

BEHAVIOUR IS COMMUNICATION



Listen to and decode the messages children are sending out.



NORMAL COMMON CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOURS

- Separation anxiety, especially at bedtime and school drop off
- Return to younger behaviours, like using the toilet, getting dressed or organising homework
- Have problems going to bed, settling to sleep or staying asleep
- Behave aggressively or disobey rules, being argumentative, self-centred, bossy
- Seem to have a lot of energy
- Be less playful or creative, seem quiet or withdrawn, avoiding their friends and other people
- Find it hard to concentrate and remembering things at school and during other activities
- Experience physical complaints such as headaches, stomach aches or loss of appetite
- Have fake illnesses, or cuts/sores and mirror their parent's physical complaints
- Become afraid of the dark, dogs, monsters, things they weren't scared of before
- Afraid of new situations and transitions from one thing to another
- Trying to be extra good to mask emotions
- Using denial as a coping mechanism and not engaging in what is happening

SETTING BOUNDARIES

Boundaries provide structure for your child so they feel safe, secure and more in control.

5 tips on how to set solid boundaries with your children:

1 DEFINE YOUR BOUNDARIES

Know what you value, think and where you stand as it's important that your child knows who you are and what you believe. This doesn't mean you should be rigid.

2 MAKE YOUR EXPECTATIONS KNOWN

Think about what you can and can't live with; think through what matters most to you. Make a list and then tell your children. Let them know the consequences of overstepping boundaries.

3 GET YOUR FOCUS ON YOURSELF INSTEAD OF YOUR CHILD

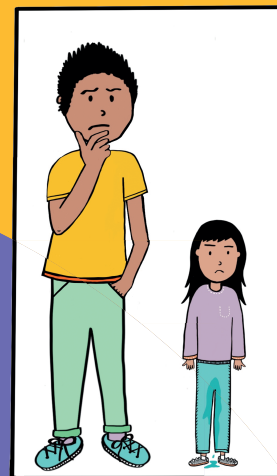
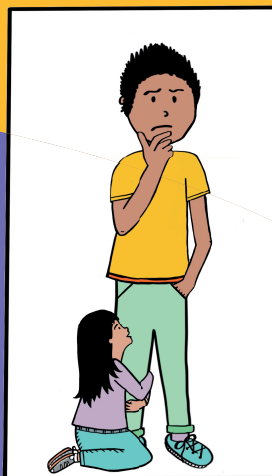
When your child is acting poorly and not listening to you, think about how you can more clearly communicate what you expect.

4 LET YOUR CHILD FEEL THE IMPACT OF A CROSSED BOUNDARY

When your child crosses a boundary, let them know and hold them accountable.

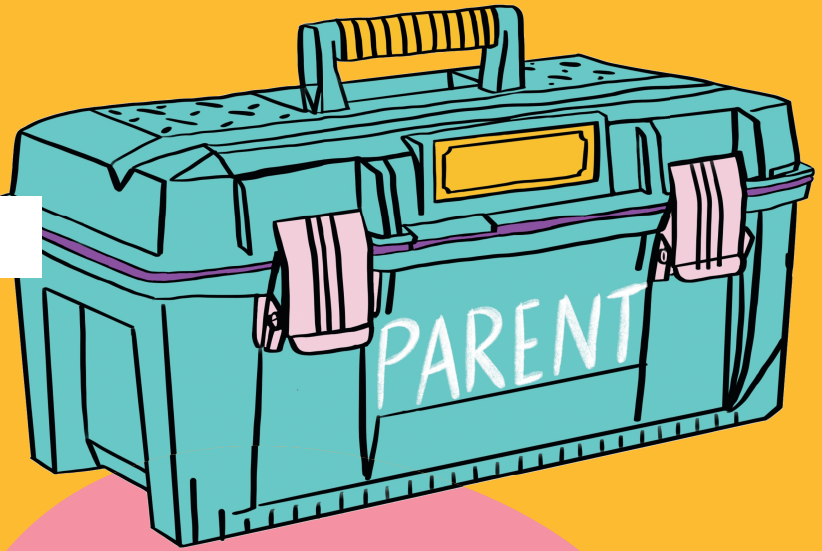
5 DON'T BEAT YOURSELF UP

We all have moments when we give in, simply try your best not to make it a pattern. Share your boundaries and expectations for your child with others who will be looking after children. Removing any boundaries in place before cancer can be very unsettling for children. If they need to change/ lapse sometimes, talk to them, give them the reason why a boundary has changed, they will continue to feel secure.



Adapt your expectations: Children who are tired or hungry will find it harder to control their behaviour, so use an empathetic response first before setting a limit or enforcing a consequence.

PARENT TOOLBOX



ROUTINE

Create a daily timetable. Split the day up into morning, afternoon and evening. Write what they need to do 'eat breakfast, clean teeth etc' underneath each heading. Add in childcare, school pickup, quiet time, family day. Plan the day and show your child. Leave it somewhere where they can always see it.

You can adapt this to a monthly calendar for older children and teens. You can block out days where you have no energy so they can manage their own expectations of you. Have 'non-cancer' activities or things on there too.

SEPARATION ANXIETY

A special stone, a button, a small soft toy or a badge that they keep on them. Stitch on a piece of cloth on the inside of a school jumper. For drop off at school, ask a teacher to give your child a job to focus on – like sharpen the pencils.

RETURNING TO YOUNGER BEHAVIOURS

Be patient, they usually disappear.

DEALING WITH ANGER

Show them safe ways to get their anger out and let them decide on how they want to do it. Try making a Scream and Shout Box, throwing a ball in the garden at targets, screaming into a pillow, ripping up paper.

BEING LESS PLAYFUL OR CREATIVE, QUIET OR WITHDRAWN

Encourage play by playing with them. Lego, cooking, sticker books, reading. Make them a den to be quiet in. Being around pets can be a great comfort.

REFUSING TO ENGAGE

Try different ways of communicating: using small post it notes, WhatsApp messages. They could be in charge of the closed family & friends Facebook page that communicates your updates.

LOSS OF APPETITE

Talk about their worries. Mix up where you have dinner, on the sofa, bedroom picnic, on the bed together with mum.

TRYING TO BE EXTRA GOOD TO MASK EMOTIONS OR ACTING OVERLY MATURE

Encourage childlike activities, like pillow fights, messy play, karaoke. Praise them for being silliness.

BECOME AFRAID OF THE SOMETHING THEY WEREN'T AFRAID OF BEFORE

Don't shame them or belittle them. Try simple solutions. Afraid of the dark = get a torch; afraid of dogs = meet a calm friendly dog; afraid of crowds = avoid them.

SLEEP PROBLEMS

Park their worries before bed, using the worry box. Put something on their teddy that remind them of you – cut up old T-shirt. Sleep in the same room. Get them a torch. Use audiobooks, recorded voice, or music.

LOT OF ENERGY

Ask the school, ask friends to help out. Sports, music, dancing, cooking. Try calming activities at the end of the day – puzzles, reading, listening to calm music.

FAKE HEADACHES, STOMACH ACHES

Treat them as if they are real, e.g. give water, cold flannels, plasters. Try giving raising their self esteem by giving them small challenges they can succeed at, and giving them undivided attention (even just 5 mins)