

Steps to Basic Behavior Change

Set up rules, consequences, and rewards. Be consistent with consequences when misbehavior occurs. Be prompt with your action.

Steps:

1. Only work on changing only one misbehavior at a time. Examples of different misbehaviors: fighting, not doing what he is told, or talking back. Rules must be simple at an early age. Consequences must fit the misbehavior. Harsh consequences will cause rebellion.
2. Explain the behavior that is unwanted and why.
3. Explain the behavior that is wanted and why. Demonstrate if necessary or role model.
4. Set consequences for misbehavior ahead of time so the child knows what to expect. Make sure the consequence is age and maturity appropriate. Example: miss a favorite activity, sent to their room, sit on a chair.
5. Set a reward for wanted behavior. Example: They will not suffer consequence, a special snack, read a book together, do something together.
6. As soon as a misbehavior occurs, remind the child of the rule and the consequence. Put the responsibility for the consequence on the child by telling them that they chose the consequence by choosing the action.
7. Give the consequence promptly. Do not give a consequence later in the day or in the week until adolescence. It will lose its effectiveness. The child will not associate the consequence with the misbehavior.
8. Do not lecture on why the child should want to change. This gives the child a chance to make up excuses, to blame others, or to change the attention to something other than the misbehavior. Usually, misbehavior will change in a few weeks of consistent reinforcement of discipline.
9. If the child throws a tantrum, they get more consequences. Stick to the consequences to show the child you are serious about wanting the behavior to change. If you give in to the tantrum, the behavior will continue and may get worse. Tantrums are used to gain control of the situation by affecting the emotions of the parents.

Isolation Technique

The child is sent to his room or to a safe room where he can not hurt himself. The parents stay close by or check often. The child is told that when he calms down, you will set a timer (1 minute per age is a good guide). When the timer rings, he can come out of the room. Occasionally tell the child that he will get out quicker if he calms down because as soon as he calms down, you will set a timer. When the timer rings, he can come out. When the child calms down, tell him that you are setting the timer, and he is to listen for the ring. As soon as the timer rings, the child is told that he may come out of the room. No lecturing or arguing is to be done when he comes out so all attention is kept on the misbehavior. Go on with everyday life. If the tantrum happens again repeat procedure.

Ignoring Technique

Ignore the tantrum. Walk into the next room to remove your presence from the child. This shows the child that the tantrum is not affecting you. Do not give in to the demands of the child. If you are in public, it is a good idea to pick up the child and take him to the car or to another place. The child should lose his privilege of going to a fun activity.