

Growing up is hard to do!

CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR:

It's normal for children to act out once in a while no matter what age they are.

Children look to their parents for help in setting limits on their behavior. Some of the more challenging behaviors for parents to deal with are:

- tantrums
- biting
- spitting
- foul language
- hitting, kicking or scratching

• **Children act-out for a reason.** Step back and take a deep breath. Look at why your child might be behaving this way. Children usually act-out when they are angry or frustrated. Because young children have limited skills and language to express their feelings, they use their bodies instead. It's much quicker for a two year old to hit or bite the child who is taking away the car he is playing with, than to figure out what to say. Don't expect these behaviors to stop overnight. *Learning to express feelings in an acceptable way is a life long process.*

Learn about typical behavior for your child's age. Talk with other parents, your child's teachers or your pediatrician. Check out a few good books on child development from the library. Attend a local parenting class or workshop.

Consider your child's temperament. Is your child always on the go, running, jumping and climbing, or is he quiet and able to sit playing with one toy for a long period of time? Each child is born with their own set of internal signals that determines how they will deal with the world around him. You can't change your child's temperament, but by understanding it you can use better strategies for dealing with his challenging behaviors.

Look at his day. Has there been a recent change in his schedule? This might include not taking naps anymore, changing child care programs, or starting a new grade. Some children adjust more easily than others to changes in routines.

Check for physical clues. Little bodies spend lots of time and energy growing. Being sick, tired, hungry, or having to wait more than a few minutes may make it too difficult for your child to stay in control of his behavior.

Consider what supervision he is getting. Adults can help children make choices to avoid a problem or keep a situation from blowing up. This could be as simple as suggesting he use the sand box now because there are already five children waiting to use the swing.

Look for added stress in your child's life. A move to a new home, a new baby, divorce, or too many scheduled activities can add more stress than your child can handle.

• **Your child learns best by watching your behavior.** When dealing with challenging behavior it is especially important to remain in control of your own behavior. Use words to express your feelings and do not use physical punishment. If you are so angry that you cannot control yourself, go to another room in your home telling your child that you need time to calm down.