



for Effective Parenting

James wants to encourage good behavior in his son. Susan is trying to help her daughter be more independent. You can step up your parenting game, too, with the following solutions to common dilemmas.

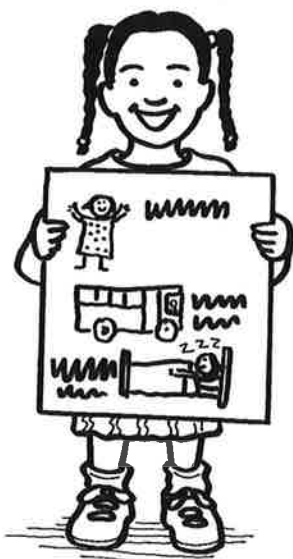
Gentle discipline

Q: *I'd like to come up with a plan to help my son behave better, such as a sticker system. What do you recommend?*

A: Let your child see the natural rewards of good behavior, instead of giving him stickers for doing the right thing. This leads to better self-control in the long run, since he won't have to rely on treats to behave.

For example, if he puts on his shoes and coat the first time you ask, he can get to the playground faster. Or if he remembers to put his favorite shirt in the hamper rather than throwing it on the floor, it will be clean when he wants to wear it.

Positive feedback from you is a reward, too. When your youngster cooperates in the grocery store, show him that you noticed by saying something like "You did a good job of helping me put groceries in the cart and not asking for candy."



Routines

Q: *My daughter started school this year, and I went back to work. Now we all have a lot more on our plate! Any suggestions for creating new routines?*

A: Predictable routines help kids feel more secure, which in turn leads to better behavior. Let your child make a picture schedule of her day. She could include things like waking up, going to school, playing, and going to bed.

Then, have her post it on the refrigerator and put a magnet on each picture as she completes the task shown. Each morning, she can remove the magnets and start over. She'll enjoy sticking to her routine and keeping track of it with the magnets.

Sibling rivalry

Q: *Our son is jealous of his baby brother. What can we do?*

A: It's normal for children to be jealous of the extra attention younger siblings need. It may help if you and your spouse each set aside a little one-on-one time with your son every day. Maybe one of you could play a board game with him while the other puts your younger son to bed.

You could also develop a special signal for just the two of you, such as blowing and "catching" kisses.

Use it when you're busy with your little one and want to remind him of your love.

Finally, promote bonding between brothers by finding activities they can share. He'll feel like the big kid as he plays peekaboo with him, sings songs to him, or rolls a ball back and forth.



continued



Persistence

Q: My son gets frustrated and gives up easily. How can I help him become more persistent?

A: Help your child see himself as a capable problem solver! He'll be more likely to tough things out when he struggles with a task like writing his name or riding a bike.

Let your son hear you ask yourself problem-solving questions when you face a challenge. You could say, "I can't get this

knot out with my fingers. What could I use instead?" When he's stuck, remind him to ask himself questions. He'll learn to find solutions rather than quitting.



Also, encourage your child to take a break instead of giving up. Brainstorm things he might do to get a second wind, like snuggling with the cat or coloring. When he feels less frustrated, he can return to the task and try again.

Independence

Q: I want my kindergartner to become more independent. What should a child this age be doing on her own?

A: By kindergarten, most children should be able to take care of their own basic needs like dressing and bathing. They can also help with simple household chores.

Guide your youngster toward independence by setting her up for success. At bath time, you might help her wash her hair, then have her wash her body. If she's learning to zip her jacket, start by connecting the bottom of the zipper for her.

Give your daughter a few chores, too. For instance, when you fold laundry, ask her to match up socks. If you're vacuuming, invite her to work alongside you with a handheld vacuum.

Self-control

Q: My daughter is like a miniature volcano when she gets angry—she explodes. What's the best way to handle tantrums?

A: The good news is that as your child grows, she'll develop better self-control and have fewer "eruptions." Until then, try these strategies.

When she's upset, wait until she calms down. It's impossible to reason with a youngster who's in the middle of a tantrum. Next, acknowledge her feelings. *Example:* "I know you're upset that you spilled milk on your shirt. You really

wanted to wear it." She'll see that her feelings matter to you. Plus, you'll teach her that she can use words to express her feelings—as you're doing.

Also, pay attention to what triggers your child's tantrums, like suddenly having to stop doing an activity she enjoys. Then, look for ways to prevent meltdowns in the future. You might give her a 10-minute warning and then a 5-minute warning when it's time to stop playing, for instance.

Family time

Q: It seems like our family is always rushing here and there. How can we make life less stressful for our son—and for us?

A: As a family, brainstorm a list of activities to enjoy together, and look for slots of time where you could fit in each one.

If your youngster wants to visit the library, you might schedule it for the weekend. A game of catch or tag may be perfect for a weeknight, since playing and exercising can relieve stress on busy days.

Laughter is a great stress reducer, too! Read funny stories aloud, hold a tongue-twister contest on the way to school, or make up silly songs while you take a walk.



Early Years