



What you can do now your child has finished their Think Children sessions

Now that your child has finished their 1:1 sessions with a Think Children facilitator you may be wondering what you can do at home to help your child. Listed below are a few of the basic skills our facilitators use during sessions and I hope you find them useful. These are meant as a general help list, some of them you may be using already.

Be aware of your tone of voice and body language when communicating with your child/children.

Listening Skills

Practice listening to your child – hear what they are actually saying, reflect what they are saying to you e.g.

Child: "I don't like that".

You: "can you tell me what you don't like about it. Have you ever tried it"

It's not guaranteed to change the child's mind from "don't like" to "like" but at least you will prove to your child that you have listened to them and taken their comments on board and given them the opportunity to talk about likes and dislikes.

If a child has problems sleeping, try and establish what is stopping the sleep.

Allowing the child to explore the issues may give you an understanding of what the child is feeling and together you can work out a successful resolution to the issue.

Boundaries

Children need clear, consistent boundaries in order to feel safe. Make sure that the

boundaries you set are realistic and carry through your actions—don't set goals and then move the goal post, the boundary will very quickly lose its aim. Use “count down” e.g. if bed time is 8.30, start preparing the child at 8.15 by counting down in five minute blocks. Especially important if the child is into an intense activity—it's unrealistic to expect them to switch off immediately.

Quality Time

Often difficult in a busy household where you are juggling all manner of jobs at once but even a regular 5 minutes a day that is just for the child can prove extremely valuable. The latest IT games etc have their place with today's young people but nothing compares with the individual attention of a parent/carer. If possible try to organize an activity on a regular basis, maybe weekly/fortnightly/monthly where you spend quality time with a child, again very important where there are siblings all vying for your attention. It doesn't need to be anything earth shattering or expensive, a visit to the local play park, a trip to town to see a film, or to the park to feed the ducks can be very rewarding for you and of huge benefit for the child.

The Word We Never Use

There is one word that is never used in any of our sessions with children and that is the word “why”. Asking “why” automatically puts children and adults alike into defensive mode. Try instead to use open language e.g.

“can you tell me how that happened” instead of “why did you do that” - this way you are inviting a response, not demanding it.

Acknowledge the child's feelings—if they say they don't want to do something then try exploring their reasons for that rather than telling them “you will do it because I say so” Explain there are times when we all have to do things we would choose not to.

Never belittle their concerns—they may seem trivial to you but to a young person they can seem a big issue. Try and help them to identify their issues and together work out a way of moving forward.

Try to understand their concerns and anxieties, never assume you know how they feel about a particular issue based on how you felt in a similar situation.

Body Language

Learn to read your child's body language—does what they are telling you match their facial expressions, behaviour? Tell them that you can see and understand that they are angry/upset.

Anger is very legitimate but needs to be channelled in a constructive and positive way. If your child is particularly angry about an issue, have a safe space within the home where he/she can let off steam without harming him/herself or any other family member. Consider an activity that may help to release all the pent up anger and frustration.

I hope that you find these comments helpful, they are intended to give you some idea of the techniques that we use when working with primary age children. If you feel you need any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me. My contact details are as follows

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