

CHILDREN WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS

Challenging Behaviours

Challenging behaviour may be displayed more frequently in children with additional needs. The characteristics of certain conditions may cause a child to communicate their feelings and needs in particular ways.

Conditions such as Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Oppositional Defiance Disorder (ODD) are often associated with challenging behaviours.

If you care for a child who has been formally assessed as having ODD or ADHD, some of the behavioural challenges you may notice include:

- Violence towards others.
- Hyperactivity or impulsive behaviours, such as squirming and fidgeting.
- Inattention or difficulty focusing.
- Interrupting and having trouble waiting.
- Causing distractions for other children.
- Refusing to follow requests or boundaries.

If you care for a child who has been formally assessed as having ASD, some of the behavioural challenges may include:

- Struggles with transition or change.
- Temper tantrums.
- Trouble following instructions.
- Repetitive behaviours.
- Appearing to ignore you.

- Active refusal to participate in certain activities such as meal times or handwashing).
- Sensitivity to sound, touch or large groups.

Assisting children with additional needs

Reminder: Children with additional needs are often not able to control some their behaviours and they may find it very upsetting for them to be asked to do so.

Many of the same strategies for managing challenging behaviour from children with additional needs will be related to those discussed above. Depending on the nature of your child's different ability, you may need to break things down into smaller steps. This can sometimes take a little extra patience.

Please refer to Resource 2: 'Setting Boundaries and Expectations' for methods of identifying triggers.

Children with additional needs often become more upset than other children when things go wrong. They will find it very difficult to behave well if there are other stressors in their life, such as bullying at school or family problems at home.

Sometimes if there are a number of behaviours that you as carers have difficulty understanding it can be hard to remain calm and patient. Try to ignore a behaviour that is insignificant as long as it is safe to do so and not stressful for your child. This will ensure that your child does not feel like they are being 'told off' all the time or are always in trouble which can negatively impact their self-esteem.

Tiredness and hunger can also impact your child's ability to control their behaviour. Feelings cards can be an effective visual way of helping children communicate. Please contact Time for Kids if you would like more information about this.

Tips For Responding To Children With ODD Or ADHD:

- Try not to spend too long doing one activity. If you notice your child is having difficulty focusing, talk to them about other activities available before the behaviour escalates.
- You may like to set up a designated 'calm down' area for your child.
- Children are often unable to listen when they are angry or upset. Wait until they have calmed down to talk to them.
- Encourage your child to release their energy in safe and positive ways, such as playing on the school equipment before they have to sit still in the car.
- Have fun and relaxing things that your child likes to do prepared for when things become stressful.

Tips For Responding To Children With ASD:

- For some children making eye contact can be very distressing. Let your child look down or away from you while you are talking to them as forced eye contact may make it difficult for them to hear what you are saying.
- Avoid activities that may be distressing for children with hypersensitivities. For example, if a child is sensitive to sound, avoid loud and crowded places such as movie theatres or markets.
- Give directions that are direct, clear and time bound. For example, "Please take the rubbish to the bin now".

Helping Children Make Friends

Children with additional needs often find it difficult to make friends and play well with others. You can help your child have the tools they need to be a good friend.

Observe The Situation

Children with additional needs often have difficulty understanding social situations and how they are perceived by their peers. Get to the root of the problem by talking with them about what went wrong, why it happened and what they could do differently next time. Also give positive feedback when your child has a successful interaction. Keep in mind children with additional needs may interact more positively with younger playmates.

Find Groups And Teams

It can be helpful to offer a variety of opportunities for play and socialising. For children living with additional needs, joining a group or team can help them learn to consider others. Unstructured time for play is also important.

Be conscious of your child's competitive spirit. Some children have trouble with competitive play, whether it is gloating when winning or raging when losing. Activities that do not require teamwork such as swimming, running or martial arts can be a good introduction to a group activity.

Role Model How To Be A Good Friend

Include the child you care for in interactions outside of their normal range of peers. For example, have a conversation with a neighbour or encourage your child to speak with the waiter to order their own food. The more exposure your child has to interaction with different kinds of people, the more they will learn the skills to manage various social situations.

For more general tips on supporting the child you care for to make new friends, visit Kidsmatter at:

<https://www.kidsmatter.edu.au/families/about-friendship/making-friends/helping-children-learning-positive-friendship-skills>

Preparing A Child With Additional Needs For Independence

If you care for a child with additional needs the journey to independence may seem longer and more challenging. Some children with additional needs may require extra support than their age related peers to carry out everyday activities. Considering the kind of support that is most likely to help develop independence is very important, along with having realistic expectations.

The sharing of household chores and everyday activities in the community can lead to greater independence.

You may like to try:

- Using varied approaches to teach tasks.
- Teaching your child in the location where the task is usually done.
- Breaking a task into smaller steps and focusing on one step at a time can make it easier to learn the overall activity.
- Practicing regularly.

Additional Resource

Video guide: preparing teens with ASD for adulthood (halfway down page)

http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/independence_teenagers.html/context/1157

For more information specific to the child you care for, please contact Time for Kids.

When To Seek Help

If a child continually 'misbehaves' or displays behaviour that worries you please contact Time for Kids. A highly qualified support staff are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to offer advice and support about any concerning behaviours.

Time for Kids' carer resources are available to download from www.timeforkids.com.au.

To discuss any issues raised in this resource, please call us on 8245 8100.

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