

HOT TOPICS

CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR TIPS

Presented by Parent Network of WNY - October 2016

It's the end of October and we find ourselves winding down from our summer activities and headlong into back-to-school routines and responsibilities. This time of year brings a change in weather patterns, especially in Western New York. These weather patterns affect the clothes we wear and the temperature changes throughout the day. Also, most children are getting to know new adults, classmates and adjusting to new routines. Many are also learning their way around new school buildings. These times of change can prove challenging for children with special needs and their families.



Children with special needs may not understand or have the words to let us know what is making them feel uncomfortable, frustrated or overwhelmed. They may be telling us through their behavior. A child might get angry and frustrated easily when you ask about their day, refuse to wear jeans or long pants even when it is a cold day, and might demand a lot of attention. Whatever the behavior, it is important to remember that it is all a form of communication.



A helpful tip in challenging moments like those is to take a deep breath, pause and think. Think about your child and what skills he or she may not have learned yet or simply can't do because of their special needs. For example, does she have trouble organizing her thoughts and things? Does he have a sensory processing disorder that makes it difficult for him to adjust to the feel of clothes like long pants after a summer of shorts? Did the teacher tell you that your child has trouble reading "social cues" (a look on someone's face for example) or difficulty "transitioning" from physical education class to math class?

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Don't forget to ask your child to share with you what he/she is concerned about. A good strategy here is to ask questions about the problem you are trying to solve. What were you thinking when you refused to put your jeans on? Why do you think you remember your homework some days and not others? Listen to your child's answer and repeat it back to them.

You could start the conversation with "I've noticed that..." or "I wonder if..." If you don't understand what they are trying to say you could say "that's great... tell me more! ..." You could also ask your child "What do you think would help you..." or "What could I do differently when...?"

Once you've thought through what you know about your child, the next step is to identify the problem that needs a solution. Write down your concerns and those of the professionals who are working with you.

Tip of the Month

A valuable resource is the Lives in the Balance non-profit organization founded by child psychologist Dr. Ross Greene. On their website at <http://livesinthebalance.org> you will find videos and live and a radio program and listening library with helpful information. Downloadable tools are available to help you gather information at <http://livesinthebalance.org/paperwork>.

For more information go to our behavior page on our Parent Network of WNY website at <https://parentnetworkwny.org/information-and-resources/topic:behavior/> and watch a short video and download our fact sheet.

For more information... call 1 on 1 Support at 716-332-4175.



“If you want
to change
attitudes,
start with a
change in
behavior.”

-William Glasser