

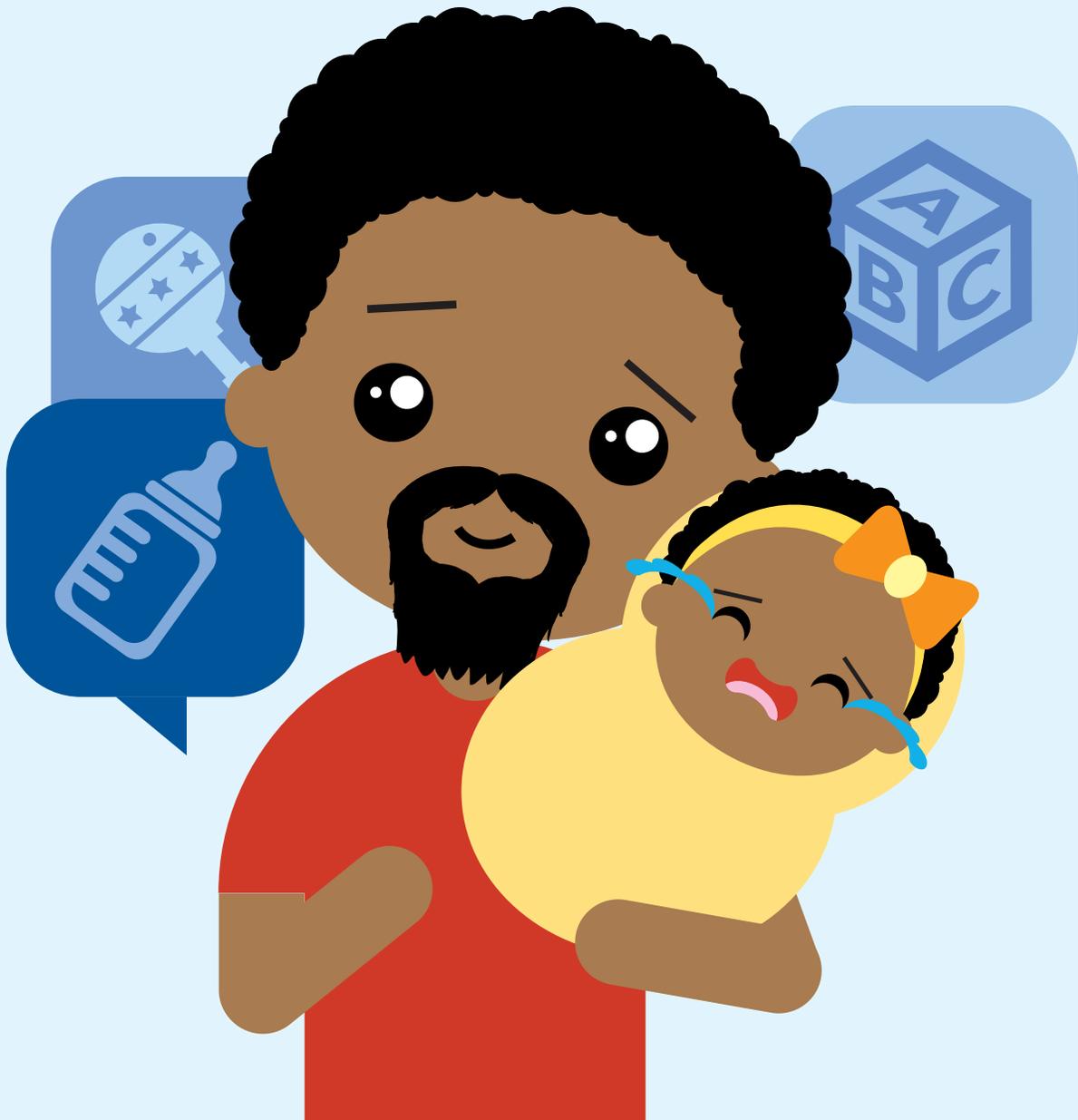
Challenging Behaviors

Children's unique forms of communication and how you can guide them



Challenging behaviors are a natural part of child development.

Children's challenging behavior can be alleviated with support, not punishment. It is important to note, there can be many reasons behind specific behaviors we may consider challenging. Children, no matter what age, do not always have the language or words to express how they are feeling. Caregiving adults can adjust their perception of approaching 'challenging behaviors' to an approach of building trust and providing nurturing and positive interactions. This paired with effective strategies, consistency, and self-care can minimize 'challenging behaviors' and give children the foundation they need to thrive.



A proactive approach

Being proactive means using preventive strategies to better understand your child's needs, which can decrease and/or prevent the likelihood of challenging behaviors occurring.

Dig deep: Try to understand what children are communicating. Knowing the root cause of challenging behavior will help you develop a sensitive and meaningful response.

Commit to uninterrupted floor time

For 20-30 minutes a day, let your child take the lead and meet them in their world. This is how they feel understood and boosts their expressiveness, impulse control and respect for others.

Be prepared.

Anticipate that a child might need extra support during a challenging time, such as when they're hungry, tired or sick.

Provide verbal reminders.

This allows children to understand what is coming next and gives them time to process.

Create routines.

For example, set a bedtime ritual and share meals together at the same time each day. Create a picture chart of your daily routine, and post in a common area.

Foster a safe environment.

Make sure toys, art materials and household items are age-appropriate, and easy for children to find and explore.



Positive Behavior Supports for Toddlers



Behavior	Tip
Biting	Make sure everyone is safe, access and attend to the wound. Teach functional communication and pro-social behavior by encouraging the child who was bitten to say, "Ouch! That really hurt." Introduce appropriate replacements to the child who engaged in biting behavior by saying, "We can bite apples or bananas but we do not bite people."
Saying "No"	Provide a set of choices for your child to choose from: "If you don't like the toy airplane, do you want to play with the toy car or boat instead?"

Challenging Behavior: Preschoolers



Behavior	Tip
Conflicts with others	Teach children problem solving strategies, such as asking, sharing, taking turns, or using a timer. Offer at least two of these as options and ask them what would work well n this situation.
Misusing items	Provide clear and appropriate expectations for the child: "You may cut paper or string, but we do not cut our friend's hair."
Aggression (Verbal and/or Physical)	Teach functional communication and pro-social behavior by encouraging the child who engaged in aggression to express themselves appropriately. You can also redirect the child to a more acceptable alternative: "I see you are throwing rocks. Here is a ball to throw instead."

Take good care of yourself

Addressing behavior challenges is hard work. Self-care helps reduce stress and fatigue, which in turn allows you to better support your child. Here's how you can practice self-care throughout your day and when you feel anxious or overwhelmed:

Stay in the moment and reflect. Acknowledge your emotions and physical state. Observe your heart rate and ask yourself: "What am I feeling? Am I responding, or reacting? Is my body tense? How's my breathing?"

Take a break.

This lets you disengage and deescalate. Take a walk, exercise, or do something you enjoy.



Take deep breaths.

Breathe in through your nose (smell the flower) exhale through your mouth (blow out the candle). This works great for children too!

Focus on gratitude and positivity. Practice positive self-talk: "I'm thankful for my child, I can get through this, this moment will end"; talk to a friend; or even write about your emotions in a journal.



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Challenging behaviors redefined

When it gets overwhelming or discouraging, remember to see a child's challenging behavior for what it actually is: a form of communication. As adults, and as their caregivers, we have the tools to calmly work through the moment, meet our child's need, and strengthen our relationship.

**For more tips on topics related to young children,
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