



Strategies for You to Take a Moment Before Guiding Your Child's Challenging Behavior

Here are some strategies that can help you as you respond to challenging behaviors in nurturing ways that, over time, will teach your child to manage his own behavior.



Pause, breathe, think.

These actions will help you calm down, so you can think and decide what to say or do. You will also be showing your child how to calm down and respond thoughtfully when the going gets rough.



Remind yourself that learning to guide his own behavior will take time.

Slowly but surely, your child will gain the ability to control his behavior.



Have realistic expectations.

Ask yourself, "What can I realistically expect?" For example, even though your baby hears you say, "No," he will most likely keep tugging at your hair. He isn't trying to defy you. He is curious and, at this age, he can't stop without your help. So, gently remind him. Explain, "It hurts daddy when you pull his hair." He needs you to stop and physically redirect him. Take his hand and gently touch his face saying, "Let's be gentle. This is how gentle feels."



Look through your child's eyes to try to understand what he is experiencing.

This will give you information to help you decide how to respond.



Model the behaviors you want to see.

Your child is always watching you. He wants to be like you. Behave the way you want him to behave.



Look for moments of success on your own or with another adult who knows and cares about your child.

Have you noticed that sometimes, in some situations, he is able to adapt or adjust his behavior? Is he able to handle situations that he may have found frustrating or upsetting in the past without losing it?

For example, he might do the following:

- Whine when he wants a cracker. Then says, "Cracker, please" when you ask him to use his words.
- Tell a friend, "Stop!" instead of hitting her.
- Take off his jacket, hang it on the hook, and then pick it up and hang it up again when it slips to the floor.
- Try and try again to pull his zipper up, crinkle his brows in frustration, and then ask you to help him.



Share your pleasure in behaviors you want to see.

When he gently pets the kitty or turns the page of a book without tearing it, comment with a big smile, "I see you are being gentle with kitty," or "You are learning to take good care of your books."



Redirect his attention.

Is he trying to grab your phone? Crawling toward the toilet bowl? Pick him up and dance around the room together or begin a game of rolling the ball. Invite your new walker to walk down the hallway or across the lawn with you as you hold his hand. Dance a silly dance.



Save "Nos" for times of danger.

For example, when he crawls towards the hot oven. If you say "No" too often, it will lose its meaning.



Remember that you are on the same team.

No matter how upset you may feel at your child, sometimes he needs you and your support to thrive.



Be kind to yourself.

Are you saying "No" too often? Losing patience more often? Put on your favorite song. Make yourself a cup of tea. Call someone from your **Circle of Support**, and talk for a few minutes. Give yourself a break!



Other ideas?
