

Parenting Tips



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**SETTLEMENT SERVICES
IN THE BOW VALLEY**

Connecting Immigrants and Community

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Introduction

Parenting is not easy. Sometimes parents are confused about how to handle their kid’s behavior, how to approach a situation, or how to communicate with their kids.

Settlement Services created this parenting booklet to help guide parents in some areas of parenting that they find quite challenging: introducing discipline, establishing rules and structure, talking about sensitive topics, keeping kids home from school, managing screen time, coping with stress.

We understand there are many issues that parents deal with on a day-to-day basis. Raising kids takes a lot of hard work and tender loving care. We salute you, parents! You are doing a great job!

“What do tantrums, tears, and laughter have in common? They are all great opportunities to connect with your child.”

Remember that kids deserve to be heard too. When they feel connected to you, there’s harmony in the home.



Effective Discipline

There are many different ways to teach your child acceptable behaviors.

As parents, your goal is to discipline in a way that will encourage responsibility in your child, increase their self-esteem and strengthen your relationship with them.

HELPFUL STRATEGIES:

Model correct (good) behavior

- Show your child the right way to act or do a chore

When possible, ignore annoying behavior

- Try to ignore behavior such as whining and tantrums (as long as your child is not trying to get hurt). Do not ignore behavior that could hurt your child
- When your child acts this way, he/she wants your attention.

Instead, pay attention to and encourage good behaviors. Over time the behavior that you ignore will decrease and the good behavior you pay attention to will increase



Use distractions (younger children)

- Try to distract a child who starts to misbehave (this is also called redirecting)
Example: If your child is fighting with another child over a toy ask your child to come help you with a special task or that you need their help

Use logical consequences (discipline)

- Use discipline that matches the inappropriate (bad) behavior

Example: if your child draws on the wall, have the child help with cleaning the walls

Example: if your older child breaks the rules with how they can use their cell phone, take the cell phone away for a specific length of time

Use time-out (younger children)

- Use time out to deal with harmful behaviors such as hitting, biting or kicking. This can be used once your child is at an age that they can understand (around 3 years old)
- Have your child sit by themselves in a place with no distractions (Away from TV, computer and other family members)
- At the end of the time out, explain to your child what they did wrong and why the behavior is not allowed
- Time outs should be one minute for every year of age (example: 3 minutes if the child is 3 years old)

Reward appropriate (good) behavior

- Set rules and expectations for your child and reward your child when they follow these rules
- Try not to use food or treats as a reward
Example: if your older child gets their chores done, they can go out with their friends

Rules and Structure

Children need rules and structure because it gives a sense of security and control. They handle change best if it is predictable; children fear the unknown – routines can help them know what is coming next and what to expect.



What is important when you make rules and structure?

- Be consistent and predictable
- Respond to your child's behavior the same way, every time
- Routines can help to improve your child's behavior and your relationship with them
- Your child's behavior will change when there are clear consequences for breaking rules
- Be positive! Reward your child for following rules and routines

Creating family rules

- Involve all family members when making family rules, and the consequences for breaking them
- Rules can be about how you treat one another, safety, manners, politeness, respect and daily routines
- Rules can change if the family decides together to change them

Example: use "please" and "thank you"

Example: be home by the time decided

Routines

- A routine is having the same activities at the same time, each day
- It is important for children to have routines that they follow each day. These routines may include a morning routine, after school routine, evening routine, and bedtime routine. Your weekend routine may be different than your weekday routine.

Example:

Morning – wake up, eat breakfast, say goodbye and leave for school at the same time each day

After school – arrive home and do homework at the same time each day

Evening – eat supper together as a family at the same time each evening

Bedtime – take a bath, read a book together turn lights off at the same time each night. Bedtime routines can help your child settle down easily and make sure they get enough sleep each night.

How many hours of sleep does my child need each night?

Age	Hours of Sleep
0-3 months	14-17 hours
4-11 months	12-15 hours
1-2 yrs.	11-14 hours
3-5 yrs.	10-13 hours
6-13 yrs.	9-11 hours
14-17 yrs.	8-10 hours

Talking about Sensitive Topics

There are many difficult topics that you may want to talk to your children about. These may include sex, drugs, bullying, and suicide.

Parents are a child's most important role model and first teacher. Having open communication and strong relationships with your child is very important.

TIPS TO MAKE THE CONVERSATION EASIER:

Plan what you want to talk about (if you can)

- If you think about what you want to say before you talk to your child you will be able to express your thoughts more clearly. This will also help you to be less emotional or stressed during the conversation
- Be flexible based on how your child responds

Schedule a time to talk to your child or do an activity together

- If you plan a time to talk with your child, it gives them some time to prepare. Knowing in advance what you want to talk about will help them respond more calmly
- If doing an activity helps to relax your child for the conversation, such as playing basketball, it will be more effective than sitting down with them

Use good communication skills

- Use good eye contact, show your child that you are listening
- Once your child has finished talking, repeat back to them what you understood that they said. Ask them if this is correct
- Talk to them and tell them your thoughts in a calm way
- Ask them to repeat back to you what they heard you say. Tell them if they are right, and correct them if they are not
- If a solution is needed, think of one together

Remove distractions or interruptions

- Make time for your child and remove all possible distractions
- Turn off your cell phones, computers, tablets, T.V.
- Meet in a place where other people will not be able to interrupt you

Listen to your child – allow them to respond and give feedback

- Give your child the opportunity to talk and tell their side of the story and how they are feeling – your child needs to feel heard and understood
- Support your child and show compassion towards how they are feeling
- Allowing your child to be heard will give them the support they need to admit when they have done something wrong, or to be able to ask a difficult question



Keeping kids home from school

Reasons why your child may miss school

- Sick
- The day is recognized as a religious holiday and your child and family belongs to this religion
- Your child has been suspended from school by the principal and your child is not permitted to return to school yet
- Your child has been expelled from their school and has not been given permission to attend another school
- Family emergencies, death in the family

Is your child too sick to go to school? Does your child have any of these symptoms?

- Vomiting or diarrhea
- Earache, headache, sore throat or recent injury
- Is short of breath or wheezing
- Seems very tired and needs rest (flu symptom, different from tired because of not enough sleep)
- Really bad cough that cannot be controlled
- Discharge from the eye
- Has a rash
- Head lice
- Fever

**if your child has any of these symptoms, check with your doctor if the child should stay home*

Does your child want to miss school, but is not sick?

- Talk to your child about why they do not want to go to school
- Meet with your child's teacher to see if something is happening at school that makes them not want to go
- Don't lecture your child about school – support them and show them that you believe in them
- Explain to them why it is important that they go to school

“The way we talk to our children becomes their inner voice.”

-Peggy O'Mara

“There is no such thing as a perfect parent so just be a real one.”

-Sue Atkins

Screen Time

What is Screen Time? Screen time is the use of computers, cell phones, tablets, television, video games, or anything electronic.

How much screen time is okay for children?

- Children less than 2 years old, screen time is not recommended
- Children 2-5 years old, less than one hour per day
- School aged children, parents can decide how much time

Why is too much screen time bad for children

- Too much screen time may lead to:
 - sleep difficulties
 - weight problems
 - vision problems
 - aggressive behavior
 - problems with social relationships

Screen time for preschool children: how you can help

- Be with your child during screen time and watch what they are doing
- Make sure the programs are educational and good for their age
- Try not to use screen time to calm your child down or as a reward

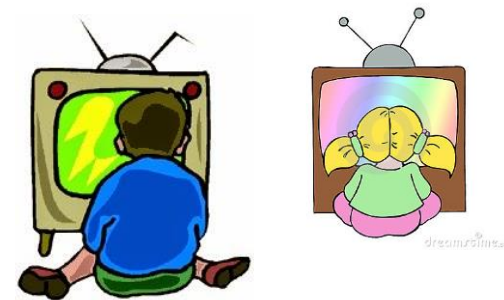
Screen time for school aged children and teenagers: how you can help

- Make sure their screen time activities are okay for their age
- Talk to your children about what they are watching and why
- Watch for aggressive behavior from your child, especially if they are playing video games or watching violent or scary shows

- Talk to your child about what is real and what is not (fantasy vs. reality)
- Encourage your child to watch programs that increase learning
- Help your child balance screen time with sports, activities, spending time with family and friends, and outdoor time

How can you set boundaries and rules for screen time?

- Make a rule that homework and chores must be done before screen time is allowed
- Have specific times when screen time is not allowed (example: meal times, no screen time after 10pm)
- Watch to see if your child is getting enough sleep. Sometimes kids stay up late on the internet or chatting online with friends – if this is a problem, don't allow phones or tablets in their bedroom late at night



“Parenting isn’t a practice. It is a daily learning experience.”

-Unknown

Managing Stress

What is Stress? Stress is how our body responds when we have problems that we have to work through. Stress comes from both good things and bad things that happen to us.

What can cause stress?

- Finances/money
- Working more than one job
- Parenting
- Drug and alcohol use
- Finding safe and affordable housing
- Family conflict (divorce, infidelity)
- Family violence
- Family reunification (bringing families together again after being apart)

How do you know when you have too much stress?

If you have too much stress, you may notice changes in your body and mind

- Headaches, pain
- Sleep difficulties
- Feeling unhappy
- Low energy
- Feeling overwhelmed and alone
- Not wanting to spend time with friends or family
- Thoughts about ending your own life

How can you reduce or lower your stress?

You can make decisions in your life that will help to reduce stress. If you try to ignore or avoid stress, it will get worse.

What are some things you can try to help lower stress?

- Keep good sleep habits – do your best to get enough sleep
- Be active – go for a walk or run, play a sport, play with your kids at the park
- Eat healthy and limit caffeine
- Don't drink alcohol, don't smoke and don't do drugs
- Slow down your mind – practice meditation, breathing exercise, prayer
- Communicate with close friends or family about things in your life that make you stressed

