



Challenging Behavior in Children

The following information is from an article we found that you may find interesting and/or helpful.

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What is challenging behavior?

Children whose behavior is challenging behave in many of the following ways by the time they are 2 or 3 years old:

- Don't follow rules or cooperate with suggestions.
- Don't respond to "no," "stop," or other commands.
- Protests everything.
- Doesn't know the difference between his needs and his wishes.
- Insists on having his own way.
- Makes unfair or excessive demands on others.
- Doesn't respect other people's rights.
- Tries to control people.
- Has a low tolerance for frustration.
- Frequently whines or throws tantrums.
- Constantly complains about being bored.

What is the cause?

The main cause of challenging behavior in children is lenient, permissive parenting. Permissive parents don't set limits and they give in to tantrums and whining. Such parents also rescue their child from normal frustrations.

How long does it last?

Without changes in child-rearing, these children can run into trouble by the time they reach school age. Other children may not want to play with them because they are too bossy and selfish. Adults may not like to be around them because they are rude and make excessive demands. Because they don't get along well with other children and adults, these children eventually become unhappy.

How do I prevent challenging behavior in my child?

1. Provide age-appropriate limits and rules for your child. Adults must take charge and make rules keeping your child's environment safe. Children need external controls until they develop self-control and self-discipline.

 2. Require cooperation with important rules and do not negotiate. Your child must respond properly to your directions long before he starts school. Adult decisions are not open to negotiation. Do not give your child a choice when there is none.
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3. Expect your child to cry.

Crying is a normal response to change or frustration. When crying is part of a tantrum, ignore it. Don't punish your child for crying, call him a crybaby, or tell him he shouldn't cry. Avoid denying him his feelings, but don't be moved by his crying.

4. Do not allow tantrums to work.

As long as your child stays in one place and is not too disruptive or in a position to harm himself, you can safely ignore him during a tantrum. By all means, don't give in to tantrums.

5. Don't overlook discipline during quality time.

If you are a working parent, you will want to spend part of your free time each day with your child. This time needs to be enjoyable, but also reality based. Don't ease up on the rules. Even during fun activities, you need to enforce the rules.

6. Teach your child to cope with boredom.

When you're busy, expect your child to amuse himself. Even 1-year-olds can keep themselves occupied for 15 minutes at a time. By age 3, most children can entertain themselves about half of the time.

7. Teach your child to wait.

Waiting helps children learn to deal with frustration. Delaying immediate gratification is something your child must learn gradually, and it takes practice. Don't feel guilty if you have to make your child wait a few minutes now and then. Waiting doesn't hurt a child as long as it isn't excessive.

8. Don't rescue your child from normal life challenges.

Changes such as moving and starting school are normal life stressors. These are opportunities for learning and problem solving. Always be available and supportive, but don't help your child with situations he can handle by himself. His coping skills and self-confidence will benefit.

9. Don't over-praise your child.

Children need praise, but it can be overdone. Praise your child for good behavior and following the rules. Encourage him to try new things and work on difficult tasks, but teach him to do things for his own reasons too. Giving your child constant attention can make him praise-dependent and demanding.

10. Teach your child to respect the rights of adults.

A child's needs for love, food, clothing, safety, and security obviously come first. However, your needs are important too. Your child's wishes should come after your needs are met and as time allows. This is especially important for working parents where family time is limited. Your child needs to learn to accept separations from his parents. If he isn't taught to respect your rights, he may not learn to respect the rights of other adults.
