



# Behaviour

## Educational Psychology Service

*This factsheet is a supporting guide to help you to better understand and manage your child's behaviour before behaviour escalates, in the early stages of experiencing anger or upset, when they are very angry and after they have calmed down.*

## Behaviour is Communication

Although behaviour can be challenging, try to remember that it is your child's way of communicating their needs or feelings with you. This leaflet will help you to understand behaviour better, look for triggers to prevent future difficulties and support your child to manage their emotions and communicate safely.

## Keeping Calm in the Day to Day



### Quality Time

Spend quality time together. Even ten minutes a day of play, shared reading, activities or chat can help strengthen your relationship with your child and help you to understand their likes, needs and behaviours better.

### Praise & Recognition

Find opportunities to praise your child's efforts as this can help to raise self-esteem. Keep your language positive and try to reinforce and praise behaviours that you want them to show again rather than focusing on punishing those you don't.

### Expectations & Routines

Set and reinforce simple, clear rules and expectations for behaviour. Use positive language and focus on rules that keep them and others safe eg. 'Keep your hands to yourself' rather than 'Don't hit.'

### Practice Being Calm & Prepare for Stressful Situations

Find ways to maintain or practice being calm throughout the day eg. rest time, choice time, a private/personal space for the child to go when they need to be quiet or practicing deep breathing. Think ahead to possible triggers for behaviour and pre-warn your child that this is coming up so you can discuss ways they can keep calm ahead of the event.

## Responding When Your Child is Becoming Upset/Angry (Early Stages)



### Divert or Distract

Suggest a change of scenery or activity to try to diffuse uncomfortable feelings.

### Name the Feeling to Tame It and Empathise

Try calmly labelling your child's feeling: "I can see you are feeling annoyed." Then empathise: "I feel annoyed too when I can't find something!"

### Separate Feelings From Behaviours and Set Limits

Validate the feeling and set the limit: "It's OK to feel annoyed but it's not OK to...eg. kick/shout/hit." Then try to find an OK solution together: "Why don't we... instead"

### Try a Calming Activity

**Take some deep breaths together**

**Pour or fill up containers with eg. pasta, rice, water**

**Help with the cooking eg. kneading dough**

**Tidy or order items eg. toys, DVDs**

**Help with jobs eg. sharpening pencils or cleaning toys**

**Blow bubbles or thread eg. shoelaces**



# Responding When Your Child Is Very Upset/Angry (Later Stages)



## Keep Safe

Do you need to:  
 Move away from a busy road?  
 Remove objects from the room?  
 Ask other children to leave the room?  
 Keep a safe distance from them?

## Be There For Your Child

**Hug if they find this calming or be present at a distance if you're worried they might hit out at you**  
**Try reading or talking in a soothing voice in the same room**  
**If they tell you to 'Go Away' then give them space and say 'OK I'm in the kitchen, I'm here when you need me' and then check on them every few minutes**

**Keep Calm: If you are starting to feel angry and if it is safe to do so, remove yourself from the situation to take some deep breaths so you can be calm when helping your child.**

# Responding When Your Child Is Calming Down



## Make Sure it is Really Over

The 'meltdown' may appear over but your child may still feel very uncomfortable. Keep things calm and simple for a while afterwards to avoid another meltdown.

## Reflect

When you are both calm explore the following together:  
 What happened?  
 What were you thinking at the time?  
 How were you feeling?  
 What could we do to stop this happening again?  
 Compare the size of the problem with the reaction using the pictures to help.

## Repair and Problem Solve

If other siblings were involved then listen to them all individually using the same questions.  
 If they are all calm, encourage them all to listen to each other's points of view.  
 Rather than punishing your child, see if they can repair any damage to relationships eg. If they hurt someone, could they do something kind for them to make it up to them?  
 Problem solve how they could respond next time to avoid the not OK behaviours.

## Consequences

Make sure any consequences are simple (and don't just cause further frustrations) and age appropriate (eg. 5 minutes consequence is enough for a 5 year old).

## Identify Possible Triggers

**Do things go wrong when your child is tired?** Perhaps schedule in some extra 1:1 time at bedtime?  
**Does your child get angry when it is too loud?** Can you find earphones to listen to calming music?  
**Does your child get stressed when shopping with you?** Could you shop online instead?  
**Does your child find it hard to share?** Could you role play this with them to practice?

