Nebraska Foster & Adoptive Parent Association

Families First

a newsletter for Nebraska Families

March / April 2022

N F A P A

HOW CAN WE HELP KIDS WITH TRANSITIONS?

With the right support, children can learn to change gears without whining and tantrums.

by Katherine Martinelli

Many children struggle with transitions, which are common triggers for behaviors that range from annoying (whining, stalling) to upsetting (tantrums and meltdowns).

There are many ways parents and teachers can help kids have an easier time with transitions — and be able to behave better—but it may take a little experimentation to find out what clicks with each particular child.

These tools are useful to help kids of all stripes with transitions. But for kids with ADHD, anxiety, autism, or sensory processing, this kind of scaffolding is particularly crucial and can make the difference between a good day and a bad one. Over a period of time it can help pave the way for success.

Create routines: If a child "doesn't want to transition because they like consistency and routine and structure," says Michael Rosenthal, PhD, a clinical neuropsychologist, "then start by building in consistency and routine and structure into the transition process itself."

For transitions that will happen every day, like turning off the phone to go to bed, consistent routines can have big payoff. A bedtime routine, for example, might seem like something for babies, but having a predictable structure in place can be reassuring and helpful even for older kids (and adults!).

Preview and count down: Along with routines, previewing and countdowns are key. In the morning you might lay out what the day is going to look like. Dr. Rosenthal suggests doing a role-play in which you practice moving from activity to activity to "engage them in the process."

Then before each transition, give a timeframe and description of what will happen along with countdowns (in 20 minutes, then 10, then 5 it will be time to finish breakfast and head to school). This is "allows them to emotionally get ready for an event," explains Dr. Rosenthal.

Give it a sound track: For younger kids in particular, songs can be especially effective tools to help implement routines and ease transitions. The "clean up" song can be heard in preschools throughout the country for good reason, but there are countless other songs to be found (and made up!) to suit a variety of situations from tying shoes to brushing teeth.

Visual cues: Other kids may benefit from visual cues. Being able to point to a chart with drawings about what to expect from a particular transition or the steps involved can help some people immensely. These are common in lower grade classrooms but could be easily adapted at home.

Get their attention: For kids with ADHD in particular, says Matthew Rouse, PhD, a clinical psychologist, it's important to make a connection with the child to ensure that you have their attention and that the information is sinking in. This could mean eye contact, sitting next to them, a hand on their shoulder, or asking them to repeat back what you have said. Simply yelling at them from the other side of the room and

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Attention Foster Parents!

Earn Your In-Service Hours While Getting the Chance to Win a Great Prize!

Answer these 10 questions correctly and you will not only earn .5 credits toward your in-service hours, but your name will also be put in a drawing for a prize. For this issue we are offering a $10 Walmart gift card.

There are a variety of ways to do this. You can email the information to ***Corinne@nfapa.org***, send the questionnaire to the NFAPA office at 3601 N. 25th Street, Suite D, Lincoln, NE 68521 or you can complete the questionnaire online at ***https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MarApr2022***
We will then enter your name in the drawing! We will also send you a certificate for training credit to turn in when it is time for relicensing. Good Luck!

1. Fill in the blank. Don't lose those opportunities to be really enthusiastic and say this was so great, it went _____.

2. True or False. Along with routines, previewing and countdowns are key. In the morning, you might lay out what the day is going to look like.

3. Fill in the Blanks. Solutions are _____instead of _____and could be the key to successfully parenting a kid who does not seem to care.

4. List 5 ways to discipline a kid who doesn't care.

5. Fill in the blanks. Conflict often occurs when parents try to control an area their teen feels is _____ _____.

6. True or False. Teens see parents as sources of support as they discover what it means to be a good person in a complex world.

7. What are 6 tips for grandparents raising grandchildren?

8. What are five things grandparents can do to make visits go smoothly?

9. Advice for prospective Adoptive parents: List 5

10. List 2 topics that you would like to see discussed in this Newsletter.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Phone #: _____

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assuming it's gotten through won't work and will only lead to frustration on both sides.

Use rewards: Rouse points out that rewards can be an effective tool for all kinds of kids and issues. These can be things like stickers, snacks, or a point system that leads to tangible rewards. Schools and parents alike can implement reward systems, and once the kid gets into the habit of seamlessly transitioning you might be able to phase it out.

Implement appropriate consequences: If a transition is not going well, David Anderson, PhD, a clinical psychologist at the Child Mind Institute, recommends paying less attention to it rather than escalating the situation.

"Ignore it as long as they're at least making an effort to make the transition or approximating the transition," he says. "If they're really egregiously misbehaving then use an appropriate consequence for that behavior that makes the child understand that behavior is off limits."

Praise good transitioning: Finally, Dr. Rouse urges parents to recognize when things go well. "For all the times it's gone wrong," he says, "there have probably been a lot more times when it's gone right. Don't lose those opportunities to be really enthusiastic and say this was so great, it went so smoothly, I really liked how you handed over the iPad right away and started brushing your teeth, and now we have more time to read."

Be specific in your praise, and follow up with a reward when appropriate. With the right support, children can learn to change gears without whining and tantrums.

Reprinted with permission from:
https://childmind.org/article/how-can-we-help-kids-with-transitions/

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5 WAYS TO DISCIPLINE A KID WHO DOESN'T CARE

by Abby Watts

"My husband puts our 13-year-old daughter in time out." That was the title of a Dear Abby question that caught my attention. Dad was clearly at his breaking point. Mom was frustrated with her husband because of the inappropriate punishment he doled out. And they were both at a loss for how to discipline a child who doesn't care about consequences.

When no punishment seems to reach your child, it can put stress on the entire family. If this is you and you just want relief, check out these 5 ways to deal with a kid who just doesn't seem to care.

Examine whether the punishment fits the crime.

Put yourself in his shoes. If you were 30 minutes late to work and your boss restricted your access to the office coffee pot, you'd be annoyed and maybe rebellious, too. When the punishment doesn't fit the crime, it's hard to respect it. A consequence, on the other hand, connects to the misbehavior. If your boss made you stay 30 minutes to make up the missed time, you'd be more likely to oblige and eventually change your ways because all the dots connect. iMOM's Consequences Calculator is a great tool to help choose the right form of discipline.

Wait 'til things cool off.

A big ah-ha moment in figuring out how to discipline a child who doesn't care about consequences is when you realize he actually does care but he's just reacting to your anger. It's similar to the dramatic breakup line, "I never loved you anyway!" Sure they did. They're just hurt and angry. So take some time to cool off after the incident. You'll have a more level head and your child will respond more reasonably as well.

Say no to negotiations.

This doesn't mean you plug your ears and refuse to listen to his side of things. It does mean that if a clearly-set rule is broken, he has to pay the price. Later, you can revisit the rule. Think of it this way: If you run a stop sign, the police officer who pulls you over might be willing to hear your excuses, but you will still get that ticket. Put on your police officer hat!

Allow your child to pick the consequence.

When things are calm, talk to your child about the recurring misbehavior. If she chronically misses curfew, allow her to decide what happens if she's late again next Friday. She might suggest a loss of car privileges or having to wash your car. The consequence needs your approval, but this puts the control in her hands so she's more likely to remember. You might think the consequence is too soft, but if it leads to success, who cares?

Consider abandoning consequences for solutions.

Some kids are mindful of the past when they think and act. For those kids, consequences work. They remember what happened the last time they messed up. For others who are more future-minded, the week they spent on iPad restriction is long forgotten. For them, a solution is a better approach than a consequence. A solution might feel like wimpy parenting because we've been trained to punish as a result of bad behavior. But I think we'd all agree that the end game is to nip the bad behavior.

Here's an example:

If your child doesn't pitch in to help around the house, instead of yelling and taking away his video games, work together on a solution that will help him contribute. You could designate 20 minutes after school to getting jobs done. Or you could let him have more say. When I was a kid I hated

emptying the dishwasher, but I didn't mind cleaning the sinks. List the chores and let him pick three he wants to be in charge of. Solutions are proactive instead of reactive and could be the key to successfully parenting a kid who doesn't seem to care.

Reprinted with permission from:
https://www.imom.com/how-to-discipline-a-child-who-doesnt-care-about-consequences/

THE IMPORTANCE OF AN APOLOGY TO A CHILD'S SELF-WORTH?

by Ashley Patek

I remember learning from a fairly early age that I was not allowed to mess up and my parents were.

Time and time again I was coerced to do the "right" thing and "say sorry" - even for things that weren't my fault or that I didn't even do.

But when my parents had an error in judgment or self-control, it was ignored. There was never any attempt to validate my feelings or repair what had been done or even process it together.

This led to two feelings: resentment and fear.

Fear to be me.

Fear to mess up.

Fear to take up space.

Fear to have a reality different from the adults in my life.

If there is one thing we now know, it is that children are wired to seek safety and fit into their family system. To not rock the boat and ensure my ticket to a nurturing environment, I had to shrink, avoid mistakes, suppress emotions, and give the answers others wanted from me.

Fast forward thirty years and that little girl is still within me. I am grateful for her because without her I would not be where I am now. Yet, as a thirty-seven-year-old woman, I don't have to keep writing those same stories.

And I'm not. It all started the day I became a mother.

AN ACT OF VULNERABILITY

I was listening to a podcast featuring research professor and author Brené Brown when she said something that struck me. "We live in a vulnerable world so we numb vulnerability."

Isn't that what apologizing is? An act of vulnerability?

Somewhere along the way, parental generations have been conditioned to believe that vulnerability equates to weakness. Growing up in my home, well, there was no room for my parents to be viewed as weak, for then, how would we kids fear them?

Is this why, when you follow the lineage, repairing the relationship with children has moved lower on the priority list and replaced with ignoring our mistakes and/or deflecting responsibility altogether?

Or maybe it isn't the priority that shifted but rather the capacity and ability to repair. Like the wounds run so wide and so deep and so far back that we have lost sight of the most important thing we can have with our child: connection.

When we choose image maintenance over connection, we actually hurt our relationship with our children.

THE IMPORTANCE OF AN APOLOGY

Children come into this world with the belief that the world is fair. This is actually a crucial part of their development. So when something unpleasant or stressful happens to a child, their brain prioritizes fairness over justice and automatically organizes the event in a way that makes it such.

As a young girl, when I did something undesirable, that thing became a barometer of my identity and worth. I now know this was my attempt to make it fair. I must have deserved what I got because I did this "bad" thing and I am bad for it so it makes sense that I am alone in my room.

I don't believe there is ever a time that a child deserves punishment for their developmental slip-ups or self-expression. I do believe that children need guidance. That doesn't mean that we are passive, and it doesn't mean that we have to be perfect, which is ultimately an exhausting and untenable goal.

Our kids aren't the only ones who make mistakes and we aren't the only ones with a perspective. We will inevitably pitfall into whatever patterns we were wired for. We will yell, lecture, wrongly accuse, assume, and do some other regrettable thing. This doesn't make us bad parents just like our children's shortcomings don't make them bad humans.

In those moments, we have a choice - a path to choose.

We can be courageously imperfect, weaving vulnerability and strength together to share our story with our children. We can let our children see us - even the messy parts we would like to sweep under the rug.

Or, we can deflect, blame, shame, and ignore the hurts we have contributed to.

When we choose the latter in the face of our missteps, it has less to do with our kids and more to do with discharging our own pain, discomfort, and not-enough narratives.

But this doesn't mean our kids aren't affected. When parents choose not to process and repair with their children, while the parent may feel better, the child's unworthiness amplifies. Not only was I not worthy of being treated well but now I am not worthy of an apology.

I was listening to another podcast with Glennon Doyle and Ashley C. Ford and they were discussing Ashley's new book Somebody's Daughter: A Memoir when she said this: "When parents refuse to acknowledge their wrongdoings, children start to question their reality. They become confused about things such as lying and making mistakes and what it means

to hurt. Do those things not mean anything when you do it to someone you love or does it just not count when adults do it to children?"

My child-self would answer this question in two ways based upon my experiences. Namely, 1) figures of power don't have to apologize, and 2) people can hurt who they love without any boundaries or repercussions.

Consciously, children must choose to either pretend the hurt didn't happen or choose to pretend to forget that it happened. While their thinking body may suppress the memories over time, their feeling body holds onto it and unconsciously replays it throughout their life.

When kids learn they can't be angry at their parents, they turn that anger inward. That is a big ask with a big price to pay. The cost is self-worth, self-compassion, and self-love.

BREAKING OLD CYCLES

Apologies help children feel safe to make mistakes and to be their whole, vibrant, messy, imperfect selves. They help our children feel seen in a world that too often overlooks the unique worth of its parts.

Ashley C. Ford says that when we grew up in a system where apologies were absent "it takes time to overcome the parts of us that are conditioned not to trust our sense of right, our worthiness, and our sense of justice. The road to get there is through self-compassion and through doing the exact thing we felt lacked in our childhood - loving and trusting ourselves."

I have compassion for my parents because, really, they, like so many, were just working out their stuff on me as had been done to them. That's how cycles continue.

But I am not interested in stepping in line. Instead, I hope to be the pivot point, and it starts with being my authentic self in front of my children, and that includes owning my own wrongdoings.

In being my authentic self, I hope my children feel the freedom to be their authentic selves, for when authenticity doesn't have to fight attachment, we become a system that lives whole-heartedly. Together.

*** Written not based on personal experience but as a ghost for a dear friend who was vulnerable enough to share her story with me.*

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https://genmindful.com/blogs/mindful-moments/the-importance-of-an-apology-to-a-childs-self-worth?fbclid=IwAR2cZ5jyZSbn_MVrXRr1i3T-CB-YkZILId0mLAnqKXH4ScCzv_Mg0azYzij4

MAKING RULES TEENS WILL FOLLOW

by Elyse Salek / Discipline & Monitoring

All About Rules

It may seem surprising, but teens want parents to establish boundaries. They recognize parents play an important role in regulating certain parts of their lives. At the same time, they feel strongly that they deserve the freedom to dictate other parts of their lives. The way in which parents frame rules makes a difference in how teens react to them.

Don't Make it About Control

These beliefs make sense when you consider the developmental process teens must go through on their journey towards an independent adulthood. Young people need to separate themselves from parents so they can learn to navigate the world on their own. Parents are the guides along the journey — but our guidance must not be about control. Rather, it must be about keeping teens safe and helping them get their bearings so they can ultimately find their own way. Conflict often occurs when parents try to control an area their teen feels is off limits. The key is to learn which aspects teens feel we do and do not have a say in. Then, we can create rules they'll more likely follow and less likely rebel against.

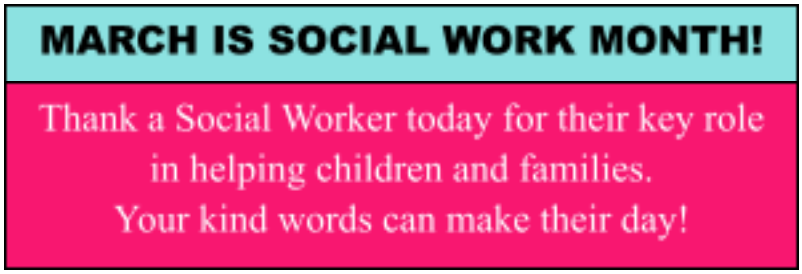
Maximize Influence

Dr. Judith Smetana's research helps us learn to set boundaries so teens will listen. Her work reveals the areas teens believe parents should have a say in — issues related to safety, values, and how to behave in society. On the other hand, teens are clear they do not believe parents have the right to interfere when it comes to their personal territory. This includes things like friendships, romantic relationships, clothing, hairstyle, or choice of music. The tricky part is parents and teens do not always agree on what does and does not qualify as personal. To maximize your influence, maintain open communication about why your rules exist. And, clearly link the rules to one of the three areas teens consider to be in your scope of authority.

"Teens are more likely to accept a rule if they understand it's there to keep them out of harm's way."

1) Make Rules About Safety

Teens are more likely to accept a rule if they understand it's



there to keep them out of harm's way. When possible, make rules about safety. For example, you might establish the rule that your newly licensed teen cannot drive with friends in the car. This is a safety issue for you as new drivers are at a higher risk of crashing when peers are in the car. But unless this connection is explicitly made, your teen might assume the rule is a personal attack against their friends (i.e. "Why do you hate my friends?"). To avoid misunderstandings, make it clear that your rule is in place (i.e. "You cannot drive with friends in the car…") out of a concern to keep them safe (i.e. "…because the risk of crashing is too high and it is my job to keep you safe.")

2) Make Rules About Values

Teens see parents as sources of support as they discover what it means to be a good person in a complex world. Parents play an important role in helping teens figure out what values are most important to them. Consider framing rules around your duty of ensuring that your teens develop character virtues like honesty, empathy, and integrity. Each family has their own unique set of values. It will be up to you to determine when, where, and how you apply rules that support your own family beliefs.

3) Make Rules About How to Act in Society

According to teens, parents are also responsible for teaching them about how to navigate social situations. Whenever possible, make it clear that rules are in place in order to prepare your teen to be successful in the future. This means following certain societal conventions. For example, you might exert your authority when it comes to choice of clothing for a job interview: "I want to help your chances of getting hired. Employers have certain expectations for what makes an outfit appropriate. I suggest you wear dress pants to the interview instead of jeans. It sends the message that you take their workplace seriously." Their outfit choice for a night out with friends? Find your inner Elsa and let it go.

If it Really is Personal

If you can't fairly frame a rule around one of those three areas, consider whether your concern is really in "personal territory." Take a breath and remember that entering this area might backfire. Your teen may view your concern as an effort to control them or interfere with their growing independence. This could push them into rebellion or make them less inclined to listen to you in areas they'd otherwise have welcomed your input. After you exhale, if the topic still remains critical to you, share your thoughts clearly and honestly. Make it about caring, not control. Open and straightforward communication is always a good thing.

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https://parentandteen.com/making-rules-teens-will-follow/

NFAPA SUPPORT GROUPS

As Nebraska is opening up with changes due to COVID please contact the RFC in your area to see when support groups will be back up and running or continuing with an online support. Registration is required when meeting in person.

CONTACT A RESOURCE FAMILY CONSULTANT FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Jolie Camden (Panhandle Area): 308-672-3658

- Virtual Support Group at this time. Available for all foster/adoptive parents on the first Tuesday at 6:30 pm (MT). Contact Jolie for Zoom information

Tammy Welker: 402-989-2197

- Virtual Support Group at this time. Available for all foster/adoptive parents on the second Tuesday of the month at 7:00 pm (CT). Contact Tammy for Zoom information.

Terry Robinson (Central): 402-460-9177

- One on one support or if you would like one started in your area, please contact Terry.

Robbi Blume: 402-853-1091

- FACES-Our online support group. Meets on Facebook Tuesday night at 9:00 pm (CT)

NFAPA Office: 402-476-2273

- Parenting Across Color Lines in Lincoln. Meets the 4th Monday of the month at ConnectioN Point, 1333 N 33rd Street, Lincoln. Note: depending on COVID Risk Dial, it may go to a virtual meeting. Contact Felicia for information or the NFAPA Office.

PREPARING TEENS TO SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP

by Ken Ginsburg / Supporting Emotional Health

Preparing Teens to Seek Professional Help

Among the most challenging moments of parenting are those when we realize that our support alone is not enough. It can be a genuine act of love – and responsible parenting – when we guide our tweens and teens towards professional help. In "Getting Our Children Professional Help When They

Need It" we offer guidance on knowing when your child needs professional support. We also provide an overview on how to get them there. Here, we offer guidance on preparing teens to be open to seeking the support they deserve.

Start from a Place of Strength

The truth is it can be tough to guide an adolescent to agree to seek professional help. They may feel ashamed that they can't handle their own problems. They may worry that going for help confirms that they are "crazy," "losing it," or "weak." Your approach to the process can make critical differences towards their willingness to seek help. It can also assist with their overall attitude about professional support. Their attitude, in turn, influences their investment in the process and the likelihood of its success.

When parents or caregivers have mixed feelings about seeking professional help, they should resolve them before talking to their teen. Adolescents pick up on our mixed emotions easily. If you believe seeking professional help is an act of strength and self-awareness your teen is more likely to see it that way.

Young people often question their worth during challenging times. For that reason, it is critical that your communications about help-seeking are rooted in an approach that highlights strengths. The approach should be grounded in seeing our children as they deserve to be seen, as we know they really are, not based on the moods or behaviors that do not reflect their essential character.

Approaching Your Child About the Help-Seeking Process

It is important to make three things very clear:

1. Professional guidance can make a real difference
2. Emotional discomfort is treatable
3. There are people who know how to support teens so that they can feel better

Make it Clear That Professional Help Can Work

Many teens, especially those unfamiliar with professional treatment, may wonder: "How can it help? Why waste my time."

This is probably the biggest barrier to seeking help. Young people that are going through difficult times may lack hope that anything will change. Hopelessness can be a temporary part of emotional distress. It may be hard for teens battling depression to see the light at the end of the tunnel, or for those with severe anxiety to feel like they will ever stop worrying.

Perhaps the most important thing you can do to prepare your teen to seek help is to reinforce that treatment can work, and is worth the investment. Help them understand that professionals have years of training and that decades of research demonstrate which strategies are most effective. If you know of people who have gained their strength and control back after support, share that.

Underscore That Time Invested Will Pay Off

Teens these days have plenty of obligations. They may feel like, "There's no time for this."

This is something you might hear particularly from a teen that is highly anxious. They may worry that the time invested in counseling will only make them fall behind in other areas of their lives.

Their anxiety may make it difficult for them to hear your words. In response, consistently remain calm. Your even-tempered calmness reinforces that their mental well-being must come first. Remind them the investment in learning how not to waste time and energy in worrying increases their efficiency and focus. And that ultimately it will lead to more time and higher levels of achievement. This will be true in the near term, and the future.

Reinforce That Seeking Professional Help is an Act of Strength

Adolescence is the time of life when young people are trying to figure out their place in the world. When it comes to asking for help, some teens may feel like: "I can handle it. I don't need anybody else."

It is critical that friends, family, and community members do not undermine the help-seeking process by framing it as a sign of weakness. A first step is to use the right language – it is not what they "need," but what they "deserve." It is genuinely brave to be able to clearly state, "I don't feel right, and I deserve to feel better."

Knowing that you deserve guidance is a tremendous act of self-awareness. People who have insight into themselves often become the most successful and happy adults. We must make it clear that seeking help is an act of strength. And that strong people know they are capable of feeling better, deserve to feel better, and will take the steps to feel better.

Acknowledge That They are not Alone

It is not uncommon when we are struggling to feel alone. Some of us retreat into ourselves while others experience shame or embarrassment. Some may even think, "I'm just a freak."

If your teen is feeling like an outsider, make it clear they are not alone. You might say, "You are a person who is wise enough to know that you are struggling." Too many people go through life pushing feelings away or making no real effort to understand their struggles. We need to be proud when our adolescents are aware of what they are feeling, know they need support, and are strong enough to reach out. Help them understand the power of this combination of self-awareness and personal advocacy.

Underscore that we all struggle sometimes. That they are not alone. People who feel intensely sometimes have tough moments during the teen years, but they grow to be strong, wonderful adults.

"No matter how hard our children seem to be pushing us away, they continue to need us, especially in times of great challenge."

Highlight How Strong Feelings Now Lead to a Strong Adulthood Later

Adolescence is a time of heightened emotions. The part of the brain that manages emotions is growing rapidly. That is

why some teens feel like, "I'm so angry all of the time!"

Always frame your desire for your teens to get support in the context of love and how you want them to be their best selves. Remind them you don't expect them to be perfect, or "fixed", just happy and poised to make a contribution. Reinforce that the very sensitivity and depth of caring that troubles teens now is what positions them to have a full, rich life later. Reinforce that people who care make the best friends, life partners, colleagues, and parents.

Relationships With Professionals are Special

Professionals do not pity the youth they serve. They serve because they want to and have gone through years of training to be able to do so. If your teen says: "I don't need anybody feeling sorry for me," make it clear that empathy is not pity.

Help your child to understand that youth-serving professionals choose to work with youth because they care for, and respect young people. Often they went into the field because they knew somebody in their life who needed support (or they themselves struggled as an adolescent), so they are committed to making life better for young people.

One of the best ways to get teens to learn this is to have them experience what it feels like to help others. This could be through community service or less formal helping. When our children experience service, they learn that it feels good to give. When they need to receive they'll understand they're not looked down upon. They are cared about. Just as they have given and felt good while doing so, they can a reach out for a helping hand in their own time of need without fear of being pitied.

Professionals Honor Privacy

Another common roadblock to getting teens on board with seeing a professional stems from their desire for privacy. They may say: "I don't want everybody to know my business." They might not realize that professionals honor privacy, and strive to serve without judgment. Make it clear that you will honor the private nature of that relationship.

Tell your teens that you will always be there to support them and that you hope to know as much about their life as they choose to share. You will look to them as the experts in their own lives to share what you need to know. You always want to be there, but are happy to know that they have another trusted adult to talk to.

Professionals Support You

You never have to worry about a professionals thoughts or feelings — their role is to support you. Your teen may wonder: "Why can't I just talk to you, Mom/Dad? Or why can't I just talk to my friends – they can relate to me better than any adult can."

The beauty of a relationship with a professional is you never have to worry about them. They've likely heard it all so they won't be shocked. They want to hear about your feelings. They won't be disappointed, hurt, or angry. They are there to support you – all of you. Relationships with friends and family are different — they want to protect you and you may worry about disappointing them or hurting your relationship. Help your teens understand help seeking is an 'and" not an "or." Professional guidance never replaces your love and support. Good friends can never be replaced. The professional is an additional person — with specialized training.

Counseling is about Guidance, Not Being Repaired

Your teen may think: "I'll figure it out. I'll deal with my own problems. No one can ever know what I've been through anyway. How could they fix it?"

If this is the case, we need to help them understand that professionals will guide them to become stronger by using skills they already have and by teaching them new ones. Explain that counseling is a learning process that offers new information that can help them make good decisions, get through challenges, and manage uncomfortable feelings.

Counselors are there to support, but you do the real work. Professionals do not give answers or solve problems, rather they find the strengths of each person and build upon them. You will solve your own problems. But you will have the support to do so.

Professional Help Can Strengthen Relationships

When teens are struggling, they may feel as though they have somehow failed, thinking "I've messed everything up."

It is common for people under great levels of stress to challenge the relationships most important to them. It is normal "to take it out on the ones you love." Why? Because it is only in those relationships that hold the greatest security that we can take the chance of revealing our most uncomfortable thoughts and feelings. It is not unusual therefore, for teens to push friends and family away precisely when they need the greatest support.

No matter how hard our children seem to be pushing us away, they continue to need us, especially in times of great challenge.

We must make it known that our love remains unwavering. . That we understand how their behavior reflects the fact that they are going through something. And how a major benefit of counseling can be repairing and restoring relationships.

Finding the Right Professional Help

Let your teen know that you will support them in order to find the right kind of help. There are all kinds of helping professionals and you are committed to finding the right fit for your teen. Consider asking your child's health professional, school guidance counselor, or clergyperson for thoughts and recommendations. Allow them to make suggestions on where to find the best potential match for your teen. Make sure to ask someone you trust, as that will help your teen believe the person chosen is trustworthy.

There are also professional organizations that can help guide you as you search for the best treatment for your child:

- American Psychological Association
- American Academy of Pediatrics
- Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine
- American Counseling Association

Don't Forget to Take Care of Yourself

Having a child is like having your heart on the outside of your body. It can be unbearably hard on parents when their children struggle. Your child needs you to be strong. You deserve to be happy yourself. Your strength and happiness are a critical factor in your child's journey back to mental and emotional wellness. It can be a genuine act of love – and responsible and selfless parenting – when we take care of ourselves just as we care for others.

As is the case of most of what we write, there is nothing in this article about adolescents that does not apply to parents. You may also deserve professional support to help you get through this challenging time. At the least you should commit to self-care.

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FIGHT, FLIGHT, FREEZE… OR FIB?

What if your child's lying is not evidence of a character flaw or disrespect? What if his fibs are actually a self-preservation strategy rooted in poor inhibition, emotional regulation, working memory, and attention — all hallmarks of ADHD? This is the premise behind a new theory that is giving caregivers and educators a new, neurological lens through which to view lies.

By Monica Hassall, R.N., Barbara Hunter, M.Ed.Verified

As the human brain has evolved, it has developed a self-protective mechanism designed to ensure survival in times of extreme danger or stress. Faced with a threat, the brain must react in a split second; deciding how to best protect itself is an instantaneous reaction. This is widely referred to as the "Fight or Flight" response1.

More recently, the field of psychology has added "freeze" as a significant and common behavioral response2. In the event of a harmful attack, this may mean playing dead while literally petrified with fear.

Today, psychologists are beginning to observe and document a fourth "F" that manifests in times of real or perceived danger for children, adolescents, and even adults with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD): "fib."

The Limbic region of the brain processes an immense variety of information from myriad sources. It senses the presence of danger, assesses threats, and activates defense. These Limbic structures are ready to respond to threat. By activating the sympathetic nervous system, which is in contact with the brainstem or cerebellum, a person is "chemically fueled" by the provision of adrenaline being released into the body. This adrenaline, in turn, triggers the decision to Fight (attack and defend) or Flight (to flee) or Freeze (play dead). Meanwhile, the body is flooded with the stress hormone, cortisol.

As neuroscience research itself continues to evolve, it appears to support these observed behaviors related to stress. However, neuroscience also encourages us to study the development of the neocortex (the outermost layer of the brain), which is an additional avenue for processing thoughts and a new line of self-defense achieved through language. With complex and advanced language (not available to our primitive ancestors), we have the ability to verbalize both factual and/or fictitious reasoning instantaneously at point of performance, most notably in times of stress and threat.

As you know, ADHD is a condition of impaired or challenged executive function. Having coached many individuals (some with a diagnosis of ADHD, but all with a challenge of executive function), we have observed this Fib mechanism as a powerful response.

The Fib mechanism protects its maker in a number of ways:

1. **Protection** (temporary) from the feeling of having disappointed someone, such as a parent, teacher, coach, or mentor. Fibbing often follows poor academic outcomes, incomplete assignments or projects, and missed appointments or classes.
2. **Deflection** (temporary) of parental/ significant other anger and the anticipated consequence.
3. **Extension**: This may be caused by a desire to "buy some time" in the momentary absence of information, or information

that is not acceptable to the person that is perceived as a threat. This provides the maker with an extension of available processing or thinking time. The consequence of the fib is not planned for.

4. **Self-preservation**: Preserving self-esteem and self-efficacy; perceived reduced self- esteem of a "failure" due to an ADHD-related behavior that ended in a negative consequence, leading to shame and embarrassment.

Often, a "fib" or "fabrication" does allow an individual to avert a present danger or threat, at least for the time being. The escape from fear, embarrassment, judgment, guilt, or shame provides a brief but powerful sense of reward (or escape/victory). This is evidenced when an individual lies to lessen the intensity of an inquisition about work completion. He is able to gain relief from what seems like a barrage of questions, while justifying possible completion scenarios in their own mind. "Oh, I'm nearly finished with the essay. I've only the quotes to add, but I have the quotes in my notes." The reality is far different.

What's more, an individual may lie to him or herself to avoid the fear of the perceived threat of their current situation. An example of this might be delaying a complicated or unpleasant task in order to undertake something more enjoyable.

Examining four key elements of executive functioning (adapted from Russell Barkley, Ph.D.3) and the associated challenges faced by those with ADHD, we can understand how this self-fibbing happens easily and readily:

1. Weak Inhibition: The inability to stop an action — in this case, the verbal or physical communication — when under pressure for an answer.
2. Poor Emotional Regulation: Overwhelming fear in the face of the stressful situation.
3. Faulty Working Memory: Planning for the future consequence of potentially being "found out" in the heat of the current moment does not happen. By not accessing the information of "the relief of now" in contrast to the later unpleasant outcome, the working memory weakness is evident. Also, the inability of "self-talk" to self-soothe and plan a logical way forward.
4. Inconsistent Attention Regulation: This may be implicated if the subject had succumbed to a dire situation from ineffective regulation of attention or was distracted, causing their inability to achieve success.

So what can we do as parents, coaches, teachers, mentors, or healthcare professionals to identify, support, and alleviate the impact of this stressful situation and the maladaptive fibbing strategy/habit that follows?

1. Use metacognitive or Socratic questioning techniques, encouraging awareness of the Fib response, and supporting the individual in changing the identified response at the point of performance.
2. Assist the individual with creating a "space for time" in order to reduce feelings of being overwhelmed.
3. Create extra, or intermittent accountability opportunities to ensure effective self-monitoring and evaluation.
4. Encourage the individual to seek assistance or input from others, such as an accountability partner, early in a problem-solving situation.
5. Implement a perspective of curiosity in place of judgment. Use open-ended questioning to uncover the fear component of a situation. "Is there something you are worried about?"

The evolving and adaptable human brain has undergone significant expansion and modification over millennia as we progress and face new threats to our survival. With the advancement of complex brain regions and neural networks, we are able to access a more complex, self-preserving response beyond Fight, Flight, or Freeze.

The Fib or Fabrication response (while not solely the domain of people with ADHD) is a less successful self-preservation strategy, but that doesn't make it any less popular. When ADHD is in the mix, challenges with inhibition, emotional regulation (and motivation), attention management, and working memory almost certainly contribute to this phenomenon.

Still, taking a psychological approach may provide an opportunity for caregivers and educators to identify fibbing as a neurological response and one sign of a fractured self-esteem, not as a character flaw.

Footnotes

[1]Oltmanns, T. and Emery, R. Abnormal Psychology, Eighth Edition

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https://www.additudemag.com/why-lie-adhd-fight-flight-freeze/?fbclid=IwAR3Buq4Ui-U3-2pveK4gYX4qX1miyzvoO21sjSooSpT45v6p9DrAx8dh2hI

GRANDPARENTS RAISING GRANDCHILDREN

Authors: Melinda Smith, M.A. and Jeanne Segal, Ph.D.

No matter how much you love your grandkids, raising them comes with many challenges as well as rewards. These guidelines can help you succeed at parenting the second time around.

The challenges of grandparents raising grandchildren

As grandparents, we usually have the benefit of interacting with our grandkids on a level that is once removed from the day-to-day responsibilities of parents. For many of us, grandparenting means a weekend together every now and then, an afternoon play date, an evening babysitting, a summer vacation, or chats on the phone and email exchanges here and there. But when life circumstances change—through divorce, the death of parents, or changes to a parent's work or school-related responsibilities, for example—it often falls to grandparents to assume full- or part-time responsibility for their grandchildren.

Also known as "kinship care," a growing number of grandparents are now taking on the parenting role for their grandchildren, thus foregoing the traditional grandparent/grandchild relationship. This often means giving up your leisure time, the option of traveling, and many other aspects of your independence. Instead, you once again take on responsibility for the day-to-day maintenance of a home, schedules, meals, homework, and play dates. And if it was tragic circumstances that required you to step into the role of a parent, you'll face many other stress factors, such as coping with your own and your grandchildren's grief.

But raising your grandchildren, while challenging, can also be incredibly rewarding. Yes, you may have to deal with colicky babies or moody teenagers, but you'll also experience a much greater connection to your grandchild's world, including their school and leisure activities. You may also find yourself rolling back the years, rejuvenated by the constant companionship of much younger people. And you can derive immense satisfaction from providing your grandchildren with a safe, nurturing, and structured home environment in which to grow and feel loved.

Grandparents raising grandchildren tip 1: Acknowledge your feelings

The prospect of raising grandchildren is bound to trigger a range of emotions. Positive emotions, like the love you feel for your grandchildren, the joy in seeing them learn and grow, and relief at giving them a stable environment, are easy to acknowledge. It's more difficult to admit to feelings such as resentment, guilt, or fear.

It's important to acknowledge and accept what you're feeling, both positive and negative. Don't beat yourself up over your doubts and misgivings. It's only natural to feel some ambivalence about childrearing at a time when you expected your responsibilities to be dwindling. These feelings don't mean that you don't love your grandchildren.

What you may feel

Stress and worry – If you've been used to the occasional visit from a grandchild, being back in the saddle full time can feel stressful and overwhelming. You may worry about how you will handle the additional responsibilities and what will happen to the grandkids if something happens to you.

Anger or resentment – You may feel anger or resentment toward the grandchild's parents for leaving you with the responsibility of caring for their child. Or you might be resentful of other friends who are enjoying the retirement you once envisioned.

Guilt – You may feel guilty and responsible for your child's failures as a parent, second-guessing and regretting your own mistakes when you were first parenting.

Grief – There are many losses that come with taking in your grandkids, including the loss of your independence and the easier role of "grandparent," rather than the primary caregiver. You may also be grieving for your child and the difficulties that have led to this situation.

Tip 2: Take care of yourself

You probably weren't expecting to be raising kids again at this stage in your life. At times, the physical, emotional, and financial demands may feel overwhelming. That's why it's vitally important that you take care of yourself and get the support you need.

When you're preoccupied with the daily demands of raising grandkids, it's easy to let your own needs fall by the wayside. But taking care of yourself is a necessity, not a luxury. You can't be a good caretaker when you're overwhelmed, exhausted, and emotionally depleted. In order to keep up with your grandkids, you need to be calm, centered, and focused. Looking after your own mental and physical health is how you get there.

A healthy you means healthy grandchildren. If you don't take care of your health, you won't be able to take care of your grandchildren, either. Make it a priority to eat nutritious meals, exercise regularly, and get adequate sleep. Don't let doctor's appointments or medication refills slide.

Hobbies and relaxation are not luxuries. Carving out time for rest and relaxation is essential to avoid burnout and depression. Use your "me time" to really nurture yourself. Rather than zoning out in front of the TV (which won't revive you), choose activities that trigger the relaxation response, such as deep breathing, yoga, or meditation.

I**t's okay to lean on your grandkids for help.** Kids are smarter and more capable than we often give them credit for. Even young children can pick up after themselves and help out around the house. Helping out will also make your grandkids feel good.

Support makes all the difference

Studies show that grandparents who cope well with the added stress of raising grandchildren are those who seek out others for support.

Find someone you can talk to about what you're going through. This will give you a chance to work through your feelings and reach an acceptance of the situation. If you deny or ignore these feelings, they will come out in other ways and may affect your relationship with your grandkids.

Look for support groups for grandparents raising grandchildren. Support groups or even phone support can be very helpful in this journey, and it's a good start for making friends in similar situations. Hearing from people who have been there can help both uplift your spirits and give you concrete suggestions for your situation.

Reach out in your community for childcare help. If you are a member of a church, synagogue or other religious organization, you may be able to ask around for available

babysitters. Try asking at a library storytime, chatting up other parents at the playground, finding out if any neighbors have a reliable teen available to babysit, or if other parents are interested in a babysitting swap.

Connect with parents with children. Even if you feel like you are from a different generation, the joys and tribulations of raising children can quickly form common bonds. It may take time, but forging friendships with parents of similar aged children can offer camaraderie and help on navigating the maze of issues facing children today.

Tip 3: Realize your grandkids will have mixed feelings too

Moving to a new home is never easy, even in the best of circumstances. When children are dealing with the loss of regular contact with their parent or parents, the move is even harder. It will take some time for your grandchildren to adjust, and in the meantime, they may act especially contrary and difficult. And if the children have suffered from emotional neglect, trauma, or abuse, those wounds will not disappear just because they are now in a safe place. They will need time to heal.

Your grandkids may resent being separated from their parent and wish to return, even if their home situation was dangerous or abusive. Don't take this personally. The parent-child bond is powerful. Even if the children are old enough to understand that they're better off with you, they will still miss their parent and struggle with feelings of abandonment.

Your grandkids' feelings may come out in many ways, including behavior. They may lash out with aggressive or inappropriate behavior, or they may withdraw and push you away.

No matter their behavior, your grandkids need your comfort and support. If you start to get angry or upset, put yourself in their head. Picture what they've been through, and the confusion, mistrust, and fear they're probably feeling.

Remember that children often act out in a safe place. While it may feel like your grandchildren don't love or appreciate you sometimes, their behavior actually means they feel safe enough to express frightening emotions.

When grandkids first arrive, they may be on their best behavior. Don't be too discouraged if, after a brief "honeymoon" phase, they start to act out. This doesn't necessarily mean you're doing a bad job. As mentioned previously, this can be a sign that they finally feel secure enough to vent their true feelings.

Tip 4: Focus on creating a stable environment

While it will take your grandkids time to adjust to their new living arrangement, there are steps you can take to make the transition easier. Above all, your grandchildren need to feel secure. Children thrive in an environment that is stable and predictable.

Establish a routine. Routines and schedules help make a child's world feel safe. Set a schedule for mealtimes and bedtimes. Create special rituals that you and your grandchildren can share on weekends or when getting ready for bed.

Encourage their input in their new home. Let your grandkids help pack and move in their belongings to the extent that they're able for their age. Encourage them to decorate their new room and arrange it as they'd like. Having some control will make the adjustment easier.

Set clear, age-appropriate house rules and enforce them consistently. Children feel more secure when they know what to expect. Loving boundaries tell the child that he or she is safe and protected.

Make sure that each grandchild has a private space. If grandchildren are sharing a bedroom, get creative: use a divider to partition off a private area in a bigger room, erect a playhouse in the backyard, or set up a tent in the family room.

Offer your time and attention. You can be a consistent, reassuring presence for your grandkids. Try to make time to interact with them at the beginning of the day, when they come home from school, and before bed.

Tip 5: Encourage open and honest communication

Communicating openly and honestly with your grandchildren is one of the best things you can do to help them cope with their new situation. It's especially important to take the time to really listen to your grandkids. In this difficult time, they need an adult they can go to with their questions, concerns, and feelings.

Plan regular times when you sit and talk to each other, free from TV, phones, games, and other distractions.

Encourage your grandchildren to talk about their feelings, both good and bad. Try to listen without judging or dismissing their feelings.

Help your grandkids learn to identify their emotions. For example, if your grandchild seems upset, you might say, "You look sad. Is something bothering you?"

Young children communicate through play. Young children may not be able to verbalize how they feel, but will express themselves through their play.

It's okay to say, "I don't know." You don't have to have an answer for everything. If you don't know when mommy's coming home, for example, be honest about it. Don't evade the question or lie.

Tip 6: Encourage contact with parents

It is not always possible for children to remain in contact with their parents, and at times, it may not be in a child's best interest. But in general, it is healthy for your grandchildren to maintain relationships with their parents, especially if they may live with them again. If meeting in person isn't possible, you can encourage contact in other ways, including phone calls, video chats, cards and letters, and email.

Making visits with parents as smooth as possible

Don't put your grandchild in the middle. Try to set aside any feelings of anger or disappointment you have toward your grandchild's parent. Avoid venting issues or saying critical things about the parent in front of your grandchild. And don't make your grandchild feel guilty about spending time with

their parent. This can be confusing and distressing for the child.

Communicate and cooperate with your grandchild's parent. Do what you can to smooth the relationship and make the parent feel a part of the child's life. Share information about the child's school, hobbies, and friends. Make sure the parent has the child's schedule and contact information.

Make visits part of your grandchild's routine. Contact with parents will be less stressful for children if they know what to expect. If possible, plan visits well in advance and put them on a regular schedule. Talk with the parent ahead of time, so everyone's expectations for the visit are clear. It's best if both parents and grandparents enforce the same rules.

Be sensitive to your grandchild's feelings. It's important to talk with your grandchild about how they feel about parental contact. Even when kids are looking forward to a visit or call, it can bring up many feelings, including uncertainty and nervousness. Kids may worry that their parent doesn't love them anymore, or that they won't have anything to talk about. Be there to reassure them.

Help your grandchild deal with disappointment. Sometimes, visits don't go well or the parent doesn't show up. Vent to a friend if you need to, but avoid the temptation to say angry or hurtful things about the parent in front of your grandchild, as this won't make him or her feel better. Instead, talk with your grandchild about what happened and how they feel about it.

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WHY I CHANGED MY MIND ABOUT ADOPTING TEENS

By AdoptUSKids

Heidi Kaplan thought she was living the life of her dreams. "I'd had success in my career and had just bought a new home."

Then a conversation with her mom prompted her to think about becoming a foster parent.

When she mentioned a friend who had adopted through the foster care system, her mom's response took her by surprise: "You should do that too."

A safe space for kids

"At first, I brushed off my mom's suggestion." Heidi said. "But then I thought about how my new home could become a safe space for kids."

Heidi decided to attend an information session, where she learned about county programs that supported foster parents. Respite care could make it possible for her to continue work travel. The county guaranteed placement for a child in afterschool care. "I'm a cautious person, so I came into the session with a list of concerns. In the first few minutes, the speaker addressed every one of them," Heidi remembers.

Heidi completed months of training to become a foster parent. After becoming certified, she received two consecutive placements of younger children. Both kids were reunited with their birth families, so adoption wasn't even discussed. She also provided respite care for other children.

Teens for three months?

After completing a 15-month placement and taking a few months off, Heidi called her social worker about another placement. At this point, she'd been providing foster care for three years. "I thought that my sweet spot was one child, a girl, who was elementary-aged," Heidi said. In September, the social worker contacted Heidi about a pair of siblings who needed a three-month placement. Heidi soon met 15-year-old Ana and 13-year-old Elian.

Ana and Elian were born in El Salvador and spent most of their childhood there, followed by time in the US, where they entered the foster care system in 2016. "I was uncertain about teens but decided that I could do anything for three months," Heidi remembers.

"I changed my mind about my parenting sweet spot"

At the end of three months, Ana and Elian asked Heidi if they could stay with her longer. "I realized that I was wrong about my sweet spot. Teens were great, and these were good, wonderful, and lovely kids, " Heidi said. She was won over by Ana's brave spirit and kindness, and Elian's big heart.

Making a family

After extending Ana and Elian's placement, the three began to discuss forming a permanent family through adoption.

Through the county, Heidi found a family therapist who specialized in adoption and foster care, and the family

What are you doing this summer?

How about hanging out with your siblings for a weekend of fun and connection at Camp Catch-Up?

Early bird registrants who fully complete and submit their applications before April 1 get a free Camp Catch-Up hoodie.

Here's the scoop. Together, you can enjoy everything camp has to offer: canoeing, ropes courses, water activities, hiking, and more - and it's completely free!

You can choose from three weekends, depending on what's closer. Transportation provided at designated locations across Nebraska.

Eastern Camp: June 2-5 at Camp Fontanelle
Western Camp: July 7-10 at Camp Halsey - Nebraska State 4-H Camp
Fall Camp: September 23-25 at Camp Solaris

New to camp? Go online to apply at **campcatchup.org.**
Attend camp last year? Log into your **campdoc.com** account to update your information.

ELIGIBILTY REQUIREMENTS

1. For youth ages 8-19. Younger siblings accepted on a case by case basis.
2. Have at least one sibling not residing with the camper also attend camp.
3. Have the ability to understand the purpose of camp.

attended counseling together through the transition. "I was making a family in my 40s with kids who were in their teens, and therapy helped us communicate about it," Heidi said. "But with Ana and Elian, I had no big reservations. It felt natural, like a fit."

The adoption process took about six months from the filing date and was finalized in 2019. A network of support helped Heidi and the siblings through the process, including their foster parent support group, social worker, CASA volunteer, and the children's attorney.

Today, Ana is a first-year college student and working as a medical assistant. Elian is a high school junior who loves playing soccer on his travel team. Both teens are happy to be active and attending in-person school, after remote schooling and cancelled activities during the first year of the pandemic.

Supporting extended family ties

The family maintains ties with Ana and Elian's cousins who live in the area. Spending Christmas Eve together is a tradition, along with regular get-togethers. "The kids wish I could cook Salvadoran food a little better, but we have a local Salvadoran restaurant that's a favorite," Heidi said. The family plans to travel to El Salvador in the future.

Advice for prospective parents

Heidi has this advice for other prospective adoptive parents:

- Your instincts will tell you if adoption is right for you.
- Focus on how you connect with the child, before assuming they're the wrong age for you.
- Build a support network, especially other families.
- To parent teens, let them be themselves, but provide some guard rails and guidance.
- People may think teens want independence more than anything, but most kids just want a safe place and a home.

"Parenting is work, but it's rewarding and all worth it," Heidi said.

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INCREASING COOPERATION IN KIDS WITH AUTISM

By Hannah Sheldon-Dean

Cooperation can be a challenge for children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) under the best of circumstances. And in stressful situations — when cooperation is often most important — following instructions can get even harder.

Here are some tips to help parents of kids with autism increase cooperation while still respecting kids' autonomy and keeping fights to a minimum.

Communicating effectively

Following a few simple guidelines can make it much easier to communicate with a child on the autism spectrum — and getting your message across makes cooperation much more likely.

• **Be simple and direct.** "If you want to give effective instruction, you have to be super specific," says Bethany Vibert, PsyD, a clinicalpsychologist at the Child Mind Institute. For example, instead of saying, "Can you finish setting the table?" you might say, "Please put the plates on the table." The idea is to let your child know exactly what your expectations are in the moment, rather than giving them a list of tasks or a general instruction.

• **Avoid sarcasm, figures of speech and jokes.** Kids with autism tend to take things literally, so non-literal speech like sarcasm and jokes can confuse them. And if they're not sure what you're asking, it's hard for them to cooperate. "Saying something vague like, 'It's about time you get to that' might just end up frustrating your child," Dr. Vibert says.

• **Use visual aids.** Often, children with ASD benefit from having a visual representation of their goal. So if you want them to set the table, for example, having a picture on hand of exactly how the plates should go can be a big help. A list where kids can check off tasks as they go can also make it easier.

• **Make cooperation rewarding.** All kids appreciate acknowledgement for a job well done, so offer small rewards when your child does cooperate. "This could be as simple as a high five or maybe a tickle routine they really enjoy," says Dr. Vibert. "You really want to make following instructions a positive thing."

Getting your child to wear a mask

Wearing a masks in public may be part of our reality for quite some time, and it can be especially challenging for autistic kids.

If your child is just getting old enough to wear a mask or has been struggling to deal with masks so far, there are ways you can help them adapt.

• **Take it slow.** Vibert recommends adding masks to your child's routine gradually. "Introduce the mask in a way that's going to increase positive association with that mask," she says. "Try not to do it right before you go somewhere or right before you want them to wear it." You might start by having your child hold or play with the mask while they do something they enjoy, like watching a favorite show. Then, once they're comfortable with it, they can hold it up to their face for a few seconds at a time and eventually wear it around the house. By practicing in low-stakes situations, your child will likely find the mask less stressful and have an easier time working up to wearing it in public.

• **Adapt to your child's needs.** Try to find out exactly what it is about the mask that bothers your child. Is it the elastic? The fabric? By experimenting with different masks, you can find one that's easier for your child to tolerate. Getting one in their favorite color or a fun pattern can also help.

• **Have an exit plan.** When your child is ready to go out with their mask on, it helps to be clear about what's expected and what you'll do if they have a hard time with it. For instance, you and your child might agree that they'll leave the mask on for ten minutes and then, if they don't want to keep it on after that, they'll be allowed to leave the store and take it off.

Managing responsibilities

Whether it's handling homework or keeping up with chores at home, it can be hard for autistic kids to reliably complete tasks. Set them up for success with clear expectations and predictable routines.

• **Set reasonable expectations.** It's important to be aware of your child's attention span. Kids with autism may struggle to stay on task for a long period of time, which can make it harder for them to do what you're asking. Help them plan tasks accordingly, like doing homework in short bursts or breaking chores up into steps that don't take too long.

• **Take plenty of breaks.** Once your child completes a task, encourage them to take a break with some physical activity, whether that's going for a walk, playing in the yard or dancing to a favorite song. "An active break will make them a little less antsy and restless," says Dr. Vibert.

• **Use a visual schedule.** Having a clear visual schedule can help your child see what's coming and motivate them to stick with tasks they might not like. Dr. Vibert recommends a simple "First/Then" format, where you pair a picture of something your child needs to do with a picture of the reward they'll get afterward. For example, "If" might be picking up their toys while "Then" is a favorite snack.

• **Be creative.** If your child tends to struggle with the same kinds of tasks over and over again, try alternate ways of completing the same work. For example, Dr. Vibert notes that some kids do better writing by hand than typing. So if your child is supposed to type a homework assignment, you can check with the teacher to see if they can write it by hand instead. Even small adjustments to tasks can make it much easier for your child to cooperate.

Hannah Sheldon-Dean

Hannah Sheldon-Dean, MSW, is a staff editor and writer at the Child Mind Institute.

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https://childmind.org/article/increasing-cooperation-in-kids-with-autism/

Scholarship Program

NEBRASKA FOSTER & ADOPTIVE PARENT ASSOCIATION

$250 Scholarship Program

The NFAPA offers a scholarship up to $250 for an adoptive, foster, guardianship, or kinship child, who wishes to further their education beyond high school or GED. This can be either at a college or university, vocational and job training, or online learning. One or more scholarships may be awarded based on scores and amount of money available for scholarships.

Please go to our website www.nfapa.org for the full application. Completed application must be received on or before April 1, 2022.

WHAT IS INSIDE

3601 N. 25th Street, Suite D
Lincoln, NE 68521
www.nfapa.org

JOIN NFAPA ....your support will enable NFAPA to continue supporting foster parents state-wide!

Benefits

- Ongoing trainings/conferences at local and state level
- Networking opportunities with other foster families, adoptive families, and relative caregivers
- Opportunity for all foster families, adoptive families and relative caregivers to be actively involved in an association by serving on committees and/or on the Executive Board
- Working to instigate changes by alertness to legislation affecting the child welfare system
- An advocate on your behalf at local, state and national levels
- 25% of membership dues goes toward an NFAPA Scholarship

Thank you for your support!

Please mail membership form to:
NFAPA, 3601 N. 25th Street, Suite D
Lincoln, NE 68521.

Questions? Please call us at 877-257-0176.

NFAPA is a 501c3 non-profit organization comprised of a volunteer Board of Directors and Mentors.

Name(s): _____

Organization: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ County: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____ Phone: _____

Email: _____

I am a Foster/Adoptive Parent. I have fostered for _____ years.
(circle one)

I am with _____ agency.

I wish to join the effort:

- ❏ **Single Family Membership** (a single foster or adoptive parent), $25
- ❏ **Family Membership** (married foster or adoptive parents), $35
- ❏ **Supporting Membership** (individuals wishing to support our efforts), $75
- ❏ **Organization Membership** (organizations wishing to support our efforts), $150
- ❏ **Friends of NFAPA,** $5 billed Monthly

My donation will be acknowledged through Families First newsletters.

- ❏ Gold Donation, $1,000
- ❏ Silver Donation, $750
- ❏ Platinum Donation, $500
- ❏ Bronze Donation, $250
- ❏ Other, $ _____