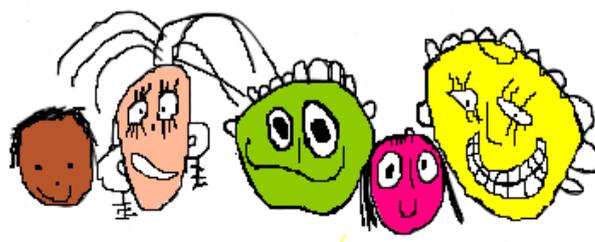


Hamilton Community Pre-School

"Where discoveries, learning and fun connect."



Information Sheets for Parents

13 Positive Behaviour Management Strategies

Australian parents are struggling with the daily stress of trying to manage their children's behaviour, according to new findings from [The Royal Children's Hospital National Child Health Poll](#).

The latest RCH Poll has shown that guilt and stress levels are high among parents who are trying to get the best behaviour from their children yet unsure of where to go for help.

The poll of 2044 Australian parents caring for 3545 children aged one year to 18 or younger found:

- The vast majority (95 per cent) of parents use positive strategies to promote good behaviour in their children, such as attention, praise and reward
- One in four parents (27 per cent) report they feel stressed every day by their child's behaviour
- A significant proportion of Australian children have been physically disciplined in the past month, according to parent report, with 4 per cent being physically disciplined 'quite a lot or most of the time', 13 per cent 'some of the time' and a further 24 per cent 'rarely'
- Almost half of parents (48 per cent) said they become impatient too quickly, while one in three (36 per cent) said they often lost their temper and later felt guilty
- One third (32 per cent) said they often feel overwhelmed by managing their child's behaviour
- And almost half (45 per cent) of parents are not confident that they would know where to go for help if they had difficulty managing their child's behaviour

The findings reveal that parents spend a lot of time thinking about how to manage their child's behaviour yet many are critical of their own strategies. Parents of younger children are especially likely to feel stressed at least once a day by their child's behaviour. The Director of the RCH National Child Health Poll, Dr Anthea Rhodes said understanding the reasons for a child's behaviour will help parents respond sensitively and more effectively to challenging behaviours. "Managing behaviours can be stressful. If parents feel overwhelmed and are often losing their cool with their kids, they should reach out for help. Speak to friends and family or your GP for advice and support. Punitive or negative discipline does not help children learn what is expected from them as it centres on what not to do rather than modelling or reinforcing desired behaviour," she said.

How can early childhood educators support parents to positively manage their children's behaviour?

They can implement a range of simple and consistent standards of behaviour, advise parents of these standards and encourage parents to implement these guidelines at home. Effective behaviour management strategies, which are equally applicable and effective in centre-based care and at home include:

1. Keeping rules simple and easy to understand:

Discuss rules with children, write them down and repeat them. Considering children's suggestions for rules is also effective. A few simple rules that work well with children include:

- Help each other
- Take care of our belongings
- Say please and thank you
- Be kind to each other

2. Say what you mean:

Use "do" instead of "don't" whenever possible. Choose your words carefully, especially when you are guiding children's behaviour. Keep sentences short and simple. Focus on what to do rather than what not to do.

- Try saying, "Slow down and walk" instead of "stop running"
- Try saying, "Hold my hand" instead of "don't touch anything"
- Try saying, "Keep your feet on the floor" instead of "don't climb on the table"
- Try saying, "Use a quiet voice inside" instead of "stop shouting"

3. Talk with children, not at them:

Children often don't pay attention when you are talking (or shouting) "at" them. Guidance is much more effective when you talk to children at their eye level. Look them in the eyes and talk with them at their level. Resist the urge to simply lecture. Instead, give children time to respond, and listen genuinely to their points of view.

4. Set a good example:

Children watch the adults around them all the time. They see how you talk to other children and adults, how you cope with anger or frustration, and how you deal with sadness and joy. They listen to how you say, "I'm sorry" and the way you handle the ups and downs of life teaches children a lot about how to behave and get along with others.

5. Encourage children to set good examples for each other:

Children also learn a great deal from each other. Encourage appropriate ways to share, play, and be kind to each other.

6. Give clear, simple choices:

Toddlers can choose between a red cup and a green cup, preschoolers can choose between playing "airport" and "zookeeper." Give children a choice only when there is a choice. For example, saying "It is nap time, do you want to lie down now?" is not really an option if your rule is that everyone will rest at nap time.

7. Show respect for children:

Talk to children about misbehaviour in private, rather than in front of others. Remind them of reasons for rules and discuss what they can do differently.

8. Catch children being good:

All children want attention. It is better to give them positive attention for good behaviour than negative attention for misbehaviour. Comment on something positive about each child, each day. Better yet, strive for several times a day and share the good news. When children have done something positive acknowledge it in front of other people.

9. Encourage like a good coach instead of a cheerleader:

A cheerleader shouts general praise, "What a great job!" or "What a beautiful picture." A good coach tells you what you're doing right, uses praise as a teaching tool, and lets you know why they are proud of you. If a child sets the table, you might say, "You did such a good job setting the table! You put the spoons and forks in the right place and remembered the napkins!" When you look at a child's painting, you might remark, "This painting just glows with colour. You used blue, green, red, yellow, and orange. Tell me how you did this!"

10. Use play activities to teach social skills:

Become a character in their pretend play and show them how to use good manners and be kind. Read children's books that show how they resolve problems. Play "what if" games and encourage them to act out ways to work together.

11. Teach children how to resolve conflict and solve problems:

Help them recognise and name feelings, identify problems clearly, come up with ideas for solving the problem, and try possible solutions.

12. Teach children how to say sorry:

Learning how to apologise is a skill. Young children have a hard time understanding another child's feelings, but by the time they are 4 years old they should begin to recognise that apologising is a good way to make up for hurting someone else. Help them learn by keeping it simple, for example "Lucas, I'm sorry I hit you". With time and practice, children will not have to be prompted, and their apology will be more genuine. Teach preschoolers and school-age children the four basic steps of apologising:

- Look at the other child
- Say the child's name
- Say "I'm sorry"
- Say why

13. Teach children how to correct their misbehaviour.

If a child throws food onto the floor give them a broom and show them how to clean it up. If a they draw on the wall, give them a wet cloth to clean the wall. Even if the they cannot successfully clean up the entire mess alone, participating in clean-up teaches them that their actions have consequences. Over time, experiencing consequences helps children learn self-control.

Educating parents about the wide range of strategies available to positively guide behaviour in young children may work as a circuit breaker and help to reduce stress levels in the home environment.

This approach is backed by RCH Poll Director Dr Anthea Rhodes: "Children's brains are wired for attention. The best type of attention to give a child is a positive response to desired behaviour as it encourages them to behave that way," she said.

Taken from [Care for kids](#)