



States of Guernsey
Children and Family
Community Services

Daily Living

Positive Approaches to Challenging Situations



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Developed by:

**Positive Behaviour Support (PBS)
Team**

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Getting Dressed

Mornings can be tricky, not everyone is a morning person. If your child is doing an activity, asking them to get dressed may be met with a resistant response at times.

What to do? (Preventative Strategies)

- Give a warning in advance “5 more minutes”
- Use a timer if needed
- Give clear directions “Now get dressed, Next TV”
- Reduce distractions so it is clear what is expected
- Give choice of favourite items of clothes (if it isn't a school day)
- Use a reward system – e.g. star chart – getting dressed earns a star

What happens if problem behaviour occurs?

- Try to avoid repeating failed instruction - if a verbal prompt does not work, try a visual prompt (e.g. Now-Next) and/or object of reference (e.g. an item of clothing).
- Try to make the next activity motivating following getting dressed
- Give reassurance “I will help you”



Brushing Teeth/Hair

Brushing teeth/hair can be tricky at times, which can be due to a variety of reasons:

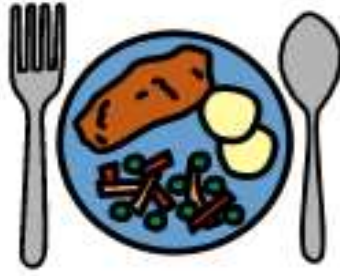
- Does not like the feel/sensation of this
- Does not understand what is expected/what to do
- Does not want to stop doing a preferred task

What to do? (Preventative Strategies)

- For teeth, explore preferred types of toothbrush - electric vs normal and preferred flavour/colour of toothpaste. For hair, give a choice of comb or brush and whether to brush it wet or dry.
- Put together a mini- schedule of each step of the task so it is clear what is expected.
- Use 'Now-Next' statements or visuals
- Make the activity fun (singing a song while brushing teeth/hair)

What happens if problem behaviour occurs?

- Restate Now-Next statement/schedule
- Refer to Mini schedule of the steps of the task
- Give option of help/no help
- Model activity by brushing your own teeth/hair
- Praise attempts/celebrate little wins (this can be built on gradually over time)



Meals/Snacks

Sometimes mealtimes can be stressful for variety of reasons:

- Child's food preferences
- Struggles to sit down for extended period

What to do? (Preventative Strategies)

- Encourage participation and involve in meal prep
- Give Choices of what to have – limit to 2 – “will we make this or that?”
- Set a time for breakfast/lunch/dinner
- Give warning prior to this e.g. 5-10mins
- Try to prevent your child filling up on snacks and beverages before meals
- Whenever possible, eat with your child and eat the same foods he/she is eating. Use active modelling and tell your child how much you like the foods.
- Praise your child for tasting new foods and other appropriate mealtime behaviour (e.g., sitting at the table with others).

What happens if problem behaviour occurs?

- Limit attention on inappropriate mealtime behaviours. You want your child to learn that he/she receives attention for eating, not for refusal. Avoid begging, pleading, or threatening your child for not eating.



Playing with others

Playing can be a socially demanding situation for some and we may need to do some teaching around this.

What to do? (Preventative Strategies)

- Let the child take the lead on playing with toys and copy. Don't put any demands on the child at this time.
- Slowly begin to take the lead on parts of the activity. Practice who takes turns first. If the child is okay with you taking part/lead in some parts of the play – try teaching more sequences with that toy e.g. put the cars into a car wash, put gas into the cars etc.
- Work on increasing the child's time on task so that he/she can engage with adults while playing for longer periods of time.
- Once a child can play with an adult for 3-5 minutes, we can start to introduce peers.
- Firstly, we would teach the child to tolerate playing near peers. Once the child is okay with parallel play, we can teach interactive play.
- Use natural play opportunities e.g. instead of two children building two separate block towers, they take turns building a tower together. Once they can play together and share some toys, we can work on increasing more conversation skills during play.

What happens if problem behaviour occurs?

- Reduce conversation and eye contact and let the child take the lead. Don't put too much pressure on the child to play. The goal is gradually work on tolerance and enjoyment during play.



When Parents can't play

There will be times when parents are juggling multiple tasks therefore learning to wait in this situation is a key skill to learn.

What to do? (Preventative Strategies)

- When you want the child to engage in play independently, direct him/her to the play area and play with him/her for a couple of minutes.
- Ensure the child is engaging with a toy, then place the wait card in his/her line of sight and say, "Wait and play". After placing the card, walk away from him/her – out of sight if possible.
- After 20 seconds, go back to the child and praise him/her for independent playing and leave again. This should continue every 20 seconds until the one minute has elapsed.
- At the end of the waiting period, remove the card, praising him/her for waiting and immediately play with the child and give him/her lots of attention for a couple of minutes.

What happens if problem behaviour occurs?

- If the child begins engaging in behaviours of concern while in the waiting period, do not provide attention and redirect him/her back to the play area. Restart the 20 seconds wait time.
- First increase the 20 second wait period and when the child can wait and play without any problems for the full minute, increase this gradually.



Cleaning/Tidying

Cleaning/Tidying is an important life skill to learn. Teaching this at younger age is important.

What to do? (Preventative Strategies)

- Create a list of jobs that everyone in the house does and when – this provides clear structure. This might include things such as: tidying up toys, making bed, laundry etc.
- Start with easier tasks before more demanding tasks.
- If the child has not done it before – model the task to them or watch a video of how it's done.
- Create step by step instructions using photos for tasks that have multiple steps – this will serve as a prompt/reminder.
- Create a reward system for task completion. When the child does ___ number of tasks, they earn _____.

What happens if problem behaviour occurs?

- Redirect back to the list and reward schedule
- If behaviour continues, give them some time to calm down before revisiting the task.
- Limit repeating failed instruction – change the way you ask. E.g., verbal, visual, gesture, object of reference



Accepting No

Accepting “No” is a universal trigger – some respond better than others. However, it is a situation that everyone will face so learning to cope with it is important.

Learning to Accept No

1. Wait for a request of something that is a preferred item or activity.
2. Immediately following the request say “Not Right Now but you can have...” (Offer 2nd best option).
3. If there is no problem behaviour, immediately reinforce appropriate behaviour with 2nd best option that was offered, along with praise (“good listening”) and a high five.
4. If there is problem following the “Not right now” statement – withhold access to item requested as well as 2nd best option.
5. Plan to ignore problem behaviour if it does not cause harm to themselves, others or property. Repeat the offer of the 2nd best option – offer at least 3 times before moving on. Use distraction/diversion to redirect the child's focus away from the original request.



Transitions between activities

Moving between activities can be unpredictable and stressful for some.

What to do? (Preventative Strategies)

- Present the child with a Now-Next Schedule when he/she begins one activity and verbally explain “Now we are doing _____ & Next we are doing _____”
- Schedule highly enjoyable activities following less enjoyable activities e.g. Now – Grocery Shopping, Next – Playground.
- To begin with, start with short transitions between activities.
- When the transition between activities is not immediate (requires walk/drive), provide distraction during the waiting period e.g. toys/i-pad.
- Provide regular praise throughout.

What happens if problem behaviour occurs?

- If the child engages in behaviours of concern when you present the instruction to transition, do not remove the instruction or allow access to next activity if it is immediately available. Instead, maintain the instruction and repeat every 2-3 seconds and using prompts (Now/Next Schedule, Gestures/Pointing).
- Set up many opportunities that require the child to transition from one activity to another so you can practice this approach in order for the child to learn the skill for more natural transitions (i.e. morning/night time routines).



Shopping

Shopping can be a stressful task as there may be multiple items to purchase in a noisy/busy environment.

What to do? (Preventative Strategies)

- Plan the duration of the visit – to begin with start with a quick visit to buy 1 item and gradually build on this
- Bring a comfort toy/ear defenders for your child if it would be helpful
- Make a shopping list (visual/written) so items can be ticked off as they are found
- Where possible try to involve the child as much as possible – pushing trolley/carrying basket, putting items in trolley/basket
- Provide regular praise throughout. A reward system could be put in place so that they get their favourite treat at the end of the shopping trip

What happens if problem behaviour occurs?

- Redirect to timer/shopping list
- Remind of reward/incentive for completing task
- Try to follow through with task. However, if problem behaviour continues and is disruptive - finish the task – withhold reward.



Restaurants

Restaurants can be busy and an overwhelming environment for some people.

What to do? (Preventative Strategies)

- Provide a choice of restaurants/food using written or visual supports
- Follow through with preference if possible
- A Social Story might be helpful to talk through where the child is going and behaviours expected in the environment
- Identify a time that the restaurant is less busy to begin with so it is less overwhelming. Alternatively, order in advance to reduce the wait.
- Bring items that could be used as a distraction/coping strategy e.g., toys/iPad/ear defenders

What happens if problem behaviour occurs?

- Use distraction/coping strategies (toys/ear defenders etc.)
- Use Now-Next Statements e.g. Now: Food, Next: Home
- Offer a break (e.g., toilet/fresh air)
- If behaviour becomes too disruptive, consider leaving and trying again another time.



Going to the Doctor

Medical appointments can be scary for a lot of people. It is important we try to make it as stress-free as possible as medical appointments are important.

What to do? (Preventative Strategies)

- Try to book an appointment at a quiet time (e.g., first or last app) to avoid long delays
- Put together a Social Story to prepare the person for the visit so they know what to expect (guidance for this can be found at gov.gg/cds under PBS)
- Incorporate role-play into the day prior to the visit (e.g., playing doctors)
- Schedule a reward following a doctors visit to make the visit more motivating

What happens if problem behaviour occurs?

- Use distraction (e.g., grab bag of toys, i-pad etc.)
- Reminder of reward on offer
- Offer a break (e.g., toilet/fresh air)
- If behaviour becomes too disruptive, consider leaving and trying again another time.

We have a separate Desensitization to Needles Booklet if required.



Bathing

Bathing routines may not be the most preferred activity for some children.

What to do? (Preventative Strategies)

- Prepare everything in advance before prompting to start routine to avoid delays e.g., products, towel etc.
- Break the task down into smaller steps – make it visual if possible so it is more predictable (e.g., remove clothing, get into bath, wash hair, wash body etc.)
- Plan for parts of the task they may find aversive (e.g., water in eyes) and plan around this (e.g., head/body position when washing hair, cloth or visor to block eyes)
- Put toys into the bath to make it more motivating - make the task fun
- Encourage independence for parts of task they can do and support with more difficult tasks to reduce demands
- Now-Next Visual with motivating task following bathing (e.g., Now – Bath, Next – iPad)

What happens if problem behaviour occurs?

- Redirect to task analysis / now-next visual
- Use distraction (e.g., toys, music etc.)
- If behaviour is escalating further, stop the task and try again another day



Bedtime

Good sleep is important for everyone for both physical and mental health.

What to do? (Preventative Strategies)

- Establish a routine that is calm and predictable before bed (lotion, pyjamas, books, etc.)
- Keep routine consistent each night (e.g., take a bath, put on pyjamas, brush teeth, use toilet, story-time, say goodnight)
- Use visual supports every night to teach routine
- Limit snacks to those without sugar or caffeine & limit liquids 90 minutes before bedtime
- Limit bright lights (e.g., i-pad / tablets)
- Limit non-sleep activities during the day in bedroom
- Plan for child to fall asleep in the bedroom in his/her bed
- Ensure environment promotes sleep – lighting, noise, comfort items

What happens if problem behaviour occurs?

- Where appropriate, avoid providing what the child is looking for e.g., attention, play etc.
- If behaviour continues to escalate, redirect child to bed and offer a story/brief time with you if it will help de-escalate the situation
- Wait until the child falls asleep and then leave the bedroom

We have a separate Sleep Booklet with a range of interventions if required.

**For further information, please contact the PBS Team on
01481-222000.**