LEARNING HOW TO RESPOND TO RULES & BOUNDARIES

WHO IS THIS ADVICE FOR?

This advice is for families, carer's or setting staff who are experiencing difficulty with a child who does not respond to boundaries because they struggle with others being in control or they have not learned appropriate waiting skills yet.

KEYWORDS:

behaviour

misunderstanding

struggle

control

boundaries

rules

structure

routine

WHERE TO GO FOR MORE INFORMATION...

Useful links and other resources:

https:www.cdc.govparentsessentials/structure/buildingblocks.html

http://www.ahaparenting.com/parenting-tools/family-life/structure-routines

https://www.education.com/magazine/article/importance-routines-preschool-children/

See also the Support Resource for: Developing Flexibility and Broadening Play

WHAT YOU COULD HAVE NOTICED ALREADY...

It is normal for children to test out boundaries, particularly as they become more aware of their effect on those around them.

The child may:

- struggle with transitions or change
- not show awareness of consequences
- find waiting problematic and have little awareness of time
- be unable to express their needs and thoughts verbally.

HELPING CHILDREN LIKE THIS...

Be consistent, predictable and follow through.
Being consistent means that you respond to the child's behaviour the same way every time it happens. You respond the same no matter what is going on or how you're feeling. Behaviours are less likely to occur again if you always use the same consequence, like ignoring or time-out. Acceptable behaviours are likely to be repeated if you let your child know you like them.

Routines and daily schedules will help you and the child. You both know what to expect each day. Routines can also improve the child's behaviour and the relationship with the child as they help the child to be able to predict. Daily schedules (visual timelines) can take the surprise out of what is going to happen next.

Being predictable means the child remembers what will happen and how you will respond. When daily routines are predictable, the child knows what to expect for the day. When rules are predictable, the child knows how you will react to their behaviour.

Think carefully about consequences you are going to use in response to your child's behaviour.

If you promise your child a consequence, you carry it out every time it happens. If you tell the child he will be rewarded for a behaviour, you give them the reward after they have done what you asked.

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Share stories about rules and making mistakes

Create 'Social Stories' - cartoon strips of how to respond to a boundary

Use Symbols or visual cues when signalling a rule: 'no entry' or 'stop' signs can show when somewhere is off limits.

Keep calm and patient

Carry through consequences, but do not punish

Use fewer words

Structure

Structure is created by consistent routines and rules. It helps children learn responsibility and self-control. Routines teach children what to expect throughout the day. Rules teach children what behaviours are acceptable and unacceptable.

How you react to the child's behaviour makes a difference. This may be why the child has good behaviour some days and not others. (Think about your mood too).

Expectations should be appropriate for the child's developmental stage.

A positive relationship is your most important tool for getting your child to listen and follow directions.

It is also important to give clear directions that fit your child's developmental understanding. Reduce the number of words you use in a sentence. Instead of 'come and get your coat we are going outside now' say 'coat on, outside' using something visual to reinforce what you are saying e.g. child's coat or a picture of outside .

Some general ideas and strategies:

One way to keep control and help children learn is to create structure and give warnings prior to changes. While helping children feel safe and ready to take on new challenges and developmental tasks would be reason enough to offer them structure, it has another important developmental role as well. Structure and routines teach children how to constructively control themselves and their environments.

It is normal for young children to challenge and push boundaries. That's how they learn about what is right and wrong.

Look carefully at what helps the child manage themselves well and what they are capable of doing. Think about what motivates them and use this to reward them when they do things well.

Making requests using visual aids can help child focus better and remember what you have said. Be clear about what you want the child to do and when they need to do it. Avoid asking questions when you want your child to do something. Asking a question gives your child the chance to say, "No!" Give options instead: "This way...or this way..."

Give one direction at a time or connect them. "This first .. then this.." Give motivating rewards when the child responds appropriately.