

Responding to Children with Early Life Stress



**Family Support
& TREATMENT CENTER**
home of hope and healing

Setting Limits:

Validate emotion

"I know you really want to..."

Set limits

"But [object] is not for [action]."

Give alternatives

*"Tomorrow you can..."
"You can do... instead."*

Explain the consequence

"If you choose [negative action], you choose [consequence]."

GENERAL SKILLS

Check yourself

Kids will pick up on your emotions, attitude, and behaviors. Make sure you are modeling what you want from them.

Don't apologize for consequences

Kids have to know they are responsible for their choices and that choices have consequences. You can say, "I'm sorry you made that choice. Maybe you'll make a different one next time."

Win your battles

Pick your battles. Then when you pick one, win it! If you don't, you are teaching them that if they hold out longer than you, they can get what they want.

"I wonder" statements

Saying "I wonder if..." invites a response without the directness of a question. Kids will be less defensive when they respond.

Identify emotions

Label their emotions for them. When they use inappropriate actions to express emotion, state what they are expressing. They will learn to communicate in appropriate ways rather than with outbursts.

Predicting behavior

Say, "I'm guessing that when [that happens] you'll [respond this way]." If they choose to prove you wrong, admit you were wrong and praise them! If not, point out that you were right.

For withdrawn children:

Notice them! Give them responsibility. Let them know their value and that you are always a source of support.

REMEMBER!

Always keep a predictable environment. Routine helps kids to feel safe and stable.

Pay attention to *messages* more than words. *You don't have to fix it.*
Acknowledging feelings is more important than fixing it.