



Handling Difficult Behaviors of Children on the Autism Spectrum

“How do I know which behaviors are typical child behaviors and which are beyond their control?”

Step 1: Validate

Begin by acknowledging and validating your child's emotion without any qualifiers. This helps your child recognize their emotion and models the expressive language to share their feelings.

Step 2: Offer Bounded Choices

Tell them what they CAN do. Offer two choices, one of which is the preferred behavior and the other which is an acceptable alternative that honors their sensory needs.

Step 3: Reinforce

Look for the opportunity to offer positive reinforcement for your child's choice. Model language in a way that helps them to process the interaction.

"I appreciate that even though you are hot and tired you stayed with the group and cheered everyone on and then rejoined when you felt settled."

Step 4: Logical Consequences

If your child understands, but has not chosen either the preferred behavior or accommodation, there is a good chance you are dealing with a good ol' behavioral issue. In this case your child may be looking for boundaries and it is important to provide them in a logical way.

Step 5: Give Yourself a Break

Unless you are a mind reader of exceptional ability there is no way to be sure you have reacted perfectly to your child's needs. What you can do is follow your instinct, keep looking for new ideas, and learn from past experiences. Relax. You're doing the best you can.

By doing your best to stay calm and following the steps above, you can help improve your child's behavior on the autism spectrum and decrease tantrums and outbursts.

