STRESS-FREE DISCIPLINE
Simple Strategies for Handling Common Behavior Problems

SARA AU and PETER L. STAVINOHA, PH.D.
Authors of Stress-Free Potty Training

A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK
Decode Your Child’s Behavior

Identify the ABCs

Think back to the most recent behavioral issue in your family. Can you identify the antecedent, behavior, and consequence?

Antecedent: __________________________________________
____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________

Behavior: __________________________________________
____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________

Consequence: ________________________________________
____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________

How could you have reframed this situation to positively affect your child’s behavior? Could you have avoided some of the contributing factors or triggers that served as antecedents? What if you chose a different consequence? Would that have made it more or less likely the behavior will repeat? Try making these changes the next time this situation crops up.
Chart Your Assets and Liabilities

Put a checkmark next to the asset or liability that describes you, and ask your spouse or co-parent to do the same. Then, add other assets or liabilities you see each of you possess at the end of the chart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assets and Liabilities</th>
<th>You</th>
<th>Co-Parent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calm demeanor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tolerance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irritability/short fuse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rigid expectations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenting for the first time</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Prior experience in parenting</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Finally, ask, “How does your partner respond to your weaknesses?,” and answer by circling one of the following:

- Irritated
- Dismissive
- Neutral
- Supportive
- Totally in Synch

Use this chart to start a conversation with your spouse or co-parent and get on the same page in terms of your reactions to your child’s attitude behaviors. As co-parents, you want to play to each other’s strengths and minimize each other’s weaknesses. Consistency and persistence are what will yield behavior improvements in your child.
Log Tantrums

If your child has repeated tantrums, you should keep a log of the ABCs. Include:

The time of day relative to naps and meals: ______________________

What was happening prior to the tantrum: ______________________

_________________________________________________________________

What situation the child was about to go into or what situation she was being asked to leave: ______________________

_________________________________________________________________

Which people were around: ______________________

What happened during the tantrum: ______________________

_________________________________________________________________

What happened after the tantrum: ______________________

_________________________________________________________________

Reflections on whether you could have done something differently: ______________________

_________________________________________________________________

With a log of this nature, you can look for common denominators in terms of ABCs. Once some of those repeating triggers are identified, you can make adjustments that may prove helpful in preventing and effectively managing future tantrums.
Describe Homework at Your House

Choose the adjective that you and your child would use to describe homework at your house:

EASY  PRODUCTIVE  NEUTRAL  UNPLEASANT  TORTURE

Were your answers the same as your child’s?  YES  NO

Why did you answer the way you did? ______________________

______________________________

Did either of you choose the Torture answer?  YES  NO

If yes, what tactics have you used that have brought about the most negative reactions from your child? ______________________

______________________________

Do you see your child’s resistance or negativity toward homework as:

INCREASING    STAYING THE SAME    DECREASING

What tactics could you use to make homework less confrontational? ______________________

______________________________

______________________________

Now, take the information you’ve learned in this exercise and request a parent/teacher conference. You don’t have to get into all the details, but you can share with the teacher that you’d like to ensure that doing homework is a positive process for learning.
Mealtime Stress Test

List the circumstances that contribute to stress at your mealtimes, and include everything that occurs to you.

Breakfast: ____________________________________________
Lunch: _______________________________________________
Dinner: _______________________________________________

Often, a purposeful slowing down of your pace can reduce the stress. Would you consider some sort of calming ritual to get yourself into a more peaceful mindset?  YES  NO

What are some things you could do to ease your transitions? Some examples are waking up 10 minutes earlier in the morning, preparing ingredients for meals ahead of time, or decompressing on the couch for 10 minutes when you get home. (An occasional pre-dinner drink or glass of wine worked quite well for our parents’ generation.)

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Whatever you need to do to transition yourself into a more peaceful state of mind is worth the investment of time. As their role model, your kids take their cue from your behavior, and if you’re at ease, they’ll be more at ease.
### Table 7-1 Attitude Behaviors Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Your Rating</th>
<th>Co-Parent</th>
<th>Other Adult</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eye-roll</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backtalk</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarcasm/smart aleck comments</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denial of responsibility</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dismissive tone</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant arguing</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foul language</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>______________</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Your Child’s Set of Social Skills

Taking stock of your child’s social skills today can help you determine where you may need to offer assistance or reinforcement. Some of us are just better at social interactions than others. Use this activity to reflect on your child’s ability to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Ability</th>
<th>No Skills</th>
<th>Some Skills</th>
<th>Good Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Make friends</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retain friends</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play one-on-one</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play as a group or team member</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pick up on social cues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Deal with conflict</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Join a group where he or she doesn’t know anyone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handle teasing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: _____________________________________________</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Seeing it laid out in this manner should give you some clues as to where your involvement can assist your child. No one is going to be perfect at all of these skills, but all of them are skills you and your child can work to improve.
Instill Resilience and Grit in Your Child

Swooping Situations

Think about the last time you swooped in and either rescued your child from a potentially difficult situation or took over for him on a frustrating task. What was going on at that moment?

Now, think about what your child could have learned from the situation if you hadn’t jumped in.

Take this information and, the next time this situation or a similar one presents itself, remember how problem solving on his own can add to your child’s resilience. Take a step back, and watch how your child tries to figure out a solution. If asked, you can offer a bit of advice, and then inquire, “What do you think?”
Take Stock of Your Family’s Stress

Sometimes it’s hard to see how stressful a situation is when you’re in the middle of it. Try to reflect on what your life’s stressors are right now and how they have impacted the day-to-day activities of each member of your family. These can include issues in your child’s behavior at this time, but also anything in your work or personal life that detracts from your ability to parent effectively right now:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Have you drifted into routines that adjust to the stress, even if they take you away from life as normal?  YES  NO

If yes, in what ways?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Do you feel like you’re at your wit’s end dealing with this problem?  YES  NO

If you end up deciding to see a professional, bring this list with you as it will inform your evaluation.