



# Behavior Strategies for Everyday Challenges

Practical Approaches for Children with Developmental Differences

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# 1 Behavior is Communication

When a child acts out, melts down, or shuts down, they're telling you something — even if they can't put it into words. Our job isn't to stop the behavior, but to understand what's driving it and help our child develop better ways to cope. Children don't want to behave badly. When they have the skills to cope, they use them.

## **Hitting, kicking, throwing**

"I'm overwhelmed and don't know how to handle this feeling."

## **Refusing to comply**

"I feel out of control and need predictability."

## **Running away or hiding**

"This is too much — I need to escape."

## **Shutting down / going silent**

"I've exceeded my capacity to cope."

## **Repetitive questions**

"I'm anxious and seeking reassurance."

### **Pro Tip from Our Therapists**

Your child is not giving you a hard time. They're having a hard time.  
The fact that you're reading this means you're already doing something powerful.





## 2 Key Strategies



### Create Predictable Routines

Use visual schedules for daily routines. Give advance warning before transitions: "In 5 minutes, we'll stop playing." Keep routines consistent in order and timing.



### Validate Before Redirecting

Name the emotion, validate it, pause, then problem-solve. "I can see you're really frustrated. That must feel hard. Let's figure this out together."



### Use Positive Language

Tell your child what TO do: "Walking feet" instead of "Don't run!" "Gentle hands" instead of "No hitting!" Children process positive instructions more easily.



### Offer Choices Within Boundaries

Limit to 2–3 acceptable choices: "Do you want to brush teeth first or put on pajamas first?" This reduces power struggles and builds independence.



### The 5:1 Praise Rule

Aim for 5 positive comments for every 1 correction. Use specific praise: "I noticed you shared your toy. That was really kind" instead of generic "Good job."



## 3 De-Escalation & Calm-Down Tools

When a meltdown is happening, this is not the time to teach a lesson. Stay calm — your calm is contagious.

### During a Meltdown

- Stay calm — take a deep breath
- Reduce demands immediately
- Ensure safety, move to quiet space
- Offer sensory support (deep pressure)
- Wait quietly, then reconnect

### Preventing Escalation

- Notice early warning signs
- Offer a break before their limit
- Use a calm-down corner (not punishment)
- Practice calming strategies when calm
- Validate emotions early

## 4 Build a Calm-Down Toolkit

### Physical Strategies

Deep breathing (smell the flower, blow out the candle), wall push-ups, squeezing a stress ball, jumping 10 times, bear hugs.

### Sensory Strategies

Noise-cancelling headphones, fidget toys, weighted lap pad, chewing gum, or listening to calming music.

### Cognitive Strategies (Older Children)

Counting backward from 10, naming 5 things you can see, thinking of a happy place, positive self-talk: "I can handle this."



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**Get Started**

# We're Here to Help

Book a free 15-minute phone consultation to discuss your child's behavior and get practical guidance.

**(630) 965-1232 | [noorpediatrictherapy.com/get-started](https://noorpediatrictherapy.com/get-started)**