

# THE OLDER CHILD...

- 1 PROVIDE**  
Provide a list of what is positive and acceptable behaviour.
- 2 OBSERVE**  
Observe difficult situation but only if it does not involve bullying/hurtful behaviour and give children the chance to sort out the problem on their own.
- 3 PROMOTE**  
Promote children to talk to one another about the problem and discuss their own solution. When acting as supervisor it is important that you do not take sides or assign blame even if you know what happened. Encourage both sides to explain what happened and give the children time to work out an arrangement.
- 4 OUTLINE**  
Outline the issue and assist children to think out different actions.
- 5 EXPLANATION AND REDIRECTION**  
Explanation and redirection can help a child to solve a similar problem on another occasion. For example "You need to get ready now so we have enough time to play outside". Use non-judgmental language to describe what is happening and interpret feelings. Explain that you get very upset when they lose their temper and that you expect them to try hard to control it the next time.
- 6 REMOVE**  
Remove their luxury item as a punishment for their challenging behaviour such as their CD player or television.
- 7 SEPARATE**  
Separate children who are in disagreement with each other.
- 8 ADVICE**  
Give them ideas that may help them to control their temper. For instance, they could come to tell you they are beginning to feel angry, they could walk away from the upsetting situation, or sit down and talk to the child about their feelings.

- 9 REMIND THEM**  
If you see them about to get angry or upset even though you have warned them, get them to remember the ideas you had that would help to calm them down. Tell them what to do to keep control. Remind the child of the agreed ground rules.
- 10 COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES**  
Communication techniques can reduce challenging behaviour as well. For example; use encouraging words: "It looks like you worked very hard on your homework" and "I like the way you handled that situation". Show how happy you are with them when you see that they successfully bring a possible outburst under control. They'll be as delighted as you. Remind them that you hope they will act in the same manner if it happens again.
- 11 ASSIST**  
Assist children to take control of their actions. For example, wiping down the tables and helping to keep their own space tidy.
- 12 MONITOR**  
Every few days check how they are getting on with controlling their temper. Hopefully there have been no outbursts, but ask them about any times that they felt they were getting angry and how they managed their behaviour.



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managing  
CHALLENGING  
BEHAVIOUR



# managing CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR

*“Challenging behaviour can be any behaviour, and is usually ‘too much’ of a particular behaviour, such as hitting, screaming, biting, tantrums, absconding, not attending, or not sharing, to name a few. It is important to note that that behaviour is challenging to the people around the child. It is not necessarily a challenge for the child. In fact, the behaviour is usually rather ‘effective’ for the child. By this we mean the behaviour serves a purpose for the child and the behaviour has a ‘function’. The challenge is on us, the carers, teachers and parents, to understand what the function of the behaviour is for the child”.*

“Meredith Martin, 2002”  
section 1.3 Managing Challenging Behaviour

## THE YOUNGER CHILD...

- 1 CALMLY APPROACH AND REMAIN RELAXED**  
Although you may be angry with the child because you feel so frustrated it is important to remain calm throughout. Adults can make children aware that they are loved even when their behaviour is challenging. For example, *“I really like you John, but I don’t like being kicked”*. Stay calm - children will mirror the emotions expressed. Use body language to express calmness, bend down to child’s level and make eye contact. Avoid angry expressions, keep your voice low and slow. Do not invade child’s space by pointing or thrusting your face forward.

- 2 REASSURE HIM**  
Tell them that everything’s going to be fine, and that you’ll help them to sort something out once they calm down. Respond to their challenging behaviour with reassurance.

- 3 SAFETY FIRST**  
During a tantrum, they might accidentally or purposely injure themselves, for example by bumping into something. Stop aggressive or damaging behaviour such as biting or kicking on the spot and give a reason for their action. For example, *“Stop kicking, kicking hurts”*. If you can avoid them hurting themselves do so straight away.

- 4 PREVENT THE USE**  
Prevent the use of labelling children especially as ‘bold’ or ‘good’. Labels can have adverse long term effects. It is the behaviour that is unacceptable and not the child.

- 5 TALK TO HIM/HER**  
The child usually retains hope that their tantrum will make you change your mind. So try not to leave them with any doubt-tell them that their behaviour will not get them what they want. Keep repeating this process every time they lose their temper.

- 6 CHANGE LOCATION**  
You may find that removing them away from the area where the challenging behaviour started may be enough to reduce the intensity of the behaviour, e.g. take out of the shop, or move them from the situation.

- 7 PROVIDE AFFECTION**  
A young child’s own temper can cause them to be afraid, and their tantrum may be very frightening for them. Put your arm round them, even though they may not want you to first, because this physical contact can minimise their anxiety.

- 8 IGNORE THE BEHAVIOUR**  
A child who is acting in a challenging manner purely to gain attention may calm down eventually if the behaviour is ignored. This is not always possible to do

- 9 REMOVE THE OBJECT**  
Remove the object causing the behaviour. Sometimes the behaviour is associated to a specific object, such as a toy or an ornament they want to play with. Removing the object from them may reduce the intensity of the behaviour, however with this it will take them time to calm down. If the behaviour is a result of two or more children arguing over the same object, hold the object in your hand and discuss with the children how they can resolve the issue of who plays with the object. Encourage them to talk out ideas and resolve the conflict themselves.

- 10 DISTRACT HIM**  
Continue to communicate with them as if they are not causing any disruption. Talk to them in a friendly way and give them something that might interest them, such as their favourite toy. This strategy can calm a child down very quickly.

- 11 OFFERING CHOICES**  
is a strategy that allows the child to have some control. Choosing between two choices is a positive way to introduce choice making. For younger children, you can ask; *“Do you want to play with the dolls or the ball?”* For all ages, a choice between two options might be reflected in a choice of timing: *“Do you want to do your homework now or after lunch?”*

- 12 FOLLOW YOUR NORMAL ROUTINE**  
Get on with another task or activity while the child goes around in their bad mood. That might be continuing with the daily activity or cooking a meal. Just carry on with your normal routine, despite their outburst.

- 13 REINFORCE THE POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR**  
Following appropriate behaviours with a reinforcer will increase the likelihood of that behaviour occurring again. It is important to note that reinforcers such as getting more of your time and attention can be very effective.

Once the challenging behaviour is over and both of you have calmed down, sit with the child and have a chat and discuss with the child how you both felt about the incident. Ask the child how they are feeling now and would they like to discuss it more. The child may not want to talk to you at that particular time but continue to support them.

