**Helping Your Child at Home - Behaviour**

**1. Boost Your Child's Self-Esteem**

Children start developing their sense of self as babies when they see themselves through their parents' eyes. Your tone of voice, your body language, and your every expression are absorbed by your children. Your words and actions as a parent affect their developing [self-esteem](https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/self-esteem.html) more than anything else.

Praising accomplishments, however small, will make them feel proud; letting children do things independently will make them feel capable and strong. By contrast, belittling comments or comparing a child unfavourably with another will make children feel worthless.

Avoid making loaded statements or using words as weapons. Comments like "What a stupid thing to do!" or "You act more like a baby than your little brother!" cause damage just as physical blows do.

Choose your words carefully and be compassionate. Let your children know that everyone makes mistakes and that you still love them, even when you don't love their behaviour.

**2. Catch Children Being Good**

Have you ever stopped to think about how many times you react negatively to your children in a given day? You may find yourself criticizing far more often than complimenting. How would you feel about a boss who treated you with that much negative guidance, even if it was well-intentioned?

The more effective approach is to catch children doing something right: "You made your bed without being asked — that's terrific!" or "I was watching you play with your sister and you were very patient." These statements will do more to encourage good behaviour over the long run than repeatedly telling them off.

Make a point of finding something to praise every day. Be generous with rewards — your love, hugs, and compliments can work wonders and are often reward enough. Soon you will find you are "growing" more of the behaviour you would like to see.

**3. Set Limits and Be Consistent With Your Discipline**

[Discipline](https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/discipline.html) is necessary in every household. The goal of discipline is to help children choose acceptable behaviours and learn self-control. They may test the limits you establish for them, but they need those limits to grow into responsible adults.

Establishing house rules helps children understand your expectations and develop self-control. Some rules might include: no [TV](https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/tv-habits.html) until [homework](https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/homework.html) is done, and no hitting, name-calling, or hurtful teasing allowed.

You might want to have a system in place: one warning, followed by consequences such as a "time out" or loss of privileges. A common mistake parents make is failure to follow through with the consequences. You can't discipline children for answering you back one day and ignore it the next. Being consistent teaches what you expect.

**4. Make Time for Your Children**

It's often hard for parents and children to get together for a family meal, let alone spend quality time together. But there is probably nothing children would like more. Get up 10 minutes earlier in the morning so you can eat breakfast with your child or leave the dishes in the sink and take a walk after dinner. Children who aren't getting the attention they want from their parents often act out or misbehave because they're sure to be noticed that way.

Many parents find it rewarding to schedule together time with their children. Create a "special night" each week to be together and let your children help decide how to spend the time. Look for other ways to connect — put a note or something special in your child's lunchbox.

Teens seem to need less undivided attention from their parents than younger children. There are fewer windows of opportunity for parents and teens to get together, parents should do their best to be available when their teen does express a desire to talk or participate in family activities. Attending concerts, games, and other events with your teen communicates caring and lets you get to know more about your child and his or her friends in important ways.

Don't feel guilty if you're a working parent. It is the many little things you do — making popcorn, playing cards, window shopping — that children will remember.

**5. Be a Good Role Model**

Young children learn a lot about how to act by watching their parents. The younger they are, the more cues they take from you. Before you lash out or blow your top in front of your child, think about this:

“*Is that how you want your child to behave when angry*?”

Be aware that you're constantly being watched by your children. Studies have shown that children who hit usually have a role model for aggression at home.

Model the traits you wish to see in your children: respect, friendliness, honesty, kindness, tolerance. Exhibit unselfish behaviour. Do things for other people without expecting a reward. Express thanks and offer compliments. Above all, treat your children the way you expect other people to treat you.

**6. Make Communication a Priority**

You can't expect children to do everything simply because you, as a parent, "say so." They want and deserve explanations as much as adults do. If we don't take time to explain, children will begin to wonder about our values and motives and whether they have any basis. Parents who reason with their children allow them to understand and learn in a non-judgmental way.

Make your expectations clear. If there is a problem, describe it, express your feelings, and invite your child to work on a solution with you. Be sure to include consequences. Make suggestions and offer choices. Be open to your child's suggestions as well. Negotiate. Children who participate in decisions are more motivated to carry them out.

**7. Be Flexible and Willing to Adjust Your Parenting Style**

If you often feel "let down" by your child's behaviour, perhaps you have unrealistic expectations. Parents who think in "shoulds" (for example, "My child **should** be potty-trained by now") might find it helpful to read up on the matter or to talk to other parents or child development specialists.

Children' environments have an effect on their behaviour, so you might be able to change that behaviour by changing the environment. If you find yourself constantly saying "no" to your 2-year-old, look for ways to alter your surroundings so that fewer things are off-limits. This will cause less frustration for both of you.

As your child changes, you'll gradually have to change your parenting style. Chances are, what works with your child now won't work as well in a year or two.

Teens tend to look less to their parents and more to their peers for role models. But continue to provide guidance, encouragement, and appropriate discipline while allowing your teen to earn more independence. Seize every available moment to make a connection!

**8. Show That Your Love Is Unconditional**

As a parent, you're responsible for correcting and guiding your children. But how you express your corrective guidance makes all the difference in how a child receives it.

When you have to confront your child, avoid blaming, criticizing, or fault-finding, which hurt self-esteem and can lead to resentment. Instead, try to nurture and encourage, even when disciplining your children. Make sure they know that although you want and expect better next time, your love is there no matter what.

**9. Know Your Own Needs and Limitations as a Parent**

Face it — you are an imperfect parent. You have strengths and weaknesses as a family leader. Recognise your abilities — "I am loving and dedicated." Vow to work on your weaknesses — "I need to be more consistent with discipline." Try to have realistic expectations for yourself, your partner, and your children. You don't have to have all the answers — be forgiving of yourself.

And try to make parenting a manageable job. Focus on the areas that need the most attention rather than trying to address everything all at once. Admit it when you're burned out. Take time out from parenting to do things that will make you happy.

Focusing on your needs does not make you selfish. It simply means you care about your own well-being, which is another important value to model for your children.

**For further help and support click on the following links:**

**0 – 4 years**

[https://www.gov.wales/parenting-give-it-time/children-0-4-years/childrens-behaviour-0-4-years/understanding-and-responding-behaviour-0-4-years](https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.gov.wales%2Fparenting-give-it-time%2Fchildren-0-4-years%2Fchildrens-behaviour-0-4-years%2Funderstanding-and-responding-behaviour-0-4-years&data=05%7C01%7CCoxS25%40Hwbcymru.net%7C99208eb271294456bc7708db2ecdae38%7C4f3f0e52b734416494091b601d147993%7C0%7C0%7C638155233135531512%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=Pi8YW21wFImY%2F0Eu4J9LgPshG6A%2FyaVBN1qjDfKzTO8%3D&reserved=0)

**4 – 7 years**

[https://www.gov.wales/parenting-give-it-time/children-4-7/childrens-behaviour-4-7-years](https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.gov.wales%2Fparenting-give-it-time%2Fchildren-4-7%2Fchildrens-behaviour-4-7-years&data=05%7C01%7CCoxS25%40Hwbcymru.net%7C99208eb271294456bc7708db2ecdae38%7C4f3f0e52b734416494091b601d147993%7C0%7C0%7C638155233135531512%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=Y2DkpARqf%2FttnfasiQRk9akWOqz3Wlq2BhZOgFxNEv4%3D&reserved=0)

**8 – 12 years**

[https://www.gov.wales/parenting-give-it-time/children-8-12/childrens-behaviour-8-12-years](https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.gov.wales%2Fparenting-give-it-time%2Fchildren-8-12%2Fchildrens-behaviour-8-12-years&data=05%7C01%7CCoxS25%40Hwbcymru.net%7C99208eb271294456bc7708db2ecdae38%7C4f3f0e52b734416494091b601d147993%7C0%7C0%7C638155233135531512%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=csDZX87QOSRImkq2GrXI7U%2BuPH2aJj88Bc9FHrZJrPw%3D&reserved=0)

**13+ years**

[https://www.gov.wales/parenting-give-it-time/children-13/childrens-behaviour-13](https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.gov.wales%2Fparenting-give-it-time%2Fchildren-13%2Fchildrens-behaviour-13&data=05%7C01%7CCoxS25%40Hwbcymru.net%7C99208eb271294456bc7708db2ecdae38%7C4f3f0e52b734416494091b601d147993%7C0%7C0%7C638155233135687750%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=IwaMlA1LoSy4sHJ9lZdRVPQ%2BpzYuvyUm10oYK9isF6E%3D&reserved=0)

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