

By trying some of these techniques we hope that you will have more good days than bad.

If you need additional help or support please contact your Health Visiting Team.

PATIENT ADVICE AND LIAISON SERVICE (PALS)

- Concerned but don't want to complain?
- Worried but not sure what to do?
- Have a problem but don't know who to ask?

Then contact the PATIENT ADVICE AND LIAISON SERVICE on 01942 482778 or 482765; email: pals@alwpct.nhs.uk. This service provides confidential advice, support and information. Information on how to make a complaint can be provided.

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Bridgewater Community Healthcare 

NHS Trust

Children and Young People Care Group

Parents' Survival Guide to children's behaviour in the under fives

You can change your child's behaviour !

Here are some tips to help you.

Join in with your child's play

We all presume that children know how to play with toys but sometimes they need to be shown and there is nobody better to do this than you.

- Enjoying activities together will not only help your child's development, but you will also keep them occupied and be less likely to misbehave. A toy will be more interesting if you share it with them.
- You will not be able to sit with your child all day, so think of ways that they can help you in everyday tasks, for example your child could help you to hang the washing out by handing you the pegs. This can, quite often, get a task completed quicker rather than if you were to do it on your own and have to keep stopping to deal with your child's misbehaviour.

Praise and Rewards

Behaviour that you want to see more of should be praised. Rewards can be something simple that you know the child will enjoy, for example a sticker. Rewards should not be expensive and do not need to be in the form of sweets or chocolate. Rewards should be given as soon as the good behaviour is displayed.

NB: Shouting and/or smacking your child are aggressive and ineffective ways of managing behaviour and may lead to your child treating others in the same way.

Your child is special and so are you

Accept that your needs are important and give yourself "time out" each day or as often as you can. Remember you deserve time for yourself - for example, an undisturbed soak in the bath. Time for yourself will help you cope with the demanding role of being a parent. Don't go it alone, ask for help from friends and family.

Give clear rules

Wherever possible try to show your child how to behave rather than just saying what the rule is e.g. “Don’t hit the cat, stroke him gently like this...good girl”. By doing this, you are criticising the behaviour and not the child.

All the child’s carers should be consistent in the way they maintain these boundaries

Attention

As a busy parent, it is very easy to ignore your child when they are being good, but they will quickly learn that in order to get attention they need to misbehave. Children love attention whether it be in the form of praise, being laughed at or shouted at and therefore will do anything to get “noticed”.

When your child is displaying good behaviour give them praise as this will encourage this desired behaviour. If your child is misbehaving but is safe, you should ignore them in order to discourage this type of behaviour.

Distraction

Distraction can be used when children are misbehaving and likely to harm themselves, others or cause damage. By distracting your child you can stop unwanted behaviour without paying lots of attention to the child or their misbehaviour.

It is often possible to anticipate unwanted behaviour or to intervene quickly once it occurs. For example, if your child is about to climb onto the windowsill, distract them by showing them a toy they like or picking them up and showing them out of the window.

“Naughty” is normal

All toddlers at times tend to be stubborn, ask endless questions and constantly change their minds. Toddlers can also display frustration in a form of anger and interrupt adults constantly. Whilst this is normal childhood behaviour, setting boundaries that you stick with consistently is important for you and your child.

Small children are only able to see their own needs and wants as the most important thing in their world.

They are also sensitive to upset, excitement and tension in their environment, for example a new addition to the family, house moves, divorce, bereavement etc.

Any changes in the home mean it is more important for the child that the normal routines of daily life are in place.

Am I doing the right thing?

It is easy to feel like the only parent in the world who is not handling your child's negative behaviour effectively. As a positive carer there are lots of things you will be already doing or you can do which your child will respond to:-

- Smiling, singing, hugging and cuddling etc.
- Using rewards and praise
- Stick to normal routines
- Spending quality time together, for example, reading, colouring and playing games
- Staying calm will help you feel more in control
- Resist attempts by the child to get into arguments. Remember you are the adult and they are the child
- Challenge as little as possible by:
 - Ignoring inappropriate behaviour and being consistent in your approach
 - Setting boundaries on behaviour.

Ideas for making life easier

Listening means paying attention

How often have you carried on with an activity whilst your child is talking to you?

Your child will become very frustrated if you don't stop what you are doing when they are trying to talk to you. They may feel they are being ignored. You may not feel that what they are saying is important but they could be talking about something that really matters to them.

Imagine how you would feel if a friend responded to you in this way when you were trying to engage in conversation.

Swap bad news for good news

Try to make a disliked activity less unpleasant. For example bath time could be made more enjoyable by putting a new toy in the bath (and changing the toys offered) therefore bath time becomes more exciting playing with a new toy.

Give warnings before changing an activity

Imagine how you would feel if you were watching a film and somebody turned it off just before it had finished without any warning. You would probably feel very frustrated or even angry. Your child may also feel like this if they are enjoying an activity and they are suddenly told to tidy up.

Try to give a warning that tidy up time is approaching so that this doesn't come as a shock e.g. "in 5 minutes we will have to tidy up as it is nearly tea time."