

## What can I do to help?

As a parent it is easy to respond negatively to your child's challenging behaviour. In some situations the child realises that the way to get your attention is through challenging behaviour. These children may need help to build their self-esteem and social skills, as well as to find more positive ways to express themselves.

The best way to help your child is to pick a calm time to talk together about his or her behaviour and to suggest other ways to act when they are feeling angry, sad or frustrated. Let your child know clearly the behaviour you expect and what is not acceptable. Try to catch your child doing the right thing and reward or praise this. If possible, try to ignore some of the things your child does wrong.

It is also important to use simple, yet firm and consistent consequences. This is easier to say than to do, but if you give in to difficult behaviour, children learn that it is a way of getting what they want. It usually doesn't help to smack your child. Instead, you could try doing different things, for example sending your child to his or her room for a short period, or have your child miss out on a favourite TV program.

You could also try:

- spending regular and relaxed time with your child
- letting your child know you notice the good things he or she does
- asking them if they are worried about anything.

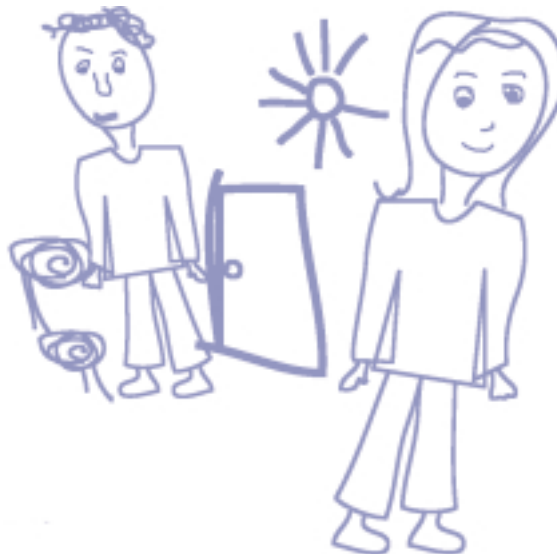
## Who can I contact?

If you are concerned about your child, it may be useful to contact:

- your general practitioner
- a paediatrician
- a psychologist
- your local community health centre
- your child's teacher, student welfare coordinator or assistant principal if there are school difficulties.

If you feel that your child's situation is urgent and you live in the Western Metropolitan Region, you may consider contacting:

- **The Royal Children's Hospital Mental Health Service**  
Intake Service on **1800 44 55 11**  
between 9.00am – 5.00pm,  
Monday to Friday.



# *challenging behaviours*

## Challenging Behaviours

Parenting is hard work and all children can be naughty at times. However, there are some children whose behaviour can be extremely difficult and challenging to manage.

Challenging behaviours can cause disruption both at home and within the community. They can affect a child's ability to solve problems, cope with life stresses and enjoy normal activities with family and friends. Not all challenging behaviour should be seen as a 'phase' or something they will 'grow out of'. A child's behaviour often shows how he or she is feeling and should be taken seriously.

Children with challenging behaviours may have difficulty making and keeping friends and getting along with others. Without professional help, they may go on to have problems with study, work, and with the police.

## What can contribute to challenging behaviours?

There are no clear explanations for why a child develops challenging behaviour, but there are things that can contribute. For example:

- personality
- family life
- learning difficulties
- difficult experiences the child might go through
- social isolation
- poor social skills.

## How do I know what to look for?

Some examples of challenging behaviours that can cause problems are listed below:

- being stubborn and very assertive
- upset by changes in routine
- being very irritable
- argumentative, especially with parents and other authority figures
- ignoring rules
- annoying others
- temper tantrums
- easily angered and aggressive
- unwilling to follow instructions.

If these behaviours are ongoing and interfere with day to day life, you may need to seek help.



## How can I look after myself?

Caring for a child with challenging behaviours can often lead to feelings that can be overwhelming, such as anger, guilt or sadness. These may be normal responses to the stress that you are experiencing. It is important that you have enough support from family and friends to help you. It may also be helpful to find out about any support groups that you could contact

By looking after yourself, you will be better able to look after the special needs of your child.

Dealing with a child who has challenging behaviours can often have an effect on other parts of your life. For example, it can put a strain on your relationships with other family members. Counselling may be helpful in working through some of these issues. Sorting out these problems will also help your child.