

**Parenting
Strategies
for Kids with
Behavioural
Challenges**

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Necessary Educational Strategies for Teachers and Students

Parenting Strategies for Kids with behavioural challenges

1. Stay calm.

“Once the parent is out of control, the child’s anger becomes even more escalated, assuring that the interaction will result in a non-productive outcome.” So pay attention to yourself if you have a tendency toward behaviours like reactivity.

Arguing with your child won’t get you anywhere. Take homework time, for instance—an activity that can feel like a tug-of-war. Arguing simply creates “a diversion that delays homework even longer.” Instead, “Diffuse, don’t engage.”

Instead suggest the following: “Say, ‘I understand this is no fun for you,’ followed by silence, positive expectancy and a loving touch on the shoulder. The wrong move here would be saying, ‘Stop complaining. You’re dawdling over nothing.’”

2. Set limits on your own behavior.

“If you’re inclined to be a worried, rescuing parent, remind yourself that the more you do for your child, the less he does for himself.” The key is to “Support, but don’t get into the driver’s seat.”

For example, during a homework session, it’s fine to ask “Do you need more of those papers with the lines and boxes on them to finish these long division problems?” she says. But taking your child’s pencil and saying you’ll both work on that long division can be problematic.

If you’d still like to keep an eye on your child, “sit close by, but bring your own work to the table—pay your bills, do emails.”

3. Set structure—but make it pressure-free.

Here structure involves “star charts for young children, calendars and planners for older ones, and clear rules and sensible routines, especially at bedtime.”

Structure helps reduce disorganization and distractibility, For example, “set a consistent time to do homework, with certain privileges only available to the child after” they’ve successfully completed their assignments, he says.

Above all, it’s best to avoid imposing pressure. So what does pressure-free structure look like? It includes “*not using threats or unreasonable deadlines and punishments that contribute to hostility, fear or drama*”.

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4. Give your kids the chance to make wise choices.

To help teach kids self-control, “Parents must provide ample opportunities for children to be faced with choices of how to respond.”

Experts suggest using a technique called “structured choice,” which gives your child two choices that steer him or her in the right direction.

For example, parents might ask, “Do you want to do your math or your science assignment next?” or “Before we can go, your room needs to be picked up. Do you want to start with the clothes on the bed or clear the top of your desk?”

5. Use reasonable consequences for rule-breaking.

Experts suggest parents ask their child what the consequences should be if he or she breaks a rule. This helps kids create commitments that they can actually own.

In addition, create and consistently enforce positive consequences for positive behaviors and negative consequences for negative behaviors, Kapalka says. This helps your child “recognize that positive behaviors result in positive consequences, and negative behaviors result in negative ones.”

6. Expect rule-breaking, and don’t take it personally.

It’s in your child’s “job description” to occasionally break the rules. When your child breaks the rules, “...correct him the way a police officer gives you a ticket. He doesn’t take it personally or groan or yell, ‘I can’t believe you did that again! Why do you do this to me?’ Like the officer, be respectful, consistent, and matter-of-fact.”

7. Advocate for your child when appropriate.

Certain accommodations might be necessary for your child because of his or her behaviour challenges. However, you still want to encourage kids to cultivate their abilities.

For example: “... stand up for his right for an accommodation like talking books, but encourage and expect him to learn to read fluently, giving him time, attention, a tutor, and most especially, your belief that he can.”

8. Avoid muting a headstrong child.

There is no point in “Trying to turn a spirited, willful child into one that never questions authority and accepts all that is said ‘just because I said so’ as a parent.”

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Instead, experts suggest that parents “accept that some children will protest and talk back, and parents must set a limit that on the one hand realizes that children need at least some way to express their frustration, while still enforcing reasonable standards and rules.”

9. Be persistent.

Kids with BEHAVIOUR CHALLENGES may “require more trials and exposure to consistent consequences in order to learn from that experience.” Trying a technique one or two times with no results doesn’t mean that it’s completely ineffective. You just might have to keep trying.

10. Tackle one issue at a time.

Every concern can’t be fixed at once. So it’s important for parents “to prioritize what situations seem most important, and start with those, temporarily letting go of the less important problems,” he says.

11. Focus on your child’s strengths.

Instead of harping on what your child can’t do, hone in on what they can. Keep reminding yourself about your child’s “resourcefulness, creativity and individuality. The same self-determination and intractability that drives you nuts today will empower your child tomorrow. Picture him as a tireless entrepreneur, attorney, or doing any work he feels passionate about.”

It’s best for parents to try to strike a balance. “Don’t deny his special needs, and don’t define him by them, either,” she says.

Finally, Cut yourself some slack.

Raising a child with a disorder whose symptoms include impulsivity, defiance and “limited self-control is one of the most challenging tasks any person will ever attempt,” Kapalka says.

So acknowledge that you’re working hard, and “Do not feel like a failure. You did not cause your child to behave this way, but you can make a difference,” he says.

Celebrate being a parent and being with your child.

[Parenting](#) kids with BEHAVIOUR CHALLENGES can feel like a frustrating—and sometimes unfeasible—task. But “Don’t let BEHAVIOUR CHALLENGES rob you of the joy of being a parent.”

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When parents are at their wits' end, they can do a few things to help. For instance, she suggests a parent “cradle your arms and remember what it felt like when your child was born.”

If you're “correcting your child too much, turn your ring or put your wristwatch on your other hand, and don't put it back the right way until you've thought of and said something positive or caught your child being good,” she says.

“I am thankful to be a parent. The responsibility is great but the rewards are greater.”

“I teach my child and my child teaches me.”

“I am thankful for my children — their gifts and talents and their love.”