



Art and play focused counselling for children, youth and families

Parent Coaching Tips

Expectations:

Try to ensure demands can be met at least 80% of the time. Gradually increase requirements as the child progresses, if digression is observed your expectations may be too high.

Identify and describe the behaviour in language the child can understand (i.e., what does being kind mean? This is vague, breaking it down into specific and observable behaviours is better i.e., speaking nicely, using a quiet voice, no name-calling, helping rather than hurting hands etc.

Make sure limits are clear and child understands what is expected of them, this comes back to ensuring you are using language that they understand.

Be sure to use praise as much as possible rather than criticism, it motivates far more effectively and allows the child's self-esteem to remain intact. Make sure you praise even small gains or improvements, this encourages continued efforts.

Evaluation:

Try to determine whether there is a good reason for the behaviour.

Ask yourself if it is something that needs to be addressed (i.e., is it causing problems for the child or others to a degree that warrants change?). Sometimes we need to chose our battles.

Modeling:

Are you modeling the behaviour you want your child to do? This is an important and effective way (i.e., yelling at a child to "STOP YELLING AT ME!" is not an ideal way to teach them to stop yelling).

Consequences:

Ensure that consequences are as naturally or logically related to the incident as possible.

Try to respond in a consistent manner, this will help the child to know what to expect and make a connection between their behaviour and the associated consequence.



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Intervention Strategies

Planned Ignoring:

The intentional ignoring of undesirable behaviour in attempt to distinguish it.

Do:

- keep yourself busy by continuing an activity or starting something new to tune out undesirable behaviour;
- casually turn or walk away to another location;
- redirect child to another task using a calm voice

Do Not:

- Try to calm the child down
- Tell your child to stop the behaviour
- Physically try to stop the behaviour
- Ignore one time then give I another time (this is inconsistent and they will push for you to give in every time because it worked ONCE)
- Yell, or argue with the child, or acknowledge the behaviour at all.

1-2-3 Cues / Prompts:

The use of counting as a prompt / opportunity to make the right choice can be quite effective. This is something that should be explained to the child at a time when everyone is calm. Advise them they will have the opportunity to chose their consequence (i.e., if they listen they receive a positive consequence – such as moving onto another activity; if they do not listen they are choosing to have a break);

Example: If a child were asked to pick up their toys and was not listening parent would respond as follows: “That’s 1 for not listening” followed by a pause (if the child listens great, commend them; if they do not, the counting continues); “That’s 2 for not listening”; “That’s 3 for not listening, now it is time to have a time-out.”

The use of 1-2-3 allows the child three chances to decide, if they have not by three their decision is presumed as non-compliance and a cooling off or time out period is applied (see below).

As a general rule of thumb, any physical contact (hitting, kicking, scratching, pushing etc.) is an automatic time out, no counting is used in this instance. The parent instead would respond by saying “that’s 3, you’re on a time out for hitting.”



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Time Out:

The use of a time out as a cooling off period is quite effective if used consistently. The duration should be relevant to the child's age, one minute per year of age is typically suggested i.e., if the child is 7 they would sit for 7 minutes.

This is not meant to be a punitive process or punishment, but rather an opportunity for the child to think about what happened and how they could respond differently next time (this can be discussed with them in a loving way following the time out).

If a child is able to regulate / calm down and think about their behaviour while playing with their toys, colouring, or reading this is okay. The goal is for them to regroup and be able to complete the task that was initially requested of them (i.e., to stop yelling, crying, hitting etc.).

While on the time out parents should not engage in arguing or power-struggling. If the child is yelling, you can advise calmly that their time out or cool off period will start when they are ready (i.e., when the undesirable behaviour stops).

Once the time out / cooling off period is finished it is important to reiterate why they went on a time out, ask what could be done differently, and validate their behaviours and feelings (i.e., "we all feel angry at times, this is okay, however it is not okay to use our hands to hurt other people. What could you do differently next time you feel that way?").

Parenting as a Team:

When more than one parent is involved parenting as a team is very important, try to use consistent strategies and techniques so they child knows what is expected. Even if the child is going from one home to another, having consistent rules, expectations, and consequences will help make this transition as smooth as possible.

Self Care:

Be sure to take a break for you to engage in self-care as needed as well, (have a bath, go for a walk, or do something else you find relaxing). You cannot properly care for others if you do not take care of yourself first 😊