



MODULE 8

**COMMON
PARENTING
CONCERNS**



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KEY MESSAGES - why is this topic important for you?

- Evidence shows that parenting empowerment can be a powerful and cost-effective tool to support the wellbeing of children and their families. To prevent behavioural and emotional problems and child maltreatment, one of the most important things you can do is to during your home visits is to increase the confidence, knowledge, and skills of fathers and mothers in raising their children.
- The foundations for children’s social and emotional skills and their relationships are laid down in the early years in the family. Therefore, your ability to support parents to build those relationships with their children is of the utmost importance. Parents and other significant caregivers are the most important people in a young child’s life, shaping the child’s values, relationships, and interest in learning.
- Most parents are eager to be good parents and do the right thing for their child. However, there is little to prepare them for this challenge. Babies and young children require a lot of care and time and an infinite amount of patience. Sometimes the struggle to get young children to sleep, eat, stop crying, or stop throwing tantrums is overwhelming and can send the relationship between young children and their parents into a downward spiral. Your role as a home visitor is to listen to mothers and fathers, observe their interactions with their children and with each other, help them become attuned to their children, and support them in becoming a good ‘parenting team’.
- It is very important for you as a home visitor to see parents as competent and capable of finding solutions, with some needing more, and others less support. Whenever possible, your role is to guide parents in finding suitable solutions for themselves and their children. Making the parents dependent on you for solutions does not strengthen their confidence, competence, and agency in supporting and parenting their child over the coming years.
- Home visitors can help parents understand that infants and young children will go through different phases and that these are normal. Newborns cry a lot; babies will experience separation anxiety; toddlers will explore and get into things. Many of these behaviours will pass with time, though sometimes it seems that they never will. Just supporting parents with what to expect can help them feel calmer and more confident.



LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this module, you will be able to:

- Describe some common parenting concerns and how they are related to the child’s stage of development.
- Perceive parents as partners with whom you collaborate in the best interest of the child and family.
- Support fathers and mothers in helping young children learn to self-regulate their emotions and behaviors.
- Share information and approaches with parents to help them deal with common parenting concerns, such as sleep/rest, calming, and toilet training in developmentally appropriate and realistic ways.
- Provide mothers and fathers with information to manage the behaviors of their young children and promote optimal social-emotional development by encouraging positive behaviors and moderating negative behaviors.



INTRODUCTION

This module builds on the 5 Core Pillars of Positive Parenting (Child Adolescent Services, 2012). Positive parenting supports the healthy development and adjustment of children, using good communication, positive attention and problem-solving to promote nurturing family environments. Parenting for The Council of Europe includes “all the roles falling to parents in order to care for and bring up children. Parenting is centred on parent-children interaction and entails rights and duties for the child’s development and self-fulfilment” (Council of Europe, 2005). “Positive parenting”: refers to parental behaviour based on the best interests of the child that is nurturing, empowering, non-violent and provides recognition and guidance which involves setting of boundaries to enable the full development of the child (Council of Europe, 2006).

The Council of Europe also recommends that key messages on positive parenting should be disseminated to all parents and caregivers involved in raising a child or caring for a child on a daily basis. These messages should recognize that the child is a person with rights to protection and participation, but also that families today face many challenges, and that governments need to provide the conditions for positive parenting, remove barriers, and raise awareness about its importance. Governments are asked to pay particular attention to first-time parents, teenage parents, families with particular needs, and families in difficult socio-economic circumstances.

The five pillars of positive parenting:

	Safe, secure, loving environment	Making sure children have a safe, supervised and therefore protective environment that is stimulating, and provides opportunities for them to explore, experiment, play, and interact with others. <i>(You can find more on this topic in the Module 9 on the Home Environment and Safety)</i>
	Positive learning environment	Being available and encouraging their children to help them learn and develop by responding positively and constructively to child-initiated interactions (e.g., requests for help, information, advice, attention) and assist children to learn to solve problems for themselves.
	Positive discipline	Using consistent, predictable, assertive guidance and limit-setting to help children learn to accept responsibility for their behavior and become aware of the needs of others. Not using coercive and ineffective discipline practices (such as shouting, threatening, or using physical punishment).
	Reasonable expectations	Having realistic expectations, assumptions, and beliefs about the causes of children’s behavior and choosing goals that are developmentally appropriate for the child and realistic for the parent.
	Good self-care	Addressing parents’ personal needs, making it easier for them to be patient, consistent and available to their children. Mothers and fathers are encouraged to view parenting as part of a larger context of personal self-care, resourcefulness and well-being. <i>(See also the Module 7 on Parental Wellbeing).</i>



These pillars form the foundation of positive parenting at all ages. When there is a safe, loving environment, when parents work as a team to help children become independent and self-regulated; when they have reasonable expectations about what children of different ages and abilities are capable of doing; when they adopt an “authoritative” rather than an authoritarian, permissive or uninvolved parenting style (we will define these terms for you further below) and positive discipline; and when they also take care of themselves and their relationship – then children are more likely to develop and grow into happy and fulfilled human beings. Your role as a home visitor is to support the parents or main caregivers to provide this foundation for their children.



COMMON CONCERNS WITH INFANTS



1. CRYING



Self-assessment

Which of the following are good strategies to discuss with mothers and fathers whose three-week old son starts crying every time he is put down to sleep.

- A. Swaddle the child, put him in his cot and sit with him, singing to him or stroking him until he falls asleep.
- B. Let him “cry it out”.

SUGGESTED ANSWERS:

A. This is a good strategy. Swaddling often mimics the feeling of being held and continuing to be touched, and hearing the parent’s voice, helps the baby feel more secure.

B. This is not a good strategy, because babies this young simply don’t have the ability to calm themselves.



Important points

The home visitors’ role is to help the mother and father understand that:

- Crying is a newborn’s way of communicating hunger, distress, or a need for attention.
- Crying peaks at six weeks old. Then infants’ crying starts to decline.
- Usually babies cry and fuss on the average three hours a day. Most of this crying and fussing seems to take place in the late afternoon and evening, although there is considerable variation from day to day and from baby to baby.
- While all babies cry, some babies cry much more than others. Some babies’ central nervous systems are more sensitive to stimulation from the outside world. This can cause irritability, because these babies are more likely to experience sensory overload. As babies get older, after the first 3 to 4 months, they become better in handling all the sights and sounds they’re encountering (Zero to Three).



Video clips

Watch the following video on Settling Strategies at http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/settling_strategies_video.html.



More information is available at:

<http://www.your-baby.org.uk/sleeping-and-soothing/mums-show-different-ways-soothing-their-babies>

<http://www.your-baby.org.uk/sleeping-and-soothing>

Good questions to help parents identify what their baby likes/dislikes to be calmed:

<http://www.your-baby.org.uk/sleeping-and-soothing/questions-help-parents-identify-what-their-baby-likes-and-dislikes>

Steps to take to respond to a child's crying:

As a home visitor you can share tips with parents on how to stay calm when children are crying. Parents may become exhausted, worried, annoyed or angry, because they feel helpless and do not know what to do to stop the crying.



Good information on crying can be found here and has been summarized in the text below.

<http://www.zerotothree.org/child-development/challenging-behavior/colic-behaviors.html>

Step 1: Help the parents identify the reason for the baby's crying. You can use the following questions to help them identify patterns:

- Is the child sick? Teething? Tired? Hungry? Sad? Upset?
- Are there certain times of day when the baby is fussier?
- Are there specific situations that lead to crying such as visits to busy, noisy places (for example, a grocery store) where the baby is overwhelmed by a lot of stimulation?
- Are there differences in the baby's cries due hunger, fatigue, boredom, anger, feeling over-whelmed? For example, many babies will look away and arch their backs, in addition to fussing and crying, when they are overstimulated and need a break from the situation.
- Has there been a recent change in the baby's world that may be making him feel less safe and secure? Perhaps he recently made the switch from a crib to a bed, or grandparents have just left after a long visit.
- Frequent irritability (worse after meals and when lying down), back arching, stiffening of the legs, and head turning may be a symptom of reflux. If you are seeing these signs, recommend that the parents see the child's doctor to determine the appropriate response.

Step 2: Have the parents respond based on the assumed reason for the baby's crying, reminding them *that there is not one right or single way to soothe a baby*. Talk with parents and caregivers about individual differences among children, as you see it during your home visits. Some babies love to be rocked when upset; others find that too stimulating and prefer to be walked slowly in a baby carrier, snuggled close to a parent's chest. Other babies are calmed by being put down in a quiet place, where they can take a break from the intensity of the world, while other babies are soothed by the sound of the vacuum cleaner. It's a process of trial and error. When one strategy does not work, something else can be tried, and a strategy that didn't work yesterday may work today.

Unfortunately, even after trying multiple strategies, the baby may still be unsettled. Letting parents know that they are not doing something wrong or harming their baby by letting her cry for a brief period on her helps. Remind parents that being there—holding and comforting the baby—is teaching the baby that she is not alone and that the mother and father will be there for her. This is the most important message that both the child and the parents can receive. As a home visitor you can reassure the parents. Talk to them, listen without blaming and judging, and discuss different strategies, suggesting that parents pick those that seem to work best for them.



Important points

Tell parents to take time to calm themselves. Caring for a baby that does not seem to stop crying is very stressful. But when a parent/caregiver is calmer, it is more likely that the baby will calm down too. When a parent is very upset, it is better to put the baby in a safe place—like the crib—and take a short break or ask another responsible adult to take over for a few minutes.

Colic is uncontrollable crying in an otherwise healthy baby. A baby is considered colicky if he's younger than 5 months old and cries for more than three hours in a row on three or more days a week for at least three weeks. The exact cause of colic is still unknown, however the condition is temporary and will not impact a child's development.

Sometimes excessive crying is associated with gas or food allergies. Although gas does not cause colic, the infant might have more gas than usual because of swallowing air while crying. If an infant however has colic, it is a good idea for a parent to discuss this with their doctor so that other potential causes, like intestinal problems or urinary tract infections can be checked out. If an infant has other symptoms – like fever, vomiting, or bloody stools – recommend that the parents contact their doctor immediately. These symptoms are NOT due to colic.



You can give parents **Information card 1** with different strategies they can try when a baby is crying (or even seems to have colic). If one does not work, it does not mean it will not work the next time. You can also discuss with parents different strategies listed in the information card.

2. SLEEPING



Self-assessment

Parents of an 8 week daughter are concerned that that she is not yet sleeping on a schedule. The grandmother had told them to ignore the infants' cries, and just let her 'cry it out.' She has told them that holding the baby every time she cries will cause her to become spoiled. She has said that the baby needs to learn to soothe herself and to sleep on a schedule. The parents are asking you for your advice. Which of the following strategies would you suggest??

- A. Go ahead and let the infant cry until she falls asleep.
- B. Ask the parents what they do before their baby goes to sleep and discuss the idea of introducing a sleep routine (every evening, bathing, singing lullaby, short reading, etc.).
- C. Explain to the parents that, even with this, such a young child cannot follow a schedule, so patterns are sure to change.

SUGGESTED ANSWERS:

The age of an infant is an important factor in determining whether or not letting a baby cry it out is appropriate. Babies who are below three months old are not able to stop crying or soothe themselves to sleep unless their needs are met. They actually cannot be spoiled at this age. Their immediate needs, for example, feeding, a clean diaper, the need to be held, are more frequent compared to older babies and must be met.

Babies are not usually capable of maintaining any kind of schedule until they are 4-6 months old. It is best that feeding and sleeping is on demand. However, when certain routines are done consistently, babies begin to gradually associate bathing or a lullaby or calm reading with sleeping.

Even when the baby is older, “letting a baby cry it out” should only be used after the parent is sure that the child is not hungry, wet, too cold, hot, etc.



Watch the following video, Baby Sleep at http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/baby_sleep_video.html/context/824



and find additional useful information here:

<http://www.zerotothree.org/child-development/sleep/sleep-challenges.html>

Newborns usually don't have trouble falling asleep, and they typically sleep a lot—anywhere from 8 to 16 hours—waking when they need something, such as feeding or a diaper change. They don't yet know the difference between day and night, and they sleep for different lengths of time each day. An unpredictable sleeping pattern is normal in very young babies. This can be difficult for parents as they may be up a lot at night.

It is important to advise mothers and fathers to follow their babies' rhythm and to observe and learn what soothes them. Babies may be helped to sleep more at night by encouraging wakefulness during the daytime. You can suggest that parents spend some time outside each day. This provides exposure to daylight and helps babies stay awake. Being outside also helps babies learn that daytime is when it's bright and they are active and social, and night time is when it's dark and quiet. (It is important to educate parents about protecting their child from sun).

By about 3–4 months of age, babies learn the difference between day and night. Around 6 months, some babies are beginning to sleep through the night. Breastfed babies are likely to continue to feed during the night. However, many babies are also still waking up because they are used to falling asleep while being fed, rocked, or comforted in some other way. When they wake up — which we all do several times a night —

they don't know how to get themselves back to sleep on their own. Babies who have learned how to soothe themselves, for example, by sucking on their fingers or getting their bodies into a comfortable position on their own (such as curling up in the corner of the crib) generally have an easier time putting themselves back to sleep. So it is a good idea to show parents how to encourage self-soothing behaviors when the baby is distressed during the daytime.



Help parents understand that every baby is different and that being flexible and sensitive to the baby's needs is very important.



This **Information Card 2** provides strategies mothers and fathers can use to help their babies fall asleep.

By introducing new and different techniques on how to put a baby to sleep and calm her down, you can help parents understand their baby's needs and explore different approaches that will accommodate those needs. Having parents focus on their baby's reactions and responding in tune with these (in an attuned way) is one of the best ways to foster circles of communication and build strong and positive attachment (More in the Module on Falling in Love).



Self-assessment

What advice would you give to parents on sleeping positions and their baby's sleeping environment?

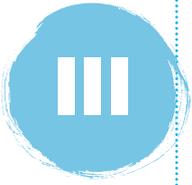


Caution parents about the importance of the baby's sleeping position and environment.

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) is the sudden and unexplained death of an infant less than 1 year of age. Research has shown that infants who sleep on their backs are less likely to experience SIDS. Therefore, pediatricians recommend that babies be put to sleep:

- On their backs
- On a firm mattress—never put the baby to sleep on a pillow, sheepskin, waterbed, or other soft surface
- In a non-smoking environment—research has shown that exposure to second-hand smoke doubles a baby's risk of SIDS.
- With no toys or loose bedding in the crib that may inhibit baby's breathing.

(You can find more on SIDS in the Module 9 on Home Environment and Safety!)



COMMON CONCERNS WITH TODDLERS/PRE-SCHOOLERS

1. SLEEPING



Self-assessment

Parents of a 32 month-old boy tell you that they are having problems because their child keeps coming into their bed in the middle of the night. He says he is afraid of the dark. So far, they have just been letting the child sleep with them in their bed, but now they are having problems sleeping themselves. What advice would you give them?

- A. Provide a nightlight if the child is sleeping in a different room
- B. Go ahead, and let the child sleep in the parents' bed.
- C. Let the child know you are angry.
- D. Make one of the stuffed animals the child's protector.

ANSWERS

A. and D. would constitute good advice.

Fear of the dark is quite common. Starting at around age 2½–3, children are engrossed in a world of pretend and imagination, but don't fully understand the difference between reality and their world of make-believe. Expressing annoyance can increase the child's distress. It also makes it more difficult for the parent to respond sensitively. If the child wakes up in the middle of the night, parents should resist the temptation to bring the child into their room, or when sharing a room, into their bed. This sends the message that the child's room or bed may not be quite safe. Instead go to the child and provide reassurance that the monsters aren't real.



Important points

You need to be careful with giving advice to fathers and mothers. If a child is really scared, crying and showing signs of distress, parents should feel free to hold their child, hug and kiss him, and stay next to him. The most important thing for the child is to calm down and realize that the parents care and are there for him.

It is also important to find out if there are other reasons why this is happening. Maybe, there have been some recent changes in the little boy's life that have increased his fears or anxiety, such as a separation from a loved one, a new baby, or a new babysitter.

How Many Hours of Sleep Do Young Children Need?

By the age of one to three years, young children need on the average 10 to 14 hours of sleep per day. This includes two naps, and by 18 months often only one nap that lasts about one to three hours after lunch. On average, a toddler will sleep 10 hours or more per night. However, this varies from child to child, and you should advise parents to observe their children and follow their rhythm and needs. Some children are naturally prone to sleeping less than others, and a child's behavior will usually indicate if he needs more or fewer naps. If a child is fussy and clumsier than usual, he may need more sleep.

Toddlers have some common sleep issues such as leaving the bed during the night; sometimes, they need a long time to fall asleep; and during the night they may call parents to get into their bed, etc. Some of these

issues can trigger negative emotions in parents and lead to shouting; the use of punishment; or belittling a child that is fearful during the night. You may want to advise parents to stay calm and as consistent as possible in these situations.



To support fathers and mothers in exploring different strategies for common sleep issues with toddlers use **Information Card 3**.

2. FROM DIAPERS TO TOILETS



Self-assessment – True/False Statements

Which of the following statements are true?

- A. Every child can be toilet trained by 18 months.
- B. Toilet training can become a power struggle with parents.
- C. Giving rewards is the best way to toilet train.
- D. Parents need to make clear that they want their child to get out of diapers. It is okay to show some anger when the child is not cooperating, e.g., scold the child, tell him he is acting like a little baby, etc.

SUGGESTED ANSWERS:

A. FALSE. Most children are still developing control over their bowel and bladder at 18 months. This skill is necessary for children to be physically able to use the toilet. How ready a child is emotionally to begin learning to use the toilet depends on the individual child. Some children are ready at 18 months, and others are ready at 3 years. While every child is different, about 22 percent of children are out of diapers by 2 1/2, and 88 percent of children are out of diapers by 3 1/2.

B. TRUE. Toddlers are also trying to gain some control over their world. They are using their growing physical, thinking, and language skills to gain some control over themselves, their bodies, and their surroundings. This natural and healthy desire for control can lead to power struggles. At this age, children quickly figure out that one way to feel in charge is by refusing to do something their parents want them to do. And for better or worse, learning to use the potty is high up on the list priorities of most parents, something they really, really want their children to do—and children quickly pick up on that. Toilet training is particularly open for power struggles because it is so tied up with toddlers wanting to have control over their own bodies.

C. FALSE. While these kinds of rewards may encourage progress in the short run, the concern is that for some children, the pressure of “success” in the form of the reward creates anxiety or feelings of failure when they have a (very normal and even expected) accident. The other risk is that the use of rewards for toileting can lead children to expect rewards for doing almost anything—finishing a meal, brushing teeth, getting dressed, etc. When parents are matter-of-fact about potty training and don’t make a big deal of it, children are more likely to follow their own internal desire to reach this important milestone. If parents want to use a reward, it is important to tell them that they should avoid material rewards (toys, sweets, etc.). They need to understand that a smile, hug, and nice words are a reward too.

D. FALSE - Parental anger will produce additional emotional pressure on a child that will make it more difficult for the child to get out of diapers.



For **additional information** on potty training, see <http://www.zerotothree.org/child-development/early-development/all-about-potty-training.html>

In the situation of children with special needs and/or disabilities, toilet training may start later and may be done in a different way. The role of the parents is even more important because they may have to observe the child very carefully to be able to identify a child's toileting rhythm. Based on that information, parents may need to place the child on the toilet at certain times, following the child's natural rhythm. That is a way for parents to increase the likelihood that the child will learn to do toileting at the same time and in the same (right) place. You should encourage parents to be patient and persistent, to praise the child, and follow his rhythm.

It is the parent's responsibility to create a supportive learning environment. This means that parents need to:

- Recognize that the child is in control of his or her body. Children are ready for toilet training when they can
 - Stay dry for at least 2 hours at a time, or after naps.
 - Recognize that they are urinating or having a bowel movement. For example, children may go into another room or under the table when they have a bowel movement.
 - Have the physical skills that are critical to potty training—the ability to walk, to pull pants up and down, and to get onto/off the potty (with some help).
 - Copy a parent's toileting behavior.
 - Can follow simple instructions.
 - Most importantly – want to use the potty!
- Let the child decide whether to use the potty or a diaper/pull-up each day
- Teach the child words for body parts, urine, and bowel movements
- Offer children the tools they need to be successful at toileting (such as a small potty, potty seat, stool, etc.)
- Expect and handle potty accidents without anger.



During your home visits, talk with parents about this and draw their attention to the child's readiness for using the potty. The most important thing, is to make parents aware that they should not use any kind of punishment (shouting, slapping, taking a toy away, etc.), blackmail the child (e.g., Mommy is so unhappy when you pee in your pants), humiliate the child (Look at yourself, you are like a little baby), call the child names, or raise expectations for a reward (e.g. if you use your potty, we will go to the park). They should also not use too much praise around the toilet. This can make children feel bad when they aren't successful.

It can be helpful to think of toilet training as a process in which both the parents and the child have their own "jobs" to do.

Learning how to use the potty is an important component of self-regulation that the child needs to learn. It is the child's responsibility to:

- Decide whether to use the toilet or a diaper/pull-up, if available
- Learn his body's signals for when he needs to use the toilet
- Use the toilet at his own speed



It is your role to:

- Help parents understand that the child needs to be sufficiently mature and willing to use toilet
- Help parents carefully observe their child and use the potty when they see signs that the child is ready.
- Help parents understand that pushing a child during toilet training can create additional problems such as withholding of urine or bowel movements, which can result in physical problems, like constipation.
- Advise parents not to postpone toilet training for their convenience. Motivate them to use the right moment, when the child is ready, and not to postpone it because they do not have time or interest, disposable nappies are available and more convenient, etc.
- Encourage parents to take risks and take off nappies when a child is ready to learn to go to the toilet. You need to help parents understand that it is not a catastrophe if from time to time children wet or soil their pants. It is an integral part of the learning process. The best time for toilet training is during the warmer months, when children wear fewer clothes.
- Show understanding of mothers' or fathers' fears and reluctance - they might be afraid that their child will get sick, that clothes will be ruined, furniture or floors be destroyed, or that they will be embarrassed in public. Your role is to help them understand that unpleasant situations can be prevented: for example, furniture or car seats can be covered with old cloth during toilet training. Parents need to understand that when the child is ready, the process of learning takes only a week or two, with the possibility of small accidents from time to time during next few months. There is one rule you should insist on – once they make the decision not to use nappies any more, they should stay with that decision. You need to advise them not to use nappies for special occasions (e.g. visiting relatives, wearing the new dress etc.), as this is going to confuse the child. In these situations instead of using nappies, parents should bring a change of clothes. Your role is to make both parents understand that this is a huge step for a child and that she needs a lot of our patience and support. And the fact that the child is maturing and learning new skills is more precious than nice clothes or expensive carpets!



Watch the following video, Potty Training at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G29_mKNZrZY. What steps does this mother take to get the child to use the toilet?



and get **additional information** on this website:

<http://www.zerotothree.org/child-development/early-development/all-about-potty-training.html>

IV

MANAGING BEHAVIOURS

As a home visitor you will find yourself very often in situations where parents are going to ask you how to manage their child's behaviours. Nothing can make a parent feel more helpless or lose confidence in their parenting abilities than when their child throws a temper tantrum, misbehaves, refuses to do what she is told, or defies a parent.

Many families still feel that physical punishment is most effective way to quickly change their child's behaviour. However, physical punishment has many negative consequences and you should help your families apply other approaches.

1. PHYSICAL PUNISHMENT

When people use the word 'discipline', what they usually mean is 'punishment'. Quite often, they mean 'physical punishment'. People's attitudes towards physical punishment are developed by their own upbringing and what is deemed as acceptable within the culture and society in which the child is raised. As a home visitor, it is important to understand first why families may believe physical punishment is the best form of managing behaviors. Then you can address it in a sensitive manner that both lets families know that you respect their culture, but that physical punishment is ineffective and harmful to young children. We can explore options with families and help them understand that children are capable of learning to manage their behaviour without physical punishment, but with guidance from caring, loving adults who set clear and reasonable boundaries.



Physical punishment is ineffective and harmful to young children!

There are many reasons why you must counsel parents not to use physical punishment. Firstly, the Convention of the Rights of the Child stipulates that children be protected from corporal and other cruel and degrading forms of punishment. *"Children have a right to protection from all forms of violence."*

(UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 19).

You can read more on violence against children in the Module 14 on Keeping Children Safe from Maltreatment

Other reasons not to engage in physical punishment include:

- Physical punishment teaches that it is OK to hit another person, someone who is smaller than the parent.
- It can make children frightened and destroy their natural desire to please and to learn from their parents.
- When children are scared, offended or hurt, their brains 'freeze up' (their bodies go into a flight/fight response), and they are unable to process the reasons why you want them to change their behavior. This means they are more likely to do it again in the future.

Parents often think that it is fine to use lighter forms of corporal punishment (smacking or a slap on the child's bottom) in a dangerous situation, because they believe that this help children understand more directly what they should or should not do. As a home visitor you need to explain that these less severe forms of punishment have the same negative effects as more severe physical punishment, and also that they are not necessary. When a child is removed from immediate danger and the crisis is over, parents can explain the situation to them. Young children are then far more likely to behave positively in the future.



Here are some simple strategies you can teach parents to avoid using physical punishment:

- If the mother or father is about to lose control, it is best to leave the child in a safe place and spend a few minutes calming down.
- Have the parent clap his/her hands instead of smacking - it's a better way to get attention.
- If a parent has already raised his/her hand to smack, divert it to hit a table or his/her own leg.



Watch the following video on Smacking http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/smacking_video.html/context/832



As you watch the video, **reflect** on how these mothers and fathers came to the decision not to hit their children. What can do you do as a home visitor to help parents understand that physical punishment does not produce the long-term results that parent expect?

You can also teach parents and caregivers about effective ways of encouraging good or desired behaviors and ways to discourage undesirable behaviors. In addition, it is important for parents to help children learn to manage their own behaviour. Here are some ways approaches that mothers and fathers can try:

- A. Reduce situations where the child gets too overstimulated
- B. Help the child handle strong emotions appropriately
- C. Encourage positive behaviours
- D. Discourage problem behaviours by not reinforcing them
- E. Use an authoritative parenting style instead of one that is authoritarian or permissive.

2. OVERSTIMULATION

When children are flooded with more experiences, sensations, noise and activities they can handle, they may become overstimulated. Overstimulated children may get tired, cranky, feel overwhelmed, and may not sleep well. When this happens, they may not enjoy doing things they usually like, but may do better with some quiet time and a familiar, calm environment.

There's no one 'right' answer to how much stimulation is too much, because every child is different. Children with "difficult to warm up temperaments" may feel overstimulated quickly, while children with "easy" temperaments may not be bothered (*see also the Module 4 on Falling in Love- Promoting Parent Child Attachment*). Each child has a different tolerance level for excitement and novelty.

Fathers and mothers often know well and should be encouraged to follow their child's lead and keep stimulation at a moderate and tolerable level. If they are not so attuned, you can help them learn to observe their child's signs and signals to learn when to reduce stimulation.



Use the **Information card 4** to discuss with parents different strategies they can use when a toddler becomes overstimulated and see <http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/overstimulation.html> for additional information.

3. HANDLING STRONG EMOTIONS

Young children are realizing that they are separate individuals from their parents and caregivers. This means that they will communicate their likes and dislikes and to try to act independently (as much as they can!) Young children are also developing the language skills that help them express their ideas, wants, and needs. At the same time, they still lack logical reasoning skills and have a hard time with waiting and self-control.

Your role as a home visitor is to help mothers and fathers understand that when they see challenging behaviors, it may mean that the child just cannot figure out how to express her feelings in an acceptable way or does not know how to get a need met.

What helps children learn is when parents show them a more constructive way to handle their feelings. Learning to cope with strong feelings in everyday situations develops gradually with better language skills in the third year as children also gain more experience with situations that require some self-control, for example, interactions with peers that require them to handle disappointment, and follow rules. While children won't completely master self-control until they are school-age (and even as adults, we have to practice this all our lives!) here are some ideas for helping a young child begin to learn about this important skill:



<http://www.zerotothree.org/child-development/challenging-behavior/toddlers-and-challenging-behavior.html>



Case study

You are visiting a family member for his 80th birthday. Everybody is having a good time, talking and having fun. All of the sudden, you hear and see a two and a half year old boy screaming and hitting his mother. He wants his brother's toy, and his brother does not want to give it to him. It is the older brother's new toy, and he does not feel like sharing it. The mother is not reacting, so the child throws himself on the floor and starts to kick with his hands and legs. It is obvious that this little boy is out of control.

His mother starts to shout at him to calm down, telling him that he can't behave in that way and that he should be like his older brother. The father steps in and spansks the child. The mother is desperately looking at you (she knows that you are a home visitor) and asks for help. She is saying that this is happening almost on daily basis, and that she just does not know how to control her younger son's behavior.

What would you advise?

- A. Should she talk to the child who is completely out of control? Can the child really hear or understand what his mother is saying?
- B. Should she allow the child to hit her? Should she pretend that nothing is happening?
- C. Should she punish child? Should she shout at the child?
- D. Should she try to solve this kind of situation in the noisy room full of guests?
- E. Should she take the toy from the older brother to calm down the younger one?

SUGGESTED ANSWERS:

- Engage with both parents: the father has intervened in the situation by spanking the child. The mother seems unhappy with this but does not know what to do.
- Start with asking the parents how they feel when these behaviors occur. You need to help them understand that they usually feel helpless and angry and as if they are about to lose self-control. And this is something that should not happen.
- It is important for parents to stay calm. Advise the father and mother not to worsen the situation by their own frustration or anger. Tell them that how they feel at that moment is not important – it is important to calm the child and help him regain self-control.
- Tell the parents that in this kind of situations they should not try to explain too much – it is the tone of voice that is important, not really the content of the message.
- Advise the parents to never hit or spank the child. It will not help and will make the situation even more difficult over the long run, as it will teach child that using physical punishment and violence is ok.
- Advise the parents that if these outbursts happen in public places, they should try to take the child out of the situation. Public places can overstimulate a child (too much light, too much notice, people making comments etc.), and also put pressure on the parents. The parents should do the same if child is at risk of hurting himself.
- Advise parents to be flexible and look at what may be triggering these kind of behaviors: Depending on the situation, parents may need to act differently – sometimes they may want to ignore the child’s behavior; sometimes they may calm and comfort the child; sometimes they may distract the child’s attention, etc.
- Advise parents to talk to the child when he calms down. Fathers and mothers should help the child learn how to talk about his emotions – You felt angry because you did not get the toy you wanted? When you do not get what you want, you start to scream and kick. This is how you are saying to me that you are angry. Instead of doing that, can you just say that you are angry? Can you do that? If you do it, I can hear you and help you. (The father who had taken the child out of the room would be in a good position to do this).
- Strongly advise parents not to give the child what he wants in order to calm him down. That is unhelpful in the long run, because child will learn to use this kind of behavior (especially in public) to get what he wants.
- If only one parent is experiencing most of a child’s negative behavior, encourage the parents to discuss how the other parent could help. If both experience such a behavior from time to time, help them talk about how they can help each other.



You can use **Information card 5** to discuss different options with parents on what they can do to help their children deal with strong emotions.

4. ENCOURAGING POSITIVE BEHAVIOURS

There are many ways of encouraging positive behaviours. Below are some strategies you can share with parents to help them strengthen positive behaviours. Ask mothers and fathers to think which ones will suit their child, and in what situations one of these strategies might work for them.

Attending – Showing the child that he is heard

Attending means really tuning in to whatever the child is saying and doing. It also involves using eye contact and open body language to let the child know that you’re paying attention. Along with “active listening” and “descriptive praise”, attending is a way for parents and caregivers to strengthen their relationships with children. Tuning into the child shows her that she’s important and that what she cares about is important. This builds her confidence and makes her open to exploring new ideas and interests. Using attention like this also shows children that good behavior attracts the interest of others.

Praise and Encouragement – catch the child being good

Praise is when you tell the child what you like about a behavior. It goes a long way towards helping children feel good about themselves. Descriptive praise describes exactly what it is that you like about a behaviour (for example, 'I love the way you shared your Lego with your brother just now'). Descriptive praise is best for boosting self-esteem and building good behavior – when children get praise for behaving well, they're likely to want to keep behaving well. Children need praise and encouragement from both their parents.

Encouragement is praise for effort, not praise for the person – for example, Instead of saying: "You are an amazing child", tell parents to say "It is great how you brought me your plate after eating!" or 'You worked hard on that construction'. Praising effort can encourage the child to try harder in the future. Encouragement is used only before and during an activity to help child do the activity or behavior. For example, 'Show me how well you can put your toys away' or 'I know you're nervous about the drawing you made, but you've worked hard. No matter how it turns out, you've done your best'. Some children, especially those who are less confident, need more encouragement than others.

During your home visits, help parents understand why they should praise their child's efforts, and not only the final achievements. Help parents understand that only proactive actions and efforts create opportunities for child to learn new skills. If parents are focused only on final results, children may be blocked and may even lose motivation.

The importance of routines

It is important for you to make parents understand the value of introducing and keeping simple routines. Routines are sometimes boring for parents, and they may not like doing the same thing every morning, lunch time, evening, and sleep time... But routines give children a sense of organization, stability and comfort. Routines allow children to be successful, and provide them with opportunities to demonstrate behaviors that parents appreciate. Routines built around meals, snacks and sleep times are very important for young children. Routines are a first step to making each day run more smoothly. When children are tired or hungry, it is much harder to get their attention or do what the parent would like.

Planning Ahead – steps for preparing children for a challenging situation

- A. Identify times or situations where children are likely to behave in a negative way.
- B. Give the child clear expectations ahead of time.
- C. Plan ways of helping the child keep busy and engaged in positive behaviors.
- D. Encourage good behavior.

Helping the Child Develop More Skills

There are several ways parents can help children learn everything, from basic self-care to more complicated social skills:

- **Instruction:** teaching by telling
 - Instructions should be given only when the child is listening. It is even better if the child is looking at the parents while they speak.
 - Language used should be language that the child understands.
 - Explanations should be exactly what we want the child to do: short, simple, and clear.

- **Modelling:** teaching through showing. By watching adults, children learn what to do and how to do it. The challenge of being the major role model for our children is to demonstrate behavior we value and like. Parents and adults should avoid behaviors they don't like or don't want to encourage in their children.
- **Shaping:** teaching by approximation. More complex behaviors are often not learned at once. It is important to start noticing and rewarding the starting-point behavior, for example when the child pulls down her diapers to show that it is wet. When such a behavior is occurring more frequently or reliably, parents should look for the next step (e.g., tell the child that she can use the potty). Give praise and attention only when it starts happening. Move slowly. It is important to wait until one step in the child's learning is well established before moving to the next step.



Watch the following video, Encouraging Good Behaviour at http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/encouraging_behaviour_video.html



Reflect on the video:

Which strategies do you see demonstrated in the video?

Which of these strategies are new for you and which do you think will be new for parents?

How can you share these new strategies with fathers and mothers? Modelling, videos, tip sheets, etc.?

5. CHANGING THE CHILD'S BEHAVIOURS



As with encouraging positive behaviour in children, there are similar strategies that may help parents change behaviours that are not desired. Approaches include changing the environment, distracting a child so that they do something else, letting consequences help control the behaviour, or ignoring the behaviour. **Information card 6** can be used as a handout to parents to help with deciding what strategies to use.



Watch the following video: Discouraging Behaviour at http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/discouraging_behaviour_video.html



Reflection and discussion - Reflection on the video

Which strategies do you see demonstrated in the video?

Which of these strategies are new for you and which do you think will be new for the parents you are working with?

How can you present these new strategies to parents? Can you use modelling, role plays, videos, tip sheets, etc.?

Temper Tantrums

Tantrums are extremely common in toddlers. That's how young children deal with difficult feelings. Fathers and mothers are however often very frustrated and feel helpless as to how to handle tantrums.



During your home visits, listen to parents' frustration, anger and feelings of helplessness and help them explore strategies to avoid situations that trigger tantrums and to have a plan for managing them. For more ideas, you can use **Information card 7** on Avoiding and Dealing with Temper Tantrums.



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POSITIVE DISCIPLINE

The true goal of discipline is to teach children the rules of behavior – they need to learn what society and other people expect of their behavior. This will help them grow up to be socially productive and personally fulfilled individuals.

1. PARENTING STYLES AND DISCIPLINE

The following different styles of parenting have been identified (Baumrind, 1991), and they differ in how discipline is used:

Authoritarian.

In this style of parenting, children are expected to follow the strict rules established by the parents. Failure to follow these rules results in punishment. Authoritarian parents fail to explain the reasoning behind these rules. When asked to explain, the parent might simply reply, "Because I said so." Authoritarian parents have high demands for obedience, but are not responsive to their children's needs and ability to be compliant.

Authoritative.

Authoritative parents also establish rules and guidelines that their children are expected to follow. However, this parenting style is much more democratic. Authoritative parents are responsive to their children, willing to explain their reasons, and listen to and consider their child's questions or arguments. When children fail to meet the expectations, these parents are more nurturing and forgiving rather than punishing.

Permissive.

Permissive parents, sometimes referred to as indulgent parents, make very few demands of their children. These parents rarely discipline their children because they have relatively low expectations of maturity and self-control. Permissive parents are more responsive than they are demanding. Permissive parents are generally nurturing and communicative with their children, often assuming the role of friend rather than parent.

Uninvolved (Rejecting and neglecting parenting).

An uninvolved parenting style is characterized by few demands, low responsiveness and little communication. While many of these parents fulfill the child's basic needs, they are generally detached from their child's life. In extreme cases, these parents may reject or neglect the needs of their children.

The opposite of uninvolved parents are over-protective parents.

These parents are excessively concerned with their child's physical and psychological health and safety. Although it looks as if they are concerned about the child, they are really concerned about themselves. They participate in child's life more than is necessary. They may want the child to remain dependent on them or, conversely, to present the child to the world as competent, strong and healthy. Their over-protectiveness may be to conceal the fact that their child is not meeting their expectations. Sometimes they do not really accept their child for what he is. They do not recognise his true capabilities, or allow him to explore, learn new skills and mature. As a result, children may feel insecure and afraid of new experiences.

In this table you can see different types of parenting styles and how they differ from each other.

	Unsupportive: Rejecting, not attuned and self-centered	Supportive: Accepting, attuned and child centered
Unchallenging Low expectations from the child	Neglecting/Uninvolved parenting (Sometimes overprotective) Few demands, low responsiveness and little communication	Permissive parenting Generally nurturing and communicative, often assuming the role of friend rather than parent, low expectations
Challenging High expectations from the child	Authoritarian parenting high demands for obedience, controlling, unidirectional communication	Authoritative parenting Responsive, willing to explain, and listen, nurturing and forgiving rather than punishing

You as a home visitor should understand that in the course of a day or a week, fathers and mothers may not be totally consistent in their parenting styles according to their life situation, age of the children, etc. It is, however, important to understand which parenting style prevails in a family and to talk with the parents about the positive impacts of certain styles and the negative consequences of others.



For more information see:

<http://psychology.about.com/od/developmentalpsychology/a/parenting-style.htm>



Self-assessment

Which of these parenting styles best promotes children’s social-emotional development?

- A. Authoritarian.
- B. Authoritative.
- C. Permissive.
- D. Uninvolved
- E. The opposite of uninvolved parents are over-protective parents.

SUGGESTED ANSWER:

B. Authoritative parenting styles tend to result in children who are happy, capable and successful.

When the parenting style is authoritarian, it generally leads to children who are obedient and proficient, but they rank lower in happiness, social competence and self-esteem.

When parents are too permissive, children have been found to rank lower in happiness and self-regulation. Uninvolved parenting styles ranks lowest across all life domains and can indicate child neglect, a very serious form of child abuse (see also Module 14 on Keeping Children Safe from Maltreatment). These children tend to lack self-control, have low self-esteem and are less competent than their peers (<http://psychology.about.com/od/developmentalpsychology/a/parenting-style.htm>)



Self-assessment

A two and a half year old is playing with her best friend in the park. Suddenly, she grabs a toy from her friend and hides it behind her back. The other child starts to cry.

Using the different parenting styles we described for you above, how would the father of the child who grabbed the toy respond?

Parenting style	Behaviour
Authoritarian	
Authoritative	
Permissive	
Overprotective	
Uninvolved	

SUGGESTED ANSWERS:

Parenting style of father whose child grabbed the toy	Behaviour
Authoritarian	The father will demand that the child give back the toy immediately. If the child does not obey, the parent will take toy and return it to the other child. The father will not listen to any explanation of the child and tell the child that certain rules just have to be followed.
Authoritative	The father will try to comfort both children and give empathy to them. He will explain that he understands that the child wants the toy, but that it is the toy of the other child. He would explain that maybe the other child would share if the child asked for a turn. He might ask the other child to explain how he felt when the toy was snatched away from him.
Permissive	The father would choose not to intervene (his child is not crying) and maybe convey the message that the children should share. Another option would be that he would try to comfort the crying child and persuade her to share. He may try to give something else to the crying child to " bribe " her.
Overprotective	The father would tell the child not to grab the toy, because the other child may fight and hurt him. He would tell the other parent that it is so uncommon for his child to grab a toy. This father will care for feeling of his own child and protect her for feeling hurt or sad. He will take the responsibility for what his child did.
Uninvolved	The father would ignore the children and continue checking messages on his cell phone.



As a home visitor, you can promote an authoritative parenting style in parents so they can guide children's behaviors, help them to feel safe, encourage self-regulation and promote social-emotional development.

In this module we tackled common issues, questions and dilemmas that mothers and fathers may bring to you when you visit them (try to meet with both parents regularly as common parenting concerns are better resolved when both parents understand positive and negative strategies). Sometimes a parent may feel confused, upset, or helpless and may ask you for advice, because they want to do what is best for their child. Your role is to support them in finding the best possible solution. In your relationship of trust, listen to them with empathy and guide their process of understanding the child and creating positive solutions. It is good practice to build the capacity of parents to problem-solve with you so they increase their own resources and do not become dependent on you.



You can find more on this in the Module 10 on Caring and Empowering – Enhancing Communication Skills for Home Visiting personnel.



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VI

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

**Final summary**

Newborns and infants under 4 months of age are usually not capable of sleeping and eating on schedule, which can create stress in the parents' lives. You can support mothers and fathers through this time by giving them information on the development of their infant and exploring with them different strategies to help settle the infant to sleep better and cry less, and to begin establishing sleep routines. No single strategy works all of the time; therefore it is good for parents to have alternatives when one approach is not working.

Toddlers bring new concerns to parents as they seek both to gain independence and stay in close contact with their parents. Fathers and mothers will face new challenges as their toddlers learn to sleep by themselves and use the toilet. Once again, the role of the home visitor is to assist the parents in exploring strategies that work for them, while meeting the developmental needs of the toddler.

There are ways to manage young children's behaviours by keeping them from becoming overstimulated and helping them learn to handle their emotions in an appropriate manner. Positive behaviours can be reinforced with praise and encouragement, good modelling, teaching skills and planning. Negative behaviours can be diminished by changing the environment, using distraction techniques, ignoring behaviours, and applying consequences appropriate to the child's level of understanding. The role of the home visitor is to introduce different strategies and to support the parents to find the ones that work best for them and their child.

Discipline is often understood as punishment. In fact, when it is used positively, it can support the child's social and emotional development. Physical punishment should not be used, as it can have a negative impact on the child's development, violates the rights of the child, models negative behaviour and is ultimately ineffective. The role of the home visitor is to help the father and mother understand the difference between punishment and positive discipline and how to use strategies based on positive discipline that help children learn how to self-regulate.

Listen to mothers and fathers, and talk with them about concerns they have and strategies they can use to address these concerns. Remember always to ask them for their thoughts and the strategies they have already tried, before you offer any suggestions. And when you do make suggestions, always offer more than one, and let the parents choose and make the final decision, provided that will not cause the child harm.



ANNEX



INFORMATION CARD 1

Strategies for Soothing a Crying Baby

- Swaddle the baby. Some babies cry less when they are wrapped snugly in a blanket—called “swaddling”—and gently rocked.
- Use a baby carrier. Being held close as the parent goes through the day can be very soothing.
- Try different ways to hold your baby. Some babies love to be snuggled tightly against their parent’s chest. Some like to be able to look over their parent’s shoulder. Others prefer to be held faced away from you.
- Use soothing sounds. Talk or sing softly to the baby. Background noise can be soothing.
- Try different kinds of movement. Some babies find gentle, slow movements like swaying soothing. Others actually are calmed by more vigorous movements such as swinging or faster rocking.
- Reduce stimulation—lights, sights, sounds, and textures—for the baby.
- Give the baby a break. When nothing works to soothe the baby, give the baby a chance to try to soothe herself by putting her down in a safe place for 5–10 minutes. In fact, sometimes our efforts to comfort our babies actually overstimulate them and increase their distress, rather than soothe them. Putting them down can actually be calming. Babies sometimes need a break from touching, talking, and interacting. If your baby doesn’t calm down, no harm is done.
- Avoid situations where the baby becomes overstimulated. Overstimulated babies might be cranky or tired, which might make them cry more or they might also seem upset or turn their heads away from the person. The baby’s movements might become jerky, and she might clench her fists, wave her arms or kick.
- Speak with a health care professional to see if there are any intestinal issues, allergies, etc.

Taken from: (zerotothree.org, <http://www.zerotothree.org/child-development/challenging-behavior/colic-behaviors.html>)



INFORMATION CARD 2

Strategies for Getting Babies to Sleep

- Consistent bedtimes and rituals. The sequence of a warm bath, rocking, nursing, lullabies, etc. set the baby up to feel that sleep is expected to follow. Capitalize on a principle of early infant development: patterns of association. Baby's developing brain is like a computer, storing thousands of sequences that become patterns. When baby clicks into the early part of the bedtime ritual, he is programmed for the whole pattern that results in drifting off to sleep.
- Calming down. Give baby a warm bath followed by a soothing massage to relax tense muscles and busy minds. Be careful, though, because this will stimulate some babies.
- Feed the baby during the day. Babies need to learn that daytime is for eating and night time is mostly for sleeping. Some older babies and toddlers are so busy playing during the day that they forget to eat and make up for it during the night by waking frequently to feed. To reverse this habit, feed the baby at least every three hours during the day to cluster the baby's feedings during the waking hours.
- Nursing the baby to sleep. Nestle next to the baby and breastfeed or bottle feed him off to sleep. The smooth continuum from warm bath, to warm arms, to warm breast, to warm bed is a recipe for sleep.
- The father putting the baby to sleep. Place the baby in the neck nestle position (nestle baby's head against the front of the father's neck with his chin against the top of baby's head. The vibration of the deeper male voice lulls baby to sleep) and rock the baby to sleep. If baby doesn't drift off to sleep while rocking, the father can lie down with the baby, still in the neck nestle position, and let baby temporarily fall asleep draped over your chest.
- Rocking or walking the baby to sleep. Try rocking baby to sleep in a bedside rocking chair, or walk with baby, patting her back and singing.
- Nestling the baby to sleep. For some babies, the standard fall-to-sleep techniques are not enough. The baby just doesn't want to be put down to sleep alone. After rocking or feeding baby to sleep, lie down with the sleeping baby and nestle close to her until she is sound asleep.

Stay asleep techniques: Try these tips to help your baby sleep increasingly longer stretches at night.

- Daytime mellowing. A peaceful daytime is likely to lead to a restful night. The more attached the parents are to the baby during the day and the more baby is held and calmed during the day, the more likely the baby will sleep through the night.
- Dressing the baby. Try various ways of swaddling the baby at night. In the early months, many babies like to "sleep tight," securely swaddled in a cotton baby blanket. Older infants like to sleep "loose," and may sleep longer stretches with loose coverings that allow them more freedom of movement. Oftentimes, dressing a baby loosely during the day, but swaddling him at night, conditions the baby to associate sleep with swaddling. A baby who gets too hot or too cold may become restless. Adjust the layering according to the temperature of the room and the sleep habits of your baby.
- Quiet in the bedroom.
- Darkness in the bedroom.
- Sounds to sleep by. Repetitive, nearly monotonous sounds that lull baby to sleep are known as white noise, such as the sounds of a fan or washing machine.

- Music to sleep by. Try a continuous-play tape recording of the baby's favorite lullabies, so when she awakens she can resettle herself to the familiar sleep-inducing sound of the tape-recording. The parents can make a medley of their own lullabies that have been proven sleep-inducers.
- A warm bed. Placing a warm baby onto cold sheets can cause trouble. Especially in cold weather, use flannel sheets or place a warm towel on the sheets to warm them, and remove it before placing baby on the warmed sheets.

Taken from: [Askdrsears.com](http://www.parents.com/toddlers-preschoolers/sleep/issues/toddler-sleep-solutions/). 2014. <http://www.parents.com/toddlers-preschoolers/sleep/issues/toddler-sleep-solutions/>



INFORMATION CARD 3

Common Sleep Issues

- **Sleep Issue: The child keeps getting out of bed**

Possible solution: If the child is having difficulty staying in her bed, try an hour of quiet time before saying good night. Reading, snuggling, giving her a relaxing bath, or listening to lullabies can assist her with having a good night's sleep. If she continues the behavior, give her a "bedtime pass." Allow her to leave the bedroom, but only once a night, to ask for whatever is needed. It can take months to modify a behavior, so remember that consistency is key. This pass, along with a security object like a pillow, stuffed animal, or blanket, can be helpful for the child, and she'll eventually outgrow the object on her own.

- **Sleep Issue: The child is taking too long to fall asleep.**

Possible solution: A regular bedtime is ideal for transitioning from a busy day to restful sleep. A sudden change in your child's schedule, such as a late-afternoon nap or a night of staying up too late, can affect sleep. And sleep deprivation can enhance sleep issues. For toddlers who still take two naps, experts recommend a morning nap of about 45 minutes at around 10 a.m. Schedule the afternoon nap for around 1 p.m., for up to 2 hours. For toddlers who have adjusted to one nap, try filling the morning with activities and set naptime for after lunch, around 1:30 p.m., from up to two hours.

- **Sleep Issue: Your child has fears and nightmares.**

Possible solution: Nightmares are common between the ages of 2 and 3. If a child is prone to these fears, avoid books or movies with scary themes close to bedtime. Make her bedtime routine as cheerful as possible, says psychologist Linda Blair in *The Happy Child*. Resist the temptation to tell your child that the fear doesn't exist. "If she is having a bad dream, tell her that it's 'gone' now. Don't, however, tell her the dream wasn't real, because to many preschoolers dreams do seem completely real," Blair says. Instead, "tell her there's no need to worry...Don't embellish with long explanations or distractions. Simply soothe and reassure, and as soon as she relaxes, say good night."

If there is a recurring nightmare, explore what could be causing it. Ask the child about encounters with other children, television shows or other daytime experiences. If they find the culprit, they can try to reduce the child's exposure to it.

- **Sleep Issue: Your child keeps crying out at night for you.**

Possible solution: When your child is crying at night, or calling out for you to return to his bedroom, try setting a schedule of timed visits to the child's room rather than responding to every request. By following a schedule, whether it's every five minutes or another amount of time, your child will still have her needs met. As long as nothing is wrong (such as illness or a wet diaper), a child will eventually self-soothe and fall asleep.

Taken from: Anderson, 2014, <http://www.parents.com/toddlers-preschoolers/sleep/issues/toddler-sleep-solutions/>



INFORMATION CARD 4

When toddlers or pre-schoolers become overstimulated:

- Reduce the noise and activity around the child. For example, turn off the TV or radio and take the child to his bedroom, or let him spend time near the parent if he needs to be close to them to wind down.
- Help the child put into words the feelings that she is expressing through behavior. For example, the adult could say, 'I can see that you're upset', 'I can see that you're feeling overwhelmed'.
- Sit quietly with the child and choose a calming activity such as reading a story, lying down with him, singing some quiet songs or just stroking his back. When he's calm, give him some time to play by himself.

Resource: <http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/overstimulation.html>



INFORMATION CARD 5

- Talk about feelings and how to cope. When the young child can label how he is feeling, it helps him gain control over his emotions and communicate them to others.
- Offer the child ideas for how to manage strong emotions. Young children need guidance when it comes to figuring out how to deal with big feelings like anger, sadness, and frustration. So when the child is really angry, validate what he is experiencing: You are really angry right now because I said no more television.
- Empathize with the child. It is okay to let her know that you understand the choices she is being offered are not the ones she wants.
- Let the child make choices appropriate to her age—about what to wear (perhaps offer 2 choices) and what to eat (within reason), what to play, who to play with. This gives her a feeling of control and supports her growing confidence and sense of competency (the belief that “I can do it”).
- Look for ways to help your child “practice” self-control. There are many daily moments when you can teach your child this skill. For example, games that require turn-taking are great for practicing how to wait and share.

zerotothree.org. <http://www.zerotothree.org/child-development/challenging-behavior/toddlers-and-challenging-behavior.html>



INFORMATION CARD 6

Strategies for changing behaviours

- Changing the child's environment
- Change the physical environment (remove objects, make sure the area is safe for exploration).
- Move the child to a different place where they are not tempted to do something wrong.
- Change the timing of an activity.
- Change the level of difficulty for the child.
- Keep things interesting or make them fun.

http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/changing_environment.html

Distraction

- Distracting can be as simple as giving your child something else to do. Introduce a new activity, toy or game, or even show children something new they can do with the toy they already have.
- Change the scene. Position children so they can see different things, or move a child to a new spot.
- Think ahead. Have a few ideas for fun activities. If you're out and about, take some attractive and fun toys that you can pull out when you need them. If the children might be hungry, have some tasty and healthy snacks on hand too.

<http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/distraction.html>

Consequences

There are types of consequences for children:

Natural consequences: Sometimes it's best to let children experience the natural consequences of their own behaviour. When children experience the results of their behaviour, they can learn that their actions have consequences. They might learn to take responsibility for what they do.

Time-out is another type of consequence that is appropriate to use with toddlers. It involves having your child go to a place – a corner, chair or room – that is apart from interesting activities, and other people, for a short period of time. It can be used for particularly difficult behaviour, or occasions when you both are feeling very angry and you need to take a break from each other to calm down. Remember the rule of 1 minute of time out for each year of age.

<http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/consequences.html/context/459>

Systematic Ignoring

Systematic ignoring is deliberately withholding your attention from a child while she engages in a specific difficult behaviour. It means not looking at her, and not talking to her, while she behaves in that particular way. The strategy is based on the fact that attention from another person can be a powerful motivator of human behaviour. Because the need for social contact and connection is built into humans, behaviour that attracts attention is more likely to occur again in the future.

Attention from a parent is a particularly powerful reward for children. This is because of the strong attachment and bond that exists between children and parents. Parental attention is so powerful that it sometimes makes little difference what kind of attention it is. From a child's point of view, negative attention is better than no attention at all. Negative forms of attention such as scolding, yelling or even smacking can be rewarding to a child.

Systematically pay attention to the behaviour you want to see instead of the behaviour you are ignoring. This makes systematic ignoring far more effective.

http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/systematic_ignoring.html/context/459



INFORMATION CARD 7

Avoiding and Dealing with Temper Tantrums

- Reduce stress. Tired, hungry and overstimulated children are more likely to throw tantrums.
- Be aware of how your child is feeling. If you can see a tantrum brewing, step in and try distracting your child with another activity.
- Identify tantrum triggers. Certain situations – shopping, visiting or mealtimes – might frequently involve temper tantrums. Think of ways to make these events easier on your child. For example, you could time the situations so your child isn't tired, eats before you go out, or doesn't need to behave for too long.
- When a tantrum occurs, stay calm (or pretend to!). If you get angry, it will make the situation worse and harder for both of you. If you need to speak at all, keep your voice calm and level, and act deliberately and slowly.
- Wait out the tantrum. Ignore the behavior until it stops. Once a temper tantrum is in full swing, it's too late for reasoning or distraction. Your child won't be in the mood to listen. You also run the risk of teaching your child that tantrums get your full involvement and attention.
- Make sure there's no pay-off for the tantrum. If the tantrum occurs because your child doesn't want to do something (such as get out of the bath), gently insist that she does (pick her up out of the bath). If the tantrum occurs because your child wants something, don't give her what she wants.
- Be consistent and calm in your approach. If you sometimes give your child what he wants when he tantrums and sometimes don't, the problem could become worse.
- Reward good behavior. Enthusiastically praise your child when she manages frustration well.

http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/temper_tantrums.html



INFORMATION CARD 8

How can you use these points to support parents to use a positive discipline approach in their parenting?

Positive Discipline

(International Child Development Programs and World Health Organization, 1997) Appendix.

Key points	How you can use it to support parents
<p>1. It is important to have emotional bonding and mutual trust (a positive contract) between the child and the parent.</p>	<p>There is a clear connection between a positive child-parent relationship and the child's development as a sensitive and understanding person.</p> <p>When there is a strong early emotional dialogue and trust between the child and the caretaker it serves as an inner model, which influences the child's future intimate relationships with other people, including his peers. ... It is when the adult becomes an emotionally important person for the child that he or she can positively influence him.</p>
<p>2. Simple and clear rules for co-operation and behaviour should be introduced.</p>	<p>A child must be made aware of a limited set of simple rules to which reference is constantly made, so that the rules are known and recognised. Rules should be simple and clear...</p> <p><i>"You are not to push/hit/scratch/bite/pinch."</i></p> <p><i>" You must wait for your turn."</i> etc.</p> <p>It is also important to have positive rules:</p> <p><i>"You must help each other."</i></p> <p><i>"You must listen to what the others have to say to you."</i></p> <p><i>"You must comfort and help anyone who is upset"</i> etc.</p> <p>The child must be given explanations as to why a rule exists and what are the consequences for others if it is broken</p>
<p>3. When a child displays unacceptable behaviour there should be a clear and firm indication of disapproval.</p>	<p>When the rules for co-operation/behaviour are broken or there is a violent incident, the child must be made aware that his behaviour is unacceptable.</p> <p><i>"Jonas is crying because you pushed him - pushing anyone like that is wrong".</i></p> <p>This kind of explanation should be provided instead of just shouting "No" and intervening in a purely physical way or punishing the child without any explanation.</p>
<p>4. It is important to listen to both parties involved in incidents of violence.</p>	<p>It is important that both sides have the opportunity to explain their part in any incident, so that the victim's version is not automatically accepted. In many cases the victim might have provoked the aggression. One can utilise such occasions to develop further the children's understanding of sensitive behaviour and discuss how they could have resolved their differences in other peaceful ways.</p>
<p>5. Focusing an aggressive child's attention on the victim's experiences and feelings is an effective way of making him realise that he should not hurt others.</p>	<p>It is important that the child understands the damage or suffering he has inflicted on the victim.</p> <p><i>"Can you see that Peter is crying? It is because he fell and hurt himself when you pushed him".</i></p>

<p>6. It is useful to get the children to enter into others' experiences and roles.</p>	<p>It is important to make the child see beyond himself in order to make him more sensitive to others feelings.</p> <p><i>"Why do you think Peter is crying? How would you have felt if Ola had pushed you?"</i></p> <p>Alternatively the child can be reminded of the instances when he himself was the victim.</p> <p><i>"Do you remember the time when Sam took your toy? Do you remember what you felt then? So you must not do things like that to others - do you understand?"</i></p>
<p>7. Instead of just stopping the child's negative behavior, it is important to indicate positive alternative actions.</p>	<p>The child must be shown that his feelings of hurt or anger can be effectively communicated in other ways besides taking violent action. Alternatives should be presented to the child to show him what he could have done instead.</p> <p><i>"You could have told Peter that it was your turn instead of hitting him" or "You could have asked for the toy and Meg might have given it to you"</i></p>
<p>8. It is equally important to redefine and improve relationships between children who create conflict.</p>	<p>Sometimes two children fight whenever they are together. It is important to find reasons for it and try and resolve the differences. In such situations one should talk to the children, point out to each the positive characteristics in the other, try to engage them in activities which do not invite conflict and are satisfying to both parties. One should also try and remove the cause of trouble as subtly as possible.</p> <p>For instance, sometimes when both the children want to play with the same toy, they can be distracted by providing an alternative activity. Whenever the children manage to play with each other without any trouble they must be praised for being "good friends".</p>
<p>9. It is practice that counts.</p>	<p>Children can be influenced to behave in an understanding and sensitive way by telling them stories which include such behavior or incorporating similar themes in other forms of artistic expression like drama, role-play or drawing/painting. There is a lot of stories about being kind, understanding, and helpful, unselfish, loving and other positive behavior in all cultures. It has been shown that children who are caring and show consideration to others often have had more experience in caring than those who do not show such behavior.</p> <p>Practical experience in caring is particularly important for behavior to be influenced, for instance, caring for younger siblings or even dolls, making cards for / writing letters to children who are sick or giving away toys and clothes to children who do not have any. Likewise, feeding and looking after pets can appeal strongly to a child's sense of caring. It is important that the child develops sympathy for other persons' needs and suffering and that he is given responsibility for doing something positive to help.</p>
<p>10. It is better sometimes to anticipate conflict and remove its possible causes from situations.</p>	<p>Some situations invite conflict and breakdown of co-operation. This is particularly true in situations where, for example, three children come together, and there are toys for only two of them (say, two swings).</p> <p>Another typical conflict situation in a group is rivalry about who plays with a popular playmate, something which can lead to exclusion of other children. It is possible with some fore-thought and planning to avoid such conflict situations. That is not to say that the children should be completely prevented from experiencing conflict and competition with other children, which is also important in a child's process of adjustment to different social situations. They will, anyway, experience such challenges, but by analyzing and improving situations one can, to a certain extent, avoid needless violent outbursts in children.</p>



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