Evergreen
School Division

Supporting Behaviour at Home

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Introduction

Children need adults to teach, guide, and support them as they grow and learn. You play an important role in guiding children's behaviour. The most appropriate ways to guide behaviour may differ from child to child and will depend on the child's age, developmental stage, and abilities. Our expectations of their behaviour will also be impacted by these factors.

Guiding behaviour is an ongoing process. Children need guidance while appropriate behaviour is happening, as well as before, during, and after inappropriate behaviour is displayed. Their ability to regulate their behaviour grows over time, and with your support and guidance you help them grow necessary skills for becoming a positive and successful member of society.

This resource includes strategies that you can use to set up an environment to encourage positive behaviours from your children, strategies for reacting to behaviour, as well as strategies to put in place to prevent problem behaviour in the future. Not every strategy may be applicable to your situation or child, however these are general strategies that typically work when applied appropriately and consistently. For more support, modelling of these strategies, and discussions on which strategies would work best for your child, please contact a member of your child's school team, which may include the resource teacher, guidance counsellor, school psychologist, or social worker.

Routine and Structure

Structure and routines are important for children and help to gain trust, security, and order. While these can be flexible, caregivers need to provide children with information about what is expected.

Adults thrive on structure and routine. We are provided cues for how to behave most places we go that provide us with a sense of security. These cues are so common that we no longer notice the calm that these supports provide us. Examples include:

- While driving, there are lines on the road to dictate where we drive, speed limits to let us know how fast to go, and lights to tell us when to stop and go. We have street signs to help direct us and we also notice landmarks such as certain houses or art installations that help us navigate an area. Especially once we become comfortable driving in an area, we barely notice these signs.
- In a grocery store, there are signs above aisles telling us what is in each aisle and signs on the walls with different departments to guide us during our shopping experience (e.g., bakery, produce).

Now, imagine driving around a community without cues to support you. Perhaps you have visited a foreign country where driving practices are different, such as the fast-paced busy roads of Thailand and felt overwhelmed and unsafe due to the lack of predictability and comfort in knowing how to navigate that environment. We may find it helpful to have a guide show us around (someone to model how to drive in that environment) or have someone teach us how to navigate the roads.

Imagine entering a grocery store and having items placed randomly throughout the store and items changed locations often. These situations would create an unpredictable and confusing shopping experience and we may feel frustrated and hopeless.

Similar to adults, children can thrive when given structure in their environments. *Having routine and structure creates a predictable and safe environment*. If the expectations on them and rules for their behaviour are constantly changing, they may feel frustrated, hopeless, and act out as a result.

See the following page for visual examples of routines in the home.

Example: Morning and nighttime routine (via Children Inspire Design)

Age	Needed Sleep	6:00 AM	6:15 AM	6:30 AM	6:45 AM	7:00 AM	7:15 AM	7:30 AM
5	11 hours 15 minutes	6:45 PM	7:00 PM	7:15 PM	7:30 PM	7:45 PM	8:00 PM	8:15 PM
6	11 hours	7:00 PM	7:15 PM	7:30 PM	7:45 PM	8:00 PM	8:15 PM	8:30 PM
7	10 hours 45 minutes	7:15 PM	7:30 PM	7:45 PM	8:00 PM	8:15 PM	8:30 PM	8:45 PM
8	10 hours 30 minutes	7:30 PM	7:45 PM	8:00 PM	8:15 PM	8:30 PM	8:45 PM	9:00 PM
9	10 hours 15 minutes	7:45 PM	8:00 PM	8:15 PM	8:30 PM	8:45 PM	9:00 PM	9:15 PM
10	10 hours	8:00 PM	8:15 PM	8:30 PM	8:45 PM	9:00 PM	9:15 PM	9:30 PM
11	9 hours 45 minutes	8:15 PM	8:30 PM	8:45 PM	9:00 PM	9:15 PM	9:30 PM	9:45 PM
12	9 hours 30 minutes	8:30 PM	8:45 PM	9:00 PM	9:15 PM	9:30 PM	9:45 PM	10:00 PM
13	9 hours 15 minutes	8:45 PM	9:00 PM	9:15 PM	9:30 PM	9:45 PM	10:00 PM	10:15 PM
14+	9 hours	9:00 PM	9:15 PM	9:30 PM	9:45 PM	10:00 PM	10:15 PM	10:30 PM

Example: Sleep schedule (www.neatlings.com)

Daily Schedule

One way to provide structure and routine is to create a daily schedule that details the events of the day. Place the daily schedule in a common room in the house (e.g., kitchen). The child can check the daily schedule to see what to expect for their night or weekend days, including when they have free time and when they have scheduled activities.

Daily schedules help children learn the concept of time and can help them become more independent. When they ask what time an event starts or what is happening on that day, you can direct them to the daily schedule instead of answering their question (e.g., what time is the movie again??). Over time, they may begin to look at the schedule first instead of asking you.

See below for an example of a daily schedule. This example is a detailed weekend day to show different examples of activities that could be on a daily schedule.

A blank schedule is provided for you on the following page.

Before 9:00 AM	Wake up!	Make your bed, eat breakfast, brush teeth, get dressed
9:00-10:00	Outdoor Time	Family walk or outdoor play
10:00-11:00	Academic Time	Reading, homework, study, puzzles, journal, educational apps
11:00-12:00	Doctor's Appointment	
12:00-12:30	LUNCH	
12:30-1:00	Home Chores	Clean rooms, put away toys, take out garbage, pet care
1:00-4:00	Free Time	Your choice!
4:00-5:00	Outdoor Time	Family walk or outdoor play
5:00-6:00	Dinner Time	Family dinner, help with clean-up and dishes
6:00-7:00	Bath Time	Bath or shower
7:00-8:00	Reading/TV Time	Relaxing before bedtime
9:00 PM	Bedtime	Put on PJs, brush teeth, clothes in laundry

www.mommyhood101.com

Daily Schedule

Date: _____

Time	Activity	Description

<u>T</u>ransitions

Transitions happen when your child has to stop doing one activity and start doing something else. Transitions can be hard for some children, leading to meltdowns, arguing, and lots of repeating on your part (e.g., It's bedtime!!). Try the following tips:

Give a warning. Children often benefit when they are informed of upcoming transitions. Try using a *five-minute warning* before they have to stop what they are doing, allowing them time to accept the change.

Use a visual timer. Children can benefit from *seeing* the amount of time left that they have with their current activity. You can set the timer at the beginning of an activity (e.g., you have 15 minutes in the bath) or to give them warning of a transition towards the end of their activity (e.g., you have 10 minutes left until supper). The timer beeps when the time is up. Put the timer up high in a place where children cannot change the amount of time left while you are not looking. Visual timer apps are also available for free.

Try not to jump from a highly preferred activity to a non-preferred activity. Transitions can be especially tough when moving from an activity the child really enjoys (e.g., playing video games) to something they do not (e.g., going to bed). Try transitioning them "slowly" by including an activity that is in the middle of their preferences before transitioning them to the non-preferred activity.

Instead of:

Video games → Going to bed

Try:

Video games → Story time → Going to bed

Use "First-Then" Language

First-Then language is helpful to use during transitions and when following schedules and routines. It involves mentioning two activities to your child (First _____, then _____). *The second activity (e.g., then...) should always be more rewarding or enticing to your child than the activity they do first.* For example, if you want your child to read but they keep asking to use the iPad, instead of saying "no" multiple times or repeatedly telling them to read, you could try saying, "First read one chapter of your book, then you can use the iPad."

The reason for using this language is to increase the likelihood they will complete the first activity, which is often non-preferred or preferred less than the second task. They are more likely to be motivated and engage in the non-preferred task if they know they get to do the second activity right after.

Why can't you say a preferred activity first?

Imagine hearing this from your boss:

"First, take an extra break, and then scrub the floors."

Would you be more likely to try making that extra break really long, and perhaps even try to get out of scrubbing the floors when you get back from the break?

You would be more likely to complete the non-preferred activity (and more quickly) if you heard,
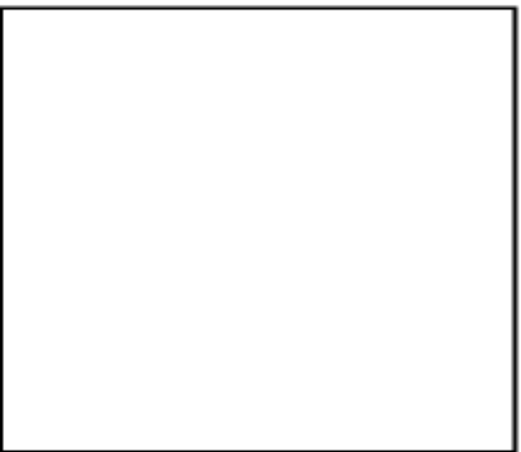
"First, scrub the floors, and then take an extra break."

If your child is a visual learner, use a first-then board with pictures of activities. See below for example and the following page for a blank form to use.

FIRST	THEN
Doctor visit	Playground
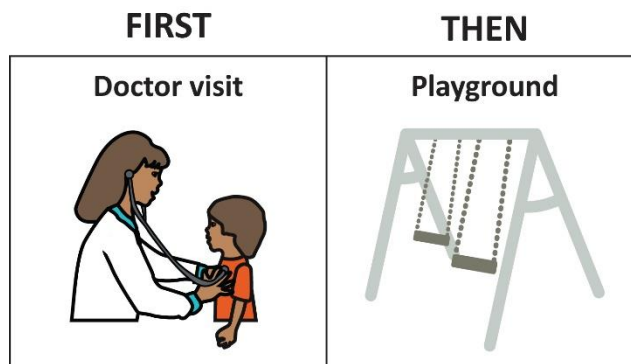
First

Then

Set Clear Limits

Limits are statements of what behaviour is appropriate. They ensure that the child knows what is expected.

Make limits easy to understand. Use simple language and explanations the child can understand. When a child understands the limits, they are more likely to follow them.

Instead of:

"Sand stays in the sand box because when we fling it up into people's eyes, we may hurt them and they may get an infection or need to see an eye doctor for treatment."

Try:

"Sand stays down low so it doesn't get in people's eyes."

State limits in a positive way. Point out what you want your child to do, rather than what you do not want them to do. Phrasing limits in a positive way not only gives them limits on their behaviour but also teaches them good behaviour.

Instead of:

"Don't run into the room and don't touch anything!"

Try:

"Walk with me and keep your hands to yourself."

Be consistent. If a child is given a limit and they are only expected to sometimes follow it or are only given consequences every second or third time they do not follow the limit, this is confusing for them and will lead to frustration and inconsistent behaviour.

Use a statement, rather than a question. A question invites the child to say "no."

Instead of:

"Do you want to help clean up?"

Try:

"It's time to clean up now."

Avoid saying, "Because I said so," when a child questions a limit. A child is more likely to follow the limit when they are aware of why it is in place. Responding in this way may lead to a child arguing and engaging in a power struggle with you.

Follow Through

Follow through means that when you set a limit or ask your child to do something, you follow through with your request to ensure they complete it.

Follow through is important because *if you follow through with what you ask of your child, they are more likely to listen to future requests.*

Imagine the following scenario:

Your child was playing Lego on the carpet. They get up and decide they want to play outside. You see that there is a pile of Lego on the carpet and you ask them to clean it up. Your child ignores your request and goes outside. You decide you do not like the mess and clean it up while they are outside. When your child comes back inside, they see the Lego is cleaned up and that you ended up doing it yourself.

In this scenario, there was no follow through on having the child clean up their mess. Because they did not have to complete the request, they are less likely to listen to your requests in the future because if they didn't have to complete the request this time, then maybe they won't have to next time. They will continue to test you to see if this is a time you will not follow through and they may "get away with it."

In the previous scenario, if the caregiver called the child back in to clean up the mess and prevented them from going outside until they cleaned up the Lego, the child is more likely to listen in the future because they know *when you say something, you mean it.*

Important considerations:

- Make sure the demand is something the child can follow through on. If it is too hard for them, this may create frustration (e.g., if they are melting down and crying on the floor, asking them to explain what happened/why they are crying is not likely a good idea because they are unable to answer in a logical way. They may not be able to identify "why" at that point and you are likely unable to follow through.)

- Accept approximations. You may have to accept behaviour that is close to what you asked for. In the above example, if the child was resistant to cleaning up all the Lego by themselves, you could say, "How about you pick up twenty pieces and I'll clean the rest." Ideally, you want to build up to the child completing the request by themselves.

Focus on the Behaviour, Not the Child

When describing a limit to a child or commenting on their behaviour, focus on the behaviour the child displayed instead of using a general comment about the child. A general comment about the child (e.g., you are so lazy), leads them to believe their whole being can be described with that trait, sending messages to the child that may impact their self-esteem and produce feelings of guilt and shame.

Share messages to the child that focus on their BEHAVIOUR, instead of commenting on the child as a whole. It is better for a child to think their behaviour was bad than they themselves are bad. It is easier and more hopeful for a child to change their behaviour in order to make their caregivers happy rather than figure out how to change themselves, especially if they think their caregivers have a set view about them (e.g., that they are rude).

If a child feels their caregiver views them a certain way, they may start to act like that trait in order to confirm those thoughts. For example, if a child feels their caregiver thinks they are lazy, they may start being lazier because even when they try, they are still called lazy and so "if they think I'm lazy, I'll show them lazy".

Statements that focus on the child:

- *You're so rude.*
- *You're so lazy.*
- *You naughty boy, get off table.*
- *You never listen!*
- *You are so unsafe!*

Statements that focus on the behaviour:

- *It is not safe to climb on tables.*
- *When you grab the truck, it makes Sam angry.*
- *Rocks stay on the ground.*
- *Please listen when I am speaking to you.*
- *When you don't follow the rules, it makes Mom worry.*

Offer Choices

Some children may not respond well when directly being told to do something. They may become argumentative and start a "power struggle" with their caregiver, which sometimes results in the child getting what they want and reduces the amount of follow through by the caregiver.

Giving choices can help avoid power struggles. *You are still asking them to do something that you would like them to do, but they have some control in the situation.* Choices should only be offered when appropriate. There are some times where you need your child to do something specific, in which case giving choices is not applicable. See the following examples below for giving choices in different scenarios.

| Instead of:	Try:
"Get dressed now."	*"Do you want to put your pants on first, or your shirt?"*
"We need to go to Grandma's house now. Put your shoes on and let's go!"	*"We need to go to Grandma's house now. Do you want to wear your purple or red shoes?"*
"Clean up your toys now and get in the bathtub."	*"You need to clean up your toys and it is bath time. Do you want to clean up your toys before or after your bath?"*
"Get your reading done now."	*"Do you want to read before or after we watch the movie?"*
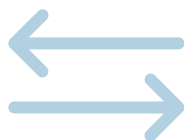
Alternatives to "No"

"No" is a common word children hear. Some children can accept hearing this, while other children do not respond well to hearing the word "no". If "no" is a word that often leads to meltdowns or you want to try switching up ways to say "no", try the following strategies:

- **Use First-Then Language.** If a child asks to engage in a preferred activity, especially when they have been asked to do (or should be doing) something else, use first-then language instead of saying "no". This way, the child gets to engage in the activity they wanted, but only after they completed the activity you wanted them to.

    "First, eat your dinner, and then we can have ice cream."

- **Offer choices or an alternative.** Instead of saying "no" and leaving it, consider when the activity could occur and offer choices or consider an alternative.

    "You can't see your friends today. Do you want to see them on Friday night or Sunday during the day?"

    "You can't see your friends today. Do you want to call them instead?"

- **State the activity that you are doing to re-direct your child.** Instead of saying "no", point out to your child what you are doing.

    Child asks to go outside
    "We are doing our homework right now."

- **Say "no" without saying "no".** Use alternative phrases that mean the same thing, but do not include the word that may be a trigger to your child.
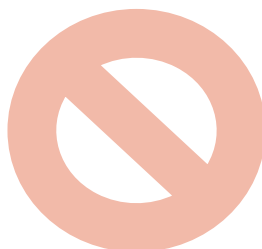
    "Not now."

    "I have something else in mind."
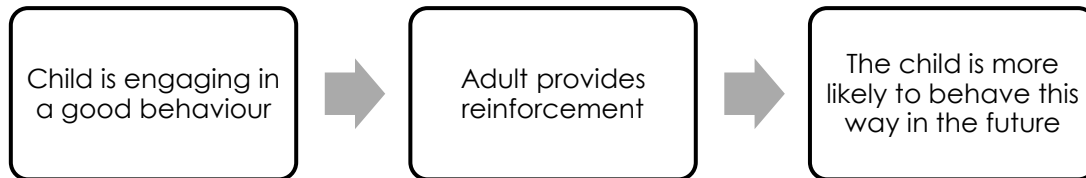
    "I wish we were able to."

    "Not today."

    "Let's think of something else to do."

Use Positive Reinforcement

In simple terms, positive reinforcement means rewarding your child for good behaviour. It occurs when your child engages in a good behaviour and you give them reinforcement as a result. When you reward a child for something, they are more likely to do it in the future because of your reaction.

Child is engaging in a good behaviour	→	Adult provides reinforcement	→	The child is more likely to behave this way in the future

Positive reinforcement trains us to look at different behaviours. It may be more natural to comment on your child's behaviour when they are doing what you don't want them to do instead of when they are already doing what you want them to do. Some children need guidance about what behaviour you are exactly looking for. By positively reinforcing them while they are completing the behaviour, they have a clear picture of what you are expecting from them.

Try to use a 4:1 ratio. Give positive reinforcement at least four times for every one time you comment on a negative behaviour or discipline your child. Using this ratio can help your child feel they are more successful than not, leading to a better self-image and higher self-esteem. Children are also more likely to listen if they are receiving positive feedback instead of constantly hearing what they are doing wrong. Try to reinforce a behaviour right after it happens.

Positive reinforcement only works when you give your child something they like!
Examples of things to use for reinforcement:

- Praise
- Candy
- Dance party
- Thumbs up
- Smile

- Hug
- Nod
- Special time with a caregiver
- Stickers

- Cheering
- Video games
- Bike ride
- Ice cream
- More time playing

Praise Effectively

Praise is an effective way to reward, or positively reinforce, your child's behaviour. Praise is most effective when it:

a) Focuses on the behaviour rather than the child,
b) Specifically points out the positive behaviour,
c) Focus on the individual's behaviour and not compared to others,
d) Focuses on effort and not ability, and
e) Appears genuine.

Instead of:	Try:
"Good stuff."	*"You folded your clothes very neatly!"*
"Awesome."	*"Awesome job getting ready for bed quickly."*
"You're an angel!"	*"You made great choices when playing with your friends today."*
"Way to go!"	*"I really liked how you stayed calm."*
"You are a Rockstar."	*"You tried really hard out there today."*
"You solved that problem quickly! You're so smart!"	*"You solved that problem quickly! You must have focused and tried hard!"*
"You draw much better than the rest of your class! I'm proud of you!"	*"Your drawing skills have improved so much! I'm so proud of you!"*

Planned Ignoring

Children often engage in behaviours in an attempt to seek a connection with their caregiver (i.e., get their attention). Examples of these behaviours can include making loud noises, picking up and dropping items, whining, and repeating words over and over. Try using planned ignoring in these situations.

Planned ignoring involves purposely ignoring a behaviour while it is occurring. It is the opposite of paying attention to a behaviour. This includes include avoiding eye contact, appearing calm, and not engaging with your child. Once the behaviour stops, pay attention to them and praise the different behaviour.

Examples include:

Your child is talking and interrupting your conversation. Ignore the talking, avoid eye contact and once they stop, pay attention to them and comment, "Thank you for being quiet."

Your child is tapping the table loudly during dinner. You continue eating, focusing on your meal and others at the table instead of them. Once they stop tapping the table, turn to them and say, "Thank you for keeping your hands quiet so everyone can hear each other."

Tips to remember:

- Planned ignoring is recommended for annoying but harmless behaviours

- Planned ignoring takes patience. You may need to open a magazine, look at your phone, or leave the room if you find it is difficult to remain calm.

- If you pay attention to the negative behaviour at some point, it may be reinforcing that behaviour and they are more likely to do it in the future (If I am loud enough, for long enough, mom will eventually pay attention to me). Take a break and stick it out!

Token Economies

A token economy uses positive reinforcement and involves awarding tokens (e.g., chips, stickers, check marks, points, or stars) to your child when they are engaging in positive behaviours. These tokens are built up and children earn a reward when they earn enough tokens.

To use a token economy, follow these steps:

1. Pick a behaviour you want to work on (e.g., making the bed in the morning).

2. Choose what items/activities will be the reward. These items need to be motivating for your child (e.g., candy, movie night out, going out for ice cream, etc.) The reward needs to be something special your child does not have access to all the time.

3. Decide how many tokens are needed before earning the reward. It is important to start small (3-5 tokens) and gradually increase the number. Children may be discouraged if they see they need 30 tokens to get the reward.

4. Decide what to use for tokens. Your child can be part of this process (e.g., stickers of their favourite character). Match tokens to the age of your child; younger children may like stickers, where older children may prefer check marks.

5. Provide a token and social praise every time they complete the behaviour. (e.g., give a token and praise them for making their bed in the morning).

6. Once the child has learned the positive behaviour, you can begin fading out the token system by decreasing the number of tokens given for each behaviour or by placing them on the "honour system." This is where they can still periodically get the reward without getting tokens as long as they continue doing the positive behaviour.

See the following page for examples of token systems.

Example 1. Star Wars Reward Chart

Example 2. I'm working for…

Example 3. Tally marks

Volume Charts

To guide your children about volume, use a visual chart. This resource can be helpful if your child likes to play and be loud, especially when out in public or when they have to be quiet (e.g., at an event such as a wedding or church service).

The chart typically has levels and the volume increases as the numbers or levels increase, which is a concrete way to explain volume level to children. The chart can be displayed in your home in an area where volume is a common concern and if your child starts to remember the numbers on the chart, you can reference the number when out in public (e.g., Your volume is at a 4, and I need it at a 2).

By teaching your child how to monitor their voice and volume level, you are not only impacting how they behave but you are teaching them a valuable social skill. Using appropriate voice volume is an essential skill that affects social relationships such as friendships and relationships with family.

See the following page for an example of a voice chart you can use in your home. This is a simple volume chart. You can find or create an example that includes pictures that show your child what each level looks like. A fun idea is to take pictures of your child modelling each level (e.g., a picture at 0 with their mouth closed and a finger over their mouth "shhhing" or a picture at 4 of them with their mouth wide open like they are yelling). This activity gets the child involved and they may respond better when you use the tool.

Voice Level Chart

4	**Shouting**
3	**Loud Voice**
2	**Speaking**
1	**Whisper**
0	**Silent**

Special Play

Special play is an uninterrupted 30-minute play time once a week with you and your child. The caregiver devotes their full attention to the child during this time. *The child takes the lead and directs the play activities, while the caregiver follows the child's lead. The caregiver does not direct the play.*

What do caregivers do during special play?

- Listen and observe the child

- Describe out loud what the child is doing, similar to a radio sports announcer
    - "You drew a happy face."
    - "You're putting those two together."
    - "You're filling that all the way to the top."
    - "That one is sure making lots of noise."

- Identify and say out loud what feelings the child is expressing either directly by themselves, or indirectly through their play with the toys
    - "You're proud of your painting."
    - "You're sad that it fell over."
    - "That looks like a scary place they are going to."
    - "That soldier is really angry with the other soldier."

- Avoid teaching your child something, correcting them, or telling them what to do
    - "Here, let me show you how to do that."
    - "Don't get so angry."
    - "Do it like you're supposed to."
    - "You can do much better than that."

Special play builds a strong relationship with your child where they feel accepted, capable, and important. You can still have limits during play (e.g., "playdough goes on the table, not the floor") and children should never be permitted to hurt themselves or you, even in child-led activities.

Feelings Charts

Sometimes children engage in negative behaviour because they are having difficulty expressing their emotions. They find it easier at the time to use behaviour to show how they are feeling, either because they do not recognize their feelings or are having a hard time using words. Using feelings charts can help by giving them a tool to show their emotions or by teaching them about their emotions when a caregiver uses the chart to point out how the child is feeling.

You can use a poster with multiple feelings or focus on one feeling if the child struggles with a certain emotion (e.g., anger). Below is an example of a chart with levels of anger you may use, and an example of a general feelings chart is on the following page.

Some feelings charts have an additional column with activities they can do when the child is at each level to feel calmer. See above.

HOW ARE YOU FEELING TODAY?

|				
HAPPY	SAD	ANGRY	HUNGRY	EMBARRASSED
SLEEPY	UNSURE	SICK	PROUD	LONELY
JEALOUS	SURPRISED	ANNOYED	SHY	SCARED
BORED	NERVOUS	EXCITED	GUILTY	SILLY

Deep Breathing

Teaching your child deep breathing techniques can help calm a child in the moment and help them stay calm in the future when they are starting to become upset. Helping a child to stay calm reduces the amount of problem behaviours they engage in.

Most people take short, shallow breaths in their chest. Deep breathing involves taking a long, deep breath, usually with your belly. To feel a deep belly breath, put one hand on your chest and another on your stomach. Try to inhale deeply and keep the hand on your chest still, while pushing out the hand on your stomach. Exhale slowly.

There are many techniques to teach deep breathing to children. Many of these techniques involve fun ideas to picture, which helps the child engage with the activity. Here are a few examples:

- Hot Chocolate Breathing: Imagine holding a big cup of hot chocolate with whipped cream and chocolate sprinkles. Take a deep breath in, smelling the chocolate and whipped cream, hold it, and then exhale by blowing the hot chocolate to help cool it down.

- Belly Breathing: Lie on the floor and place a stuffed animal on your stomach. Breath in deeply and feel the stuffed animal rise, then lower it down as you exhale. Rock the stuffed animal to sleep using the rise and fall of your stomach.

- Candle Breathing: Imagine leaning close to a candle (not too close!) and taking a deep breath in with your nose to smell the candle. Then, exhale with your mouth to blow the candle out.

- Square/Star/Triangle/Rectangle Breathing: Raise your finger in the air. Inhale and draw one side of a shape. Hold your breath for the next side. Exhale and draw the next side. Hold your breath for the next side, and so on.
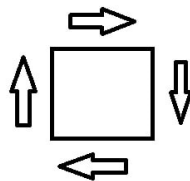
- Lazy 8 Breathing: Raise your finger in the air. Start in the middle and draw a side-ways "8". Inhale during one loop of the 8, and exhale during the other loop. See the following page for a visual.

Lazy 8 **Breathing**

Breath In · **Breath Out**
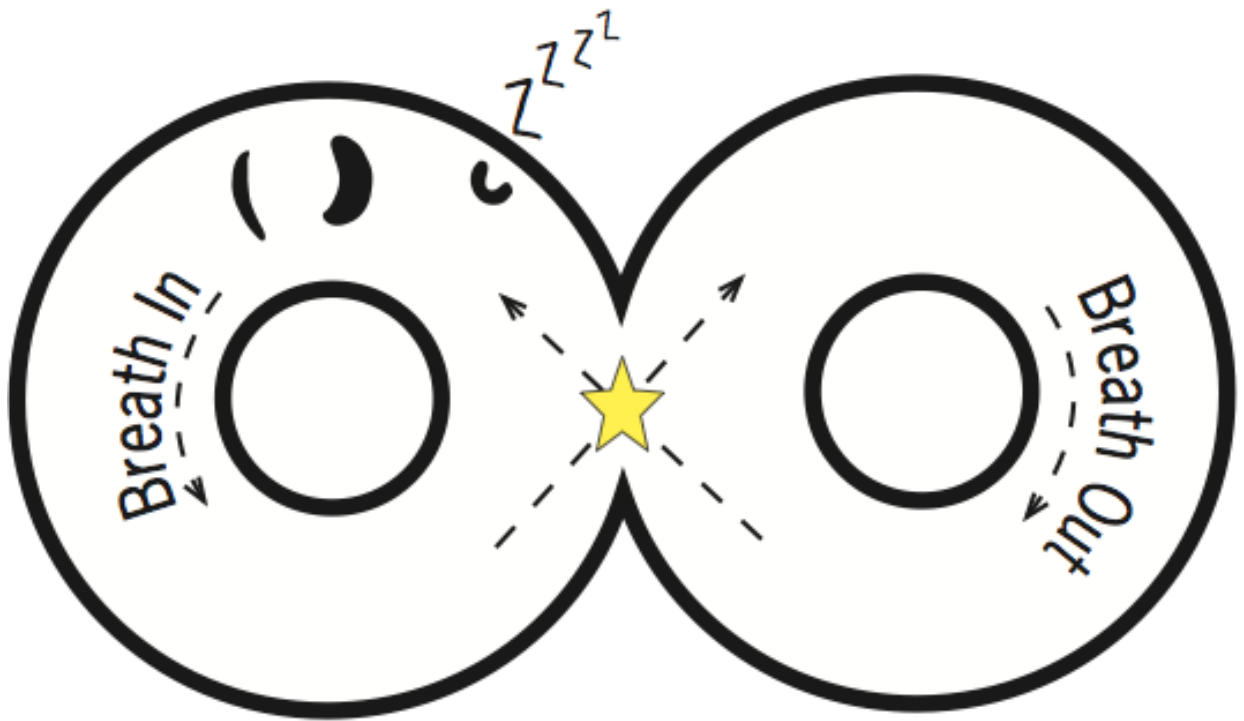
Trace the Lazy 8 with your finger starting at the star and taking a deep breath in.

As you cross over to the other side of the Lazy 8, slowly let your breath out.

Continue breathing around the Lazy 8 until you have a calm body and mind.

Be a Model

Children look to adults for how to act in many situations. An adult's verbal and physical communication skills are critical in modelling the positive behaviour they wish children to learn.

Appear calm. Although you may not be calm on the inside, appearing calm on the outside helps your child to be calmer. Children can feed off your emotions. If an adult becomes visibly angry, starts to yell, appears tense, and moves their body aggressively, children often pick up on these cues and begin to appear this way as well. Here are ways to appear calm:

- Keep a neutral facial expression
- Keep your voice at a quiet volume
- Speak in a matter-of-fact tone (e.g., no sarcasm or exaggerations)
- Keep your body as neutral and relaxed as possible
    - Open hands
    - Dropped, open shoulders (not up by your ears or hunched over)
    - Arms relaxed at your sides
    - Feet firmly on the floor
- Keep movements slow
- Limit fidgeting (e.g., toe tapping, wringing hands)
- Limit crossing your arms or legs

Model appropriate responses to situations. When something disappointing happens or when you get angry, this is a great opportunity to model for your child how to respond by appearing calm, using a strategy, and discussing a solution. It is important to talk through your reaction. See below for an example.

Scenario: You drop your phone and the screen cracks.

"Oh no, my screen broke. That makes me angry. Dad is going to take some time to calm down by taking deep breaths. *Models taking deep breaths for child.* Now that I feel calmer, I am going to call the company and see if I can get my screen replaced."

It is important to note that nobody is perfect, and everyone will have days where appearing calm is easier said than done. Just do your best and tomorrow is a new day! If you find yourself becoming visibly upset and angry, see if you can switch out with a partner or take some time to yourself before returning to the situation.

Stress Balls and Fidget Tools

Having items such as stress balls and fidget tools available to your children can help reduce the amount of challenging behaviours you face in the home. These tools can work to reduce your child's stress and help calm them when they are upset.

These tools are helpful if you find your child becomes visibly calmer while using them and they are using the tools appropriately, like squeezing a stress ball slowly and repeatedly. *The moment that your child starts being silly with the fidget tool* (e.g., throwing it up in the air, jiggling it in their hands, giggling, etc.) *the TOOL becomes a TOY and it is no longer doing its job*. The tools should then be removed as they are not being used for their purpose of helping to calm your child.

For instructions on making your own stress balls at home, see the next page:

Making Your Own Stress Balls

Items:

- Balloons
- Rice, flour, or corn starch
- Scissors
- Funnel

Step 1: Blow up the balloon until it is 4-5 inches around. Do not tie it and keep the balloon as inflated as you can.

Step 2: Pinch the top closed, about an inch or two from the opening, to leave room for the funnel.

Step 3: Insert the funnel while still pinching the balloon closed underneath the funnel. Don't worry if the balloon deflates a little.

Step 4: Fill the funnel with the filling you chose using your free hand (or enlist a helper!).

Step 5: Slowly release your pinched fingers, allowing the filling to drop into the balloon. It works best to add a small amount of filling at a time. If you go too quickly, the air leaving the balloon may blow flour or corn starch into the air and make a mess!

Step 6: Finish filling your balloon. Continue filling your balloon until you fill three inches high.

Step 7: Squeeze out excess air so that only your filling is in the balloon (we don't want it to pop!).

Step 8: Tie the balloon closed.

Step 9: Use scissors to cut off excess material at the tip.

Step 10 (optional): To give the stress ball extra protection from popping, stretch a second balloon over the stress ball so that the tied end of the first balloon is at the top part of the second balloon. Tie the end and cut off the excess.

Step 11 (optional): Decorate your stress ball with a permanent marker.

Calming Corner

A calming corner (or calm down corner) is a comfortable and calming space for children to go when they need to calm their bodies and minds and process big feelings. A calming corner is not used for punishment or as a time-out space. It should be a calming space, filled with familiar and comforting items. If a calming corner does not feel safe or soothing, it is not going to serve its purpose.

When to use a calming corner:

- During a tantrum
- When a child is being aggressive
- When they are fighting with siblings
- When they are starting to show signs of anger or the need to calm down

What is in a calming corner?

- Comforting items, such as stuffed animals, pillows, blankets
- Calming items, such as fidget tools, stress balls, and glitter jars
- Engaging items, such as a colouring book, word search, or toy cars
- Optional: feelings charts and visuals for breathing (like the lazy 8 breathing picture found with Strategy 17: Deep Breathing)

Offer the calming corner as a place your child can go. Give them a few minutes (3-5) in there before checking in on them or wait until they are quiet to have a discussion with them.

It may seem like you are rewarding your child's challenging behaviour by giving them access to small toys and a comforting place when they are "being bad," but adults use this practice quite often. Do you find yourself getting really mad and going to the bathroom or sitting in your car just to take a few moments to yourself? You may use this time to calm down and use coping skills like deep breathing or talking to someone. *Using a calming corner can help your child learn positive coping skills to use when they are angry and displaying challenging behaviour.*

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