



**Parent Information Center  
ON SPECIAL EDUCATION**

## ***Discipline Toolbox A Workbook***

***Some strategies and tips  
to bring out the best  
behavior in children***



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This is a “toolbox” of strategies and techniques to help you be more effective with discipline. The goal is to find a strategy that works for you and your child. It is important to remember that what works with one child may not necessarily work with another. What works in one situation may not be the best strategy to use in another.

### **Getting Started**

The word discipline means “to teach.” Teaching children appropriate behaviors can be one of the more difficult tasks for a parent. Teachers also struggle with inappropriate behaviors that interfere with learning. It is helpful when parents and teachers work together and share information about positive behavior interventions. Here are some basic tips to get you started:

1. Be positive - Let your child know you love him and appreciate him. Notice appropriate behavior. Praise and acknowledge his efforts!
2. Identify the specific behavior that needs to change.
3. Focus on only one behavior at a time.
4. Be consistent - decide on the rule, the expected behavior and the consequence or reward - then stick to it!
5. Recognize the small steps toward progress or change.
6. Let your child know what to expect - Go over the rules and consequences with your child.

Whether the inappropriate behavior is happening at home or school it is important to figure out the reasons for it. A Functional Behavioral Assessment is a formal evaluation used by schools to gather information about problem behaviors.

An FBA uses the ABC approach. This approach can also be helpful to parents.

- A** Antecedent (what factors led up to the behavior)
- B** Behavior (what is the behavior of concern and how serious is the behavior)
- C** Consequence (what does the child achieve with the behavior: ex: attention, avoiding a too difficult task, removal from the peer group)

The information gathered by using this A, B, C approach can then be used to determine the reasons for the behavior. It can also provide a foundation for developing positive ways to change the problem behavior.

### **Discipline Tool Box - Encouraging Positive Behavior**

- ★ Functional Communication System
- ★ Redirect
- ★ Time-out
- ★ Natural Consequences
- ★ Logical Consequences
- ★ Teach Relaxation
- ★ Sensory Diet
- ★ Repair the Damage
- ★ Lend a Hand
- ★ Verbal Warning
- ★ Teach Replacement Behaviors
- ★ Negotiate
- ★ Work Before Play
- ★ Ignore the Behavior-Choose Your Battles
- ★ Rewards & Charts
- ★ Remember to Praise

## Encourage Positive Behavior

Children crave attention, positive or negative. Sometimes a child may be misbehaving just to get attention. Here are some ways to encourage positive behavior:

- ★ Give more attention for positive behaviors than for negative behaviors (at home & at school)
- ★ Provide choices between two acceptable options
- ★ Provide reassuring routines and tell the child in advance if the routine will change
- ★ Involve the child in setting limits
- ★ Model the desired behavior

Ways I Can Use This: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Listen and Give Your Child Your Full Attention

- ★ Help your child to identify her feelings
- ★ Keep it simple

Ways I Can Use This: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Praise

Children will respond better to praise than to criticism. Praise teaches children to seek positive attention.

- ★ Praise the positive behavior
- ★ Use specific praise for genuine accomplishments
- ★ Praise small steps towards the desired behavior
- ★ Give praise immediately and frequently
- ★ Mix praise with unconditional love
- ★ Teachers can send a note home to tell parents about positive behaviors

Ways I Can Use This: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Natural and Logical Consequences

The use of natural consequences involves letting the results of behavior provide a learning experience. When responding to inappropriate behavior a logical consequence is one that fits the behavior.

**Example of Natural Consequence:** The child forgets his homework. Instead of bringing it to school, the parent allows him to experience the consequences of missing recess and/or having to do it over.

**Example of Logical Consequence:** After telling your child ride her bike in the street, she does so anyway. The parent takes her bike away for a specific time period.

- ★ Allows children to take responsibility for their actions
- ★ Use consequences in combination with positive techniques
- ★ Follow through with consequence promptly
- ★ Be consistent; empty threats do not work

These approaches cannot be used in situations where the safety of the child or another person is a concern.



Ways I Can Use This: \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Provide a Functional Communication System ~ Behavior is Communication**

Without a functional way to communicate needs, wants and feelings, a child will become frustrated.

Negative behaviors can be the child's attempt to make others aware of his needs, wants and feelings.

- ★ If a young child cannot express that he is hungry or thirsty, simple sign language may enable him to convey these basic needs
- ★ An older student who has no way to participate in class discussions is likely to act out to gain the attention of his teacher and classmates
- ★ Assistive technology may be needed by some children

Ways I Can Use This: \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Teach Replacement Behaviors ~ Provides the child with more appropriate responses**

Gives the child a better, more acceptable way to behave; replaces undesirable behaviors with more acceptable ones.

- ★ Teaches the child other options
- ★ Acknowledges that the traditional telling the child to just "stop the behavior" will not be effective because the child does not know an alternative way to behave
- ★ This strategy can include providing the child with scripts for common situations
- ★ Can also include teaching the child to use visual imagery, such as a stop sign
- ★ If a child curses when angry, provide more appropriate words to use

Ways I Can Use This: \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Ignore the Behavior ~ Choose Your Battles**

Some problem behaviors may stop when they are not rewarded with a reaction from you. Ignore less serious behaviors so that you are not constantly nagging your child.

- ★ Decide what you can and can't ignore
- ★ Don't give attention to the behavior
- ★ Be consistent even though it is difficult
- ★ Expect behavior to get worse before it gets better
- ★ Reinforce desirable behaviors - when the child acts or responds in the appropriate way praise immediately to reinforce this is what you want!
- ★ Allow your child to make decisions and mistakes but let him know that some basic rules must always be followed (ex: staying safe, not hurting others)
- ★ When identified rules are broken, follow through with pre-determined consequence

Ways I Can Use This: \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Give a Verbal Warning**

Prepares your child so he can meet your expectations. Easily combined with other strategies.

- ★ Be clear
- ★ Avoid last minute "surprises" that may overwhelm your child
- ★ Focus on "do" not "don't"

Example: In 5 minutes you need to stop watching TV and brush your teeth.

Ways I Can Use This: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Redirect

One way to change an undesirable behavior is to re-focus the child's attention from one activity to another. This tool typically works best with younger children.

- ★ A good way to intervene when there is conflict between two or more children.
- ★ Suggest an alternate activity that is attractive to the child
- ★ This should not be used as a punishment (Examples:: if children are fighting over the TV, offer to play a game or child is unable to wait his/her turn to use playground swing, invite him/her to join a group shooting hoops)

Ways I Can Use This: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Time Out

Time out is designed to stop and change a child's out of control/aggressive behavior by removing the child from the environment so he/she can regain control.

- ★ Gives the adult and the child a chance to calm down and reflect
- ★ Explain the time-out rule to the child
- ★ Time-out is not a way for the child to avoid the rules
- ★ Choose a quiet and safe time-out location
- ★ Limit time-out to one minute per year of the child's age (5 minutes for a 5 yr old)
- ★ Use a timer
- ★ When time-out is over, help the child determine what went wrong and what could she do differently next time, then help the child rejoin group activity
- ★ Help child rejoin group activity
- ★ *For older children, removing privileges is a similar concept*

Ways I Can Use This: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Teach Your Child to Relax

Providing a child with an appropriate way to respond to stressful situations may minimize "melt downs".

- ★ Recognize your child's reaction to stress
- ★ Help child to recognize and understand their stress
- ★ Help to minimize the stressful situation
- ★ Teach Relaxation Techniques
  - Quiet Time
  - Breathing Technique
  - Progressive Muscle Relaxation
  - Visual Imagery

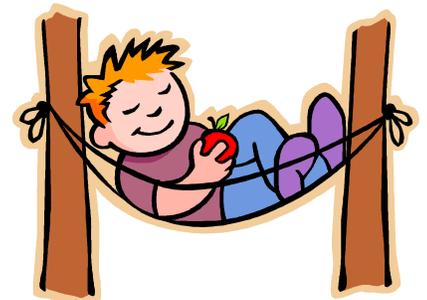
Some children will need a visual reminder such as a paper taped to his/her desk with picture cues for "count to 10, breathe and talk to an adult".

Ways I Can Use This:

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## Work Before Play

Help a child realize that a reasonable amount of work needs to be done before being rewarded with a favorite activity.

- ★ Builds a sense of responsibility and an ability to wait for rewards.
- ★ Increases self-esteem.
- ★ Provides a model for productive adult behavior
- ★ It is important to be consistent and follow through.

Child can watch half hour of television at night but only after homework is completed.

Ways I Can Use This: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Rewards and Charts

Rewards can help motivate your child to change negative behavior by developing new habits. When using rewards and charts it is important to keep the following points in mind.

- ★ Focus on only one behavior or routine (such as morning routine) at a time
- ★ Ask your child for types of rewards that would interest him
- ★ Be creative, vary the types of rewards
- ★ Follow through on your reward promise
- ★ Rewards can include prizes, money or activities, such as feeding the classroom pet
- ★ The reward should be available fairly soon after being earned
- ★ Stickers or tokens can be effective for some children, but others need a more concrete and immediate reward
- ★ If using charts, make them easy to use, read and maintain
- ★ Older children can be involved in charting their own progress

Ways I Can Use This: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Lend a Hand

This can be a useful tool when a child does not know how to complete a task or is overwhelmed.

- ★ A parent can make a game out of a chore by having a race to see who can finish first.
- ★ A child cannot figure out how to do their math homework. A parent can help by providing a review of the process or by helping with the first 2 or 3 problems.
- ★ A young child feels overwhelmed when asked to clean up a messy room. A parent can help child get started.
- ★ Educating and modeling for young children in this way will prepare them for success during the school years.
- ★ This should be accompanied with an explanation of how parent is helping, so child will learn organizational skills.

Ways I Can Use This: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Repair the Damage

This technique teaches children about other's feelings and how to take responsibility for their own actions.

- ★ Have the child undo or correct the social or physical damage
- ★ Show compassion to the person who was wronged-this teaches the art of apologizing
- ★ Have the child practice - provide the child with specific language she can use
- ★ Praise and reinforce compliance resist the urge to do it for them (ex: have child pick up mess he made in sibling's room)



Ways I Can Use This: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Negotiate

Include your child in solving the problem behavior. When the child is part of the solution, it's more likely to be successful. Learning mutual problem solving is a skill that is useful in all relationships. Together:

- ★ Define the problem
- ★ Brainstorm all solutions
- ★ Evaluate the possibilities
- ★ Choose the best option that is agreeable to all
- ★ Implement the plan and later on, check to see how it's working
- ★ Develops maturity & reasoning ability
- ★ Teaches responsibility & respect for others
- ★ Increases self-esteem as the child realizes she can solve problems

Ways I Can Use This: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Implement a Sensory Diet

A sensory diet provides the child's sensory system with input that keeps him in a "just right" arousal state. A child can be calmed and put in a "learning mode" by using physical, auditory or visual stimulation.

- ★ Primarily used with children whose disability is on the autism spectrum, including children with ADHD. Requires advance planning, as well as some training and support. While specialized equipment may be used, inexpensive alternatives can also work.
- ★ Without a sensory diet, the child's behaviors, which may include tantrums, self-injurious behaviors or "self-stimming" may lead to the child being secluded.
- ★ A sensory diet can enable the child to participate more fully in activities at home and school.

Examples:

Providing pressure or physical input can include swaddling an infant, seating the child in a beanbag chair or wearing a weighted vest or backpack.

Watching a fish tank or using headphones to replace distracting noises with calming musical background can provide visual/auditory support.

Ways I Can Use This: \_\_\_\_\_

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