

TIPS FOR BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT AND JUST PLAIN SURVIVAL FOR PARENTS STAYING HOME WITH THEIR CHILDREN

Behavioural Reactions

Be aware of the normal behavioural reactions children can experience when there are significant changes in their lives. Predictable routines provide children with a sense of safety. Children frequently behave badly when they don't feel safe. As a result, your children may exhibit many of the following behaviours given their current circumstances:

- An increase in anxiety, irritability, impatience, anger, meltdowns and tantrums.
- Complaints against restrictions on normal activities, lying, opposition and defiance.
- Mood swings, withdrawal, clinginess, aggression, trouble concentrating.
- Sleep problems, bed wetting, thumb sucking.
- Headaches, stomach aches, chest pain, fatigue.



<https://www.relaxkids.com/blog-single.aspx?id=896>

Helping Your Child Manage Negative Emotions

- Model appropriate expression of emotions – Be the change you want to see.
- Set reasonable expectations – unreasonable expectations lead to failure, frustration and anger.
- Avoid known triggers e.g. tired, hungry.
- Alter the environment – e.g. provide each child with their own space to avoid conflict.
- Don't encourage them to vent by punching a pillow etc – this will only intensify the emotion.
- Distract – lead them to focus on something else e.g. snack, game.
- Let them talk it through – telling their story reduces anger.
- Express empathy for their feelings (not the behaviour).
- Help them to think differently about the event - ask questions to elicit the other person's perspective and options to avoid future problems.
- Help them to change their response e.g. use calm down strategies, use their words, fix it.
- Be compassionate and gentle – punitive responses only increase everyone's stress.

How To Make Your Child Feel Safe

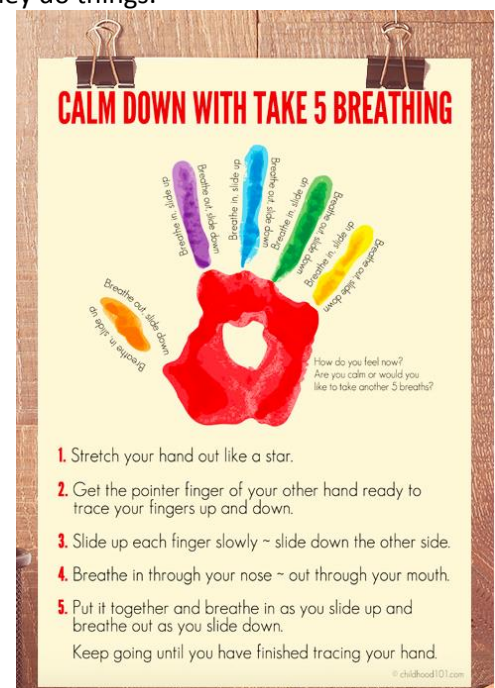
- Make this a positive experience – children look to parent emotional reactions to determine how safe the world is.
- Monitor their emotional wellbeing - look for signs listed to the left, talk openly about the situation and ask them how they feel, give them a safe space to open up about their feelings.
- Acknowledge their concerns and share your own past experiences and coping strategies.
- Remind them of their own coping successes in the past



Download and work through the Relax Kids for Parents pack:

<https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/re/public/stfills/uploads/sites/2293/2018/05/Relax-Kids-Pack-for-Parents.pdf>

- Let them know that this too will pass.
- Work on designing a daily routine together.
- Working on it together will give your children a sense of ownership and make it more likely that they will follow it.
- Try to follow the routine each day but remain flexible.
- Remember that routines change at school too sometimes and we are all likely to have to adapt to many more changes before this is all over.
- Help them regain their sense of control by giving them choice from a reasonable set of options for when, what and how they do things.



<https://childhood101.com/take-5-breathing-exercise/>

Avoiding Parent Meltdowns

Everyone in the house together all day, every day can be a challenge for everyone.

Put your own self-care first to build your resilience against meltdowns

- Journal your feelings/experiences 20 minutes a day.
- Practice Gratitude - start your day by listing at least 3 things your grateful for.
- Listen to your favourite music.
- Make yourself a hot drink.
- Schedule time to talk to friend.
- Go for a walk/exercise regularly.
- Have a nap.
- Replace an unnecessary activity in your schedule with an enjoyable hobby.



But when the inevitable happens and you reach your limits:

- Clap your hands once forcefully and loud – it can stop things long enough to give you room to think.
- Say – “This behaviour was unacceptable and we will speak about the consequences later.”
- Give yourself time out from the situation:
 - Get a drink of water.
 - Do something calming – go for a walk, yoga.
 - Ask yourself how would an observer see this?
 - Don’t mentally rehearse negative thoughts.
 - Use your supports – call a friend.



Dealing with Defiance

- ✓ Make sure both parents are on the same page.
- ✓ Make sure you have a predictable routine – sudden and unexpected demands can increase resistance.
- ✓ Build your relationship by replacing negative attention with positive/neutral attention (e.g. “Thank you for answering the phone,” “Your wearing green today”).
- ✓ Give at least 5 positive comments to every 1 negative comment.
- ✓ Check out <http://resourcingparents.nsw.gov.au/>
- ✓ Spend at least 15min of one-on-one time 3-4 times/week with each child.
- ✓ Give one command (not a question or favour) at a time – speak in a business like tone.
- ✓ Communicate clear and specific expectations e.g. fill and run the dishwasher, put the dishes. away when the dishwasher is done
- ✓ Be flexible and adapt to changing demands of each day.



Addressing a Problem Behaviour

1. Pause – Remember that mistakes are an opportunity to learn.
2. Calmly state the problem behaviour.
3. Explain why it’s a problem.
4. Suggest more appropriate alternative behaviours.
5. Ask for a replay of the events with the newly chosen behaviour.
6. Resume the conversation/meet the request when appropriate behaviour is shown.
7. Do not make hollow threats.

Making The Best Of A Bad Situation

None of us would have chosen to be in this situation willingly but now that we’re here, how can we make the most of it? While there will be many challenges, there are also many things we can do to make the experience more positive:

- ❖ What are some of the things you’ve always wanted to do as family but never found the time? Do them now!
- ❖ Build a cubby house, take an online art classes together, start a vegetable garden, make pasta from scratch.
- ❖ Use the time saved travelling to and from work and shopping for “stuff” you really don’t need to spend dedicated, focussed quality time with each of your children individually. Turn off your phone notifications and enjoy the time together without interruptions.
- ❖ Do a <https://www.bigfamilychallenge.com/>
- ❖ Remember to be playful – at school the children have recess and lunch breaks as well sports, drama and art. These are all times to let loose, be creative and play – it’s not all work, work, work, they have fun too.
- ❖ Use the Internet to get out of the house and/or travel – Visit a virtual art museum or famous international landmark.
- ❖ Set up online play dates using one of the many Apps available to let people get together online. E.g. Zoom.
- ❖ Set them up to watch a movie with friends through Netflix Party.
- ❖ Use your child’s interests to encourage learning – crazy about animals – visit an online Zoo and build a habitat for their favourite animal together.
- ❖ Allow time off from school work when necessary – now is not the time for more emotional distress and frayed relationships
- ❖ Take turns parenting – give each other permission to take a break from childcare and school work to focus on personal needs and projects.
- ❖ **KIND is the new COOL** - Remember to be kind to yourselves and to each other, things will inevitable not work out the way you plan – accept it at the outset and it will be much less stressful. Family relationships and the wellbeing of each family member should always be our primary goal.

