

# *Managing Disruptive Behavior During COVID-19*

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# Many families are struggling with

- social isolation,
- homeschooling
- economic stress
- managing their children's behavior



- disruptive behaviors prior to COVID-19
- these challenges are new



# Many of the changes to our daily lives that came with COVID-19

- shifts in routine,
- Unable to go to school
- participate in activities outside of the home
- changes in academic instruction
- separation from friends and loved ones



# Increased stress, which may present in children as

- Defiance
- Tantrums
- Arguing
- Irritability
- Withdrawal and clinging to caregivers.



# Managing disruptive child behavior

- Positive Attention
- Managing Big Emotions
- Consistency and Routine
- Caregiver Modeling and Self-care



# Positive Attention

- Give attention for behavior you would like to increase and remove attention from behavior you want to decrease.
- **Catch your child being good** with praise.



- Praise increases the positive behaviors you want your child to show,
- Tells your child exactly what he or she did well,
- Pair praise words such as “Good job” or “Thanks for” with the specific behavior you observed and want to see more





# Some examples include

- “Thank you for . . . .,”
- “Great job . . . ,”
- “I love it when . . .
- ” In addition to verbal praise, rewards can be used as positive reinforcement for children of all ages.



# Ignore minor challenging behaviors

- Sass, Back talk, Tantrums or Whining,
- Ignoring is purposefully removing your attention from the child
  - your words,
  - facial expression
  - and body language.



# Once you start ignoring

- Stick with it.
- You must ignore your child's negative behavior until it stops –
- Minor disruptive behaviors can get worse before they get better.



- With consistency, your child will start to learn more positive ways to get your attention.
- Follow up your "ignore" phase with praise for the positive target behavior as soon as it is demonstrated.
- Never ignore serious misbehavior or potentially harmful behavior such as physical aggression or destructive behavior.



# Managing Big Emotions

- Be present with your child
- Validate their feelings



# Validation

- is a powerful way to let your child know their feelings are OK
- you can help your child to manage their feelings safely
- Ask your children to use emotion words to express themselves



- everyone needs time to “cool off” when they experience big emotions.
- Each person (adults too) should have an identified **cool-down spot**.
- This could be a bedroom, special chair, or even just a spot on the couch they can go to when feeling overwhelmed.



- Spending even just a few minutes per day engaging in **child-directed play** (letting your child lead and refraining from questions, commands, and suggestions)
- is helpful in supporting emotion regulation and parent-child relationships.





## For older children and teens

- Spend a few minutes a day just listening to your child or allowing them to talk about a topic of interest to them.



# Consistency and Routine

- Create a general schedule for school
- Visual daily schedule
- You can include time for meals, homework, breaks and free time.
- Also, establish a consistent wake time and a reasonable bedtime similar to before COVID



- Get your child's input on more flexible activities, such as asking "would you like to ride your bike or scooter today?"
- Offering your child a choice can also help instill a sense of control during this uncertain time



- It may be helpful to review the schedule as a family each morning.
- For a child who is a more visual learner, pictures can be added to improve comprehension of the schedule.
- Using timers can also increase predictability, informing children when activities are about to end,



# Set Realistic Expectations for Yourself and Your Children

- You are now juggling more roles and responsibilities than ever. It is important to be realistic regarding what you and your children can accomplish each day
- flexibility is also needed during this time.



# Maintain good nutrition, hydration and physical activity

- to go outside for physical activity and sunlight
- Schedule phone calls/video chats with peers, family or teachers to help maintain these relationships and social connections.
- Spend time with your child without any demands or agenda while engaging in leisure activities together such as playing a game, reading a book, taking a walk or preparing a meal.



# Caregiver Modeling and Self-care

- **be a positive role model** for your child
  - Express your emotions with words
  - Verbalizing our feelings can prevent strong emotions from building up inside and coming out in unhelpful ways.



- Remember to take space when you're feeling overwhelmed.
- Pause and take a break to cool down when you notice strong emotions rising in yourself or your child.





# Practice self-care

- . Make time for yourself, even if it's just for 5 minutes a day.
- Prioritize sleep, exercise and healthy eating — the basics are more important than ever



- If your child's behavior continues to worsen over time, it's important to seek additional support

