



10 STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

1. Get BELOW the child's eye level when having a discipline/teaching moment – Parents report that they avoided the BIG meltdowns when they did this due to demonstrating empathy: I'm here with you, I'm relaxed, I have empathy toward you.
2. Connect with emotions BEFORE dealing with behavior: Sooth first. Kids don't learn in fight or flight. If the point of the discipline is to learn a skill, etc. we need to teach them when they are calm
3. Relaxation breathing: Big belly breathing: Use a visual – smell the flowers, blow out the candles. Place a "lovely" or stuffed animal on their belly and watch it rise and fall. Practice when the child is calm, model the behavior.
4. Hold, and actually extend the moment when a child is feeling healthy guilt: Guilt vs Shame – "you feel bad you hit your brother. Hmm. What do you think you need to do to make it right?" Guilt helps us to say sorry and not do it again – guilt is healthy. The part of the brain that is firing the guilt needs to grow stronger. We need to let the child know that we accept their apology. Do NOT shame children or punish when the child shows progress with signs of increased empathy.
5. Consider Movement: Movement can lower the arousal level and shift emotions. Consider setting up designated movement breaks throughout the day. It takes time, but saves lots of time/stress dealing with behaviors.
6. Consider Playfulness: One example = Play the guessing game – if a kid does not want to put on outdoor clothes, play the guessing game. Have children close their eyes. You put your outdoor clothes on first and then, without looking, have them guess what item you will put on. Then have them put on an item when you are not looking, and you guess which item they put on.
7. Instead of denying the child's feelings, give them a name: Teach emotional growth and teach skills. "I can tell by your tears that you are really upset that you cannot keep playing on the iPad."



8. Take the “no” out: Listen to yourself – how often are you stating you sentences with “no, don’t, or stop” for many kids these are trigger words. It encourages them to “run faster, jump higher” or have a tantrum. Taking the “no” out leaves room for conversation and allows our kids to hear what is coming next. Grant the child’s wish and fantasy: Restate what they want, but put your spin on it. “I want a cookie.” “A cookie is a great idea for after dinner.”
9. When/then versus first/then: Avoid using “if...then” – say “when .. then” instead. This is more likely to give the message that you expect the child to do as you asked.
10. Question if a consequence is even needed: If the teaching/discipline was done exceptionally well, then the lesson was learned – and guilt was the natural consequence of unexpected behavior. Going to your room should be about re-regulating, not about shame/punishment.

