

Parenting Tips: Techniques Sheet

Relaxing

An effective technique for relaxing is the 7-11 technique. The idea is to breathe in counting to 7 and out counting to 11. When the out breath is longer than the in breath it triggers the physical relaxation response. A few minutes of breathing in this way can really help to calm nerves and help you relax. When you are relaxed you see things clearer, make better decisions and handle situations more effectively.

Using 'I' Statements & Being Specific

When discussing issues using 'I' statements helps you to state your case saying how the behaviour has impacted on you rather than sounding like you are 'blaming' by saying 'you...'. Being specific allows you to address just the issue at hand rather than bringing in past issues (not saying: 'you never...' or 'you always...')

Using 'What' Instead of 'Why'

People often ask children 'why did you get angry...etc?' The answer is usually 'I don't know'. If you ask 'What were you doing before you got angry?' They are far more likely to be able to tell you and you can then piece together what caused them to behave that way even if they didn't recognise how they got angry or what led to their outburst.

Offering Positive Choices

When people are offered a 'way out' that is better for them & doesn't mean they will lose face they are more likely to take the easy option. If all available options are negative there is more likely to be conflict. For example if a shoplifter is offered a basket before leaving the shop they are likely to use it or put the items back. If they are stopped once they have left the shop they are likely to fight to get away.

Choices work best in the early stages of an incident before the situation has escalated to high.

Another reason to be offering choices is that it means the child has to rationally think about which option they want. This begins to make the part of their mind associated with rational thought become more active & the part of their mind associated with emotional responses less active.

When offering or explaining the choices it is best to link the options with the outcomes they will get, as many children don't see the outcomes when they make their decisions especially if the outcome isn't going to be immediate.

Forward Planning

There are many issues that parents often find occur frequently. These can be thought about and planned for in advance so that you know and have mentally rehearsed what you will say and do if those issues occur again. This can help you to feel more in control & calmer in the situation. You can also mentally tryout different ways of dealing with future situations & get a sense of how your different ideas will make things go.

Distraction

Many people have had the experience of being distracted & then forgetting what they were doing, or cutting themselves, being distracted & so not noticing the pain. The same process works with children. It doesn't need to be a big distraction just well timed. For example if your children are playing & you get a sense that things may soon turn to fighting then you may excitedly call one of the children through to the kitchen to help with something or go into the room & put the TV on to something they both want to watch & this then prevents the situation escalating. Distraction works best when the situation is still calm but escalating. Many parents say they can see the signs that things are going to change. These are the times for distraction.

Planned Ignoring & Walking Away

Many parents see walking away as a sign of failure. They often say 'I tried everything; then gave up & left him to it'. What they often report happening after they walk away is that the child ended up calming down. Planned ignoring isn't about 'blanking' your child; it is about sticking to a statement & not being drawn into discussions. For example sticking to saying 'When you have calmed down we can talk about this...' Walking away is a part of planned ignoring because you need to state what you are doing then remove yourself from the situation & not allow yourself to be drawn back into the incident. Some parents find they need to go out for a walk to calm down themselves, other put headphones in and listen to music to avoid responding to provocation & some parents feel they can just ignore it. It's about finding what works for you to help you to not get drawn back into the incident.

If you would like support or just to find out more information visit www.yourspacewestsussex.co.uk and search for the **West Sussex Parenting Project**