

### Practical parenting strategies

For practice, write down what theory these strategies might relate to if known (eg. Operant conditioning, negative reinforcement)

#### **Link privileges to good behaviour**

Privileges should be taken away if your child is disrespectful to you or others, refuses to comply with house rules or calls or anyone else names. Privileges are electronics, internet, money, driving, sleepovers, time with friends that should only be allowed to access when they are behaving appropriately.

#### **Avoid repetition**

Don't be a nag – it doesn't work and encourages defiance while undermining your authority. Instead, give directions, and make sure your child understands what is required (eg. I would like you to clean your room now, please. You have 30 minutes. I won't ask you again. If you don't clean your room, or don't clean it properly you will lose screen time until you). Offer only one warning and then follow through with a consequence that is equal with the task. There may be tantrums to start but compliance will come quickly if you use this technique, and you'll have a more peaceful household.

#### **Always enforce consequences**

Never threaten a consequence that you will not enforce, you'll lose your authority when your child calls your bluff. If the child doesn't comply, provide the consequence in a calm manner. You might say, "You didn't clean your room like I asked you to, so you won't be allowed to go to the movies," or, "Since you came home late tonight you won't have access to the car this weekend."

#### **Teach that actions have consequences**

Do not rescue your child from the consequences of their behavior as this only encourages further defiance and a lack of respect. So, if they backtalk a teacher, don't make excuses for this behavior or try to have the punishment lessened. Instead, talk to your child about how they should make choices that work in their favor rather than choices that ultimately make them unhappy.

#### **Be the grey rock**

Parenting is hard and can be overly emotional. When your child is defiant, they may be angry, and this may make you angry. Emotional gut reactions generally don't help calm conflict, so it's best to recognize what's occurring and remove the instinct to be angry, but rather handle the situation in a calm voice. Often children provoke fights to deflect from the situation at hand. Repeat in your head 'be the grey rock', to calm yourself and remove all emotion, and maintain a more logical approach.

## Parenting tips and strategies

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### **Have a plan**

If you think your child will become angry create a strategy beforehand. Plan what you'll say to your child ahead of time (see the difficult conversation strategy in Lesson 5) before they act out again, and deliver your message in a simple, clear, respectful, and calm manner.

### **Praise good behavior, catch them doing good things**

Offer your teen a compliment or thank you when you see them making a good choice or doing something you asked. Something like, "Thanks so much for cleaning your room without even being asked" (make sure your compliments aren't sarcastic or over the top). This will encourage your teen to continue to do good things. If you're always on their back about what they do wrong, they might think they can't do anything right, so why bother. Acknowledge the small steps they take in positive directions.

### **Teach problem solving**

When things are calm, you might say, "This behavior won't solve your problem, it'll only get you into more trouble. So how can you solve this problem differently next time?" Listen to what your child says and offer ideas if they can't come up with anything.

### **Focus on one behavior at a time**

If your child is defiant in several different ways, it will be difficult and exhausting to try to address all the problems at one. So, if your child is disrespecting or swearing at everyone in the family, not doing their homework and breaking their curfew, decide which of these behaviors you cannot live with or seems most detrimental to the child's or other's safety. Choose just one behavior that is bothering you the most and plan the steps you will take to improve that behavior. When you've enforced consequences for the first behavior and it's under control, move onto the next most bothersome behavior. Be consistently consistent.

### **Pick your battles**

Decide which battles are worth fighting and which are best to let go. Avoid power struggles. Often children will use petty arguments to delay having to comply with rules. Instead, concentrate only on battles that truly need your attention to protect your child's well-being. By avoiding minor disagreements, you create a more peaceful environment for your family, which can give your teen more confidence to approach you on more significant issues.

### **Stay respectful – you're the adult in the room**

Teens often come across as rude and disrespectful to their parents, teachers, or other authority figures, which can be frustrating. Sadly, many adults respond by being rude and disrespectful back, but this is not constructive. As the adult, you must model the behavior you want to see. Regardless of what you "preach," if your teen sees you respond disrespectfully to them, they will assume that disrespectful behaviour is appropriate.

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### Get support

When our children act inappropriately, it becomes easy to think we're bad parents. Don't buy into these negative thoughts or isolate yourself. Instead, find someone to talk to, whether it's a therapist, support group, friend, or a trusted family member. You'll be surprised how much better you'll feel when someone simply listens to you.

### Other parenting tips and tricks to help moderate your child's behavior:

1. Talk with your child about school and why they don't want to go. Ask, 'If you could change one thing about school, what would it be?'
2. For younger children, have them score each part of their school day out of ten to try to find where the issue is. Break the day up into sections: the bus ride, the classroom, recess, specialist classes, peers, etc. Very young children can point to sad faces or smiley faces to give them a voice.
3. Is there anything happening at home that could trigger this behavior? Domestic violence, a sick relative or pet? A death in the family? Have you recently moved home or school? Is their drug or alcohol misuse or abuse?
4. Have conversations not interrogations (important especially for older children).
5. Teach your child to problem solve issues that are age appropriate.
6. Use positive reinforcements if you'd like a behavior to improve, say "I see you've been working on your science project, and I know it's been tough and I'm proud of you for persisting. Let's get some ice-cream to celebrate your good work."
7. Nobody gets top grades all the time, and it's important that your child understands you don't expect perfection. Encourage that they try, rather than get high grades.
8. Break tasks like the science project up into chunks and using breaks as rewards for getting through each chunk.
9. If homework is a trigger, consider hiring an older student or university student to help monitor the homework and ease any stress on the family. Children usually behave better for other people.
10. Avoid judgement and irritability. Let your child know you don't expect perfection, you just want them to reach their full potential.
11. Be consistently consistent in all your parenting (except the dodgy stuff).

### Enforcing strategies for school refusers:

- Set strict home rules if the child refuses to go to school
- Do not allow anything that would not be allowed at school (eg. Phones, music etc)
- Set an alarm the same time as if the child was going to school
- Remove the child's devices for the length of the school day
- Disallow rewards such as gaming
- Enforce learning plans
- Turn off the modem and remove devices at the same time every night to ensure they get enough sleep.

Irrespective of the trigger, maintain a calm and logical demeanour. If there's a conflict, it's best to remove the emotion and use the "grey rock" approach where their behaviour is not triggering you and thus transitioning the argument. Stick to the point.