Positive Parenting: Helping Children to Make Choices

Children become frustrated and cross for a variety of reasons
- They are learning to manage their feelings.
- They are finding it difficult to be understood.
- They have not got the experience to cope with new situations.
- They have intense feelings which are new to them.

How to help children learn
- Try to see things from their point of view – understanding how children see the world will help you to help them as they learn.
- Be playful – you can enjoy childhood alongside your child.
- Feelings matter – be aware of your child’s mood as well as your own in different situations.
- Don’t expect to be perfect – children can be forgiving as long as we are thoughtful most of the time and are ready to explain and say sorry when we should.

Children learn from the people around them

Be clear about what you want
- The most helpful adults are ‘firm but fair’ people.
- They stick to ‘no’ when it is important.
- They tell children what they ‘can do’ rather than what they can’t.
- They explain their feelings ‘I’m cross because’.

Focus on the positives
- Make the effort to catch children ‘being good’ – these may be very small things.
- If there are things your child is struggling with focus on one change at a time.
- Make sure children are confident of your affection e.g. resist the temptation to say ‘I won’t like you any more if...’ Talk about what has happened e.g. ‘Sunil is hurt, he is sad’.
- Give clear information e.g. ‘Well done, you let Gary have some of your bricks’.

Help children to manage their feelings
- Talk about feelings (your own, your child’s and other peoples) in day-to-day experiences e.g. ‘I’m happy we’re going to the park today’ or ‘I’m sad we’ve run out of milk’.
- When children are struggling to play together calmly use the conflict resolution approach to solve the problem together. (See separate document called ‘Conflict Resolution Steps’ available from www.westsussex.gov.uk/ecsgoodpractice within the ‘Personal Social and Emotional Development’ section of the ‘Including All Children’ page)
- Explaining feelings helps children to begin to understand their intense feelings and learn new ways of managing next time.

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Help children to learn about the results of their actions

- Every experience is a new one for young children, they are learning all the time. Very young children will need lots of support and sometimes physical guidance to stop themselves being tempted e.g. to post things into the video!
- Help children to learn about how the world works through setting boundaries/giving fair warning **before** events change and praising their achievements. Some useful phrases to use could be: **now** we will tidy up, **next** we can play another game together.”
- Support children within a situation to make positive choices then move on to a fresh start. (See separate document called ‘Limiting Setting Approach’ available from [www.westsussex.gov.uk/ecsgoodpractice](http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/ecsgoodpractice) within the ‘Personal Social and Emotional Development’ section of the ‘Including All Children’ page.)

Positive Parenting

- Remain calm; parenting isn’t easy, be positive and start afresh next time!
- Be consistent e.g. bouncing on the bed shouldn’t be met with laughter one day and a cross face the next.
- Warm encouragement does not spoil children; have clear boundaries and tell children what they have done right.

These ideas have been taken from the leaflet ‘Helping children with their behaviour’ by Jennie Lindon from the ‘Learning together’ series, available from [www.early-education.org.uk/downloadable-resources](http://www.early-education.org.uk/downloadable-resources)

Useful Publications:

- **Bayley (2006)** More than Happy and Sad: Young Children and Emotions, London: British Association for Early Childhood Education.

Useful Contacts:

- **Family Information Service (FIS) 01243 777807**: can let you know of services dealing with this subject e.g. through your local Children and Family Centre.
- **Family Lives (formerly Parentline Plus)** website focusing on supporting parents and providing information on making happier relationships, and happier families. [http://www.familylives.org.uk/](http://www.familylives.org.uk/)
- **Family Lives (formerly Parentline Plus)** helpline: 0808 800 2222 is open 9am – 9pm, Monday to Friday and 10am – 3pm Saturday and Sunday.