

Handout 8.1

Preventing Challenging Behavior

Choose a few of these strategies and write down how you will use them with your child.

Strategies to Try

How Can You Use This Strategy?

Notice and describe your child's feelings: *You really want to go to the park, but Grandma isn't here yet. It's so hard to wait sometimes, isn't it?* This strategy helps children feel understood.

Teach coping skills: *How about we turn some music on and dance a little bit while we wait?* Teach your child how to handle stressful situations in appropriate ways.

Point out what your child is doing well. *You did a great job of putting your shoes by the door. Thank you for being a helper!*

Use positive language to state rules and limits. Instead of saying what your child *can't* do ("Don't run away from me"), say what you expect in a positive way: *"We hold hands in the parking lot."*

Use routines. Routines teach children what to expect each day and help them to feel safe and secure.

Prepare children for a transition. Switching from one activity to another—especially when they're having fun—is hard for young children. You can prepare children for a change by using a timer, singing a song, or providing a reminder ("We'll eat lunch in 2 minutes").

Create a "yes" space. Try to create at least one space in your home that is child friendly—a safe place to play. This strategy cuts down on you saying no and sets your child up for success.

Plan ahead for challenging moments. Activities such as waiting at the bus stop or going to the supermarket can be tough for young children. Plan ahead to make these moments better. Pack a book or small toy, stickers, or other distractions. It also helps to let children know what to expect when they'll be in a new situation (such as a dental visit). Talk about who will be there and what they will do.

Make time to be together with no distractions. Your child thrives when your relationship is close. One-on-one time, with no screens, helps your child feel connected to you. Just 10–15 minutes a day makes a big difference!

Know your own triggers. Keep track of your own stress. Calming yourself or getting help when you are stressed helps create a peaceful home.