

BEHAVIOURAL MANAGEMENT FOR CHILDREN

Every child displays a range of behaviours – both desirable and not-so-desirable ones. A child can sometimes act in ways that impress and delight you, or other times behave in ways that anger and frustrate you.

We at the Thomson Paediatric Centre believe that there are no inherently 'bad children'. With time, effort, a nurturing environment and well-tailored strategies, it is possible to teach and guide a child into using more adaptive behaviours. While professional consultation would be beneficial in designing behavioural plans best suited to your needs and your child's, here are some general strategies for parents and teachers:

Setting rules

- Give child, if possible, a chance to develop his/her own rules. This enhances ownership and they will be more likely to comply.
- Explain the rationale behind the rules.
- Place the rules in a visible area.
- Ensure that rules are clear, concise, and achievable for the child.
- Write the rules in a positive manner, avoid "don'ts".
- Agree on positive reinforcements when the child follows the rules, as well as negative consequences when a rule is broken.

Establishing routines

- Routines and organisation minimise behavioural challenges and keep the household/ classroom well-managed.
- Check child's understanding of the routines.

Build positive relationships

- Respect your child, never embarrass or ridicule
- Celebrate his/her strengths and successes
- Show interest in his/her likes and dislikes
- Create positive environment for him/her to feel relaxed and accepted.

Increasing desirable behaviours

- Reward the child for both outcomes and his/her efforts.
- Types of rewards, to be provided consistently and immediately:
 - Social e.g. genuine, specific praise
 - Tangible e.g. use of tokens, star charts, stickers
 - Activity e.g. more play time

Responding to undesirable behaviours

- Remain calm, use non-threatening verbal and body language
- Explore triggers of behaviours to understand the function of their behaviours (e.g. to seek help/gain attention/escape from activity)
- Types of negative consequences, to be provided consistently and immediately:
 - Time-out
 - Removal of a preferred toy or activity (e.g. shorter play time)
- Physical punishment is strongly discouraged for many reasons (e.g. child learns aggressive behaviours, and parent-child relationship is affected)
- Be prepared that behaviours can get worse before they get better.