

Parenting Strategies For Changing Behaviour

Many parents taking control of young children's behaviour find it particularly challenging to change the patterns they have established in terms of acting and reacting. Review these three strategies and then give yourself just a few extra seconds to think before reacting to your child's next outburst.

1. Find your Child's "Buy In" – Your child, like you, is motivated when they have an invested interest in changing. Find your child's motivation and you've got it made. For instance, a child's "buy in" to helping make dinner may be that they get to eat. If suddenly you "go on strike" and no one helps out, dinner is not made. You are guaranteed to have found your child (and maybe even your spouse's) "buy in".
2. Parenting Discipline with Joy – Instead of yelling and throwing a tantrum yourself, follow through and discipline with joy. Children do badly when they feel bad. Making a child feel worse about their action rarely inspires them to improve their behavior.
3. Follow-through – When you say you're going to do something, do it. Empty threats only teach your child to not listen to you.
4. Once you have mastered these three commonsense secrets to changing behaviour, you can focus on maintaining the changes.



Maintaining The Behaviour Change

There is only one skill I know of that works for maintaining any change when parenting—consistency! Consistency is like the parenting glue that maintains any change.

If you are not consistent, long-term change is impossible. So do what you say, and keep doing it consistently until the change is permanent.

This may be difficult, especially when your children test you. You have been acting and reacting to their behaviour in a certain way for a long time. When you suddenly change your behaviour, your kids will tend to act up even more than at first.

The good news about changing behaviour?

Changing children's behaviours for the better is possible when you are consistent. Since you want your kids to change their misbehaviour permanently, you need to prove to them that you mean business and are committed to a new way of doing things. The great news is that generally after a week or two of being consistent, children will trust your follow-through enough to change themselves. At this point, you have lift off. You have mastered the secret of changing behaviour and maintaining the change with your children!