

# Tricky Moments

Tips for parents on coping with  
your child's behaviour



## About this book



All children do things that can be hard to deal with.



We call these **Tricky Moments** because it can be hard to know what to do.



If your child has a learning disability or autism they might be more likely to have a Tricky Moment.



This is because they can find it harder to use words to tell you how they feel.

So they might use other ways to tell you how they feel instead.

They might tell you how they feel by...

- shouting



- hitting



- refusing to eat food



- doing the same thing over and over.







This book has some tips for what to do when your child has a Tricky Moment.



All children are different.



Some of the tips will work for you and your family.



Some of the tips might not work.



But we hope you will find something that works for you!

## Why your child behaves the way they do



If your child has a Tricky Moment they are trying to tell you something.



They might be scared.



They might be frustrated.





They might not understand what they are supposed to do.





So when your child has a Tricky Moment, the most important thing is to ask “what is my child trying to tell me?”


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## Kicking, hitting and shouting



### Here are some tips that might help



Try to stay calm.

It can be hard to stay calm.



Try not to get angry.

This can make your child more upset than they already are.



Tell your child what they are doing and why it is not okay.

For example, say “you are hitting me. That hurts me and I feel sad”.



Count down out loud from 10 to 1.

This will give your child time to calm down.

And it lets them know when they should stop kicking, hitting or shouting.



It might help your child to count down using your fingers too.



Say “stop”.

Put your hand up in a stop signal at the same time.

Hearing and seeing the stop signal will help your child understand what they are meant to do.



Try using a reward chart.

You can get one from the internet.

Your local library can help you print one.



When your child behaves well,  
you can put a sticker on the chart.



When they have earned a certain  
number of stickers you can give them  
a reward.



When your child is behaving well,  
give them lots of praise.



Your child might kick, hit or shout  
because they are scared.



So you could set up a place where your  
child can go to feel safe.

You can make a tent indoors.



Or you and your child can just choose  
somewhere in your home to be the  
safe place.



When your child has calmed down,  
talk about what happened.

Talk about what they could do differently  
next time they feel that way.



## Asking the same question over and over



### Here are some tips that might help



Tell your child what they are doing.

Say “you are asking the same question again and again”.



Ask your child to use their thinking voice instead of talking out loud.

Tell them “your thinking voice is when it stays in your head and doesn’t come out of your mouth.”



Ask your child the same question back.



Tell your child how it makes you feel.

You could say “When you ask the same question over and over it makes me sad. It means you are not listening to the answer.”



Each time you answer the question use exactly the same words and tone of voice.



If your child is old enough to read you could write down the answer to the question.

When your child asks the question, tell them to read the answer.



Say “1 more question and then we are talking about something else.”



Tell your child what you are going to do next.

This will help them think about something else.

You could say something like “talking time is over. Now we will make the dinner.”



When you answer the question, ask your child if they understand.

Ask them to say the answer back to you.



Then ask them if they want to write the answer down.

This might help them understand the answer.

## Doing the same thing over and over



Some children like to do the same thing over and over.

They might do things like...

- line things up



- chew their clothes



- flap their hands.



If your child has a learning disability or autism they might be more likely to do things like this.





If your child does the same thing over and over they are trying to tell you something.

Your child might do it because it makes them feel good.



They might do it because they are bored.



They might do it because there is too much going on.



If your child likes to do the same thing over and over do not try to stop them from doing it completely.

This could make them upset and worried.

But you might want to help your child spend less time doing the same thing over and over.

## Here are some tips that might help



You can set a time limit to let your child do the same thing over and over.

So if your child likes to line things up, tell them they can do it for 15 minutes.



Set a timer for 15 minutes.

Give them something else to do when the timer runs out.



If your child likes to chew their clothes you can give them something else to chew.

Make sure it is something they cannot swallow.



Keep an eye on your child when they use the chew toy to make sure they are safe.

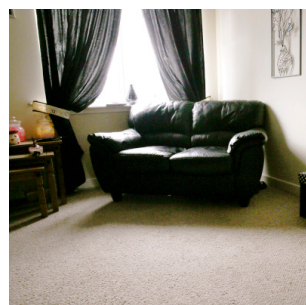
## Doing private things in public



Some children do not understand the difference between...



- a private place like their bedroom



- a public place like the living room or somewhere outside.

So they might do things in public that they should only do in private.

Some things your child should only do in a private place are...

- touch their private parts
- take their clothes off
- go to the toilet.

## Here are some tips that might help



Talk with your child about the difference between a private place and a public place.

Talk about what they should only do in a private place like their bedroom or the bathroom.



If you are in public and your child does something they should only do in private, say “no thank you”.

Tell them what they can do instead.

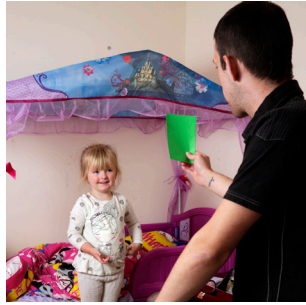
Say “put your hands in your coat pockets”.

Or “put your hands on the table”.



In your home, show your child where they are allowed to do private things.

Use a green card to show them where it is okay.



Take them to the bathroom or their bedroom and show them the green card.

Say “it is okay here, on your own”.

Use a red card to let them know where it is not okay.



Take them to somewhere it is not allowed, like the living room.

Show them the red card and say “it is not okay here”.



You can ask for more help with this from...

- your social worker
- your doctor or health visitor
- your child’s school.

## Not wanting to join in



### Here are some tips that might help



Your child might not want to join in a new activity.

You can help them join in by letting them get used to the activity slowly.

First let them watch.

Then ask them if they want to join in a little bit.



Bit by bit you can get them to join in for longer each time.





Give your child lots of praise if they join in something they didn't want to do at first.



Your child might not want to join in everything.

That is okay too!

Don't force your child to do something they really don't want to do.

## Toilet training



### Here are some tips that might help



When you teach your child to use the toilet, start with a potty.

The toilet can seem big and scary to a young child.



Your child might need time to relax to be able to go to the potty or toilet.

Sit them on the potty or toilet for at least 5 minutes.

Try to relax and be patient.







Give your child lots of praise when they manage to use the potty or toilet.



Even when your child can use the toilet they might still wet the bed at night.

It can take children a long time to grow out of this.



You can help your child with this by waking them up during the night to use the toilet.

Teenage children can still wet the bed sometimes.

If they do this a lot it is worth talking to your doctor about.

## Using swear words



### Here are some tips that might help



If your child uses swear words it might be best to ignore them.

If your child thinks they can make you angry they might be more likely to use swear words again.



If your child uses a swear word tell them a word they can use instead.

So you could say  
"don't say shit, say sugar".



Tell your child why swearing is bad.

Say that swear words are not nice words and other people don't like them.

Tell them that swearing makes other people feel sad.



Ask your child to use their thinking voice instead of talking out loud.

Tell them "your thinking voice is when it stays in your head and doesn't come out of your mouth."

## Problems with food



### Here are some tips that might help



Some children only like to eat a few different foods.

If your child will only eat a few different foods you should still make sure they eat something.



If your child does not want to eat something, try not to get angry at them.

This can make them more upset.

Then they will be even less likely to eat the food!





If your child has autism they might find it hard to eat some foods.

There are lots of reasons for this.

You can ask your health visitor for advice about this.



Your child might not want different foods to touch on the plate.



You can buy a plate with different sections to help with this.



You could make your child's food into a picture to make it more interesting.



You can get your child to try new food by putting a little bit into food they like already.

For example, your child might like mashed potatoes but not cheese.



You could put a little bit of cheese into the mashed potatoes so they can get used to it.



If your child doesn't like a food you can try to hide it.

For example if your child doesn't like carrots you could use a blender to make carrot soup.



Or you can mash the carrots with a fork.

Get your child involved in...



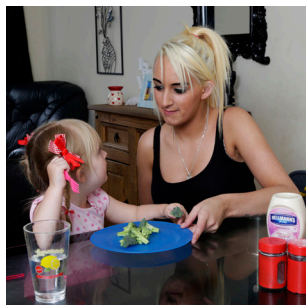
- shopping for food



- cooking a meal



- setting the table.



Keep trying to get your child to eat foods they don't like.

Tell them that sometimes you have to try something lots of times before you like it.

## Not wanting to be away from you



Here are some tips that might help



If you are going away, tell your child when you will be coming back.

Tell them you are not going away forever.

And always come back when you told them you were going to.



If your child is worried about anything, talk to them about it.

Tell them it will be okay.





**You** might feel worried or upset when you are away from your child.



Make sure you have something to do to take your mind off it!

## Problems sleeping



Here are some tips that might help



Set a limit on how much TV your child can watch in their bedroom.



You can use a timer to tell them when to turn the TV off.



Try playing some quiet music to help your child get to sleep.

Tell them that when the music ends they must go to sleep.

They can't ask to play the music again.

When you get your child ready for bed do things in the same order every night.

For example do...

- bath time



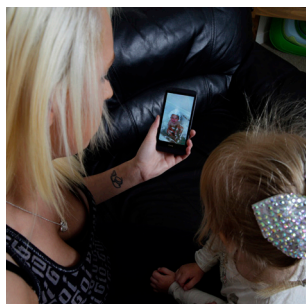
- story time



- bed time.



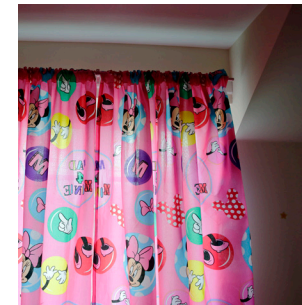
You can show your child pictures of the routine to help them learn it.



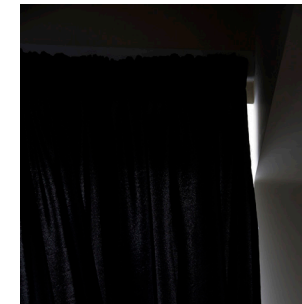
A teddy or a blanket might help your child get to sleep.



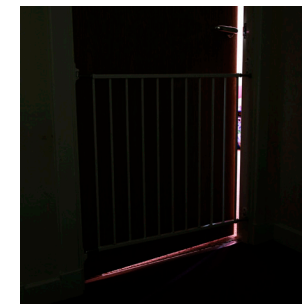
Make sure your child's bedroom is dark enough for them to sleep.



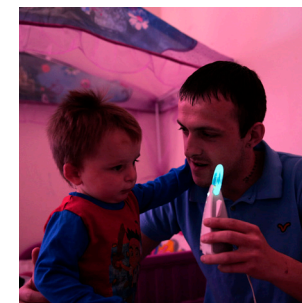
You could put thick curtains or blinds up at the window.



Turn lights off outside their bedroom if they are too bright.



If your child is scared of the dark you could try using a night-light.



Use an alarm clock to help your child learn when it is okay to get up.



Set the alarm for the time you want them to get up in the morning.

Tell them "you are only allowed to get out of bed when the alarm goes off".



This book was written by  
ENABLE Scotland.

ENABLE Scotland has a helpline called  
ENABLE Direct.

If you would like more help with anything  
in this book you can call ENABLE Direct.



The number is **0300 0200 101**.

The line is open 9am – 5pm  
Monday to Friday.

If ENABLE Scotland cannot help you  
with something they will tell you about  
other organisations who can help.