

# BEHAVIORAL CHALLENGES IN CHILDREN



**All children misbehave or “act out” from time to time. It is a normal part of their development.**

Children act out for many reasons. You may see a tantrum, irritable mood, or defiance (refusal to obey).

This can happen when they:

- are hungry or tired
- want your attention (even negative attention)
- are trying to get something they want
- are avoiding things they do not want to do
- have mood issues (such as anxiety or depression)
- have issues with learning or development
- are going through a major life event (such as birth of a sibling, moving to a new city, losing a loved one)

**When do I ask for help with my child’s behavioral issues?**

Talk with your child’s doctor if you notice:

- Changes in behavior that last more than a few weeks
- Issues that cause problems at home or school
- Behaviors that could cause harm to themselves or others

A doctor can check your child and refer them to a specialist if needed. Early treatment can help you and your child manage and control their behavior.





## TIPS FOR PARENTS

### How do I support healthy behavior for my child?

**Do not try to reason with your child when they feel upset.** When children feel emotional, they can't think or solve problems well. Wait until they calm down before you talk to them. This also allows you to calm down.

**Help them calm down.** The same methods that adults use to calm down can also work with children. Have your child count to 10, breathe, or take a brief "time out" in a quiet place until they feel better.

**Focus on the positive.** Pay attention to positive behaviors. Your child will be more likely to repeat them. Tell your child when you notice them doing something you like.

**Ignore minor misbehavior.** Minor misbehavior is often an attempt for your child to get your attention. It is behavior that is annoying but not dangerous, such as whining, refusing to do a task, or arguing. By ignoring these behaviors, you can teach your child to find better ways to behave. When your child acts out or throws a tantrum, tell them to stop once, and ignore it after that. When kids learn they can't get your attention through negative behaviors, they will stop.

**Set family rules and limits that are fair.** When your child does not follow the rules, make sure that the consequences are similar or the same each time you see the behavior. Do not give in to tantrums or other negative behaviors.

**Talk about feelings.** Sometimes, children act out when they can't express what they are feeling. Let them know that their feelings are valid and that you are there to listen to them.



## TIPS FOR CHILDREN

### How do I calm myself and control my behavior?

- **Take deep breaths.** When you feel upset or angry, deep breaths can help you calm down. Try breathing in slowly through your nose and out through your mouth.
- **Tell yourself it is okay.** If you feel upset about something, tell yourself, "It's okay to feel upset. I know how to calm down."
- **Talk about your feelings.** Tell your parent or teacher what you feel when you are angry or upset. Talking about how you are feeling can help you feel better.



### Where can I find online resources for more support?



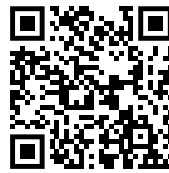
[Here's Advice from Psychologists on How to Help Kids Cope With Anger and Frustration – English](#)

*American Psychological Association*



[How to Shape and Manage Your Young Child's Behavior – English](#)

*American Academy of Pediatrics*



[How to Shape and Manage Your Young Child's Behavior – Spanish](#)

*American Academy of Pediatrics*