

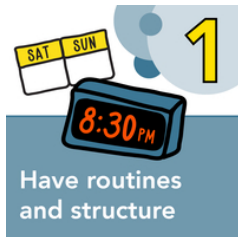


Doors slamming, eyes rolling, crying, yelling...sound familiar?

When children act out, whether they're 3 or 13, it can be challenging to respond calmly and support them in the moment. It's also hard to change a child's behavior, but there are things you can do.

One step in behavior change is understanding the why behind their actions. It's helpful to explore the source as kids act in certain ways to communicate and meet their needs. They behave to have specific things given to them and to connect with adults about something important. This may include caregiver attention, emotional support, feelings of control over an unfamiliar situation, or even basic things like a snack or water.

When things don't go their way, children may use certain unwanted behaviors to bring immediate attention to their needs. While it may be difficult to eliminate such unwanted behaviors, we can reduce them. Here are some ideas to get you started:



Have routines  
and structure

Kids' mental health and behavior benefits from **routines and structure**. Having a consistent schedule so they know what to expect is helpful. Consider posting one in a central place and discussing the schedule regularly.



Meet basic needs  
(sleep, food, etc.)

Make sure they're **getting enough sleep**. Are they eating and drinking enough? Having these basics covered will help a child's mood and behavior.



Are they getting plenty of **attention and affection**? Kids thrive when they know that they're cared for. Handing out high fives and hugs can be reassuring.



Set **clear expectations**. Having a visitor over? Going to a park for a playdate with a new friend? Going to a relative's house for a weekend? Get specific ahead of time about how you'd like your child to behave. For example, "At grandma's house, we ask before we get a snack from the refrigerator."



Offer **lots of praise** when you see the behavior you want. If your child is being quiet in the library, rather than just saying "good job," try to be specific, like, "I really appreciate how you are using an inside voice here at the library." Attention and praise motivate a child to repeat that behavior.



**Give rewards for positive behavior**. This could be giving them something they like (time on the playground, a favorite game) or taking away something they don't like (giving them a homework break or a day without chores). Download a tip sheet on praise and rewards for positive behavior and get started today.



### Rewarding Positive Behavior

You can help motivate your child's positive behaviors by sharing specific rewards that they care about.

#### Start by Giving Them Something They Like

##### First Pick

Giving kids a choice is powerful. Consider letting them pick:

- |                             |                                |                       |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| A menu item for a meal      | Activity for a family fun day  | Chips/cereal to get   |
| Three songs for a road trip | Video to share with the family | Movie for movie night |
| Game to play as a family    | Fast food/takeout              |                       |

##### Spending Time Together

Spending time with you is special. Even giving them 10 minutes is great!

- |                           |                          |                        |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| Play a card game          | Try a craft project      | Dance together         |
| Paint each other's nails  | Blow bubbles             | Go on a scavenger hunt |
| Toss a ball to each other | Build something together |                        |

##### Add Ons

Add a bonus when they've really gone above and beyond.

- |                                |                                 |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Special prize                  | Online game                     |
| Pick an extra book for bedtime | Craft supplies                  |
| Stickers                       | 10 extra minutes of screen time |
| Card or board game             | After school snack              |
| Bedtime 10 minutes later       |                                 |



**ON OUR SLEEVES**  
The Movement for Children's Mental Health

**Wolfson Children's Hospital**

While no child will behave perfectly, encouraging and praising positive behavior may help increase it.

Finally, it's also important for adults to take care of their mental and physical needs. This ultimately benefits everyone at home!

Don't forget to share how you're using On Our Sleeves resources. Share what activities you're trying on social media, using #OnOurSleevesJax and #OnOurSleeves so we can see! You may also hit the reply button to tell us your On Our Sleeves story.

Sincerely,  
Wolfson Children's Hospital

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The mission of On Our Sleeves is to provide every community in America access to free, evidence-informed educational resources necessary for breaking stigmas about child mental health and educating families and advocates. For more information, visit [OnOurSleeves.org](https://OnOurSleeves.org). To access educational resources and revisit the mission of On Our Sleeves®, visit [WolfsonChildrens.com/OnOurSleeves](https://WolfsonChildrens.com/OnOurSleeves).

If you or someone you know is thinking about suicide, contact the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline by calling or texting 988 or contact the Crisis Text Line by texting “START” to 741-741.

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