



## Managing Challenging Behaviors

**Control vs. No Control:** Does the child have control over the behavior? Are they testing a limit, trying to get out of doing/get to do something or seeing what kind of attention they can receive? **OR** Does the child have the ability to perform the desired behavior? Is the skill immature or not able to be developed for some reason?

**Foundation:** Set reasonable, enforceable rules and consequences. Create a routine/schedule for your family to follow. Understand shaping - that behavior gradually improves rather than changing quickly. Model appropriate behavior/skills for your child and demonstrate behaviors/skills that you want them to learn.

**Positive Attention:** Give specific, "in the moment," positive praise as much as possible. Use physical attention (hug, kiss, high five, fist pump, etc.) to give extra attention when necessary. Use the "when.... then" phrase - "when you pick up the toys, then we can go outside" to offer privileges and rewards when appropriate.

**Directions Guidelines:** Be close to your child when giving an instruction. Be on their eye level (your eyes and theirs are at the same level.) Offer a physical prompt - something you do that gets them started with the behavior. Prepare them for a change in activity in advance. Do not ask a question you already know the answer to. Stay away from the question why? Make a polite command, not a question, when giving a direction. Tell them what to do rather than what not to do (staying away from the words "don't" "no" "stop" "you can't.") Offer one warning if they are noncompliant and then a choice (following through with a consequence for whatever choice they make.)

**Alternatives to Punishment:** Ignore minor, attention-seeking behaviors. Redirect them to the desired behavior by making it fun. Utilize substitution: what does the child need/want to do and how can you let them do it appropriately? Modify the environment if there are things that are contributing to misbehavior.

**Negative Consequence:** Use time out (1 minute per year of age) to allow them a break from attention. This can be called something different for older children. Use loss of privilege for activities that are motivating for them. Use response cost (giving them tokens and taking them away as they misbehave with privilege earning potential at the end of the time frame) if this strategy would be the most effective.

**Skill Building:** Demonstrate and have children repeat desired skills more than once. Remember that skills will improve gradually. Have children act out the desired skill in the moment and through practice/acting/pretending times (role-play.)