

Reducing Challenging Behavior

1. **Change the setting.**

Change the room, activity or people involved, so your child feels less stress. Suggest a different activity, and reduce the level of stimulation.

2. **Respond calmly.**

Adults sometimes get upset, too. If your child's behavior has made you angry, take a couple of minutes to calm down before responding.

3. **Teach alternate behaviors.**

For example, if your child fights over sharing toys, teach her how to ask to borrow, trade, or ask for a turn.

4. **Offer choices.**

Small choices, for example, when getting dressed, either the red shirt or blue shirt, go a long way toward making a child feel like he has some control over his environment.



5. **Notice the positive.**

Provide genuine praise at every opportunity. It lets your child know that you respect her.

6. **Be consistent.**

Routines remove some of the chaos from a child's life. Following through on incentives or discipline is key. It gives the child a sense of knowing what's coming.

7. **Avoid surprises.**

Give your child advance notice when there is a change in the schedule or routine.

8. **Have fun.**

Make sure there is joy and fun in your child's life every day.

9. **Express your own feelings clearly.**

"It makes me upset when you interrupt me." – rather than – "Can't you see I'm on the phone?"

10. **Be aware of the intent behind the communications.**

Focus on teaching your child a better way to behave than on getting him to feel bad about what he's done.

**For FREE parenting support, call the Health Department of Northwest Michigan
at 1-800-432-4121 or visit www.nwhealth.org**