

# North West Boroughs Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust - CAMHS

## A-Z Guide to Helping Your Child's Behaviour - Promoting Positive Mental Health in Children

**Activities** – Telling stories, trips to the park, playing games , watching TV together.

**Answering back** – Try not to fall into the trap of answering back. Children enjoy watching a parent lose control, particularly when this results in them getting their own way – in the end.

**Behaviour** – Always acknowledge 'good' behaviour, look for it if you can! Try not to pay too much attention to 'bad' behaviour.

**Boredom** – Make sure you have some plans for holidays and bad weather.

**Boundaries** – Children need to know what is and isn't allowed. Agreed boundaries will change as your child grows i.e. a small child may be allowed to go to bed at 7:30pm, whereas an older child may be allowed to stay up until 9:00pm.

**Copying others** – Children learn by watching others, they pick up 'good' and 'bad' behaviour. They need to watch the 'good' examples from older brothers/sisters, their friends and their parents. Have confidence in your ability as a parent.

**Consistency** and staying calm, even in dire circumstances, help to 'cool' situations.

**Choices** – Give limited choices and explain the consequences i.e. "it's up to you. You can leave your dinner if you want to, but there will be no pudding." Once a choice is made always follow through with the consequences.

**Distracting** techniques for youngsters. If you are aware that a situation may "get out of hand" then try to distract the child before it happens i.e. offer the child a toy, start an interesting conversation/game or activity.

**Don't** enter into physical or verbal 'battles'

**Excitement** – try to get your child to calm down 15-20 minutes before going to bed. This can be done gradually i.e. by putting toys away to get ready for story time. Re-reading a story together then going to bed.

**Encourage** your child to talk.

**Everyone** needs time for themselves. Make sure you have special time alone: it is necessary, and you need it!

**Fairness** – Children expect fair behaviour and treatment. If there are family 'rules' make sure they apply to all of the children – be consistent. Consequences/punishments should be fair and appropriate.

**Guiding** – Gently guide your child through the first learning stages of any new activity. Make sure you allow them to do it alone eventually. Praise all attempts that your child manages.

**Hugs** and cuddles lets your child know he/she is loved and will give him/her a sense of security. On some occasions some older children might just prefer a pat on the back or being told "well done".

**Ignore** – When appropriate it is often best to try and ignore the bad or annoying behaviours. Do you tell your child why you are ignoring him/her and make this very clear from the outset. You will need to take action if your child is in danger of causing harm to himself/herself, or others.

**Jealousy** – Most families have ‘sibling rivalry’ a technical term for jealousy between brothers and sisters. Children see life in a black/white way, noting what they see as ‘fair’ and ‘unfair’ situations. Parents need to work at fair systems with their children. Decide on fairness together and make sure it is talked about openly.

**Kisses** and hugs and cuddles reinforce the idea that he/she is succeeding. Succeeding is fun.

**Learning** with your child – take part freely in his/her activities

**Listen** to him/her – learn to understand his/her world, try to imagine how he/she feels.

**Late nights** – If sufficient sleep is sometimes a problem, create a bedtime routine: i.e. story – warm drink-cuddle-bed-and stick to it! If children have a TV in their room think about how programmes might be vetted.

**Manipulation** – Children are very able to find weak spots in situations and will manipulate parents, even choosing to set one parent up against another. Talk about this before hand and try to prepare for the pitfalls before they occur.

**No** – Don’t be afraid to say no when you have to.

**Organisation** – Try to encourage your child to be responsible for his/her own bedroom, toys and belongings. Then, forget the bedroom ‘scene’ and concentrate on him/her.

**Praise** your child when he/she is being ‘good’.

**‘Promises’** – “The Golden Rule” – If you make promises you must keep them.

**Questions** – Try to answer all questions your child asks, as this helps him/her to develop an understanding of the world, his/her language skills and an ability to communicate.

**Relax** – Try to stay calm when dealing with a difficult situation. In some cases it may help to acknowledge the incident, and perhaps deal with it later. Don’t deal with issues in anger.

**Reward** your child when he/she tries and remember rewards don’t have to cost money. Giving a child your time is one of the most valuable assets that you have.

**Removing** – If a child throws a tantrum remove him/her from the area and give him/her time to calm down – remember remain calm but firm.

**Smiles** – A very important ‘way’ of making your child feel good. Smiles encourage and reinforce good behaviour.

**Surprises** – Always have something up your sleeve for those unexpected ‘bored’, ‘tired’, ‘argumentative’ moments.

**School** – These are the hours your child spends away from your in school. Listen carefully to what he/she tells you, take an active part in school life and try to get to know other parents as ‘friends’.

**‘Time out’** – Can be used if a child is persistently trying or annoying a parent:

- 1 Remind the child how he/she should be behaving
- 2 Warn the child of the consequences if the behaviour persists.

3 If 'time out' follows, use it for a short period only. A rough guide is to use the same number of minutes as the child's age i.e. 6 minutes for a six year old.

**Talk** to other parents – a problem shared is a problem halved. Use friends or grandparents to help as a 'sounding board' to off load the problems and worries – that most parents admit to having.

**Understanding** – Think about what you expect from your child and understand always that he/she is a child.

**Understand** his/her needs, worries and fears.

**Voice** – try not to raise your voice as this indicates that you could be losing control. A child demanding attention might feel he/she is getting more attention with the extra noise of a raised voice.

**When... Then** – "when you have done your home-work then you can play out"

**X** – Expectations. Try and not 'expect' too much from your child. A child that often feels pressured to perform often will misbehave and become rebellious.

**Youth** – Children are young and youthful, they are learning about the world.

**Zzzzz** – Make sure you get enough sleep. A tired out parent is not able to stand the stresses and strains of an active child.

Please remember all children are different. **You** know your own child best! These are just suggestions that may help!