INTRODUCTION

Raising children can fill you with joy, but it can also be painfully difficult. Add a global pandemic like COVID-19, and even the best-behaved child can start acting up. This guide has ideas, tips and tools that can help with behavior. It is our hope that this guide can bring some ease to your home.

First things first: It is normal for children, teens (and adults) to act differently when they feel stress. One of the best things you can do is have compassion for yourself. We can't take care of anyone else, if we can't take care of ourselves. Do what you can, and know that we all make mistakes.

Next, you will probably have to try a new idea several times before it starts to work. It is a lot like learning to ride a bicycle. It can feel odd, uncomfortable, or just plain different. You are trying out a new skill, while your child is trying to figure out a new “rule.” If you decide to try something, do your best to stick to it for a while. Otherwise, your child might just wait you out, and go back to what they were doing.

If you want more support, there are additional resources on Spring ISD’s Mental & Behavioral Support For Parents & Staff during Coronavirus page. Here is the link: https://www.springisd.org/Page/6298
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Hyperactivity/Impulsivity
(Can’t pay attention, Can’t sit still. Interrupts on accident. . .a lot)

Interventions:

1. Create rules for the home.

Make a set of basic and straightforward household rules. Have positive rules (an example of a positive rule is saying, “Walk indoors” instead of “No running”). Keep only as many rules as you can handle. Choose the rules that are most important to you, or rules to stop the things that bother you the most. It is okay if your rules are different than rules for other children.

2. Ignore some of the little things and give praise when a child does what you want (choose your battles).

Parents too often get into hopeless and minor scuffles with their children about unimportant things. Focus on the big things and the little things, as they say, will take care of themselves. If your child left out his or her toys again, consider ignoring it once in a while.


While young children are not our pets, they often learn best when parents phrase their directions in the form of a simple yet firm and clear directive.

Get the child’s attention: Say their name before you tell them what to do.

Tell them, don’t ask them — Say, “Jason, please clean up your crayons before you go outside,” instead of, “Jason, would you mind cleaning up your crayons?”

Be as clear as you can — try saying, “Maggie, please take out the trash before dinner” instead of, “Maggie, could you take out the trash sometime?”

Keep it short, and use words they understand — Talk to a 4-year-old like a 4-year-old.

Don’t try to reason with them, or expect them to think like a 14 years old.

Tell a child the consequence, and follow through — Say, “Larry, please clean up your room before you go to bed or you’ll be grounded tomorrow,” instead of, “Larry, clean up your room or else!”

4. Have a plan ahead of time

We all work better when we know the rules ahead of time. If a child doesn’t do their homework, and still watches TV, they think homework isn’t important. If you say, “James, no TV until your homework is done” your child knows exactly what to do to get time with TV.
Disrespect
(Rude. Insulting. Ignores you on purpose.)

Interventions:

1. Set expectations for your child.

Have your child earn privileges, instead of taking privileges away. For example, tell your child that after his homework he can do an activity of his choice (e.g., watch TV, play with toys, go on the computer, etc). This works better than pressuring a child to do homework, and taking something away if they don’t do homework. Children cooperate more when they know the expectations and can earn something.

2. Be consistent and follow through (as much as you can).

If you tell your child that they can earn a privilege for finishing something, stick to what you said (e.g., “First homework, then you get TV”). If they earn the reward, give them the reward. If you do not keep your promises, they will not take you or your rules seriously. You also need to stay strong. Your child might argue: “I don’t want to do my homework!” and try to turn on the TV. Give a reminder in a confident, firm way: “Homework first, then TV.”


It is human nature to get upset. Do your best to keep calm when keeping your rules with your child. Stick to what you say without yelling. You are teaching your child a valuable lesson when you stand by your rules without yelling. You are teaching them how to keep calm, and get things done even when they are upset or frustrated.

4. Give your child choices.

Children often want to feel in control because they are always being told what to do. Give your child choices you are comfortable with (e.g., “Do you want to wear the green shirt or red shirt?” “Do you want jelly or butter on your bagel?” “Do you want to do your math or reading homework first?”).

5. Tell your child what to do, instead of what not to do.

Research shows that children (even teenagers) respond better to specific directions than to being told not to do something.

Some examples are:

- “Keep working on your homework,” instead of, “Stop daydreaming.”
- “Here, draw on this paper,” instead of, “Stop drawing on the walls.”
- “Hand me my purse,” instead of, “Stop going in my purse.”
6. **Take an interest when your child tells you something about their thoughts, feelings, ideas, or just about their day.**

Children are often excited to tell their parents something (e.g., “Guess what my teacher said, today?” “I think I know what I want to be when I grow up.” “If I was president, I would make sure there were no more bad guys.”). No matter how unimportant you think it is, or if you just don’t feel like listening, do it anyway.

When your kids know you listen and care about what they say, they will come to you about important stuff, the stuff you want them to tell you about. It also helps their self-esteem and confidence to feel like what they say matters. Kids with good self-esteem and confidence make better choices.

7. **Avoid arguing, long lectures, or making fun of your child’s behavior.**

Stick to your rules. Don’t negotiate, go back and forth, or argue with your child. If your child starts to argue or yell after you tell them the rule, let him/her know that you are not going to talk about it anymore. Do not give attention to an angry outburst. When they have calmed, compliment your child for calming down, and listen if your child wants to talk about his/her feelings. Then show your child what they need to do next.
Defiance
(Argues. Annoys / upsets people on purpose. Does the opposite of what you say)

Interventions:

1. **Set up rules ahead of time and let your child earn privileges for following those rules.**

This works better than punishing your child or taking away privileges when they don’t do what you want them to do. Let your child have a say in what they want as a reward.

Allowing children to earn privileges puts the ball in their court. They know what is expected and they know what they have to do to earn the things they enjoy. They also feel a sense of pride when they work to earn a reward.

2. **Use reminders.**

When your child starts getting off-track, remind them of what they are working for instead of telling them what you will take away if they doesn’t listen. Research shows that children and teens are more likely to do what is expected when they have the power to earn something, than when being threatened that you will take something from them.

3. **Prepare your child for what is coming next.**

Here is an example; “In ten minutes it is time to turn off your video games and come eat dinner” or “After this show, it is time for homework.” Give some more reminders as the time is winding down (e.g., “in two minutes it’s time for dinner”). A visual timer app, or kitchen timer can be helpful for children who have trouble understanding time.

4. **Use empathetic words to show your child you understand how he/she feels.**

Imagine how you would feel if someone came into your room and said, “Get off the computer and go to bed.” Although they are kids, they still have the same feelings you would have in that type of situation. You can show them you understand how they feel with a statement such as “I know you are really enjoying your computer time and you don’t want to turn it off. You need to get rest for school tomorrow. You can have some time on the computer again tomorrow.”

5. **Tell them what you want, not what you don’t want.**

Also, remove the word “can.” Instead of saying, “Stop jumping on the furniture” or “can you stop jumping on the furniture?” Try something like, “Sit down” or “Come down off the couch” in a calm, confident voice. Try to give them a different activity or guide them to something they like, “Let’s do jumping jacks, together,” or “Here are some puzzles/blocks to play with.”

Children respond better when you tell them “what to do” rather than “what not to do.” Want your child to stop what they are doing? Give them a clear direction of what you want them to do, instead. Giving an explanation such as “you can fall” or “that can damage the couch” can also help.
6. Praise your child for following a rule. Be specific.

Some examples are “great job picking up your toys,” “you worked hard on your homework,” or “nice job listening to directions.” Praise your child for what they do right.

It reminds them what you want, and encourages them to keep trying.
Temper Tantrum
(Sudden anger. Yelling. Holding breath. Throwing things)

Interventions:

1. Avoid arguing.

Give your child time to calm down on their own. When your child is calm, it is okay to talk about how they felt and complement them for relaxing: “I really liked how you calmed yourself down! You should be proud of yourself.”

2. Remove distractions.

Turn down the volume on the TV or music. Turn off some (not all) of the lights. If possible, ask everyone else to leave the room for a few minutes. Try to “dial down” the excitement and distractions.

3. Feelings are important.

Tell your child you know they feel upset. A little bit of understanding can go a long way.

Your child knows you are here to help, when you understand how they feel.

4. Help them talk about it.

Ask your child to tell to you what is upsetting them. Let them know this helps you understand how to help them. If they are too upset right now, try when everyone is calm.

5. Focus on the positive.

Pay attention to what your child is doing right, not only what they are doing wrong.

Maybe they are yelling or cursing. Do they have good eye contact? Are they using words to say how they feel? Pay attention to that. Try dealing with the yelling and cursing when everyone is calmer.

6. Remind your child.

Tell your child what you want them to do, not what you want him to stop doing. Say, “Please talk to me using an inside voice,” instead of, “Stop yelling!” You may want to lower your voice to a whisper as you remind your child.

7. Have another adult try.

Is there a different family member / caregiver around? A child may calm down more easily if another adult tries to help and you step away. When everyone is calmer, you can come back and talk about what happened.
8. Wait it out.

When all else fails, wait it out. Keep an eye on your child from a distance. Let them know that you will be happy to talk with them as soon as they calm down. Then, do something else. Make it look like you have other things to do.

9. Take your time.

If you act like you have all day, the situation is more likely to be better in a few minutes.

If you act as like only have a few minutes, it may just take all day.

10. Say what you mean. Mean what you say.

Follow through when you tell your child to pick up their toys before going outside. Stay away from empty threats (punishments that you will never do). Your child will learn that you are serious. If you don’t mean what you say, he/she won’t take you seriously.

11. Use a schedule.

Make a schedule for chores, homework, self-help tasks (shower, brush teeth, etc.), and fun things. Have your child help make the schedule. Try taking turns between fun things (games, outside, etc.) and work (bath, chores, etc.). Keep in mind that children are looking for things to do. Adding a schedule can cut down on some of the impulsive stuff, like running / jumping inside.
Consequences

If a child does something wrong and they need a consequence, here are some things to try:

1. Time-out – Your child is given a predetermined place away from anyone or anything to reflect on what they have done.

2. Delay a privilege – Make them wait to get something they really want

3. Lose a privilege – Break a rule? They lose TV or something else they like.

4. “Natural Consequences” – Natural Consequences are what happen “naturally” when they break a rule. Here is an example: You tell your child not to go in the rain without a raincoat. They do it, anyway. The natural consequence is they get wet. Some people call it “learning the hard way.”

5. “Logical Consequences” – A logical consequence is what you do because of what the child did. A couple of examples:
   a. You tell the child not to ride their bicycle and they do it anyway? They can lose the bicycle for the morning.
   b. Did the child make a big mess when they were angry? They can clean it up.
Rewards

Rewards help people do the right thing. Rewards are not bribes. You pay a bribe before someone does something bad. You give a reward after someone does something good.

1. Watch a favorite show.
2. Wear a sticker of their choice on their shirt or hand.
3. Pick a game for the family to play.
4. Pick an activity for the family to do (e.g., arts and crafts activity, playing a sport outdoors, picking a movie to watch or go see).
5. Help the family cook dinner or bake something.
6. Spend time on the computer, tablet, etc.
7. Do a special arts and crafts activity like making sock or paper bag puppets or making paper plate masks (you can staple on rubber bands if your child will be safe with the staples, or glue on a Popsicle stick for a handle for the mask).
8. Use sidewalk chalk.
10. Pick the family meal for one night during the week. It has to be realistic and appropriate. For example, it should not be something like candy or ice cream. It also should not be something too expensive or too hard to make.
11. Perform for the family (good for kids who like to act, sing, dance, tell jokes, etc).
13. Get toenails and fingernails polished by family member.
14. Listen to music of choice in the bedroom or on headphones (should be age-appropriate).
These are just some ideas for privileges a child can earn. You may think of more. You can give your child a choice of two or three privileges to choose from. Try to pick things they like.

Here are some examples of when to allow a child to earn one of the privileges:

- After finishing one thing (homework, a chore, etc.).
- After finishing more than one thing in a row (e.g., finished homework, cleaned up plates, put on pajamas, brushed teeth). After following rules for a period of time, like an hour, a day, or a week (e.g., using kind words, keeping hands to self, etc.).
- At the end of a good week (for example, if your child finishes their homework every night, they can earn a desired privilege on the weekend).

Some of these things you might have already known, some might be reminders, and some might be new thoughts and ideas. We hope they helped.

You’ve got this.
References/ Resources

1. psychcentral.com/lib/adhd-behavioral-interventions-for-the-home


3. educationandbehavior.com/how-to-get-your-kids-to-listen-to-you-and-show-you-respect

4. educationandbehavior.com/strategies-for-oppositional-defiant

5. educationandbehavior.com/ideas-for-kids-good-behavior


7. extension.umn.edu/encouraging-respectful-behavior/using-natural-and-logical-consequences#selecting-effective-logical-consequences-511961
World Health Organization (WHO) for parents

1 COVID-19 PARENTING One-on-One Time

Can’t go to work? Schools closed? Worried about money? It is normal to feel stressed and overwhelmed.

School shutdown is also a chance to make better relationships with our children and teenagers.

One-on-one time is free and fun. It makes children feel loved and secure, and shows them that they are important.

Set aside time to spend with each child

It can be for just 20 minutes, or longer – it’s up to us. It can be at the same time each day so children or teenagers can look forward to it.

Ideas with your baby/toddler

1. Copy their facial expression and sounds
2. Sing songs, make music with pots and spoons
3. Stack cups or blocks
4. Tell a story, read a book, or share pictures

Ask your child what they would like to do

Choosing builds their self confidence. If they want to do something that isn’t OK with physical distancing, then this is a chance to talk with them about this.

(see next leaflet)

Switch off the TV and phone. This is virus-free time

Ideas with your teenager

1. Talk about something they like: sports, music, celebrities, friends
2. Cook a favorite meal together
3. Exercise together to their favorite music

Ideas with your young child

1. Read a book or look at pictures
2. Make drawings with crayons or pencils
3. Dance to music or sing songs
4. Do a chore together – make cleaning and cooking a game
5. Help with school work

Listen to them, look at them. Give them your full attention. Have fun!
COVID-19 PARENTING
Keeping It Positive

It’s hard to feel positive when our kids or teenagers are driving us crazy. We often end up saying “Stop doing that!” But children are much more likely to do what we ask if we give them positive instructions and lots of praise for what they do right.

Say the behaviour you want to see

Use positive words when telling your child what to do; like ‘Please put your clothes away’ (instead of ‘Don’t make a mess’)

It’s all in the delivery

Shouting at your child will just make you and them more stressed and angrier. Get your child’s attention by using their name. Speak in a calm voice.

Praise your child when they are behaving well

Try praising your child or teenager for something they have done well. They may not show it, but you’ll see them doing that good thing again. It will also reassure them that you notice and care.

Get real

Can your child actually do what you are asking them? It is very hard for a child to keep quiet inside for a whole day but maybe they can keep quiet for 15 minutes while you are on a call.

Help your teen stay connected

Teens especially need to be able to communicate with their friends. Help your teen connect through social media and other safe distancing ways. This is something you can do together, too!

For more information click below links:
- Parenting tips from WHO
- Parenting tips from UNICEF
- In worldwide languages
- EVIDENCE-BASE
COVID-19 has taken away our daily work, home and school routines. This is hard for children, teenagers and for you. Making new routines can help.

Create a flexible but consistent daily routine

1. Make a schedule for you and your children that has time for structured activities as well as free time. This can help children feel more secure and better behaved.

2. Children or teenagers can help plan the routine for the day – like making a school timetable. Children will follow this better if they help to make it.

3. Include exercise in each day – this helps with stress and kids with lots of energy at home.

Teach your child about keeping safe distances

1. If it is OK in your country, get children outside.

2. You can also write letters and draw pictures to share with people. Put them up outside your home for others to see!

3. You can reassure your child by talking about how you are keeping safe. Listen to their suggestions and take them seriously.

Make handwashing and hygiene fun


2. Make a game to see how few times we can touch our faces with a reward for the least number of touches (you can count for each other).

At the end of each day, take a minute to think about the day. Tell your child about one positive or fun thing they did.

Praise yourself for what you did well today. You are a star!

You are a model for your child's behavior

If you practice keeping safe distances and hygiene yourself, and treat others with compassion, especially those who are sick or vulnerable – your children and teenagers will learn from you.

For more information click below links:

- Parenting tips from WHO
- Parenting tips from UNICEF
- In worldwide languages
- EVIDENCE-BASE
4 COVID-19 PARENTING

Bad Behavior

All children misbehave. It is normal when children are tired, hungry, afraid, or learning independence. And they can drive us crazy when stuck at home.

Redirect

1. Catch bad behavior early and redirect your kids' attention from a bad to a good behavior.
2. Stop it before it starts! When they start to get restless, you can distract with something interesting or fun: "Come, let's play a game together."

Take a Pause

1. Feel like screaming? Give yourself a 10-second pause. Breathe in and out slowly five times. Then try to respond in a calmer way.
2. Millions of parents say this helps - A LOT.

Use consequences

Consequences help teach our children responsibility for what they do. They also allow discipline that is controlled. This is more effective than hitting or shouting.

1. Give your child a choice to follow your instruction before giving them the consequence.
2. Try to stay calm when giving the consequence.
3. Make sure you can follow through with the consequence. For example, taking away a teenager's phone for a week is hard to enforce. Taking it away for one hour is more realistic.
4. Once the consequence is over, give your child a chance to do something good, and praise them for it.

Keep using Tips 1-3

1. One-on-One time, praise for being good, and consistent routines will reduce bad behaviour.
2. Give your children and teens simple jobs with responsibilities. Just make sure it is something they are able to do. And praise them when they do it!

For more information click below links:

- Parenting tips from WHO
- Parenting tips from UNICEF
- In worldwide languages
- EVIDENCE-BASE

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COVID-19 PARENTING
Keep Calm and Manage Stress

This is a stressful time. Take care of yourself, so you can support your children.

You are not alone
Millions of people have the same fears as us. Find someone who you can talk to about how you are feeling. Listen to them. Avoid social media that makes you feel panicked.

Take a break
We all need a break sometimes. When your children are asleep, do something fun or relaxing for yourself. Make a list of healthy activities that YOU like to do. You deserve it!

Listen to your kids
Be open and listen to your children. Your children will look to you for support and reassurance. Listen to your children when they share how they are feeling. Accept how they feel and give them comfort.

Take a Pause
1-minute relaxation activity that you can do whenever you are feeling stressed or worried

Step 1: Set up
- Find a comfortable sitting position, your feet flat on the floor, your hands resting in your lap.
- Close your eyes if you feel comfortable.

Step 2: Think, feel, body
- Ask yourself, “What am I thinking now?”
- Notice your thoughts. Notice if they are negative or positive.
- Notice how you feel emotionally. Notice if your feelings are happy or not.
- Notice how your body feels. Notice anything that hurts or is tense.

Step 3: Focus on your breath
- Listen to your breath as it goes in and out.
- You can put a hand on your stomach and feel it rise and fall with each breath.
- You may want to say to yourself “It’s okay. Whatever it is, I am okay.”
- Then just listen to your breath for a while.

Step 4: Coming back
- Notice how your whole body feels.
- Listen to the sounds in the room.

Step 5: Reflecting
- Think ‘do I feel different at all?’
- When you are ready, open your eyes.

Taking a Pause can also be helpful when you find your child is irritating you or has done something wrong. It gives you a chance to be calmer. Even a few deep breaths or connecting with the feeling of the floor beneath can make a difference.

You can also Take a Pause with your children!

For more information click below links:
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- Parenting tips from UNICEF
- In worldwide languages
- EVIDENCE-BASE

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COVID-19 PARENTING
Talking about COVID-19

Be willing to talk. They will already have heard something. Silence and secrets do not protect our children. Honesty and openness do. Think about how much they will understand. You know them best.

Be open and listen
Allow your child to talk freely. Ask them open questions and find out how much they already know.

Be honest
Always answer their questions truthfully. Think about how old your child is and how much they can understand.

Be supportive
Your child may be scared or confused. Give them space to share how they are feeling and let them know you are there for them.

It is OK not to know the answers
It is fine to say “We don’t know, but we are working on it; or we don’t know, but we think.” Use this as an opportunity to learn something new with your child!

Heroes not bullies
Explain that COVID-19 has nothing to do with the way someone looks, where they are from, or what language they speak. Tell your child that we can be compassionate to people who are sick and those who are caring for them.

Look for stories of people who are working to stop the outbreak and are caring for sick people.

There are a lot of stories going around
Some may not be true. Use trustworthy sites:
and
https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/covid-19
from WHO and UNICEF.

End on a good note
Check to see if your child is okay. Remind them that you care and that they can talk to you anytime. Then do something fun together!

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- Parenting tips from WHO
- Parenting tips from UNICEF
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- EVIDENCE-BASE