



Having a child with behavioural issues can be challenging. While many schools and educators are trained to deal with kids who struggle with their behaviour, parents may find themselves ill-equipped to handle the challenge of a child who is acting out. If you have a child with behaviour problems, and you are looking for ways to help manage that behaviour at home, the following ideas may help. These creative techniques can help children feel calmer, more focused and more empowered when they start to feel out of control.

Breathe Through It

If your child has anger or behavioural issues, one great way to calm him down is by doing a guided meditation or breathing exercise. When your child begins to have a tantrum or can't stay focused on a task at hand, have him sit in a chair or on a yoga mat on the floor and close his eyes. Then, lead him on a guided meditation to get him refocused and breathing. Ask him to imagine his favourite place in the world, like a beach or a summer camp. Then, ask him to imagine what he sees, feels, hears and smells. A meditation can last anywhere from five to 30 minutes, and it can help children who have pent-up anger feel both calmer and more positive.

Create a Rewards Menu

Positive reinforcement of good behaviours can be one of the best ways to encourage children with behavioural issues to behave properly. To

reinforce good behaviour, make a "menu" of rewards that a child can choose from when he behaves well or completes a task without complaining or getting derailed. Some reward ideas include getting to choose what's for dinner, having an extra half-hour of television time or getting a special snack or treat.

Come Up with a Daily Schedule

Sit down with your child and come up with a daily schedule for both weekdays and weekends. Allow your child to have input into the schedule, and try alternating activities that he does not enjoy (homework) with ones that he does (a half-hour on his bike). Having a concrete plan and routine each day helps minimize the number of disputes about what your child should be doing at any given time, and allowing your child to help you make the plan gives him some agency, which feels empowering.

Feelings Exercise

Give your child a piece of paper with a blank circle or face drawn on it. Then, ask him to draw a picture of how it feels to be angry. Repeat the exercise with a number of feelings: happy, sad, scared, frustrated, jealous and so on. Having your child think about and illustrate what feelings do to a person can help him get in touch with what he is actually feeling, and this can help limit outbursts that occur when he is having a hard time dealing with negative emotions.

Body Scan

In the middle of a behaviour episode or just prior to one, you can have your child do a "body scan" to relax and calm overwhelming feelings. To start, have your child focus on his head and face, tighten all of the muscles there, then relax them. Repeat going down the body: the neck, torso, legs, hands and feet. At the end of the body scan exercise, children may feel calmer and more relaxed and also more in touch with what their body is feeling. Having a child with behavioural issues can be tough, but arming yourself with the knowledge of how to handle them can make parenting easier. By getting your child to learn about his emotions and how to calm down in a tense situation, you can help him manage his feelings.

