

## Coping with Tricky Times: Conflict Resolution in Adult/Child Relationships

### Strategies for Positive Discipline

- **Look for underlying needs.** Give your child something to play with while waiting in line.
- **Give information and reasons.** If your child colours on the wall, explain why we colour on paper only.
- **Look for underlying feelings.** If your child hits his baby sister, encourage him to tell you why he is upset, and to express his anger and jealousy in harmless ways.
- **Change the environment.** (It's easier than trying to change the child.) If your child repeatedly takes things out of the kitchen cupboards, put a childproof lock on them.
- **Find acceptable alternatives** and redirect your child's behaviour. If you do not want your child to build a fort in the dining room, tell her where she can build one.
- **Be playful.** Turn the situation into a game. "Let's pretend we're the seven dwarfs while we clean up."
- **Give choices rather than commands.** Decision making empowers children; commands invite a power struggle. Try: "Would you like to brush your teeth before or after putting your pajamas on?"
- **Make small concessions.** "I'll let you skip brushing your teeth tonight because you are so tired."
  
- **Provide a period of preparation.** If you are counting on company for dinner, tell your child how you expect him to behave. Be specific. Role-playing can help prepare for potentially difficult situations.
- **Let natural consequences occur** (when appropriate). Don't rescue too much. A child who does not hang up her bathing suit and towel may find them still wet the next day.
- **Use logical consequences** (only if necessary). If while holding your child, he wiggles so much that he kicks you, explain that it hurts. Set him down and offer to hold his hand instead.
- **Give I-messages.** "I get so tired of cleaning up crumbs in the living room."
- **Hold, hold, hold.** This expression of love enables children who are acting aggressively or obnoxiously to channel their pent-up feelings into healing tears.
- **Remove your child from the situation,** and stay with her until she is ready to act appropriately. Use the time for listening, sharing feelings, moving toward conflict resolution.
- **Demonstrate how you want your child to behave.** If your child pulls a cat's tail, show her how to pet a cat. Do not rely on words alone.
- **Make a deal, negotiate.** If you're ready to leave the playground and your child is having fun, reach an agreement on the number of times she may go down the slide before leaving.
- **Defuse the situation with laughter.** If your child is mad at you, invite him to engage in a playful pillow fight. Play your part by surrendering dramatically. Laughter helps resolve anger and feeling of powerlessness.
- **Revise your expectations.** Young children are naturally loud, curious, messy, willful, impatient, demanding, forgetful, fearful, self-centred, and full of energy. Try to accept them as they are.
- **Take a parental time-out.** Leave the room, and do whatever is needed - cry, call a friend, meditate, take a shower, read a poem - to regain your sense of composure and good judgement.