

# Firm, Fair & Consistent®

Medford Township Public Schools  
Elementary School Counselors

Guiding Students for School Success

## Express anger responsibly

You've had it with your child's behavior—and you let her know by yelling. Now you're upset with yourself. You didn't mean to yell. You didn't want to make things worse. To avoid losing control when you are frustrated:

- **Take a break.** Before responding, calm down. You may need to step away for a little while.
- **Write notes.** Too emotional to speak quietly? Craft a nicely-worded letter to your child instead.
- **Start with "I."** Rather than defining your child ("You are so messy"), describe your perspective ("I am worried that someone will spill something on your school books").
- **Don't look back.** Address what is happening now, not what happened in the past—or even what might occur later.
- **Be fair.** If your anger is influenced by other problems, such as tiredness or frustration with work, don't take it out on your child.
- **Make a rule.** Decide that angry yelling isn't allowed in your family. Hold one another responsible. Be caring and respectful. Remember the importance of apologies.
- **Listen to yourself.** Keep a recorder handy to record your angry words. If you yell, hearing it later (and imagining your child's feelings) can lead to change.



Source: Melanie Howard, "When Mom Has a Temper Tantrum," ClubMom, Inc, [www.msfa-apa.org/News/Mom\\_Temper\\_Tantrum.doc](http://www.msfa-apa.org/News/Mom_Temper_Tantrum.doc)

## Exercise may improve behavior at school

Exercise is good for the body—and it might affect grades, too. A new study indicates that exercise may cut boredom and improve focus. It may boost self-esteem as well. How much is needed to make a difference in grades? About 20 minutes of vigorous activity at least three days per week, the research shows.



Source: Jorge Cruise, "Fit Smart: Exercise is a key to academic excellence," *USA WEEKEND*, April 20-22, 2007 (Gannett, 1-800-487-2956, [www.usaweekend.com](http://www.usaweekend.com)).

The first contact you make with your child's teachers can set the stage for the rest of the year. It's a good idea to get to know the teachers early—before there is any possibility of problems arising.

Consider writing a short letter introducing your child. Point out his strengths, skills, interests—and areas where he might need extra help.



## Teach respect & tolerance of others



Here's an easy way to teach your child to respect others: Try exposing her to different cultures. The more she knows about other peoples' lives and habits, the more open-minded and tolerant she may become.

Here's how to start:

- **Select foods** from different countries to nibble together.
- **Attend community events** that celebrate other cultures.
- **Spin a globe** and point out faraway lands.
- **Visit the library** and explore stories from around the world.

## When you don't have a choice

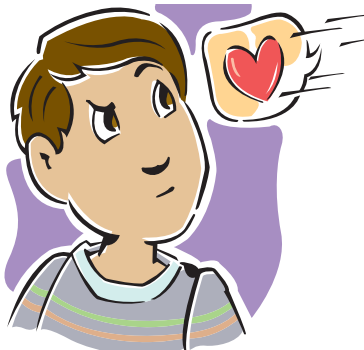
It's normal for your child to fuss about doing homework. But you'll make matters worse by giving him a choice he doesn't really have. If he must complete an assignment now, don't say, "Would you like to finish your math?" The truth is, he *needs* to finish his math—whether he'd like to or not. Instead, make a simple but firm statement: "No more TV. It's time for math."



Source: Jeanne Shay Schumm, Ph.D., *How to Help Your Child with Homework*, ISBN: 1-57542-168-2 (Free Spirit Publishing, 1-800-735-7323, [www.freespirit.com](http://www.freespirit.com)).

## No more 'Because I said so!'

Tired of replying, "Because I said so!" whenever your child balks at being told what to do? Stop! The next time he demands to know why he must do something, try this response instead. Say, "Because I love you!" After all, that's probably why you give him commands in the first place—because you care about him and want him to do the right thing.



Source: Scott Brown, *How to Negotiate with Kids ... Even When You Think You Shouldn't: Seven Essential Skills to End Conflict and Bring More Joy Into Your Family*, ISBN: 0-14-200398-0 (Penguin, 1-800-631-8571, www.penguin.com).

## Questions & Answers

**Q:** I know I should focus on my high-strung child's positive behavior and praise her if she's good, but when can I do it? Between work, school and chores, we're always frazzled—and it leads to bickering. Help!

**A:** It can be hard to find "down time" with your child, especially if she's high-strung. Not only are you facing the everyday stresses of life, you're also exhausted from dealing with your demanding youngster. Still, it's vital to set aside a few minutes each day to simply be together. It's during these relaxed moments that you'll be able to appreciate your child and to reinforce her good behavior—which she can carry into the classroom. Here's how to begin spending "special time":



1. **Remember the goal.** You're looking for calm moments where you can enjoy—not scold or correct—your child. This gives you the best chance for noticing her good behavior.
2. **Don't wait until she's about to tackle homework.** Choose a time when she's already playing. If your child likes to hit tennis balls against the garage while you make dinner, put down your spatula and head outside. Don't disrupt her, but do pay attention to what she's doing. Don't ask her any questions. Just watch.
3. **Make a few simple comments.** "Great swing!" "Nice stroke!" After a while, be more specific. "You're getting much better at your backhand!" Use a funny sportscaster's voice if you think she'll like it.
4. **Check the clock.** After 15 minutes or so, let your child know you enjoyed time with her and you'd like to have this special time every day.

Source: Russell A. Barkley, Ph.D. and Christine M. Benton, *Your Defiant Child: Eight Steps to Better Behavior*, ISBN: 1-57230-321-2 (The Guilford Press, 1-800-365-7006, www.guilford.com).

## Turn down the volume

Rather than having to shout to get your child's attention, use a different tactic. When you need to tell him something, speak softly (or even whisper).

By turning down the volume, you'll force him to really pay attention to what you're saying. You'll also be able to get your point across calmly. And best of all, it may keep you both from shouting across the room!

## Whining? Say you don't understand!



If your child's whining drives you nuts, plead ignorance! In other words, pretend you can't understand what she's saying. As soon as she starts whining about homework, say, "Sorry, but I just don't know what you're trying to tell me." If her whining continues, say it again (and again). In time, she'll start to see that whining has no effect—and get to work!

Source: "6 Ways to Stop Whining," iVillage.com, <http://parenting.ivillage.com/tp/tpbehavior/0,,6xvg,00.html>.

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