



**Special Needs
Inclusion Program**

TRENTON MFRC

PARENTING: TIPS FOR SUCCESS

PUT THE OXYGEN MASK ON YOURSELF FIRST

You need to take care of yourself so you can take care of your child. In order to help a child to self-regulate you need to be regulated yourself or you may just add more stress to the situation! You can't help your child swim if you are drowning!

TEACHABLE MOMENTS ARE CALM MOMENTS

A meltdown is not the moment to teach or explain because we know that the part of their brain that can understand and process those conversations is NOT online during those difficult moments. Your child needs to be in a calm and alert state to absorb those teachable moments!

MONKEY SEE MONKEY DO

Remember that one of your biggest jobs as a parent is to be their role model. Show them the way you want them to act in difficult situations. Narrate or model how to calm down or manage big feelings. This helps what you teach them stick because it isn't confusing them with "do as I say not as I do."

LISTEN... BUT REALLY

Often as parents we feel like we need to have all the answers so we listen to respond. One of the best things we can do for our kids is to listen to really hear what they are saying. It's OK to say I don't know and it's OK to pause before responding, it lets them know that you are really thinking about what they are saying and taking it seriously!

CONSISTENCY IS KEY

One of the biggest tips we can give you is to be consistent! This applies in a few ways:

1. Be consistent in how you respond to certain behaviour, unpredictability is really challenging for kids and can cause more behaviours.
2. ROUTINES!! Have a routine and stick to it. Again, predictability is really comforting for kids and helps them practice appropriate behaviours for the situation.

WATER WHAT YOU WANT TO GROW

One of the hardest things about being a parent is being the one that is responsible for teaching them all the hard stuff, which often comes with a lot of enforcing limits and correcting behaviours. Our kids also need to hear what they're doing well and what good you see! Try to cheer them on more than you correct, focus on the good and that's what you will encourage!





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BE AWARE OF YOUR REACTIONS

Your reactions can be key in your child's behaviour. Notice how you react and how that influences your child and adjust as needed. Know that negative reactions, like anger or ridicule for example, can exacerbate behavioural or mood concerns with your child.

WHY? AND WHY NOW?

Undesireable behaviour is often deeper than just your child misbehaving. It is helpful to consider the WHY and WHY NOW of the undesireable behaviour you're seeing. Maybe they are having a meltdown over the wrong colour plate because they are craving control and wanted to choose the plate, for example.

BE THEIR SAFE HAVEN

Show your child that your love is unconditional. Do not change how you treat them regardless of their behaviour. Be loving and accepting of who they are. Allow them time and space to work through their feelings WITH you. Be responsive to your child's signals and be sensitive to their needs. Remember that your child needs to feel SAFE first and foremost.

FIND OPPORTUNITIES TO SAY YES!

Kids ask a lot of questions and make a lot of requests that we often say no to. It can be helpful to find opportunities to say yes, or ways to turn it into a positive. Instead of saying "No we can't go to the park" redirect it to what you can say yes to like "How about we go play outside instead!" OR "Going to the park sounds really fun, why don't we plan to go tomorrow!"

BE FLEXIBLE

Things don't go according to plan everytime so it is important that we build flexibility into the way we parent to ensure that we can bend as needed. This idea of flexibility is also important as we go through our parenting journey as what we are doing when our child is a toddler will not work forever so we need to adapt and let our parenting follow the lead of our child.

ADJUST EXPECTATIONS DURING TIMES OF ADDED STRESS

During times of added stress it is important that we adjust our expectations of our kids AND ourselves. Give grace and flexibility to get through the tough times and focus on CONNECTION to see you through the challenging times.





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PARENTING: MANAGING BIG EMOTIONS

IDENTIFY THE FEELING

When your child is struggling with big emotions it can be helpful to reflect the feeling to them. It gives them the words to identify what it is that they're feeling, now and for the future. It also lets them know you're there for them and listening. It also lets gives them the opportunity to correct you! Maybe you think they're mad, but really they're sad, having the chance to correct you on this gets the conversation started.

"You're really _____ (sad, mad, frustrated, etc.)"

"Your heart hurts."

"You feel really upset right now."

VALIDATE, VALIDATE, VALIDATE!

We want children to know that all feelings are normal and acceptable. It is easy to punish in these moments due to the behaviour that often accompanies a child's big feelings but we have to remember that they are little and may not know how else to communicate their feelings or get them out. The biggest thing we can do is validate their experience and let them know its OK.

"You didn't feel like that was fair."

"It really does suck."

"That was a hard day."

"You feel _____ when _____."

"I hear you."

LET THEM KNOW YOU'RE THERE

Often what children need in difficult moments is to know that they're safe, loved and supported. It is important to connect in these moments to let them know that their feelings or behaviours don't change our love for them or us being there for them. Staying calm and reminding them that you're there and nothing has changed in your relationship is key to helping your child feel safe and secure to learn to work through the big feelings they are experiencing.

"You are safe."

"I love you."

"I'm right here."

"I'll be right here for as long as you need me."

LIMITS

Often our children will push limits when they are experiencing big emotions, in this case we need to acknowledge what they're feeling when limits are enforced and help them find a safe alternative.

A good way to do this is to verbally acknowledge how they're feeling, reinforce the limit, and help them to find the alternative. Below is an example:

Feeling: You are frustrated with your brother.

Limit: But your brothers book is not for destroying

Alternative: You can rip up this paper instead.

