



Hurtful VS Helpful Responses to a Child:

Hurtful

- “Stop being so bad!”
- “Do you want me to get rid of you?”
- “What is wrong with you?”
- “Do you want to get spanked?”
- “Because I said so”
- “Who is going to want you if you keep acting like this?”

Helpful

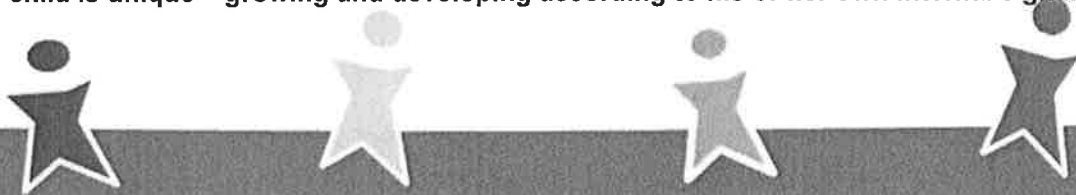
- “I see you are (insert feeling word), please stop (specific behavior)
- -Give choices!: “You have a choice right now: either continue (unwanted behavior) and (specific consequence will occur) or you can (preferred behavior) and (positive consequence) will happen.”
EX: “You have a choice right now, you can continue to kick and yell and choose no TV tonight or you can choose to talk to me calmly and you keep TV and maybe get what you are asking for.”
- “Do you think this is a good choice? What would be a better one?”
- “It’s ok to be mad, not ok to do (unwanted behavior), do this instead”
- (Give an actual reason for request)
- Just don’t say that! - DO NOT equate worth of child with behaviors – – saying things like “I love you, I want you here, I am committed to you, etc)
SHOULD be said often and not presented as conditional:
- I’m feeling very frustrated/impatient/upset when you act this way, but I need (time out, calm voice, etc) before deciding what to do
- ***** “I am committed to you and love you even when you make bad choices” *****





Children at this age:	Sexual Development – What to Expect
Birth to Age 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn about love and trust through loving relationships with parents and their caregivers • Explore their bodies including their genitals • May have erections or lubricate vaginally • Experience genital pleasure • Begin to learn expected behaviors • Begin to notice differences between the bodies of boys and girls, children and adults
Age 3 to 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Become very curious about bodies, and the difference between boys and girls • May play house, or doctor or other forms of body exploration or “sex play” with friends • Learn that they are either male or female • Learn about male/female roles by observing others • Enjoy learning about and talking about body parts and functions • Find adult bathroom activities very interesting • May ask questions about pregnancy and birth such as “Where did I come from?” • May learn words related to sex and try using them • May mimic adult sexual behavior • May begin to masturbate
Ages 6 to 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin to have strong friendships with children of same sex • Be affected by stories they hear in the media (e.g. about AIDS or abuse) • Have definite ideas about male and female roles. • Have a basic sexual orientation and identity • Want to be like their peers; for example, boys may feel pressure to choose the type of toys and activities that other boys choose. • May engage in name-calling and teasing. • May continue with sex play.
Ages 9 to 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May begin the changes of puberty • Become more modest and want privacy • Continue to value same sex friendships • May experience increased sexual feelings and fantasies • Develop crushes on friends, older teens, teachers, rock stars, etc. Romantic feelings may be directed towards the same sex and/or the opposite sex. • May take part in sexual exploration with peers • May masturbate to orgasm • May have to face decisions about sex and drugs
Ages 13 to 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the changes of puberty. • Place great value on independence. • Experience increased sexual feelings and desire physical closeness with a partner. • May face peer pressure to be sexually active whether or not they feel ready. • May change close friendships in favor of romantic relationships. • May make choices which lead to pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases. • May have to face violence in relationships (sexual harassment, date rape).

Each child is unique – growing and developing according to his or her own internal signals.





What Is A Trigger And How Can I Help A Child Who Has Been Triggered?

A trigger is an overwhelming sensation that causes reliving of some aspect of the abuse or traumatizing event. It's much easier to be compassionate and supportive when you see that the child's behavior is a response to the past not a present desire to be disruptive.

Triggers can be:

~ Conscious or Unconscious ~ An object ~ A touch ~ A movement ~ A smell ~ A place ~ A body sensation ~ A feeling such as fear, abandonment or anxiety ~

To an abuse victim, sudden, seemingly irrational fears can result in feelings of panic and out-of-control terror; which can result in emotional and/or behavioral reactions.

The best way to help a child who is being triggered:

- **Remain calm**
- **Reassure the child**
- **Bring attention to the present reality**
- **When appropriate offer statements such as:**
 - ***"You're safe now, no one will hurt you"***
 - ***"Look at your feet right here on this floor"***

When the heat of the moment is over, asking questions can help you identify if the child's behavior may have been linked to a traumatic memory from their past.

- ***"What thoughts went through your head?"***
- ***"What feelings were you having when you chose this behavior?"***
- ***"Did that remind you of unhappy things?"***

Specific Examples of Triggers

- Jennifer's abuser smoked cigars. Whenever she smelled smoke, her heart began to pound.
- Tommy's abuser gave him chocolate Hershey bars every time he performed a sex act. He now has a strong angry reaction to being offered chocolate.
- CJ wore his favorite monkey pajamas on the night of his abuse. He is terrified of zoos now and refuses to go there. He is even afraid of stories of monkeys.
- Olivia frequently forgets to brush her teeth to the point that her family was very irritated. Her family only had mint-flavored toothpaste. Olivia wrote a list of things that reminded her of her offender – she had negative associations to both the smell and taste of mint toothpaste.
- At the same time every day, Stacey threw a huge fit. Later, her family identified that the music from a particular show really bothered her. Stacey's molestation occurred every day after school at precisely the hour this TV show aired.





'Time Out' Rules for Young Children

1. **Warning:** Request specific behavior and count to 3 for behavior to occur (very important to follow through!)

2. **State intention:** "Due to (insert behavior here) you will go to time out now for (amount of minutes should be age of child)"

3. **Time out!:** Take child to time out spot
 - If child is not doing time out correctly, reset time (minimum interaction with child)

4. **Process:** When time out is over, calmly and patiently ask child:
 - a. What did you do wrong?
 - b. What could you do differently next time?
 - c. Request an apology
 - d. Request a hug





Recommended Reading for Caregivers of Trauma Survivors

Children and Trauma: A Guide for Parents and Professionals, Cynthia Monahon

Children Changed by Trauma, Debra Whiting Alexander

Helping Children Cope with Separation and Loss, Claudia Jewett

I Can't Get Over It: A Handbook for Trauma Survivors, Aphrodite Matsakis

Life After Trauma: A Workbook for Healing, Dena Rosenbloom and Mary Beth Williams

Mind Wide Open, Steven Johnson

Parenting from the Inside Out: How a Deeper Self-Understanding Can Help You Raise Children Who Thrive, Daniel J. Siegel and Mary Hartzell

The Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Sourcebook, Glenn Schiraldi

The Scared Child: Helping Kids Overcome Traumatic Events, Barbara Brooks, Paula M. Siegel

Too Scared to Cry, Lenore Terr

Trauma-Proofing Your Kids: A Parents' Guide for Instilling Confidence, Joy and Resilience, Peter Levine, Maggie Kline

Traumatic Stress: The Effects of Overwhelming Experience on Mind, Body and Society, Bessel van der Kolk, Alexander C. McFarlane and Lars Weisaeth

Writing to Heal: A Guided Journal for Recovering from Trauma and Emotional Upheaval, James W. Pennebaker

