

**Hope for Children and Families**

Building on strengths, overcoming difficulties



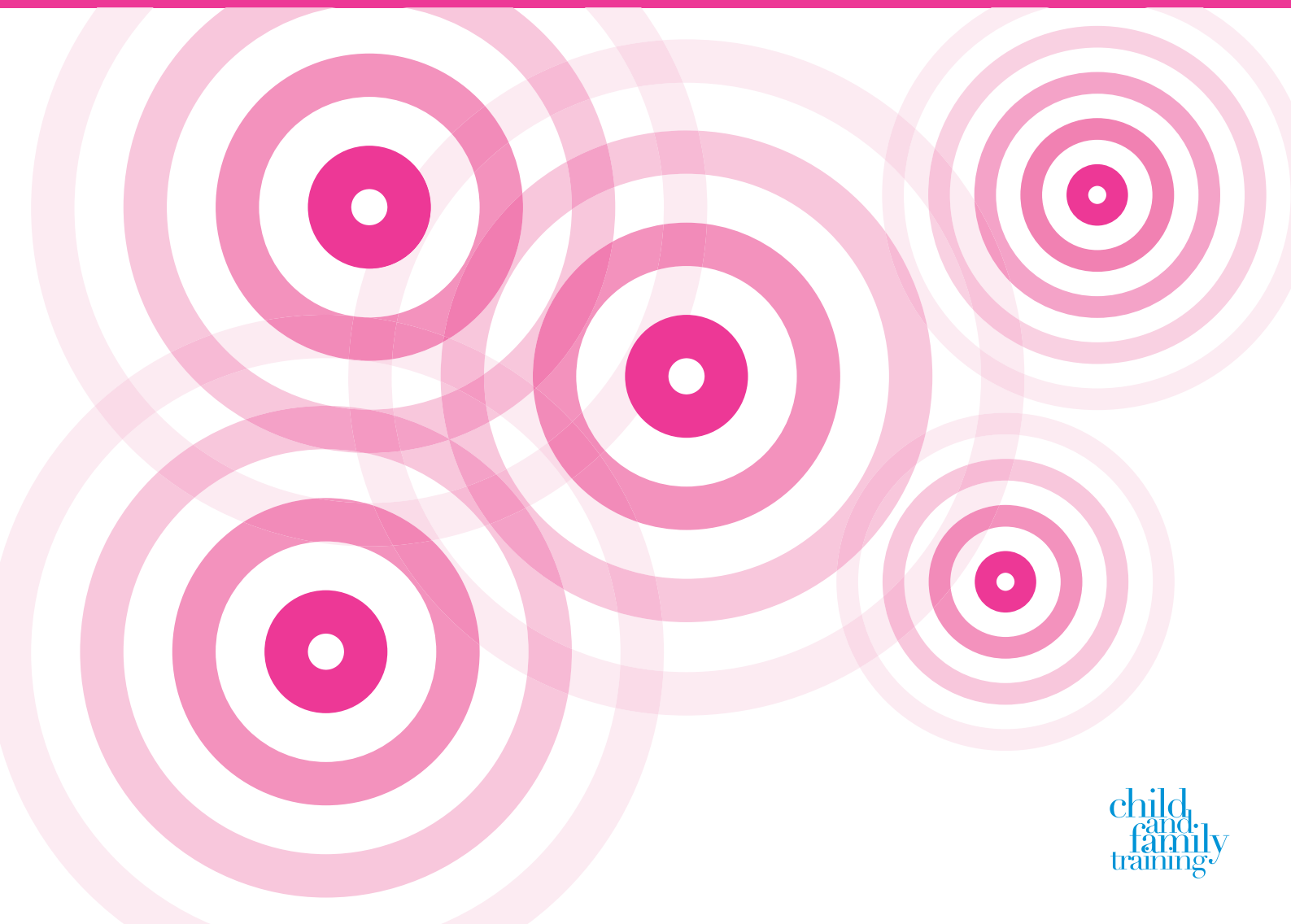
Intervention guide for practitioners

# Promoting positive parenting



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need to review performance, evaluate whether it is being helpful and look to change the contract as required.

This approach will require a good deal of help from your family, from your child's school and from other relevant people in your lives.

## Techniques for managing challenging behaviour

### Finding a replacement behaviour



Previously we discussed using the ABC of behaviour to analyse what was happening to trigger or reinforce difficult behaviours. Another technique parents have found helpful involves turning this behaviour on its head and finding a positive replacement behaviour that can be rewarded and reinforced.

It's important to name the behaviour that we want to see, not just the opposite of what we don't want.

So, for example, if your child is constantly arguing with you when asked to do something, the replacement behaviour might be 'doing what you're asked the first time'.

### activity

- Using the 'ABC of behaviour worksheet' [PP-4] and 'Choosing an alternative behaviour' [PP-11], help the parent to identify a replacement behaviour for the behaviour they want to change.
- Identify what rewards they will use to reinforce the behaviour and how they will deal with the unwanted behaviour.

### Using consequences

Sometimes we need to discourage children from doing things we do not like, which are inappropriate, manipulative, dangerous or annoying. We need to let children experience the natural, logical consequences that occur when they do them. Sometimes natural consequences may be sufficient, but it may be necessary to select logical consequences that are appropriate for particular behaviours: a desire to change, teaching children how to make good choices, helping them learn about responsibility so they can be effective.

#### h ABC of behaviour

1 of 3

When we are thinking about how to improve or change a child's difficult behaviour it's helpful first to look at and try to understand what might be driving the behaviour and how the consequences, or what happened afterwards, may be helping that behaviour to be maintained.

Everybody shapes and influences each other's behaviour on a daily basis. For example, if your friend is critical of your new jumper, saying the colour does not suit you, you're less likely to wear that jumper when you see her again. If, on the other hand, your family tell you how delicious your new chicken recipe is, you're much more likely to cook it for them again. In both situations the other person's behaviour affects your own behaviour by either increasing or decreasing the likelihood that you will behave in the same way again.

One idea that parents find helpful in managing behaviour is the ABC below:



Antecedents, sometimes known as 'triggers', are the things that happened before a behaviour, and consequences are all the things that happened afterwards.

#### How do you change behaviour?

There are two main ways of influencing or changing behaviour.

The first is by altering the triggers, the things that are happening prior to the behaviour. This means anticipating behaviour before it happens. If you know that Ashleigh and Craig are likely to squabble at the dinner table you may decide to sit between them, or give them a task that will distract them both. By changing or moving the triggers it is possible to influence behaviour.

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PP-3

#### w Choosing an alternative behaviour

The unwanted problem behaviour is:

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The alternative behaviour I want to encourage is:

.....

I will encourage the alternative behaviour by:

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The triggers I may need to alter are:

.....

The consequences I want will be:

.....

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PP-11

# Using logical consequences: Helping children make good choices

See 'Natural and logical consequences' [PP-12].



Parents frequently say they cannot make their child do anything if they have decided not to. This is often true. All parents can do is to offer children a choice between doing what they are asked and having a consequence for not doing so.

The goal is to make it more rewarding for them to take the choice parents suggest. Effective discipline involves helping children and young people to make good choices and to learn from their bad choices.

Parents can help by offering limited choices. For example, 'You can either play nicely with your toys and stop throwing them around or they will be put away in the cupboard. It's your choice.' It is important to wait for a few seconds to see if the child will comply. If so, great, you can praise them. And if not, follow through with the consequence.

## When... then commands

A useful technique for helping children make positive choices with built-in consequences is When... then. For example, 'Kieran, when you have done your homework then you can watch TV.' Here, there is a clear reward for doing homework and a consequence for not doing it.

### activity

- Discuss with the parent using natural or logical consequences or When... then commands with some of the behaviours previously discussed.
- Choose one behaviour and role-play how to use these techniques.

## h Natural and logical consequences

### Natural consequences

This is the term used to describe the results of our actions. For example, if a child is slow to get up and get dressed in the morning, the consequence may be that they are late for school. Natural consequences can help children learn the impact of their decisions and actions.

### Logical consequences

The term describes the consequences designed by parents as a response to inappropriate behaviour. For example, if a child refuses to do their homework, one logical consequence could be that they will not be able to watch television that evening. The consequence is not randomly applied but is chosen because it is in some way related to the behaviour.

### Involve your child if possible

If your children are quarrelling over who is to play on the computer you could try to involve them in making a decision. "You seem to be having trouble sharing the computer. You can choose either to take turns or I will turn it off. You decide."

### Consequences should be non-punitive

It would be inappropriate to say to a child, "Since you broke my favourite ornament I'm going to break one of your toys."

### Be straightforward and neutral

Avoid being sympathetic, angry or critical. Your feelings may get in the way of the child experiencing for themselves the negative impact of the consequences of their behaviour.

### Consequences should be appropriate

Don't be too severe. If 12-year-old Grant rides his bike on the main road after being told to stay on the minor roads, it is logical for his parent to put his bike out of bounds. It would be excessive to lock it away for a month and might leave Grant feeling very resentful and annoyed. It would also prevent Grant from having opportunities to be more responsible in his bike riding.

### Give a warning and choices

"If your room is not tidy, you will not be able to go out with your friends." This gives the child some choice about how to respond. They can choose not to tidy their room but the parent hopes that the young person will learn that it is in their interest to respond positively.

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PP-12

# Consequences and sanctions

See 'Consequences and sanctions' [PP-13].



The best way of achieving the results that you want is by giving clear instructions, praise, support, ignoring and rewards. However, all parents need to have fair, quick ways of doing something immediately when behaviour is challenging, unacceptable or there is a high level of opposition.

Consequences may include:

- stopping the game, moving the child away or removing the toy or object
- leaving the area/playground/park
- withholding privileges for a specific length of time – e.g. watching television, computer time
- withdrawing treats – e.g. sweets, dessert, snacks
- withdrawing an opportunity to visit a friend or go out and play if a child hits someone or behaves unkindly
- removing a toy if the child breaks it or having the child contribute to the cost of replacement if they break another child's toy.

It is important that consequences should be fair, quick and proportional, with no extra nagging or removing something or an activity that the child likes for an extended period.

Make it clear that if you do X then you lose Y.

Parents who are feeling very stressed about their child's behaviour or things going on in their lives sometimes find it difficult to think about what to do in the heat of the moment to manage their child's behaviour.

It can be helpful for parents to have a list of possible consequences they can call upon and use that do not involve very punitive approaches. Thinking about the behaviours we have been discussing, can we make a list of possible consequences or sanctions that you could use?

## h Tips for parents: Consequences and sanctions

- Small are better than big.
- Be consistent so that you can strengthen the connection between behaviour and consequences. Children are less likely to learn the rules if the rules are variable or if they depend on the mood of their parent.
- Be specific. Vague threats like "You're going to be in big trouble if..." have little impact on behaviour.
- They work best if they are immediate in order to help the child keep the connection between the behaviour and its consequences.
- You must be prepared to carry through the consequences.
- When you tell your child to stop doing something, say it just once. Then give a warning in a neutral voice. Tell them briefly what will happen if they continue their behaviour. If the behaviour doesn't stop in 10 to 30 seconds, use the sanction.
- Limit your battlefields.
- Always use sanctions in conjunction with rewards and encouragement of desirable behaviours.

### Remember...

- Behaviour changes slowly, even when sanctions are used. Sometimes it actually gets worse initially. This can be a sign that we are on the right track in tackling misbehaviour.
- Don't be vague. Don't be general. Be specific.
- Lectures don't change behaviour.
- Sanctions alone are not successful. They work best in a relationship where warmth, respect and encouragement are given plentifully at other times.
- Calmer is better.
- Sanctions are not for revenge. Adults need to have a handle on their own feelings. Sanctions should depend on the child's behaviour and needs, and not on how angry the adult is feeling.
- Consequences should be well balanced. If the negatives outweigh the positives, the young person will become demoralised.
- Sanctions don't need to be severe to be effective.
- Support and praise should be given more frequently than sanctions.

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PP-13



# ABC of behaviour worksheet

Think of a behaviour you would like to change and that seems to happen quite a lot. Work through the ABC, filling in the boxes for what typically happens.

Start with the middle box – the B for Behaviour. What did you notice? What did the behaviour look like? Be as specific as possible.

Then look at the Antecedents. What were the triggers for the behaviour? Could you see it coming?

Finally, complete the C for Consequences. What happened afterwards? Did your child get lots of attention – even if it was negative? Did anyone get hurt or upset? Who else did the behaviour affect and what were the consequences of that?

Antecedents → Behaviour → Consequences



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