

I Can Choose What Works Best for My Children

GUIDE FOR PROFESSIONALS

Knowledge of parenting and child development is an important protective factor. Parents who understand the usual course of child development are more likely to provide their children with developmentally appropriate limits, consistent rules and expectations, and opportunities that promote independence.

No parent can be an expert on all aspects of child development or on the most effective ways to support a child at every age. As children grow, parents will need to continue to learn and respond to children’s emerging needs.

Parenting styles need to be adjusted for each child’s unique temperament and circumstances. Parents of children with special needs may benefit from additional coaching and support.

Key Points to Cover With Families

<p>Children have reasons for behaving the way they do.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the parent to identify a challenging behavior they have seen recently. Ask: <i>What do you think your child is feeling or needing from you?</i>
<p>Parenting is a tough job! Every parent has strategies that work and areas where they struggle.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask: <i>What is going well with your child? What is not working as well?</i> This is an opportunity to explore the parent’s perspective. If a strategy is harmful (e.g., spanking), suggest positive alternatives.
<p>How we were parented affects our parenting.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is natural to parent our children the way our parents did or to try to avoid repeating our parents’ mistakes. Ask: <i>How do you think the way you were parented influences your parenting decisions?</i>
<p>No parent can know everything. All parents need advice at times.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask: <i>Where do you go when you have questions about parenting?</i> (e.g., family, media, teachers, friends, books) Offer resources where they could get expert advice, such as parenting classes or online sources (e.g., CDC, Raising the Future, healthychildren.org, or Abriendo Puertas/Opening Doors).
<p>It takes time to change habits, but it is never too late to try something new.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage parents to commit to one small change. Ask: <i>What do you think will work best for your child and family?</i>

More resources on [knowledge of parenting and child development](#) can be found on the Child Welfare Information Gateway website.

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CONVERSATION GUIDE

Being a great parent is part natural and part learned. All parents face challenges and need advice along the way.

Child's Name: _____ **Challenging Behavior:** _____

What's Happening	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Why do I think my child behaves this way?▪ What do I notice before this behavior occurs?▪ What makes it better or worse?	
Current Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ How do I handle this now?▪ How is this working for us?	
My History	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ How did my parents handle this behavior when I was a child?▪ How did I respond?▪ What do I like and dislike about their approach?	
Trusted Experts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Who do I trust for parenting advice?▪ How do they suggest I handle this behavior?▪ What do I like and dislike about this approach?	
Things to Try	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ What is the one thing I could try <i>before, during, or after</i> the behavior occurs?▪ Where could I receive additional support, if I need it?	