

Behavior Guidance Filter

When addressing challenging behavior, there are no cookbook answers (ie. if a child is whining, do this). However there is a filter through which you can process all of your responses to challenging behavior in order to have the most appropriate and effective approach.

Step 1

Am I calm and regulated right now? If not, take a breath before engaging with the child. You are the anchor and need to maintain a sense of calm and self-control.

Step 2

Acknowledge the child's emotions and tie it to a cause. Their behavior is telling you something and it needs to be acknowledged.

You seem frustrated because you really want to keep playing the game and it is homework time; that is hard. I sometimes get frustrated when I have to stop doing an activity I enjoy too.

Step 3

Help the child to regulate. Without this step, a child has limited access to their cortex or thinking brain. Any discussion or problem solving without this step will be time wasted.

When I feel upset, taking some deep breaths helps me. Lets take a few breaths together right now.

Step 4

Listen to the problem and offer choices; offer options to address the situation that are desirable outcomes. Think about the goal and give the child a couple ways to get there that address the issue.

It's time to clean up; we can take a picture of the game board so you can start where you left off tomorrow – or find a place to safely store it intact until tomorrow.

Step 5

Have reasonable consequences (result of an action) established if the child does not comply – either natural or logical – NOT punitive.

If you continue having trouble putting the game away when it is homework time then the game will be put away for a couple of days and we can work on finding an activity that might work better during this time when you arrive tomorrow.



Marshfield Clinic
Health System

