

STRESS-FREE DISCIPLINE

Simple Strategies for Handling
Common Behavior Problems



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1

Decode Your Child's Behavior

Identify the ABCs

Think back to the most recent behavioral issue in your family. Can you identify the antecedent, behavior, and consequence?

Antecedent: _____

Behavior: _____

Consequence: _____

How could you have reframed this situation to positively affect your child's behavior? Could you have avoided some of the contributing factors or triggers that served as antecedents? What if you chose a different consequence? Would that have made it more or less likely the behavior will repeat? Try making these changes the next time this situation crops up.

Chart Your Assets and Liabilities

Put a checkmark next to the asset or liability that describes you, and ask your spouse or co-parent to do the same. Then, add other assets or liabilities you see each of you possess at the end of the chart.

Assets and Liabilities	You	Co-Parent
Calm demeanor		
Tolerance		
Irritability/short fuse		
Rigid expectations		
Parenting for the first time		
Prior experience in parenting		

Finally, ask, "How does your partner respond to your weaknesses?," and answer by circling one of the following:

IRRITATED DISMISSIVE NEUTRAL SUPPORTIVE
TOTALLY IN SYNCH

Use this chart to start a conversation with your spouse or co-parent and get on the same page in terms of your reactions to your child's attitude behaviors. As co-parents, you want to play to each other's strengths and minimize each other's weaknesses. Consistency and persistence are what will yield behavior improvements in your child.

3

Tantrums

Log Tantrums

If your child has repeated tantrums, you should keep a log of the ABCs. Include:

The time of day relative to naps and meals: _____

What was happening prior to the tantrum: _____

What situation the child was about to go into or what situation she was being asked to leave: _____

Which people were around: _____

What happened during the tantrum: _____

What happened after the tantrum: _____

Reflections on whether you could have done something differently: _____

With a log of this nature, you can look for common denominators in terms of ABCs. Once some of those repeating triggers are identified, you can make adjustments that may prove helpful in preventing and effectively managing future tantrums.

4

Homework

Describe Homework at Your House

Choose the adjective that you and your child would use to describe homework at your house:

EASY PRODUCTIVE NEUTRAL UNPLEASANT TORTURE

Were your answers the same as your child's? **YES NO**

Why did you answer the way you did? _____

Did either of you choose the Torture answer? **YES NO**

If yes, what tactics have you used that have brought about the most negative reactions from your child? _____

Do you see your child's resistance or negativity toward homework as:

INCREASING STAYING THE SAME DECREASING

What tactics could you use to make homework less confrontational? _____

Now, take the information you've learned in this exercise and request a parent/teacher conference. You don't have to get into all the details, but you can share with the teacher that you'd like to ensure that doing homework is a *positive* process for learning.

5

Mealtime

Mealtime Stress Test

List the circumstances that contribute to stress at your mealtimes, and include everything that occurs to you.

Breakfast: _____

Lunch: _____

Dinner: _____

Often, a purposeful slowing down of your pace can reduce the stress. Would you consider some sort of calming ritual to get yourself into a more peaceful mindset? **YES NO**

What are some things you could do to ease your transitions? Some examples are waking up 10 minutes earlier in the morning, preparing ingredients for meals ahead of time, or decompressing on the couch for 10 minutes when you get home. (An occasional pre-dinner drink or glass of wine worked quite well for our parents' generation.)

Whatever you need to do to transition yourself into a more peaceful state of mind is worth the investment of time. As their role model, your kids take their cue from your behavior, and if you're at ease, they'll be more at ease.

7

Attitude

Table 7-1 Attitude Behaviors Chart

Behavior	Your Rating	Co-Parent	Other Adult
Eye-roll	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Backtalk	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Sarcasm/smart aleck comments	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Denial of responsibility	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Dismissive tone	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Constant arguing	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Foul language	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
_____	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
_____	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
_____	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

8

Impact Your Child's Social Development and Peer Influence

Your Child's Set of Social Skills

Taking stock of your child's social skills today can help you determine where you may need to offer assistance or reinforcement. Some of us are just better at social interactions than others. Use this activity to reflect on your child's ability to:

Social Ability	No Skills	Some Skills	Good Skills
Make friends			
Retain friends			
Play one-on-one			
Play as a group or team member			
Pick up on social cues			
Change activities			
Lead activities			
Deal with conflict			
Join a group where he or she doesn't know anyone			
Handle teasing			
Other: _____			

Seeing it laid out in this manner should give you some clues as to where your involvement can assist your child. No one is going to be perfect at all of these skills, but *all* of them are skills you and your child can work to improve.

9

Instill Resilience and Grit in Your Child

Swooping Situations

Think about the last time you swooped in and either rescued your child from a potentially difficult situation or took over for him on a frustrating task. What was going on at that moment?

Now, think about what your child could have learned from the situation if you hadn't jumped in.

Take this information and, the next time this situation or a similar one presents itself, remember how problem solving on his own can add to your child's resilience. Take a step back, and watch how your child tries to figure out a solution. If asked, you can offer a bit of advice, and then inquire, "What do you think?"

Find Professional Help for Your Family

Take Stock of Your Family's Stress

Sometimes it's hard to see how stressful a situation is when you're in the middle of it. Try to reflect on what your life's stressors are right now and how they have impacted the day-to-day activities of each member of your family. These can include issues in your child's behavior at this time, but also anything in your work or personal life that detracts from your ability to parent effectively right now:

Have you drifted into routines that adjust to the stress, even if they take you away from life as normal? **YES** **NO**

If yes, in what ways?

Do you feel like you're at your wit's end dealing with this problem? **YES** **NO**

If you end up deciding to see a professional, bring this list with you as it will inform your evaluation.