

SESSION

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Leaflet for parents

How to help your child develop emotionally and behave well

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Build a positive relationship with your child

Building a positive relationship with your child is the best way to help your child develop positive emotional wellbeing. As a parent you have a central part in helping your child learn how to tolerate frustration, learn to calm down, know how to behave acceptably in society and relate to others in a healthy way.

Showing your child that you are listening to them and that you understand that they are trying to communicate with you is an important part of developing a two-way relationship. You may not always know immediately what they are attempting to tell you but they will feel more secure knowing that you are open to hearing about their feelings.

Show your child you are listening to them

Find support for yourself

There may be times when both you and your child might find feelings overwhelming. It is at these times that logical clear thought seems to be most difficult. Finding support for yourself is extremely important part of your emotional wellbeing. In taking care of your emotions you may feel better able to help your child with his. Regaining a sense of calm may make what you thought was an unmanageable situation seem less difficult.

Parents have often commented that at difficult times it is hard to look past your child's behaviour and think about how your child is feeling. Finding ways to stay calm can not only support you but also help you to look past the behaviour and see the message your child may be giving and why they behaved in that particular way.

Stay calm and try to work out what your child is feeling



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**Accept angry
and frustrated
feelings and offer
calm or comforting
words and
actions**

Helping your child to calm down so that they will eventually learn what it feels like to calm themselves is an important skill for life. For example staying close to the child and offering words of comfort and an affectionate gentle hug to let them know you are there for them and helping them to cope with their anger and frustration. As children get older, being able to tolerate frustration and cope with strong emotions may positively affect the way they behave towards other people.

Children respond far more positively towards loving, predictable behaviour and clear boundaries. Avoiding threats and harsh punishment, smacking and excessive shouting will help both you and your child develop a more respectful and positive relationship. Giving children a way of saving face and an opportunity to change their behaviour is important in helping them to learn that relationships are about how both people feel.

**Give your child
a way to back
down without
losing face**

**Lay
foundations by
praising positive
behaviour**

Choosing behaviour techniques such as positive praise and encouragement, distraction, time out to calm down, or rewarding good behaviour instead of focusing on difficult behaviour, will help lay the foundations for later negotiations on acceptable limits to behaviour.

Boundaries and rules are often an important part of family life. They can offer a sense of security and predictability for your child. Boundaries that are most effective are those that are appropriate to your child's age.

**Rules and
routines help
children feel
safe...**

**... but be
flexible where
necessary**

While it is good to be consistent in putting agreed rules and boundaries into place, it is also helpful for a degree of flexibility. There may be occasions when it is appropriate not to stick rigidly to the rule such as when your child is ill.



If boundaries are changed for other reasons it is best to avoid making decisions at the height of an argument or in anger. The message about new rules may be lost as one or both of you struggle to keep control of your emotions.

You will have times when you feel helpless and useless. Although it is easier said than done, try and have some confidence in your ability as a parent.

Do not make unrealistic rules. Make a few rules and stick to them

As your child grows and develops there will be decisions to be made about changes in boundaries. Talking to your child about why new boundaries are planned will help them co-operate more readily.

Difficult behaviour usually has a meaning, even though sometimes it is not clear what the meaning is. You may need to keep an open mind for a while about what is causing the difficulty. Your child may have little idea about why he is getting cross or upset and behaving in the way he is.

You will need to decide what you think is acceptable behaviour, so that if other people criticise you for your child's behaviour, you will be more sure of your ground.

Sharing time with your child to help develop a positive relationship is important. Within a family children may have different individual needs. This may include giving different age-appropriate bedtimes.

Share one-to-one time with your child

Think about the things that shape you as a parent

It may be useful to spend some time thinking about the way you want to parent your child. You may choose to discuss this with your partner and family members. Each parent or carers' experience of being parented as a child themselves may be different and can raise difficult issues for some couples who may feel they want to parent their own children differently. Children can feel confused by receiving different messages from adults in their lives, so it might be really useful to think about how you would like to be as a parent.

