed a great deal, it might be better to ask a friend or family member to help. In other words, you have to think about yourself as well as the child. You are in this together!



The reality, though??? Sometimes there IS no good time to start! Maybe you will never have free time or someone to help you... Well, if that is the case, then you are going to have to take a deep breath and just do it. Yes, it will be hard, but if you do not deal with the problem now while your child is younger, it will be even harder down the road.

Just remember, once you get rid of the behavior, your home will finally be a place of calm and peace----something that both you and your family deserve. The work will be worth it.

Family Support

Every family is different and so is the amount of support you can count on. If you have family (or friends) that will help you---use them! Just remember that YOU are in charge and should make the decisions about what is right or wrong for your child. If you see someone really has a different opinion and/or is working against you, then it is much better to manage the problem on your own.

What if your situation is even worse than that? What if you share custody with someone who refuses to follow your new rules or even works against your plan? In those cases, all you can do is limit that person's contact with the child to the degree you can (sometimes you have no choice) and then make it very clear to the child that there are *different rules in your house*.

Here are some ways you can do this:

1. Use picture charts to show your house rules
2. Go over the rules when your child returns home
3. Give the child time to “settle back in” when they return home---be patient with them. It is hard for the child too!
4. Deal honestly with the problem----it is OK to say, that the other person allows them to (stay up late, etc.) but you have a different rule. Make the difference clear without judgment or comment. Just state the facts and leave it at that.



Yes, it is true that things would be so much easier if everyone was on the same page, but sometimes that isn't possible. Just know that you still CAN make this work.

Issues to Consider

Is there anything else you should consider? Yes----let's take a look at a few more things before we get started....

Remember YOU are the Adult

When we think about behavior problems, we often think too much about what the child is doing and not enough about what WE are doing. The reality is children learn what they are taught, and we often accidentally teach children to continue some of these behaviors. Don't feel guilty about this----we are all doing the best we can. Just remember that we sometimes have to change OUR behavior before we can change a behavior in our child.

For example, I remember when my own son used a swear word for the first time, and it shocked me so much I made way too big of a deal over it. Well, that two-year-old noticed and learned that he got a lot of attention for that word, so he used it...often. What a mistake! And I manage behavior for a living 😊 It took me three months to get rid of that swear word!



So, just remember parenting is a hard job, and you **will** make mistakes. You will scream when you shouldn't, over-react when you should be calm, ignore a behavior because you are too tired and don't want to deal with it, etc., etc. Just do the best you can, love the child, and try to do better next time. That will make up for any of the normal mistakes of parenthood. Your child WILL survive your parenting!

Be Confident

The problem with behavior issues is everyone has an opinion about what you should do, and yes, that goes for me, the author, as well. LOL But, YOU are the one that must and should decide how to manage the situation, **so stop second-guessing yourself!** If you sit there and mentally try to remember what every expert says about tantrums, etc., you are going to drive yourself up a wall. Have you noticed that no one agrees? ☺

No, **YOU** must decide what to do and how to do it based on your life, your belief system, and your child's needs. *There is no one correct way to handle these problems.*



Once you understand this concept, you not only will be less stressed, you will get better results. A child responds to both the technique and the authority of the person using it. If you are unsure of yourself, the child can smell that fear a mile away and will take advantage of your confusion. So, just make the best decision you can at the moment and move on with confidence---even if you are faking it. If you made a mistake and should have handled it differently, you can always adjust down the road.

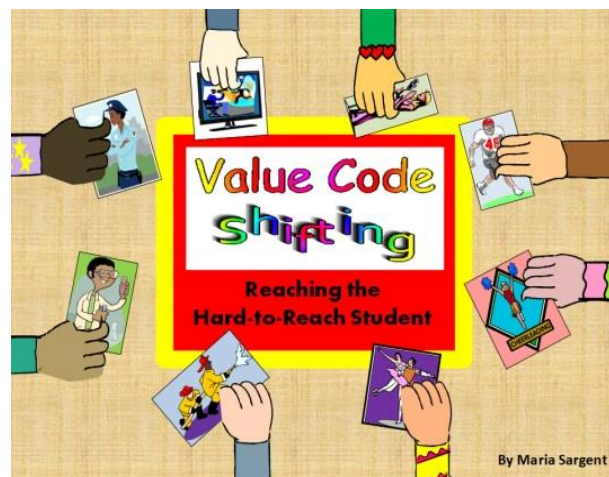
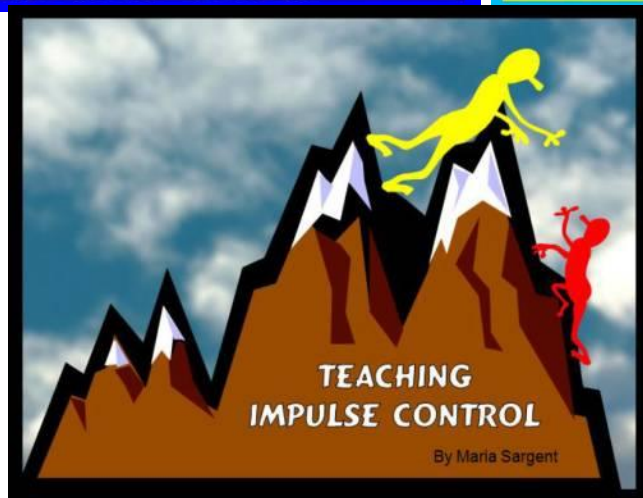
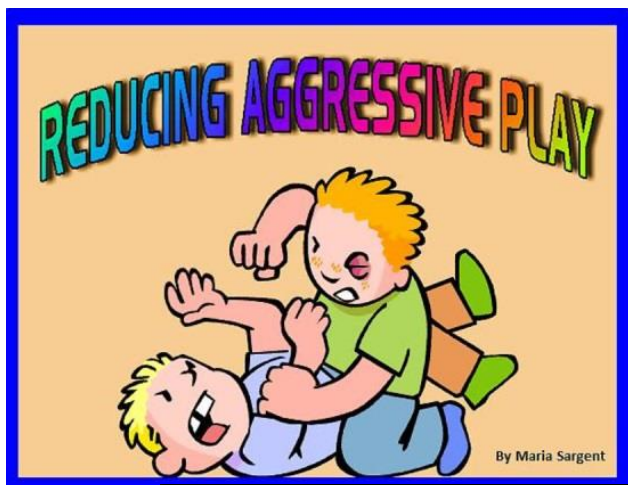
The Goal is to TEACH

The word *discipline* comes from the word *disciple* and means “one who is taught” and that is what your discipline is meant to do---teach!

So what *DO you want to teach your child?* What are the values you wish them to learn? This should always be in the back of your mind when you are dealing with a problem. Yes, you want to get rid of their hitting, but why? Is it because it will hold them back in sports? Is it because they will get in trouble? Is it because you feel it is spiritually wrong? You must decide what you are teaching and why. That will make your discipline effective for your value system and goals!

THE BASICS

So, enough with the little facts and comments---let's get to the real techniques! This manual gives the basics of how to deal with behavior issues. I have kept it very simple and to the point. If you would like to learn more, though, please see the behavior section of the Neuro-Teach website (<http://www.neuro-teach.com/behavior.html>). It contains information for teachers and other professionals that you might really enjoy. Some manuals to look for on that page include:



Yes, these manuals are written for professionals, but that doesn't matter at all. The techniques remain the same regardless of where they are used. Take a look and see if some will work for your home!

Using “Ignoring”

A wonderful first technique, and one many adults try, is ignoring. Ignoring is VERY effective since so many children misbehave just to get attention. Unfortunately, though, you must do it right or you actually can make the problem worse. If you don't manage it well, this is what happens:

Result of “Failed” Ignoring

- ❖ Child makes disruptive noise
- ❖ You choose to ignore
- ❖ Child makes noise again
- ❖ You continue to ignore
- ❖ Child repeats noise 30 more times
- ❖ You finally say something to child...

You have just taught the child that they must make the noise at least 30 times in order to get your attention 😊

This “lesson” wasn’t exactly what you had in mind, is it?

So, if you are going to use ignoring, make sure that you keep these tips in mind or you can accidentally make the problem worse. If after reading them you think maybe ignoring is not for you, or at least not for this behavior problem, don’t fear, there are many other techniques you can use!

When Ignoring May Not be Wise

There are certain situations where ignoring will not work or is not suggested. They include:

1. You are sensitive to noise and would never be able to ignore for long.
2. Other children are around and will probably end up learning the misbehavior.
3. The child is in danger, someone else could be hurt, and/or objects are being destroyed.
4. It is just not the right time to allow the behavior to continue. It is bothering others or too difficult to manage.

If any of these conditions are present, or you just have a gut feeling that ignoring is not going to work well at that time, just skip it, and try something else! YOU will know best which method to use...



Helping the Child While Ignoring

Some children may not even notice that you are “ignoring” them (too busy misbehaving 😊) and may need a little help. You can help them by:

1. Praising someone who is showing the behavior you want. For example, “Mommy, I see that you’re eating, so you can have desert when you’re done!” Make sure to address the person who is doing the correct behavior, not the child. The child should be ignored.

2. If no one else is around, that is okay, just praise yourself. I am sure that YOU are doing the right thing. So, just say out loud something like, “I’m not screaming so I’m ready to go into the store!” Make sure to address yourself, not the child. The child should be ignored.

Helping the Child While Ignoring

1

Praise someone who is nearby, even another adult, to signal there is a problem without giving too much attention to the child.

The technical term for this action is “proximal praise”



2

If no one else is around, then just praise yourself!



3. Some children are so busy misbehaving that they can't even think about what to do instead. Help them figure out the "correct behavior" by saying what that behavior should be. Do NOT tell the child directly, though. Just say to someone else nearby (or on a pretend phone call) something like, "When he stops screaming he is going to be able to play with you too. I bet it is soon!" You can also remind the child by addressing yourself. "When (child's name) gets quiet, she can play the game, and I will go get us some drinks." Anything that gives a hint about what the child should do instead will work! You decide what will help your little one the best.

"Signaling" Ignoring

3

Cue the child on how to solve the problem by telling someone else (or yourself) what they should be doing instead



4

Physically prompt the child without making eye contact or speaking if needed.

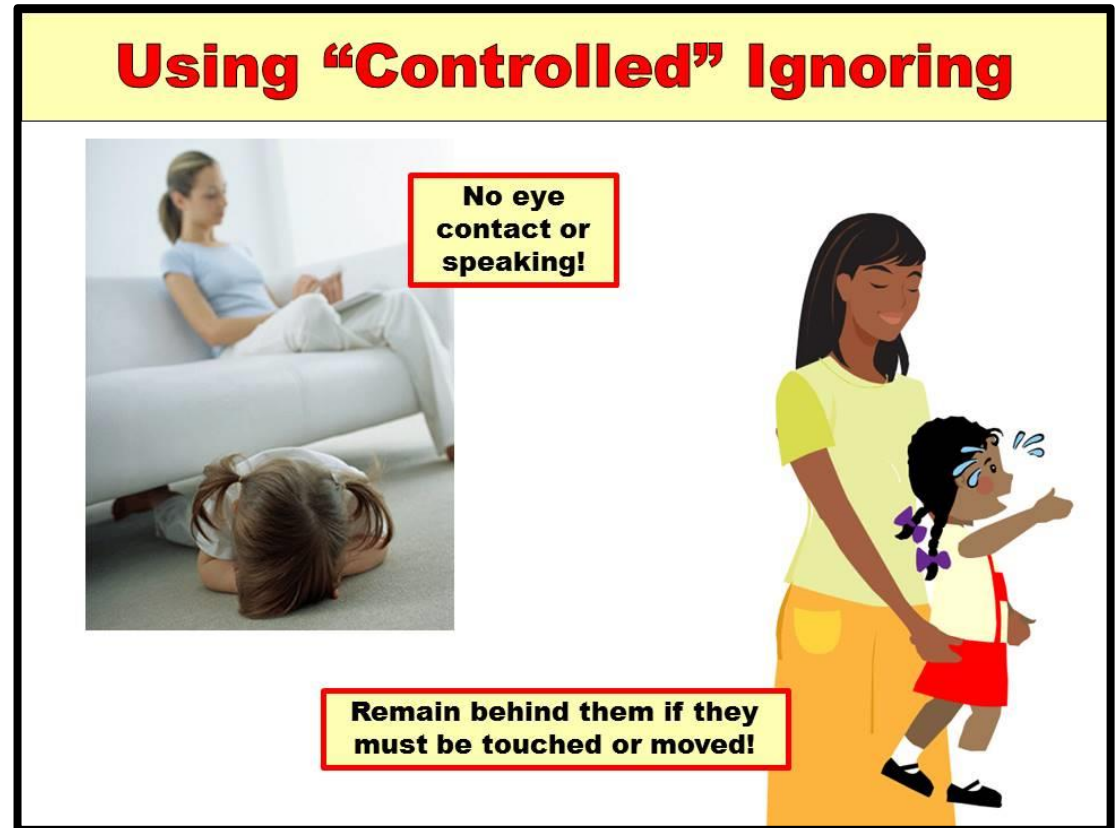
After they respond, then make eye contact, praise them, and divert their attention



4. AFTER the child complies, then you can pay attention to them. Praise them, but do not go overboard. If you give them too much attention, you can accidentally teach them that misbehaving before doing the correct thing gets more attention than just doing the correct thing in the first place. Then, as soon as possible, get the child involved in something else.

Tips and Cautions

1. Once you begin ignoring, you should continue until the child responds with the right behavior. Be ready to ignore “forever” if you must. **Do not speak to them or pay attention!!!!**
2. If you must deal with the child while you are ignoring (i.e., you need to move them during a tantrum so they don't get hurt, bother people, etc.) you can do that----*just do not look them in the eye, speak to them, and make as little physical contact as possible. If you must carry or move them, just turn their body away from your face to reduce interaction.* This allows you to respond physically without “paying attention”.



3. If you have already tried ignoring and ended up giving in, you can try again, just be ready for the episode to last a VERY long time. The rule of thumb is the child will usually attempt to get your attention ~2-3 times longer than their longest previous attempt. But, if you can out-last those first couple of long behavior tantrums, you can make ignoring work for you!
4. If you have other children or adults around, let them know they should ignore too. Do not wait for the problem to begin either---discuss it with them before the problem happens and plan out

what you are **all** going to do. Siblings and friends can be very helpful if you can get them to cooperate....

5. If the child's whining or crying is stressing you out, consider wearing headphones and listening to some calming music, the radio, or television. It really does help!!!
6. If you have a family member or friend to help you, try stepping totally out of the room or house for a short time and letting them take over ignoring for you. It allows you to remain calm and really sends the child the message that you are not going to back down this time.
7. And remember, if there are family members, friends, or siblings around and you cannot use ignoring, or you are in an environment where you must respond (e.g., restaurant, church, etc.) then just use another technique. There are so many other ways to deal with problems that you do not have to use ignoring to get the behavior change you want. If you cannot run the program well, it is best to use something else.

Let's explore one more "ignoring-related" technique before leaving this topic....as special variation especially for toddlers.

Toddler Version

Toddlers are pros at tantrums, a perfect behavior to ignore, but a child that young needs to realize that they are not receiving attention. You have to make your ignoring physical so they understand.

The easiest way to do this is to slowly approach the child, and if they are in control of the behavior, you will see them slightly quiet down, then carefully step around or over them, and continue to move away from them for a short distance. If you need to keep an eye on them due to the location, just take out your cell phone and position it so you can see behind you (they will never know), and watch for a

pause in the screaming. Then, you can swoop in and respond during that moment of quiet with attention and praise.

Quick diversion to something else should then happen if possible. The key is to “catch them being good” and then get them interested in something totally new. Do not try to reason with this age group or explain what was wrong, because you will lose! Approach as a pure cause-effect response and leave verbal understanding of right and wrong behavior for a later year.

Now, if the child does not quiet, this may not be a behavioral tantrum that is within control and/or the tantrum may have gone beyond the point that the child is ABLE to calm on their own. This not only happens with very young children, it also can occur if a child is overly sensitive, has low impulse control, and/or is truly, emotionally distraught. In those situations, you should help the child calm in some way, including:

“Step-Over” Technique for Toddlers

- 1. Walk slowly towards child**
- 2. Make sure they see you!**
- 3. Slow enough for them to calm**
- 4. Carefully step over them
and continue walking away...**



Just be careful to not overuse these solutions since they can cause the child to seek this comfort by misbehaving first.

After a while, you may be able to detect a pattern that helps you know when the child is losing control. If possible, try to step in and assist the child BEFORE a tantrum occurs.

NOTE—This does not mean you should “walk on eggshells” around the child. If you are getting tantrums on a regular basis and/or from everyday situations the child *should* be able to handle, then you may need a more intensive program that teaches alternative behaviors. Keep reading this document for those more intensive programs that can teach a child to use their words, regain calm, ask for help, etc.

Lastly, if your child tends to need this type of “calming” help a great deal or beyond a reasonable age, seek professional assistance to determine if the child is struggling with sensory or emotional issues that are causing behavior to be more challenging. You do NOT have to deal with this alone if the problem is becoming chronic!

“Loss of Control” Tantrums

Wrap in blanket



Sensory input
(pat, rock...)



Whisper
or sing



Quiet



...just be careful or you can teach them to use tantrums to get this attention!

CREATING Pictures (Cues) to Teach Behaviors

We know children do not learn well by listening. They usually have to be shown something during the learning process (pictures, videos, etc.). Well, children also “learn” behaviors, so you must use the same teaching style here too. If you want to teach your child a new behavior, you are probably going to have to do it with pictures. When we do this, it is called cueing.

So, how do you make cues? It really isn't hard. Here are some examples for you!



Don't worry about how well you draw--children don't care, thank goodness.

As you can see, my art ability is not too high, and I have never had a problem 😊



Adding Velcro so the child can move the pieces really helps younger children understand what you are trying to teach. They just do better if they can “use” the chart rather than just “look at it”.



Taping an envelope on back (this one closes with Velcro) keeps small pieces from being lost.

This chart allows the child to earn stars for each “good behavior”.



YOU decide what the chart needs. Some things to consider including are:

- Pictures of the behavior you want
- Pictures of the behavior you want stopped
- Consequences
- Rewards
- Ways to keep track of progress (bug stickers used in this case)

Name: _____ Date: _____

My Goals:





8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00	11:30
12:00	12:30	1:00	1:30	2:00	2:30	3:00



Monday  Tuesday
 Wednesday  Thursday
 Friday



You can also make sheets on the computer.

If you would like to use something like this but don't want to make it yourself, look on my website, www.Neuro-Teach.com under the "Behavior" section. There is a document titled, "*Blizzard of Behavior Charts and Cues*" that has lots of pre-made sheets for you to use!



Think of new ways to remind a child about a behavior goal.

This little guy is trying to remember to "keep his hands to his own body". When he forgets, he is told to "put his hands on his masking tape X's"---a nice way for him to remember what "keeping your hands to yourself" means!



Once you get creative, you will come up with wonderful ideas.

This child is actually going to “wear” the cue on their wrist! Just attach pictures to a “slap-bracelet” and you are good to go...




...and this one was made by attaching pictures to a key-ring. It was designed to help a second-grader who was “telling on others” (tattling) for no valid reason during recess.





In some cases you may want to even put the cue on the child's body.


In this case, a small smile face was drawn on the child's fingers to remind them about their goals.


Morning














Day Chart


Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
*homework *books *glasses *blue folder	*homework *books *glasses *gym clothes *ballet clothes *hair stuff THERAPY	*homework *books *glasses *ballet clothes *hair stuff	*homework *books *glasses *gym clothes THERAPY	*homework *books *glasses *ballet clothes *hair stuff VISION THERAPY


Night













Remember that cues can be used to stop behaviors, but they also can be used to TEACH them too!

Here is an example of a chart I used with my fourth-grade daughter with special learning needs who had to learn organization skills.

You can either make copies so they can mark it with a pencil, place it on a cookie sheet so they can cover completed items with magnets, or as I did, cover it with plastic and use a dry-erase marker to mark off items. This totally solved her problem---she loved it! Find what will work for you and your child....



Sometimes cues are more powerful if we link them to something the child loves.

This little boy needs to learn to “listen to adults”. This chart shows him how “listening skills” are required to become a fireman--- something he really wants to do when he is older.

Because the cue “made sense” and involved something he loved, he really worked hard, and the program went much quicker.

As you can see, cues are really easy to make and use. Just remember that there are no wrong or right ways to use cues. It can be anything!!!! I have even hung a sock on the doorknob of a closed door to a child’s room. It was there to remind the child to hang up their school clothes when they got home. They had to see the sock when they turned the doorknob to enter their room, so it worked like a charm!

Just think about what you need to teach and then put that concept into objects or pictures. A good way to figure out what you need to focus on is to *think about what you are constantly **saying** to the child*. That will tell you what they need to learn and/or keep forgetting. Then, THAT is what you should put into your pictures.

USING Cues to Teach Behaviors

So, now that you have your cue, how should you use it? Well, as “silently” as possible...

See, our goal is to have the child think to themselves what they should do. This “internal thinking” will help them behave when we aren’t there to guide them. The best way to get this internal thought is to **keep our own talking to a minimum.**

To use cues, then, we should follow these simple steps:

1. Create the cue with the child (draw the pictures with them), or if you are using a prepared picture sheet, explain to them what the pictures mean.
2. Go over the cue several times during the first day or two....reminding them about what the pictures mean.
3. Eventually just point to the pictures and have the child tell you what they mean.
4. Once the child knows the program, just point to the picture and let the child “cue” themselves. At this point they don’t even need to tell you what the picture means. Just let them look at it and remind themselves silently. THIS is what will get the behavior into the child’s memory and eventually solve the problem. This technique is critical to success!

I know it can be hard to be silent when faced with a behavior problem, but it really is important to *keep as silent as possible.* The way you respond after the behavior (reinforcers and consequences) will then bring home to the child whether they did the correct or incorrect thing. Let’s move on to the topics of reinforcement and consequences...

Using Reinforcers

Reinforcement is one of those topics that sometimes make people uncomfortable, so let's deal with some of the concerns right off the bat. Then we will go on to the specific techniques 😊

Misconception

It is a bribe

Reality

No, reinforcement is a reward. A bribe is given to do something wrong or illegal.

Intrinsic is best

True, but rarely are behaviors held here. Even our own job is not at the internal/intrinsic level of reinforcement---we are the symbol-delayed level (i.e. **our paycheck**)

What about my "good" children?

Again, true---what about them? If you are only providing reinforcement to children with behavior problems, you ARE doing it wrong. All children should be rewarded for learning a new skill. Your son might be rewarded for learning his name in cursive and your daughter for learning to not fight on the playground.

The money!

Yes, if you always use toys and stickers it can get pricey. Consider things that do not cost money...play time, staying up later, playing a game with you, etc. can be very powerful.

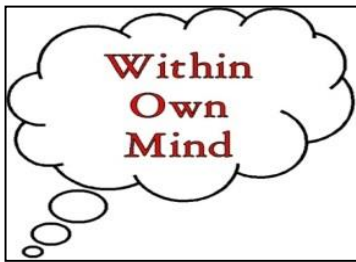
There is no reinforcer that works

At times it might be difficult to find one, but even for the most severe cases, one exists. Just look for what they like to do, even if it is unusual. I actually ran a program once to the timer on the microwave! The child had autism and loved to hear the bell.

Too much time and bother

If you are considering running a program, you are already putting in the time. Even if it takes time at first, at least this approach will eventually get rid of the problem. Well worth the effort for both you and your child!

So how do you run a reinforcement program? Well, the first thing you need to understand is the developmental sequence of reinforcers. Let's first look at it us adults....



INTRINSIC / INTERNAL: I do the behavior because I feel it is the right thing to do...



SOCIAL PRAISE: I do the behavior because someone will notice I did it...
(example: my name in a newsletter, being clapped for in a meeting)



SYMBOL-DELAYED: I do the behavior because I will eventually get paid for it...
(example: my paycheck)



CONCRETE / IMMEDIATE: I do the behavior because I immediately get something...
(example: watching television after washing dishes)



PRIMARY: I do the behavior because I will get something my body likes....
(example: a hot shower after exercise, dessert after a healthy lunch)

What are examples of these levels for children? Here is a list to get you started....

Intrinsic

- Child does not need reinforcement from you

Social

- Hugs
- Praise
- Having friends or family notice them

Symbol-Delayed

- Sticker chart (turned in for something later)
- Tokens (collect and turn in later)
- Pretend paycheck (to "cash in" later)

Concrete / Immediate

- Immediately given play time
- Immediately given a sticker
- Immediately given a toy or other object

Primary / Body

- Immediately given food or snack
- Immediately given a back rub
- Immediately allowed to swing/sensory play

How can you use reinforcement well? Here are some very basic rules:

1. Have every child in your home working towards a goal and being reinforced.

EVERY child should be noticed for their hard work. So, have the child who is having behavior problems work towards a “behavior” goal and the other children work towards something else they need or want to learn----a skill like tying their shoes, learning to ride their bike, etc.

2. Use the reinforcement level that will lead to success.

If your child is only interested in food right now, well, use that! Always use what will work. There is plenty of time to get the child to an “older” level like a sticker chart or intrinsic motivation. You have to GET the behavior before you can make it stronger or more advanced.

3. Consider using a MENU of reinforcers

This just means the child has some level of choice. So, if your child is on an Immediate Level of reinforcer, allow them to choose from several prizes. This will keep the program from getting old and the child from losing interest.

4. Using PAIRING to move out of lower levels of reinforcers.

When you pair, you are just using reinforcers from different levels. That way your child might choose a toy at some point instead of food, etc. It is just a way to help a little one move up to a higher reinforcement level.

5. Use BOTH a reinforcer and a consequence

Most children respond better to reinforcers, but there are cases where only a consequence will work. If you use both, you are ready 😊



Using Consequences

Consequences are a bit easier to understand. When you use a consequence you are allowing the child to receive negative feedback about their behavior.

Even though consequences are easy to understand, they can be tricky to use well. Here are the basics you need to know:

1. Always have a consequence in place, but DO try to run the program with a reinforcer first

We adults just seem to naturally go to consequences first....we tell a child that if they do not behave then they will have to come in from outside, go to bed early, lose television or video game privileges, etc., etc. Using this type of consequences is never wrong, but this usually works best for simple problems that do not happen too often. If you are having to use these ALL of the time, your child will usually respond better to a program based on reinforcers because it will have a more positive tone.

So, if you have been running a timeout or loss of privileges program without success, just *try turning it around*. Instead of the child losing their playtime, trying having them EARN it, same for anything else that will work, like earning television or video game time with good behavior. It really can set a much better tone and sends the message that good behavior is rewarded in life.



2. Set consequences so YOU can control them----“artificial” teaching events really help!

You want to make it clear that a certain behavior will not be permitted and feel a true consequence will do the trick. How do you manage that without disrupting the world? One of the best ways I have found is to artificially set up a “learning event” and let nature take its course!



So, if your child always causes a problem in the grocery store, go to the store one day just to teach the child that this behavior will no longer be tolerated. Since you aren't planning on really doing any shopping, you can remain calm and controlled when you have to leave. Just explain to the little one what they must do in the store, use your picture cues (keep it positive---tell them what they need to do, not just what they “shouldn't do”), and then pretend to shop a bit. Even throw a couple of things into the cart the child especially likes. Then, when they act up, like you anticipated, you can easily leave the store (and your cart) and go home.

Setting up these artificial consequences for problems like not getting ready in time to leave the house, are fantastic ways to teach behavior. Busy parents often do not have the time to deal with problems when they occur. Maybe you HAVE to go to your friend's house because it is an important party and can't be late. Maybe you can't just leave somewhere you have to be when your child misbehaves. You know that would be the best thing, but you just can't do it right then.

Well, if that is the case, and the problem seems to be happening often, set up a situation where you can teach the behavior you need on your own terms. Talk about a wonderful place that you and the child are going to (but have no real demand to be at), wait for them to not be ready, and then cancel

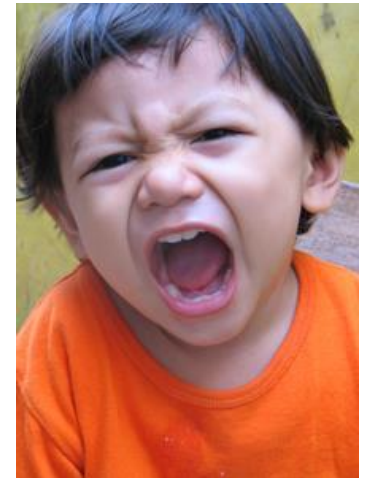
it without an issue because it was an “okay if we do, okay if we don’t” kind of situation. Just be ready with something to do if a miracle occurs and they DO get ready on time. LOL

The same techniques can be used to teach a child that they must behave or “you will have to leave”. Set an artificial consequence event! Just call a friend, explain what you are doing, and then go to their house *just so you can leave when your child misbehaves*. The lesson will be learned, and you will have managed to do it when you had the time and patience to deal with the situation. A win-win for everyone involved.

3. Avoid talking when you are using the consequence!!!

When a child misbehaves, it can really get to you. You want to make sure the child knows how displeased you are, what they should have done instead, how many times you have told them to behave differently, etc. That, however, is the worst thing you can do...

Believe me, in almost every case your child **already knows what they did wrong and what they should have done instead**. To discuss it at all will give them the attention they want and only make the problem worse.



No, instead, if you feel you MUST say something, then “say” it by pointing to the picture cue and leave it at that. Instead of talking, just respond by using your consequence or loss of reinforcer. That will “speak” for you and get your message across.

If you really must say something because you feel the child need the guidance, use only a few words----or better yet, say it to someone else (just like the ignoring technique). For example tell someone else, “When David stops screaming, he can try to go outside to play again.” This gives the child the information without giving them a lot of attention. It is definitely the better way to go!

Running Your Program

How do you actually run a program? Well, that depends on how serious the problem is. If you are dealing with a common behavior that only happens here and there, then just deal with it using a simple cue and casual reinforcers and consequences. No need to make a fuss.

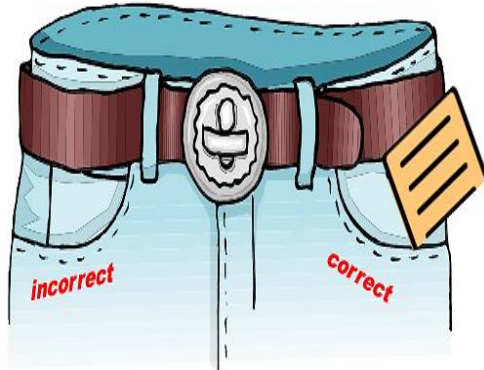
If the behavior is more serious or has been going on a long time, though, you might really want to run a true behavior program and track the child's progress. It sounds difficult, but it really is very easy to do. Here are the steps to take:

1. Look at the behavior closely for two or three days (if you can---if the behavior is dangerous, skip this step). Get a good sense of how bad the behavior really is. Sometime it is much worse or much better than we think.
2. Decide on which reinforcer and consequence you will use.
3. Then, make a cue to teach the child the new behavior.
4. Figure out a way to track progress so you can see if the behavior is improving. Use the information you got in step one to decide whether your plan is working.
5. Be patient and TEACH----Just like learning to walk took time, so will learning a new behavior. These things take a while!
6. Fade the program (remove it) as soon as the child is ready.

Keeping Track of Progress

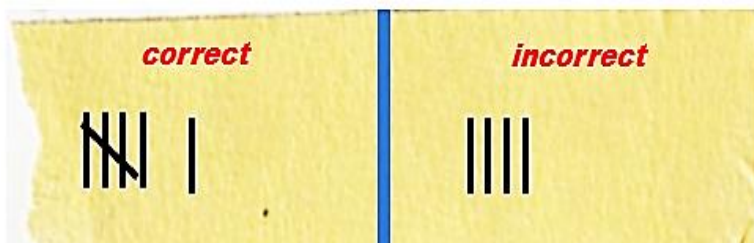
Many adults may want to keep track of their child's progress in their mind, but I have found out that it is really hard to get a good count that way. Most people are just too busy and will forget what happened.

So, here are some ways to really keep track of your child's progress. Look for the method that is easiest for you:



Every time your child does well, slip a coin, piece of paper, etc. into your pocket.

If you always make one pocket the correct behavior and the other pocket the incorrect one, you can really take some great data easily!



Stick a piece of masking tape on your arm and make tally marks. One side can be for the correct behavior and the other for the incorrect.

I always wore my pen around my neck at work so I wouldn't lose it 😊



Place paper clips or pieces of paper on a folder. Use one side for the correct and one side for the incorrect behavior.



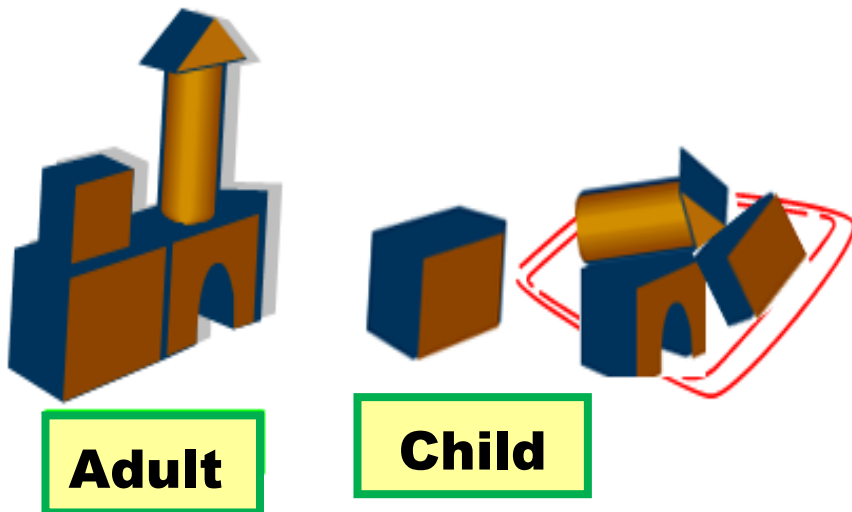
Use a sticker sheet. Take the back totally off and place it on a piece of paper. Then, every time the child behaves well, give them a sticker to put back into the empty spaces like a puzzle.

Then, all you have to do is count how many stickers they earned that day to get a sense of how the day went.



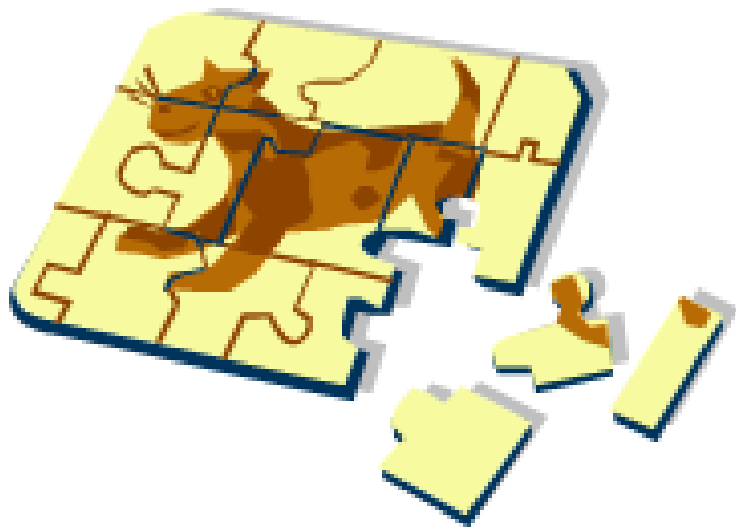
Use a sticker sheet that has lots of pieces. Every time the child does what they are supposed to, they can add a sticker piece to their picture.

Not only is this a lovely way to keep track, but children really enjoy this method! It has its own built-in level of reinforcement 😊



Build a little block tower and every time the child behaves, they get a block so they can build the same tower.

If they earn all their blocks, you can award the child a special prize for their effort.



Choose a simple puzzle and give the child a puzzle piece every time they earn one.

Once they have put together the whole puzzle, you can give them a special reinforcer for a job well done.



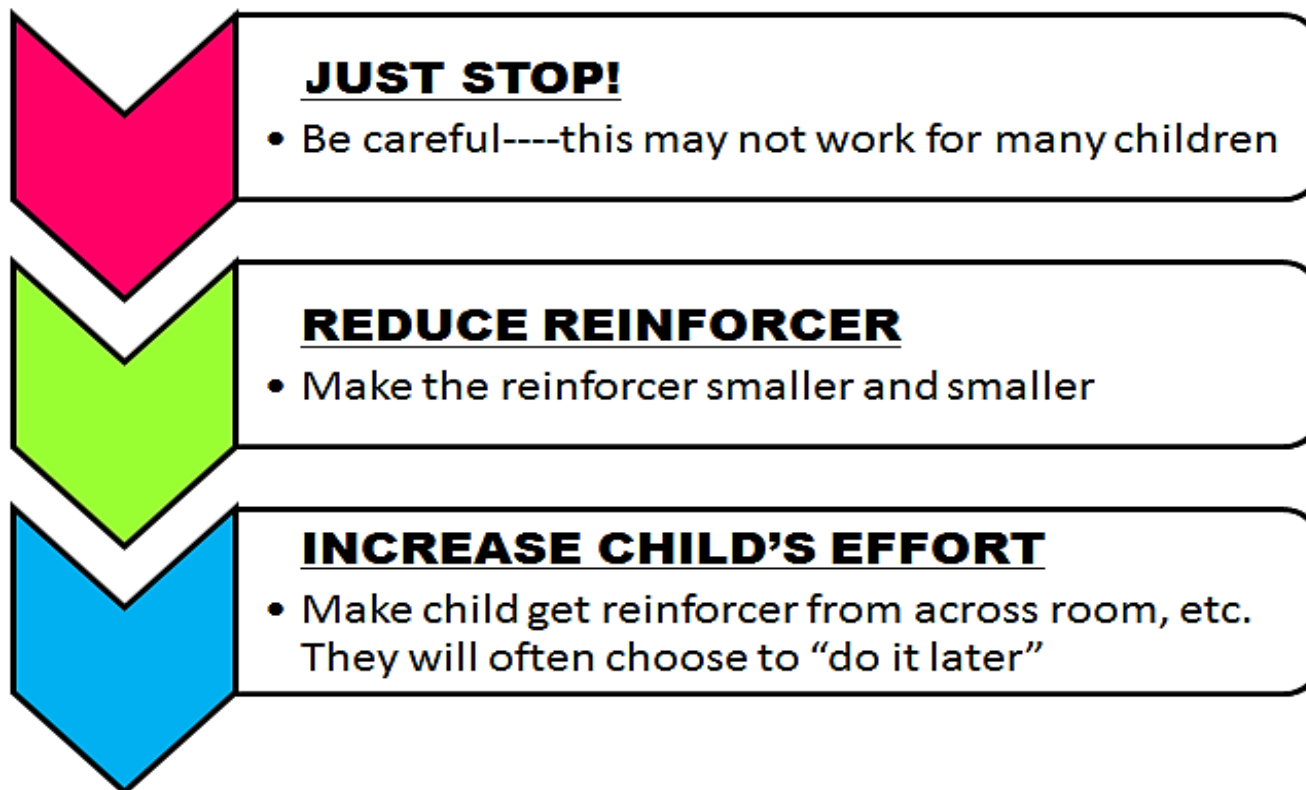
Same concept here----just use a flannel board picture and have them earn the different pieces.

How to Stop a Program

So, you have finally managed to remove the behavior and all is going well. Congratulations! Now, how do you get rid of the program? Here are some signs that the child is ready to move on:

1. The child wants the reinforcer but quickly goes back to their own activity after it is received.
2. The child realizes they have earned the reinforcer but says “they will get it later”.
3. The child doesn’t even ask for the reinforcer and is just happy with knowing they “got” it.
4. The child has had great behavior for three or more weeks.
5. The child asks for the program to be stopped.

When this happens, you can remove the program by doing the following-----use your best judgment on what will work for your child.



Reality...

Running behavior programs can be a bit complex. After all, there are whole college courses on the topic! That said, having children (and dealing with them) is just part of being a family. It usually does not require any special preparation or skills! Just be confident that YOU ARE THE ADULT, make the best decisions you can, and adjust what you try based on what you see happening. The rest will usually fall into place.

But what if it doesn't fall into place? What if you really, really are stuck? Well, you may need some special help, and there is nothing wrong with that. Cases in which you might need to use a stronger program and/or might need some outside help include:

1. When your child is extremely intelligent (very bright children are much more challenging!).
2. When your child is unusually sensitive.
3. When your child has experienced something difficult (a divorce, violence, a parent being absent, a death, a change in living location or situations, etc.).
4. When your child has a special learning need, sensory disorder, or disability.
5. When your child has a sibling that is modeling poor behavior choices.



If you find yourself in ones of these situations, take a look at the module titled, *The Challenging Child: Assisting Both Your Child and Your Family in Difficult Situations*” for additional ideas and/or contact your local school district for assistance or locations that will provide support. Meanwhile, **NEVER give up**, you can make things better!

SOLUTIONS

Introduction

DISCLAIMER:

The solutions provided in this section are only meant to serve as examples of possible techniques to try for specific problems. You should decide whether these techniques will work for you, your family, and/or mesh with your value system before you begin and must take full responsibility for their implementation and results.

Also, please feel free to come up with other approaches on your own. Often what YOU design will be the best for your family since you know them so well.

***NOTE:** If you or your child have special considerations (i.e. unusually sensitive or stressed, a medical condition, a mental health or behavioral condition, and/or a special learning need or disability) or you have any other concern or doubt, you should seek professional and/or medical guidance prior to using any of these suggestions.*

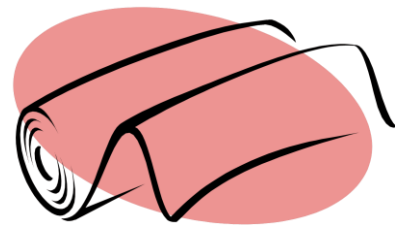
Using Timeout Appropriately

Timeout is a “solution” that can be used for any behavior problem, and it is very effective---- but only if used well. Here are some things to know about this common technique:

1. Timeout does not work for all children. If your child seems to **want** timeout, it may mean that they are overwhelmed or avoiding something. In either case, you should use another technique and/or control the situation so your little one does not try to avoid it.
2. Timeout is a consequence, but its main function is to teach a new skill. In order for this to happen, you have to make sure to follow up with the child and ask (and get answers) to the following questions:
 - a) Why are you in timeout? (you will be shocked at how many have no clue 😊)
 - b) What did you do that put you in timeout?
 - c) What should you have done instead? (critical piece of information!)
 - d) What will you do next time, then?

THIS is what will make timeout an effective technique for you and your child. If you see the child really cannot answer some of these questions, you have some teaching to do! Get out your visual cues, teach the skill, and then you will begin to see some progress...

3. If you have a very young child that needs and uses timeout well, it can be a good idea to construct the timeout area with a cue that can be moved. For example, have the child sit on a small piece of red cloth when in timeout. It can be placed on a chair, carpet square, etc. You can then take that red cloth with you anywhere. This allows you to “move” the timeout to another location---to grandma’s house, the park, etc. A nice way for you to use timeout outside the home.



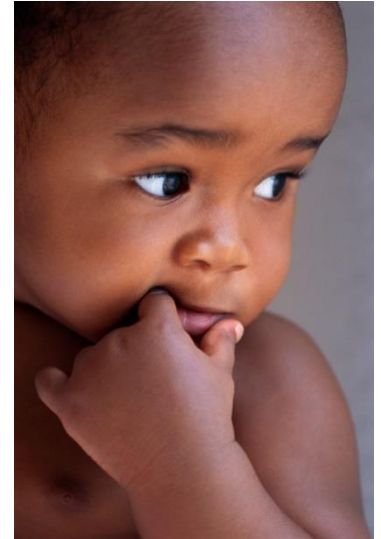


VERY
EARLY
CHILDHOOD

Teaching the Word “NO”

It is best to teach the word “no” when the child is very young. Usually once they are crawling well and moving around the house. You should purposefully teach this for the best result.

If the child learns through normal experiences, they will be doing a lot more experimenting with what they can and can't do. You can reduce some of that trial-and-error learning of the word “no” by teaching its meaning directly.



1. Pick one object (a light plastic vase works nicely—nothing valuable or heavy!) and place it on a table where the baby can reach
2. When the child reaches for it, tell them no, gently take their hand away, turn their body away and/or sit them down, and have them reach for a nearby toy/play. *In other words directly teach them what you want them to do when they hear that word----stop, turn away, and do something else!*
3. Now get ready LOL...this is going to make them want to figure this all out. They will repeat, and repeat, and repeat step #4 to see if this magical response happens every time.
4. Eventually the child will either stop step #4 and/or get a bit frustrated. This is when you should stop the activity and put the vase away for the day.
5. Repeat this activity daily. At first always use the vase, and later begin to use other objects. Eventually begin to use the word “no” in other situations so the child will learn it means the same thing everywhere and ever time.

Teaching the word “no” does not mean your child will respond perfectly---after all, they are still children. It does help, though, and is well worth the effort!

Biting

Biting can happen for many reasons. Here are various techniques you can try:

Babies and Very Young Toddlers

- If the biting *seems to happen after eating* the child might just be “stuck” in a “chewing” mode. Give them a bottle/drink for a short period before getting them up from the table. This can break that cycle.
- If the biting *first happened when the child was giving an “open-mouth” kiss* (very common), you will have to directly teach how to kiss properly, if the child is old enough. Just imitate closing your mouth tight, putting it against the skin and then making a kissing noise. This approach to “kissing” makes the bite less possible and can be a wonderful way to teach “kissing” before a bite can ever happen 😊 Don’t be afraid to try and teach this to very young children. They really do imitate well, and your little one may be able to learn the skill just fine.
- If the biting *seems to be connected to teething*, make sure the child has something to chew on. Biting down hard soothes their gums, so they will bite anything they can get their hands on...and that includes you! The problem will eventually fade away.



Older Toddlers and Preschool Children

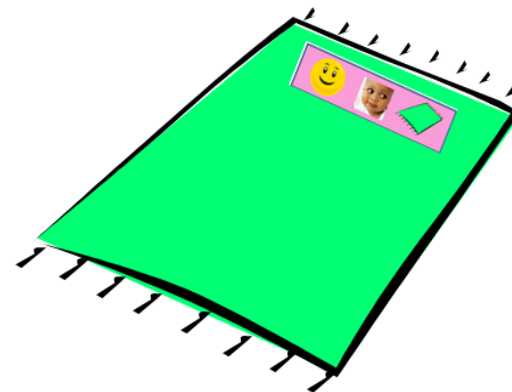
Definitely try any of the above techniques that you think will work. Here are some additional ideas for the older child:

- If the biting *is out of anger*, try this:
 - Directly teach the child another way to show they are angry (use picture cues) and provide a mild consequence and reinforcer if the problem seems to be occurring often.

- If the biting *seems to be coming from a lack of social skills*, this may help:
 - Directly teach the child how to approach others. Model and assist them as needed. Make sure to use picture cues. This may be one of those instances where you want the cue to be on the child at all times (pictures on bracelet, ring, etc.) Make sure to provide a mild consequence and reinforcer if the problem seems to be occurring often.

- If the biting *has become a habit*, then this more involved approach may be needed:
 - Practice the skill in a controlled situation---either in your home or at a good friend's house. Use a picture cue that reminds the child about not biting. Tape it to a small rug or blanket. This is where the child must stay to play for a while. In about five minutes, ask them if they would like to "try to leave their spot". Remind them of their "rules" and use a picture cue on their body, if you think they need it. Do not let them leave for long---you want them to be successful!

After just a few minutes, have them come back to their rug, provide reinforcement for a good job (or assistance if it did not go well), and give them a rest before trying again. Increase time away from the spot very slowly, having them earn time away through good behavior. Eventually they will learn the skill and/or decide that "biting" is just too "costly" to use anymore 😊



Tantrums

- If a *tantrum is due to tiredness, hunger, or some other need*, just ignore the situation and assist the child in meeting that need. Many times we have just pushed the child too far, and they have no other way to express their distress.
- If a *tantrum seems to happen because your child is unusually sensitive* to sounds, textures, smells, people close to them, etc. Your child may need some assistance with sensory skills. Please see the manual titles, *Sensory Integration Disorders: When the World Won't Stay Still!* You will find it under the PROCESSING tab. If the problem is severe, you should also seek professional assistance!
- If the *tantrum started when the child did not get their way*, you will have to ignore to the best of your ability. Using headphones to reduce the noise can help and moving your child to a safe place away from you can also reduce your stress---and the likelihood you will “give in”. If you haven't already, make sure to read the section on ignoring in this document for more ideas.
- If the *tantrum is for attention*, make sure you do not give any!!!! Again, see the section on ignoring for some tips.
- If the *tantrum is due to loss of control*, they child may need a little assistance to regain control. Once more, the ignoring section of this manual will guide you on how to help reestablish calm without giving the child too much attention for the misbehavior.



Sucking Thumb / Fingers



Know that sucking the fingers or thumb is a natural part of infancy and may fade on its own, especially if little attention is given to the behavior. If it becomes an issue for an older child, here are some different techniques to use to try and break this habit.

There are different opinions on how pacifiers, teething rings, and chew toys play into the habit of sucking the thumb. Some feel that they can keep a child from resorting to their fingers and are easier to wean away since they are not part of the child's body. Others feel that they mix play with oral activity for too long of a period and make matters worse and can even encourage a thumb-sucking habit.

I feel that there are good points on both sides, and it really comes down to your child and their personality and needs. There are just some children that seem to need this behavior more than others and it probably would have developed either way. If you your child is struggling with this behavior, it is NOT something that you did right or wrong....

- Try keeping their hands busy during the day. If you see an increase of thumb-sucking when the child is watching television or not physically occupied (in the car, at church, etc.) make sure to provide small toys or other activities that can be used in that situation.
- If you see the child sucking their thumb at night, remove it gently, and place their hand away from their face or under their pillow. If the child is old enough, have them go to sleep with puppets on their hands as a reminder to not suck their thumb. You will need to provide reinforcement for this program and know it will take some time, often months! This habit is hardest to break at night.

- If the child is old enough, try placing bandages on the child's fingers/thumb. This habit is often unconscious, so feeling the bandages in their mouth will remind them of their goal.
- There are products on the market that can be painted on the fingers that have an unpleasant taste. These can be useful for some children. Make sure the child understands that the product is a reminder not a punishment. They need to know that you understand their struggles with stopping this behavior.
- If the child is older, painting their nails can serve as an incentive to keep their fingers "pretty". Make sure to use a non-toxic child polish.
- Praise, positive incentive programs, and visual cues that are worn on the wrist (bracelets, bands, watches, etc.) can also remind the child of their goals and provide rewards for their effort. While praise (being a "big" boy or girl) are effective for all age groups, positive incentive programs usually work best if the child is older.
- Note the situations where the child is sucking their thumb to see if stress or anxiety is playing a role. If it is, try to reduce those situations and/or assist the child in developing other ways to cope. If this emotional piece seems to be a big factor, you should seek professional assistance for more help.
- In extreme situations (child much older or mouth and teeth being impacted), a doctor can provide thumb-guards that stop the child from sucking their thumb. Your family doctor can guide you as to whether this approach should be considered.
- Children who are older can be taught about germs and the effects of thumb-sucking on their teeth. Pictures, using a mirror to look at their teeth, and other visuals will be useful here. Even if this information is understood, though, the child may still need assistance and/or a reward to stop this behavior. Habits are hard to break!



Needing Constant Attention



Some children seem to need more attention than others. There is nothing wrong with this unless the child begins to demand your attention constantly and/or begins to resent you paying attention to anyone or anything else.

If the amount of attention your child is demanding becomes too large, here are some techniques you can use to bring it back down to a more typical level. They will take some time and effort on your part, but this is the type of problem that rarely goes away without some work. It is worth the effort to bring

some peace back to your home and help your child become more independent and mature. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Be physically present for the child----a small rub on the shoulders, brief hug, and other quick touches as you walk by can reassure them that “you are there”. Even a smile or comment from across the room can increase your presence and provide attention without actual physical contact or proximity.
- If you need to be pulled away for a while (phone call, carry for a baby, etc.) give the child something to do or have them help you. Be sure to praise them for their “work”.
- Warn the child when you are going to be pulled away to do something else. Some children become afraid when they look up and see a parent gone without warning. Having the child complete a task while you are “gone” can keep them busy until you return.
- Reward the child for doing something else while you are busy. The best reward will probably be your attention and time (playing a game, cooking, reading a book, etc.) so use those as your rewards.

There are some special situations that might be making this problem worse. Here are some to consider:

You have been “absent” for a period of time

If the child is reacting to your being absent (hospital stay, out-of-town, military, prison stay, etc.) they have a fear that needs to be managed before they can become comfortable with you being absent again, even for short periods of time. If your absence was unplanned (i.e. a sudden accident placed in the hospital), this problem can be even worse.

In these cases, you have to help the child understand, to the best of their ability, that you do not plan on being gone anymore. You can help them to begin to handle longer and longer periods of separation by leaving them for a couple of minutes and then coming back (go into another room to get something, etc.). In other words, actually practice “being gone” with them. A timer can be used to help them track the time.

If the fear of your absence is very strong, does not improve or involves a death in your family, your child may need professional assistance or counseling to totally conquer the fear. Be sure to seek that help if needed...



You child is not really afraid of you being gone but is rather seeking to control you

Some children are not really afraid but just want to be the center of attention. If this is the case, you probably will need to run a more formal program with reinforcers and consequences.

The best way to do this is to set time periods where you are “with the child” and time periods where you are “busy”. Make the busy periods very short at first so the child can be successful and try to ignore them while you are “busy” or they will not really understand what you are trying to teach them. When they do earn their reward time, *don’t allow anything to interrupt it* if you can. Later you can teach them to deal with unexpected interruptions but not at the beginning. Make sure to also use visual cues, timers, etc. in the program----they really do help!

Whining



We all have behaviors that seem to bother us as parents, and the one that bothers me the most is whining. So, what did my children do? Of course, they whined...and they were very good at it, I might add! 😊

Whining is one of those behaviors that really responds well to ignoring, but only if you can manage to ignore completely. If you think that ignoring just will not work for you and your child, here are some other things to try:

- Use a reinforcement and consequence program. Also, consider wearing headphones so you do not hear the whining. They can really help you to remain calm!
- Teach the child different ways to “get what they want” without whining. These can include drawing a picture, tape recording a message, writing, etc.
- Consider directly teaching the child the difference between a whining/crying voice and a talking voice. You would be surprised at how many children do not really know what “whining” means, so they are unable to change the tone of their voice. You really should practice this when the child is calm. The best way is with some dolls or action figures and just make it part of the game you are playing. No need to make a big deal out of the lessons.
- Set a timer for a short period (1-2 minutes is enough). During that time they can think about reasons you should change your mind. Once the timer goes off, they then have a chance to present their reasons in a “talking voice”. Limit them to only two or three reasons---this shouldn’t become an ongoing debate! The decision you then make is final, but do try to let them “win the argument” once or twice at the beginning. You are trying to get a new skill in place, and their success with help that process. *Do not feel you have to allow this every time you make a decision.* Make it clear when you will allow their opinion and when you will not. YOU are the adult and these are your choices.

"EVERY-DAY" PROBLEMS



Will Not Get “Ready”

It often seems like children move the slowest when we are in a hurry! For some children it is just a response to being rushed, and if that is the case, just try to slow things down a bit. If the problem happens most days, though, then you should consider trying some of these solutions as well:

- Warn the child ten minutes and then again five minutes before they have to get ready. Some children just need a bit of time to stop their current activity.
- Use a chart to help the child keep track of what they need to do. This can be very useful in the morning and when getting ready for bed. See the example on page 25 and then make your own so it fits the needs of your child and your home.
- Put in place a controlled consequence that will teach your child the cost of moving “too slowly”. You can read a great deal about this beginning on page 32. For this behavior, just pick a day when you are not busy and ask the child to get ready to go “somewhere” (don’t say where you are going and be reasonable in the amount of time they have before leaving). When they do not manage to get ready then just “cancel” your plans. Do not scold or pay too much attention. Just casually express how sad you are to miss _____ (a fun event the child would have dearly loved to do). Since you planned for them to miss the outing and didn’t really *have* to be somewhere, you can remain calm. This is a lovely way to teach this behavior on your own terms. If you leave it to chance, you usually do not have the option to stay home. Picking a time to teach this skill and controlling makes it so much easier for **both** you and your child!
- Teach the concept of slow and fast. Using terms like triple-speed or warp-speed can be lots of fun. Then, teach the child to get ready based on the speed needed. Make sure to not use warp-speed too often. If you are finding you need warp-speed often, you should examine your schedule. You may be moving too fast and accidentally setting your child up for failure...



Will Not Go to Bed



Bedtime programs really change depending on how you run your household, so read through the suggestions and pick what will work for your home.

- Make sure to develop a bedtime routine and put it into picture form. If the child knows the sequence that is being followed, they will be able to follow it much easier. Keep the bedtime and routine the same. If it keeps changing, the child will never learn that “this is the rule”. Be consistent and do not give up!
- Try to keep things calm before bedtime. If the child does have activities before bed that gets them excited (e.g., seeing a sibling’s sporting event, etc.), a calm story, backrub, warm bath, listening to calm/quiet music, etc. can help.
- Children hate to be left out of things, so do try to keep activities in the house quiet when they are going to sleep. If they hear others talking, laughing, or watching television, of course they are going to want to join you.
- Be firm but do not become upset, yell, or resort to locking the child’s door. Use the techniques outlined under the ignoring section. If the child gets out of bed, just take them back. Do not make eye contact, speak, or pay them any real attention. At the beginning, you may have to do this “three-thousand times”, but if leaving their room is not working, they will eventually quit. If it does become a game in itself, then of course, resort to a reinforcer/consequence program.
- This is one situation where a very strong reinforcer and consequence program can work wonders, especially when no other method mentioned above seems to be working. Do not be afraid to use sticker charts, visual cues, and logical consequences (e.g., you were up late last night, so you will need an even earlier bedtime today to make up your “sleep minutes”).

- Do not add anything to the routine that you do not want to use forever....this includes rubbing a child's back until they fall asleep, laying in their bed, etc. It is best for you to make the routine complete but short. A simple story and kiss should be enough. Remember, learning to fall asleep when left alone is a skill, and like any other skill, it must be learned. So, do not stay in their room until they are asleep or be the one to “put them to sleep”. Make sure to leave while they are awake so they eventually learn to fall asleep on their own.

Sometimes there are other issues that can make bedtime challenging. Here are some issues to consider:

Your child is afraid

If the child becomes afraid for some reason (my own son became terrified of witches after accidentally seeing a commercial for The Wizard of Oz ☺), you should take steps to manage the fear in addition to dealing with the bedtime routine. See page 85 for ideas on how to help a child get rid of a fear.

Your child seems to be uncomfortable when they stop moving or lay flat on their bed

Many children have hidden sensory problems that really cause issues when they stop moving and/or lay



down to sleep. These can include feeling like their skin is prickling, the bed is spinning, or they are falling. Please see the manual titled: *Sensory Integration Disorders: When the World Won't Stay Still!* for more about these conditions. The manual can be found at www.neuro-teach.com under the TEACHING section, and contains a section on sleep-related sensory issues.

If you suspect your child has a sensory issue that is making bedtime or naptime a problem, please also consult with your medical doctor or educational professional for further assistance. They can direct you to locations for assessment and treatment.

Late bedtime is a habit

If your child has been in the habit of staying up late, you may have to “start where they are” and move the bedtime back to a more normal time slowly. Begin your bedtime routine at the time they normally become sleepy and move it back 15 minutes after they are doing well for three days. Continue to move the bedtime back slowly over time. Remember it is better to move slowly on this one!

Medication and/or child’s special needs are causing sleep problems

Some children are on medications that cause them to have sleep problems or a reduced need for sleep. This also can occur with some disabilities, especially autism. If your child falls in this category, consult your family doctor for assistance. Sometimes a slight change in dosage or a change in medication schedule can work wonders. In addition, some sensory therapies can also help the child to calm their bodies. A doctor can also help you explore natural sleep aids that might be appropriate for your child. If you do suspect medication is a problem, please do not adjust dosages on your own---make sure to seek medical guidance!

Additional ideas for SOME households

There are other special techniques that can be used, but they really depend on how you want to run your household. These can be especially useful if you have a child who must “take a nap” even when not sleepy (e.g., daycare situations) and those rare times when they are just too excited to sleep for some reason. Take a look and see what might work for you:

- ✚ Allow child to remain awake and play as long as they stay in bed. Use a special set of toys (make sure items are quiet and rather boring so you do not make the problem worse).
- ✚ Allow the child to listen to music in their bed (make sure to choose quiet music----radio stations are not good choices to use here).
- ✚ Allow the child to play (out of bed) but not leave their bedroom. This only can work if you control the toys that are in the room. In other words, do not have anything exciting in there!

Will Not Eat

Some children can be very picky eaters. It is important to figure out when an eating problem should be of concern (e.g., allergy, sensory problem, swallowing problem, etc.) and when it is being used by the child for attention and/or control. Take a look at the following, and if in doubt, consult your family doctor to discuss your particular situation.



- *If the child avoids a particular food* they may truly dislike it. Do they really need to eat that? If it is a total food group like vegetables, do try to encourage them, cover up the taste with sauce, or put them in casseroles, but in many cases, just avoiding the food for a while will take care of the problem. Some children have very sensitive taste buds and strong-tasting foods really DO taste bad to them. Eventually most children grow in to adults who will eat anything, including onions, liver, and broccoli. So pick and choose your battles now 😊
- *If the child avoids a total food group*, they may just dislike it, but it also may be causing them some type of physical symptom as well. This can especially be the case with milk, eggs, wheat or grain, and sugar (Yes, there is such a thing as sugar/starch intolerance—it is called Congenital Sucrase-Isomaltase Deficiency (CSID). See <https://www.csidcares.org/about/csid/> for more information). Make sure to ask the child questions and watch them closely. If you do suspect there may be a food allergy or intolerance, contact your family doctor for further assistance.
- *If the child avoids a food but you suspect it is a choice* having a friend over who likes that food can help. Do not discuss the situation; just make sure that food is on the table when that child is over so they can see their friend eating it. You can also encourage children to try new foods by having them participate in growing them (a garden or box at home), buying, and/or preparing them.

- *If the child refuses to eat most or all of their food and then complains about being hungry and/or demands you make them something else make sure to ignore the behavior.* I know this can be hard to do, but you must not give the child anything until the next meal. They may cry, complain, and tantrum, but you must hold your ground on this one! The child **will not starve if they miss a meal or two** and being hungry until the next meal is a surefire way of nipping this behavior in the bud.

In these situations, it is best to give the child the same meal back (reheated or fresh, doesn't matter) so you make it clear that they will eat what you prepare for them. Of course, if you have to take this stand, make sure the meal does not contain items that are totally disliked and/or may be causing issues for the child. This approach is only for the situations where the child is just being difficult and picky for no reason.

- *If the child seems to be having unusual problems eating* make sure nothing else is going on. Here are some things to look for:
- problems chewing (biting the inside of their cheek or lip)
 - painful teeth
 - difficulty swallowing (especially when foods are both liquid and solid, for example, soup)
 - seems to avoid certain textures (sensory problems)
 - strange preferences (will only eat straight noodles, not wavy ones)
 - choking
 - drinking large amounts of liquid so they are not hungry
 - eating items that are not food (known as pica)

All of these may be warning signs of other problems and should be discussed with your family doctor. Other professionals (special educators, therapists, dentists, etc.) may also need to be consulted, depending on the problems involved.

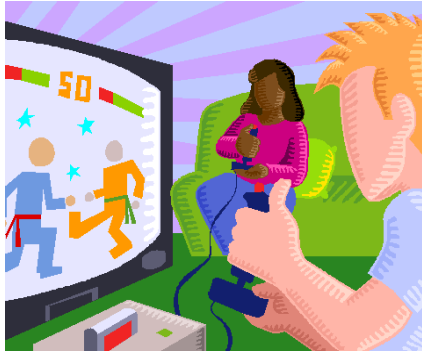
Will Not Take a Bath

Many children go through a period of time where they dislike taking baths, often for no reason you can figure out. Here are some approaches to try to get them back on track.

- Set a specific time when the bath must be taken. Try to stick to this schedule as closely as possible. Ignore tears, whining, and other complaints. Too much attention will make the problem worse.
- Consider having the child clean up in different ways. Showers, standing in the tub but washing from a basin of water, using sponges, unusual soaps, bubble baths, and other different ways can make taking a bath interesting and fun. Games also help (have child close their eyes and tell you the body part you are washing; have them “roll” the washrag on their body rather than rub; try a “speed-bath” to see how fast they can go (within reason and safety); wash to different kinds of music, etc.). Use anything you can think of to make the bath a bit more interesting!
- Take a good look at bath time to see if there is anything that is frightening the child or causing them discomfort. Even something as minor as “soap in the eyes” one time can cause a child to begin to avoid their bath. My own daughter began to protest her bath until I realized she was afraid of having her hair washed. We problem-solved a new way, and she decided she wanted to lean back and have me use a cup. It didn't totally solve the problem, but it made HER feel better, so it worked anyway 😊
- There comes a time where you might have to put your foot down. If that happens, use reinforcement and consequences that work for you and your home. Sometimes just moving the bath to right after dinner can help a lot. Nothing else happens until that bath is done----no television, no play, etc. Even move it up to after school if you must! No one said the bath HAD to happen right before bed. You decide what you need to do to get the job done....and then stick to it!



Addicted to Television or Video Games



Many children are way too attached to video games and/or television. It is both physically and emotionally unhealthy---even a bit stressful at times. Here are some ways to reduce your child's dependence on these electronics:

- The easiest way? Just say “NO” and mean it. There is no reason a child must have the latest game or spend time on this activity. You are the parent and must purchase these for your child, so take a step back and see what behaviors *you* must change before your child can really be helped.
- Determine the amount of time the child is allowed to spend playing these games or watching television. A timer can really help you to keep track of the time spent. When the time is up, that's it. They finish the current game and move on to something else. If need be, any problems will result in “electronic-time” being take away the next day. They will soon learn that this is a rule and accept it.
- Be reasonable/flexible (within limits). For example, you can give the child “extra time” tickets for good behavior and/or for sticking to their time limit without a fuss. If they have an extra ticket to spend, allow them to use it. A nice way to be flexible without setting yourself up for constant pleas for “just a little while longer”. Having or not having the ticket for extra time is now in their hands...
- If you are having great difficulty, consider having the child earn their television or game time for the next day through their good behavior *the previous day*. The amount of time they get is now up to them. This is a lovely way to make electronics a powerful reinforcer and is often the most effective method adults can find to eliminate other problems!
- Make sure to help the child develop other interests, especially ones that involve physical activity. It may mean some effort on your part, but there are many activities (sports, dance, cheerleading) that do not cost much, if any, money and are located in safe spaces. Look around and see what you can find!

COMMON PROBLEMS



Biting Nails---Picking Skin---Chewing Hair/Clothes

In many ways these problem are similar to thumb-sucking. It is often just an older version of the same behavior. They can be VERY difficult habits to break, though, so be patient. Expect to see them return here or there so be ready to run these programs multiple times if needed:

- Try keeping their hands busy so the behavior cannot occur. Look for those times when they tend to use that behavior (often when they are watching television, reading a book or other situations where there body is quiet). If that is the case, make sure you have something for them to do during those times. Even rolling a small piece of playdough between their fingers can help.
- If the problem involves the child chewing their hair, placing their hair up on their head can help. Once it can't be reached, the problem usually fades on its own.
- There are products on the market that can be painted on the fingers that has an unpleasant taste. It is mostly used to break thumb-sucking, but it can be useful to stop nail biting as well.
- If the child is older, painting their nails can serve as an incentive to keep their fingers "pretty". Make sure to use a non-toxic child polish in case they forget.
- Visual cues that are worn on the wrist (bracelets, rings, plastic bands, watches, etc.) or in their hair (barrettes, clips, etc.) can also remind the child of their goals. They can help the child will notice what they are doing (so many of these behaviors are unconscious) and remind them to stop. For example, if a child wears a heavy bracelet that slides down their arm when they put hand up to bite nails, they may be more likely to notice that they are biting their nails again and attempt to stop it.



➤ Make sure the incentives are menu-based (see #3 on page 31) because this type of program takes a while to work. If you use the same reinforcer over and over, the child will eventually get tired of it, and it will stop working. Also, be sure to set the program goals so the child is successful. These are very hard habits to break, so the child will need all the support you can give them. For example, your early goals might involve having the child go 15 minutes or a half hour without showing the behavior. Just make it short enough that they have a chance to do well 😊

➤ Some children use these behaviors because they need a lot of sensory input. If you suspect your child is having sensory problems, please see the manual titled, *Sensory Integration Disorders: When the World Won't Stay Still!* The manual can be found at www.neuro-teach.com under the PROCESSING



section. You may also want to discuss this issue with your child's teachers to see if they see the same behaviors in school. A family doctor can be a great source of information and assistance if you suspect a sensory problem is present.

➤ Some children are responding to stress or anxiety when they use these behaviors. Talk to the child and see if that is playing a role. If it is, try to reduce those situations and/or assist the child in developing other ways to cope. If this emotional piece seems too serious, you should seek professional assistance for more help.

➤ Children who are older can be taught about germs and how they are transferring them to their mouth during this behavior. Pictures and other visuals will be useful here, but just be aware of their response. Your goal is to stop the behavior, not develop a new fear! Even if this information is understood, though, the child may still need assistance and/or a reward to help things along. Habits are hard to break!

Will Not Listen

This is one of those behaviors that can really become severe. If your child is “not listening” most of the time, please also see the manual titled, *The Challenging Child: Assisting Both Your Child and Your Family in Difficult Situations*. The manual can be found at www.neuro-teach.com in the FAMILY section. Meanwhile, here are some general techniques you can try for milder problems:









- Take a good look to see if there is any pattern to the child’s behavior. Are they refusing to just listen to you, or do they act the same with other adults? Are they better at school, daycare, or someone else’s home than yours? Try to figure out the WHY behind this behavior. Sometimes it is just the way we are parenting.

There is no reason to feel badly if you think this is the case. Everyone has a different personality and some children are just *harder* to parent than others....especially if they are very bright. If you think the problem stems from what you are doing, then the behavior program must first be run on you-- LOL. Here are some mistakes parents make that affect some children:

- Pleading and begging the child to behave rather than give firm but loving commands that you require them to respond to---and then sticking to them if they don’t at first listen
- Paying too much attention to misbehavior and ignoring good behavior because it is easy to ignore during your busy life
- Responding to misbehavior some times and then ignoring it other times
- Beginning to cater to the child (walking around on eggshells) to avoid a tantrum

These are just a few of the parenting habits that can begin to **cause problems for you**. If you suspect that you have some habits to change in yourself, see the manual titled: *With a Firm but Loving Hand: Being the Adult in the Adult-Child Relationship*. It is also in the FAMILY section at www.neuro-teach.com . Don’t worry if you have some things to change----what parent doesn’t?

- Make sure that you do not “ask questions” when you are really giving a command. For example, if you want the child to come inside do not say, “Will you come in now?” That suggests they have a choice in the matter. No, instead give the child a very clear direction----“You need to come in now.” This makes it clear that they are required to do what you ask.
- If you want to give your child choices without losing the power of a clear direction, give the child a choice of HOW to comply, not whether to comply. Here are examples of what to say and not say:

 <p>You need to come in for dinner. Do you want to walk or run to the door?</p>	 <p>You need to pick up your toys. Do you want to start with the red or the blue blocks?</p>	 <p>You have to put on your coat before you go outside. Which arm would you like to start with?</p>
 <p>Would you come in for dinner now?</p>	 <p>Can you pick up your blocks for me?</p>	 <p>Would you put on your coat, please?</p>

If the child does not choose *a way to comply*, feel free to choose for them. Do not give them lots of chances, let them change their minds multiple times, or use this small choice to gain back power and control. If they do not use choices well, then simply give them no choices until you teach them that skill. Most children, though, soon learn to respond within the boundaries you set. Just be ready to TEACH this skill if need be since it may not develop completely on its own.

- If this behavior is happening often, you will also have to use a reinforcement and consequence program to really get rid of it. Usually a simple program will do, but for more serious or stubborn cases, make sure to see the *The Challenging Child: Assisting Both Your Child and Your Family in Difficult Situations* manual!

Disrespect / Talks Back



Some children become confused as to who has the authority in the household. These problems become more likely if the child is very bright or has to shoulder adult responsibility too early.

To really solve this problem, you may need to regain the authority you have lost. If that is the case, see the two manuals titled, *With a Firm but Loving Hand: Being the Adult in the Adult-Child Relationship* **and** *The Challenging Child: Assisting Both Your Child and Your Family in Difficult Situations*. They are both in the FAMILY section at www.neuro-teach.com. Meanwhile, here are some additional techniques for more mild problems:

- Does your language and behavior to others reflect the behaviors you want your child to follow? Are you respectful to people? Do you respect “authorities” in the city (police, judges), church, and the home (elders)? Your child will do what you do, so make sure to set a good example.
- Really reflect on the status of the child in your home. Do you want them to take on too much responsibility and handle things on their own too early? If you are requiring your child to act too much like an adult most of the time, coming back in and then demanding they respond like a child will not work. I know in today’s world it can be hard, but you either have to let the child “be a child” and fully care for and protect them, or resign yourself to them being independent and not needing you or your advice. Rarely can you have both...
- If the child’s problem involves a bad tone of voice (yelling) or choice of words (cussing), you may have to teach the child a new way of speaking. It sounds silly, but these types of responses become habits. You will have to help them find a new way of speaking to you and then demand it.

- Ignoring can really be useful here (see that section) but it can be difficult to ignore this type of disrespect. So, really think about whether ignoring will work for you before you begin. Reinforcers and consequences are also often needed, so be sure to take a look at those sections as well.

This is one place where a very bright child can struggle. They have SO many arguments and reasons for their position in their little brains that they are driven to help you “see their point of view” 😊 If it will work in your household, feel free to allow them to respond back, just make sure that you remain in the authority role and the “discussion” does not drag on. If you see any of the following:

- You begin trying to convince the child you are right or begging them to listen
- You find yourself repeating and repeating what you have already said
- You are beginning to become angry
- The child begins to whine
- The child uses disrespectful words, tone of voice or actions

It is time to stop the discussion....

Rarely should you listen to more than one or two reasons even if the discussion is going well. This is not the time for a debate. If you find the child DOES make a good argument and it was done in a respectful manner, then by all means adjust your request. In that case you are not losing authority; you are showing the child how to handle a tough situation appropriately. A wonderful skill to teach!

- Some children cannot express themselves well through words, especially when angry. If that is the case for your child, consider using the following:
 - Having the child write, draw a picture or tape record their response/reasons
 - Requiring the child to “think for a couple of minutes” before you discuss things. This will give them time to cool off and get their thoughts together so they can remain respectful.
 - Teaching the child specific words to use when expressing anger, confusion, etc. It sounds so silly, but you would be surprised how much this helps...especially younger children.

Lying

Even though lying is an irritating behavior, it is important to know that the younger the child, *the less likely they are to really understand what a lie really is*. We adults can track a thought back in our mind. We can tell what happened, did not happen, and tell it apart from what we “wish” would happen. This is not the case for many children.

No, children just think in a global way. They cannot reason well and what they “wish” can easily become confused with what really happened. In other words, they confuse reality with pretend. This is why your little one can be covered in chocolate while swearing to you that they did not have any 😊

So, here are techniques that can be used for children at different stages of development:

Techniques for children who know the difference between the truth and a lie

1. Use reinforcers and consequences as appropriate. Cue if you have to...
2. Consider reducing consequences when the child tells you the truth about a situation. You can even provide rewards for “coming to tell you” rather than you having to find out on your own.

In other words, if you want your child to tell the truth, *do not make it horrible when they do so*. Any intelligent person would begin to avoid honesty under those conditions. That does not mean when the child is honest there should be no consequence, that would eventually work against you, but honesty should be taken into account and have some type of tiny reward (reduction of consequences).



Techniques for children who cannot tell the difference between a lie and pretend

1. Teach them the meaning of the words REAL, PRETEND, WISH, and HIDE. Once they understand these words, then add the words TRUTH and LIE.

I have found it is best to teach these words through everyday life (wearing costumes, pretending to be cat), while watching television (i.e. some shows show real people and some show pretend people), and in play (i.e. have dolls or action figures act out things that are real, pretend or telling the truth and lying). These types of lessons should be done **before** you begin to deal with them during a behavior problem and/or when associated with lying.

2. Now that they understand the words, you can begin to walk them through questions that help them figure out what is real (the truth) and what is pretend (a lie) during a behavior situation.

Some questions for the child to think about include:



- ✚ Did I see, hear, or do this...or did I pretend it in my mind?
- ✚ Was this what happened...or what I wish happened?
- ✚ Am I afraid to tell what the **REAL** thing is? Why am I afraid?
- ✚ What can I do **FOR REAL** next time so I don't have a problem?

You will probably need to picture cue these concepts and/or the questions at first. You don't need to use fancy graphics, simple drawings will do. Make sure to praise your child not only for good behavior but also for telling the truth, even if the behavior they did was wrong. You want the child to understand the benefits of being honest!

Fighting with Siblings



Ahhhh....brothers and sisters fighting. How many times has that made a parent wonder why they ever decided to have more than one child 😊

But, there are bound to be sibling fights here and there. It is just life. As long as the fights are rather rare and there is no hitting, etc., you probably should just keep an eye out and see if they can solve it on their own. If not, often a quiet word to the oldest child can settle things down. If arguments are happening often or getting ugly, though, here are some techniques to try that may restore some peace to your home:

- Take a good look at how **you** handle arguments with adults and loved ones. The children will model what you do and say. It is a hard truth, but many of us have to learn to handle our own behavior during disagreements before we can help our children find a new way of handling their arguments.
- Look at the personalities and stages of development of your children. There are natural time periods when different age groups get along and other times when fights are bound to happen. Sometimes you just have to limit contact if one of your children is going through a difficult time or stage of development. You should do this directly and with all parties involved. Simply sit down one day (do this when all is quiet and the children happy) and explain that you know that so-and-so is having a rough time right now with football, social life, grades...whatever. Then ask the other children to give that person some space. The children will appreciate that you understand the problem and will usually cooperate with the guidelines you set, especially if you are firm about them.

- If you have an older child that resents the intrusion of the younger ones, talk with them and come up with a time where those younger brothers and sisters will have their full and undivided attention. Make sure to enforce the “together” and “alone” time for both sets of children. This can especially be useful when one of the children involved is a teenager.
- If you are having great difficulty, you may have to “directly teach” a new era of love 😊 This can be done by having the children remain apart in a quiet, rather boring place (in a room, on a chair, etc.). There should be no television, video games, or exciting toys available...just a few books and maybe a stuffed animal, if appropriate. Once a ½ hour has passed, you then bring the children together for 5-10 minutes to “practice” being near each other. They do not have to play together; just being in the same room may be enough at first. Use picture cues to show what behavior you expect.

If all goes well, praise them or place a sticker on their sheet and tell them that you will have another “practice” session in another 15 minutes. If there are problems, they go back to their quiet spot immediately, and you wait for another ½ hour before you let them “try again”. Repeat this until the children begin to try and convince YOU that they can now handle being near each other. Let them try, and if they do well, continue to provide reinforcement. If problems occur---back to step one you go! Eventually fade the program when the children no longer need any “lessons”.

As part of this technique, it is *important to also teach what the child should do if problems occur*. They **must** have a way to get adult help, especially if they are the younger or weaker sibling in the home. Come up with solutions and be ready to help them when they need you. If they come complaining about a sibling (even if it is not fully true) and you just ignore them, they WILL take matters into their own hands, and you will be right back where you started. Better to take the time now, teach the skills and get rid of the problem. In the long run it will be much easier for you...



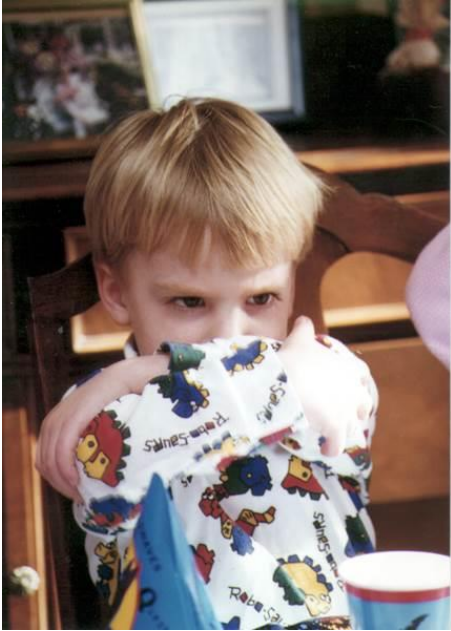
Has to be in Control / Right

This problem is really just another version of “not listening” so be sure to take a look at the techniques on page 67. There are some additional twists that can help you with this particular problem, so also consider using the following:

- Take time to explain what you are doing and why prior to the request. Beyond that, you really should limit the discussion during the behavior situation since many children use this to control and/or stall. For example saying, “The weather has turned colder so you need to put on a jacket now,” is better than saying, “I need you to put on your jacket.” The reason is stated right from the start and can stop some arguments before they begin.
- Do not rely on reason to get you anywhere. Even if you give a good, solid reason, childhood behavior is not based on logic. They **STILL** will try to argue that they are right. If this describes your child, just stop with the explanations for right now. *They do not work*. Just give your direction and enforce compliance. They will eventually come to understand when older. Meanwhile, consider guiding them into becoming a lawyer. It may be their future path in life 😊
- **You do not have to give a reason for everything you request!** YOU are the adult and sometimes it truly is “because I said so”. There is nothing wrong with that. There is also nothing wrong with the child not understanding why you want something. Their understanding may not be possible at that moment in time or at that age. Even if they do not understand why they have to come in before dark, be home at curfew, etc., etc., it does not change the direction you have given. Do not get caught up in waiting for the child to understand what you do and why you do it before requiring compliance, a common mistake of parenthood. *Hint: They will not understand or appreciate most of what you do until around age 25.* Best you give explanations when needed and leave the rest to be cured by time!



Acting “Like a Baby”



Some children seem to resort to baby-like behavior even though they are older. The reasons behind this can really affect how you deal with the problem, so try to match your child’s situation with the appropriate technique below:

There is a new baby in the house

1. It can be very hard to watch a new infant get all of the attention. Make a special effort to include the child when you do have to be involved with the new baby. They can get items, help hold bottles, etc. Any small job will work.
2. It is also VERY effective to “tell the baby” that they cannot do things that the older child is doing. Yes, the baby cannot understand, but your child hearing you say, “_____”, you can go outside to swing, but (baby’s name) you have to stay inside. You aren’t big enough yet.” This can help your child see the benefits of being “big” and make up for the loss of attention.

3. Lastly, it can be useful to construct some pretend “milestones” that are hooked to your child’s age and/or status as a big brother or sister. Being able to now *have an extra cookie because you are four* or being able to *stay up 15 minutes later because you are now the “older” sibling* can be very powerful. Look for little ways to celebrate your child’s new status as the bigger one in the family!

The child wants attention

1. This is a bit tricky because you have to do some soul-searching to see if the need for attention is appropriate. ARE you giving the child enough of your time? Is the time you give divided (you are also on the phone, texting, cooking dinner, talking with others, etc.). Some children just need more attention than others. Taking a step back and setting up some “special times” just for that child can often take care of the

problem easily. If the child really is receiving enough attention but clingy see page 52 for some helpful hints.

If this behavior comes on suddenly, you may want to explore what has happened in the child's life that is causing them to need so much attention. They might be having a difficult time with siblings, school, or have a fear that is causing them to seek the comfort of being with you. Once you can figure out the source of the problem, you usually can begin to solve it. If it is something serious, be sure to follow up with a professional who can help you!

The child has had a serious or unusual experience that caused the behavior

1. When a child experiences something serious (e.g., hospitalization, accident, death, fire, etc.) they may go back to infant-like behavior. Give the comfort of being held and the extra attention they need.

If you suspect that a certain event has caused this change, you may need to go back to interactions that you used when the child was younger. Find time to cuddle them, read a story, and be physically present for them (touch them casually often---stroke their hair, pat them on the back, etc.). In other words, try to increase your presence until the child's memory of the event begins to fade. You may also need professional assistance and/or counseling if the problems persist or are very severe.

2. If the event involved is temporary or not serious (e.g., moving to a new house, having a new adult in the home, parent away for a short time, etc.), you should follow the same rules as above but also begin to help the child adjust to the new situation. If possible, it is best to do this preparation before the event occurs, but this is not always possible. Even dealing with it after the fact is useful, so do take the time to help the child cope. This can include talking about the change, making preparations (packing toys, making a welcome or goodbye card, etc.) and dealing honestly with any loss or hurt involved (e.g., plan on how to stay in touch with old friends, taking picture of old back yard, etc.). Just be respectful of the child's feelings. Even though small, they can feel emotions powerfully. Help them cope with the intense feelings they are experiencing.





Social
Problems
~~~~~

## Fighting with Friends / Bullying



When your child fights with friends, it can also put pressure on you, especially if the friend happens to have parents who are your friends as well. Regardless of who is involved, this is a behavior that can cause issues for your child. Schools, daycares, playgrounds, swimming parks, etc. will not permit these problems to continue, so putting effort into changing the situation is very wise of you.

Look carefully at this behavior and make sure that nothing else is going on. Some children will need work on reducing aggression all around (see the manual *Reducing Aggressive Play* under the

BEHAVIOR tab), others do not know how to function in a group, have limited play skills, or really need someone to teach them **HOW** to play (see the manual titled, *Play Intervention*, under the TEACHING tab). If the problem is purely a social one, though, here are some ideas you can try:

- If your child knows how to play well alone, that does not mean they know how to play with others. Take a good look at your child and see what skills they are missing. Maybe they need to learn “how to lose”. Other children do not know how to handle teasing. See which skill your child is missing and take some time to teach it at home. Then, practice with other children that they know and trust...maybe a cousin or a close friend. Be sure to **picture cue the skills you are trying to teach** and **provide reinforcement and consequences as needed** to make sure the skills are actually used.
- If you see that your child **DOES** have the skills to play and simply likes being in charge or is overly bossy, you must look first to your home to see where this problem is coming from. Are you letting the child boss you and/or siblings? Is the child modeling someone in your home who is a bit controlling? Do they think this is how a “man” or “woman” must act in order to be grown up?

Figure out where the behavior is coming from and begin to correct your child's thinking. If you find out your child is too much in control, you might also have to change the authority patterns in your home. If that is the case, see the manual titled, *With a Firm but Loving Hand: Being the Adult in the Adult-Child Relationship*. It is in the FAMILY section at [www.neuro-teach.com](http://www.neuro-teach.com) and will help you deal with that issue.

- Sometimes the real truth is your child enjoys hurting others or being cruel. Do not panic, but do take some steps to remove this once and for all. It is definitely something that could bring a great deal of grief down the road.

YOU will have to decide exactly how you wish to do this work. Figure out which values you want to teach your child and then begin to do so. If you want them to be gentler, work on that behavior with siblings, close friends, and with pets. If you want them to understand the moral issues behind hurting others, then word your lessons using the moral or religious concepts you wish to teach. Make sure to teach the skill with visual and physical cues and put in place reinforcers and consequences as needed.

- Some children are very rough, and this is how the fighting begins. You might just need to teach gentleness, how to move carefully so you don't bump people, when you are squeezing too hard, etc. but sometimes these problems stem from something called a "sensory disorder". These children do not really know where their body is in space so they do not move well, feel object well so they hold them too tight, etc. These children grab, squeeze, push, and hit without really meaning anything by it.



If that is a problem for your child, see the manual titled, *Sensory Integration Disorders: When the World Won't Stay Still!* It will help you understand what sensory disorders are and what you can do about them.



# Problems in Public (grocery store, parties, etc.)

There is rarely anything more embarrassing than having your child misbehave in public. You can feel everyone looking at you and often feel like you do not have the ability to really do anything about the behavior because of the situation.

This is something every parent experiences, so do not let people judge you---we have all been there. On the other hand, if this is happening most of the time, there really are things you can (and should) do to change the pattern. Both you and your child will be much happier and less stressed if you do!



- Figure out which skills your child is missing. Do they know how to sit quietly? Maybe they have problems staying close to you in the store. Other children just need work on following an adult direction without a fuss. Once you know what the child is NOT doing, then like always, *teach the skill using visual cues and physical practice*. If you feel you need it, do not hesitate to use reinforcers and consequences. If the bad behavior is a habit, they may need that reinforcement to really change it for good.
- This is a wonderful place to use pre-planned practice teaching episodes just like we discussed earlier. In other words, if you child runs all over the store and will not stay by you, then teach the skill at home, practice in the yard, **and then** go to the store and practice there-----but, do not try this when you really need to shop! No, go to the store just to teach the behavior. That way if the child does not do well, you can calmly leave without a fuss. Much easier for both you and the child.
- In very severe cases, you might want to consider having the child earn the right to go outside of your home. Explain to them which skill they are working on and then practice at home. Once they are able to show the skill there, THEN they get to prove to you they can do it in the car, at the park, etc. At first only allow them short practice runs, 15 minutes at most. If they do fine, increase the time to 30 minutes, and eventually an hour. A great way to stress to the child that this behavior has to stop!

# Too Shy / Clingy

Children can be shy for many reasons. If the child seems to really need your constant attention, see that earlier section for some ideas on how to help your little one become more independent.

Older children, though, can show this behavior for many other reasons. Try to figure out what is behind your child's problem and then try the following:

## **The child wants attention**

1. Some children learn that they get a great deal of attention if they act “shy”. Adults try to get them to talk with them, their parents are discussing “how shy they are”, and other children treat them like babies. If this is the case for your child, begin to ignore the shyness and only pay attention to their efforts to interact with others. In other words, simply stop giving them attention for the behavior.
2. If the child has had this habit for a long time, you might have to teach or re-teach certain skills. They may no longer be sure how to talk to other children, know how to play the currently popular games, etc. If your child is missing a skill that will make them more confident in their play, teach it using visual cues, and practice it at home before trying it with other children.
3. If your child has reached the point that they are known for being shy or not speaking to others, you may have to change that public image a bit. You can find some ideas on how to do this in the manual titled, *The Challenging Child: Assisting Both Your Child and Your Family in Difficult Situations*. See the section on children who refuse to speak in public for some great ideas on how to change this public image and teach your child new public skills.



## The child is afraid

1. Some children really do have fears about speaking or playing with other children. You can get some general ideas on how to manage fears in that section in this manual.
2. Make sure the child does not have any sensory issues that could be making it more difficult for them to play with others. If your child does not like to be touched or seems to over-react to noise or movement, they may have a sensory problem. See the manual titled, *Sensory Integration Disorders: When the World Won't Stay Still!* and consider seeking professional assistance.
3. Setting up some “security zones” can help a child. To do this, teach (using visual cues) how to “check in with mom, etc. and feel safe”. At first practice this check in at home and have them physically come over to you so you can rub their back for 10 seconds (set a timer/limit so they do not stay there) and then have them go back to play.



When this is understood, you can try it at a relative's house, and then a friend's house, and eventually somewhere public like a park. **Keep track of how often they use the safety zone and then leave.** This is what you will base their reinforcement on. For example, if they came to you for comfort and then left again without a fuss, they get a point. *If they did not use the safety zone at all they get lots of points.* Make sure they are earning something wonderful. This is a hard habit to break...

Once they have mastered the physical security zone approach (coming to you physically), then begin to teach a second way to check in, through just visual checks from a distance. At this level, they just look at you, smile, and you smile back or give a thumbs-up. Use the same sequence----learn the skill at home, practice it, and then begin to use it out in other situations, and eventually in public. Use the same type of reinforcement system here. They get points for checking in and then going back to play and extra points for not using it at all for a certain length of time. As the child allows themselves to get more and more involved with others, they will eventually forget all about you.

# Tattling

This is another of those problems that can come from different sources. Figure out the source and then find the matching technique to try.

## **The child is confused about when to tell an adult and when it is considered “tattling”**

We DO sometimes give mixed messages about this behavior. We want children to “tell us” if something is wrong, and then when they do in other situations, we tell them to stop tattling.

Figure out for yourself when you want your child to tell you about something that they see and/or are worried about and when you don't. Is it when someone is upset or only when someone is being physically hurt? Is it when someone is playing rough or only when something is being hurt or destroyed? Once you know what YOUR rules are, **then** you can teach your child. A simple picture checklist or chart can help your child check to see if their news is something they should/need to share with you or another adult.



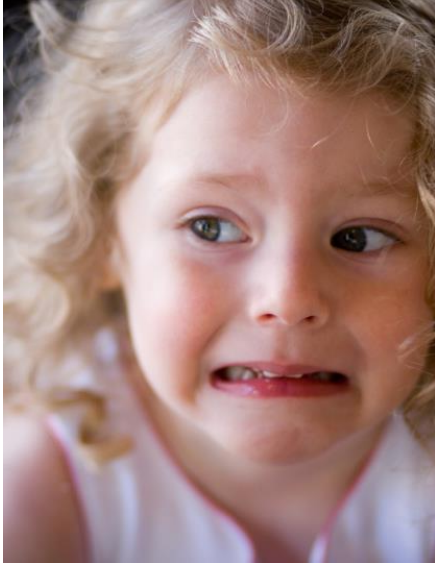
## **The child enjoys getting people “in trouble”**

If your child seems to enjoy getting others/siblings in trouble, treat it like any other misbehavior. Teach the value your child seems to be missing (kindness, truth, forgiveness, etc.) and then provide the practice and visual cues needed to get the skill in place. If the problem is very severe, you may need to make it a formal behavior program and use reinforcers and consequences.

## **The child likes the attention or enjoys the excitement of sharing their “news”**

Again, this should be treated like a general behavior problem. Ignore the behavior, teach a new value/skill if the child needs it, and then provide reinforcement and consequences if they are really struggling.

# Fears



It often takes very little to develop a fear in a young child. When they are very little, the fears are usually concrete and sensory (big dogs, people with mustaches, thunder, etc.). As they get older, they begin to fear concepts (being kidnapped, someone dying, etc.). Regardless of the age, here are some solutions to try.

*NOTE: If your child's fear stems from some event in their life (e.g., abuse, tornado, house fire, witnessing violence, etc.) you should seek professional assistance. These problems usually require counseling and/or long-term support. Both you and your child will do much better if that type of assistance is provided.*

- The difficult thing about a fear is there is no way to manage it. So, one of the best solutions is to help the child come up with concrete ways to “keep themselves safe. Allow THEM to come up with these solutions. Their solutions will be very strange sometimes (and may make no sense), but that doesn't matter. If the child thinks it will help, it will 😊

For example, like I mentioned earlier, my own son became terrified of witches after accidentally seeing a commercial for The Wizard of Oz on television. He simply refused to go to bed after that for fear a witch would come to get him in the middle of the night. I asked him what he thought would protect him from witches, and he said that he thought water would work because they melted in water. LOL Well, that works for me!

So, every night the child went to bed with a glass of water nearby to keep him safe. This went on for a while, and then he began to forget the water and would have to get up to go get it (important...make the child go get it not you!). After doing this a couple of times, he got lazy and assured me that he was now

such a fast runner that he thought he could get to the bathroom to get water if he needed it. So, we began to just leave an empty glass in there...and eventually he forgot that too. *The main point is to have the child figure out what they can do to create “safety” and then follow their plan.* Yes, the solutions will often be quite silly, but the CHILD feels secure, and that is all that matters.

- Do not use logic...children cannot usually follow this line of reasoning. For that matter, neither can we. How many of us are terrified of flying even though a plane is much safer than a car? Fears rarely have a base in logic, so logic cannot be used to remove them. With older children, you can give it a try, but do not be surprised if it has little effect.
- Take a good look and see if some type of skill is missing that should be taught. Children who are afraid of dogs may benefit from being taught to care for a puppy. Others who are afraid of thunder might be sensitive to noise and have to build tolerance over time. A child afraid of being kidnapped by a stranger would benefit from learning about what to do if they feel they are in danger. In other words, see which additional skills might help your child cope, and then provide the lessons or experiences needed.
- Some children are very sensitive to sound, touch, movement, and other sensory experiences that other children love. If it is a typical problem (child dislikes swinging high or roller coasters), then just be patient, give them small doses of the experience (e.g., make the ride shorter or try slower rides) and let time take care of the problem.



If the child is showing extreme responses (i.e., screams and panics when they hear a fire alarm) or has unusual responses (i.e., can't stand to touch sand), then you may be dealing with a sensory problem instead of a fear. If that is the case, the only way to remove the problem is to quiet the child's sensory system. If you suspect a sensory problem, see the manual titled, *Sensory Integration Disorders: When the World Won't Stay Still!* It will provide information, solutions, and guide you on how to seek additional professional help to support your child so the “fears” can be reduced or removed.

# Conclusion

Parenthood is never easy. The key to surviving it all is to realize *you can and should teach the behavior YOU want*. It can be difficult when other people (or family members) imply that you are somehow doing it all wrong, but that is where you can use your new ignoring skills learned earlier, except now you are ignoring the adults 😊

Yes, there are things you should learn because not all children are easy to raise, and sometimes you need to use something different to assist your child. It doesn't mean you are doing something "wrong", it just means your child needs something slightly different from the norm (or even different from your other children).

Regardless of whether you need "typical" parenting skills or something unique, the most important technique you can learn is confidence. You are the child's caregiver, and you love them. Yes, you will make mistakes, but if that love is there, it will all work out in the end.

**Be confident about what you do, and you will be successful....and your child will someday appreciate and love you for all you have done!**

