

# Cool Down BEFORE things Heat Up



For parents  
of Babies, Toddlers and Pre-School Children  
Adapted with permission from 'Cool Down Before Things Heat Up'  
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for the National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse (NCPCA) USA

Bringing up children is not easy and sometimes parents find it very difficult to cope with the behaviour of their child.

Sometimes, parents lose control and might hit, shake or injure their child physically and emotionally.

Parents can learn more effective ways of coping with the stresses of bringing up children. Getting help from a friend, taking a break and getting advice about normal behaviour in children can all help.

It is important to remember that our own problems are never an excuse for abusing a child.

## Behaviours of Children that can Trigger ANGER, ABUSE and FRUSTRATION

### 1. Screaming

- WHAT TO DO -

- ◆ Ask a friend to mind baby for a while. It is a good idea to have two or three friends who can help each other.
- ◆ Ask your local doctor or community health nurse if he or she knows of a home visitor service which could help.

- ◆ If there is no obvious cause, try soothing music, baby massage or warm bath.
- ◆ Call the Parenting Line in your State or Territory.

### 2. Feeding Problems with Toddlers

- WHAT TO DO -

- If baby continues to be unsettled after meals, check with your Early Childhood Health Service or Nursing Mother's Association or doctor.
- Understand that young children like the feel of food between their fingers and like to try and feed themselves.
- Children (like adults) like variety of food in texture, colour and flavour.
- Small children are naturally messy eaters so put a sheet of plastic under the high chair to catch spills.

### 3. Tantrums and Whining

-WHAT TO DO -

- ◆ Talk with other parents about the problem.
- ◆ Ask your child to speak with his/her nice voice and distract with an activity.

- ◆ Find ways to ignore the problem (although this can be difficult when others are around, or in a public place).
- ◆ Ask for help from your local doctor, minister of religion or community health nurse.

#### 4. Biting

##### - WHAT TO DO -

- It is important to know that teething babies need to bite. Teething rings are helpful.
- Have your doctor check your toddler. Sometimes a medical problem is found but if not, a doctor can help by giving you advice about your child's behaviour.
- Ring a Parenting Line in your State or Territory for suggestions.

#### 5. Toilet Training

##### -WHAT TO DO -

- ★ Understand that many children still wet the bed at 4 or 5 years of age. Bed wetting often runs in families. It may also happen when children are stressed by a new experience.

- ★ Contact your local doctor or Early Childhood Service for advice.

#### 6. Disobedience or Untruthfulness

##### - WHAT TO DO -

- ◆ Understand that children will avoid telling the truth if they think they can avoid getting into trouble (grown ups often do too!)
- ◆ Remove temptation by putting forbidden things away until such time as children learn control.
- ◆ Tell children why it is important to be truthful and why some things can be harmful to them.
- ◆ Explain that rules are made to keep us safe.
- ◆ Children don't always see things the same way as adults, and we need to keep our expectations of children in line with their abilities.
- ◆ Show by example!

## REMEMBER

- ⊗ Most children go through periods of tantrums, disobedience and untruthfulness. Many take time to be toilet trained.
- ⊗ No parents are perfect.
- ⊗ All parents become frustrated at times
- ⊗ A support network can help before problems cause stress.
- ⊗ All parents need help at some time.
- ⊗ Ask for help if you think you need it.
- ⊗ Children learn more from their parents than we realise. They learn about love and sharing and self control and how to get help. If they learn these things well from you, when the time comes for them to be parents, they will do a good job too.