



Strategies with Kids | Information for Parents

Children with special needs



Parenting a child with special needs is very much the same as parenting any other child. All children need lots of love and warmth, and limits and boundaries to guide their behaviour. Sometimes they also need extra help with some areas such as mobility, learning or sensory input.



“They have amazing abilities”

Behaviour/discipline


Think about whether your child's behaviour is part of their natural development. Most children go through stages where they throw food, have tantrums, or say no to every instruction.

Chat with other parents and ask them what's happening with their children. You'll get lots of practical information and advice and you'll be able to think about the areas where your child might need some extra help.

Some children need extra help with learning and may develop behaviour that is a bit unusual. This doesn't necessarily mean that your child needs specialist intervention. It usually means your child does not understand what you are trying to tell them. It is likely that they are trying to tell you something with their behaviour.



**“Be really
consistent”**



They may not understand because they have trouble concentrating, they don't understand what you're saying or they forget what you have told them. This may mean you have to show them what to do or that you have to use very clear instructions which have to be repeated lots of times.

Your child could also be trying to tell you they are really sensitive to hot and cold, find touching some textures really difficult or they don't know what to do when they are playing with other children. Sometimes they might just be hungry or tired.

Some tips

- Decide whether the behaviour is a big or small problem. Sometimes it's best to overlook some behaviour.
 - Be consistent, this is really important if your child has difficulty understanding instructions.
 - Be firm, without yelling.
 - Tell them when they are being good.
 - Don't smack your child, they might copy your behaviour and smack other people.
 - If you're getting really angry, walk away and take some deep breaths.
 - Don't try to discipline your child while they're having a tantrum. Make sure they're safe and keep an eye on them.
 - Give clear physical prompts. If they hit the cat, show them how to stroke gently and say "stroke the cat gently" not "be nice to the cat".
 - Have routines and structure so your child sleeps and eats at the same time each day.
 - Think about what their behaviour is telling you. Are they tired, frustrated, scared, sensitive to touch or a situation?
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- Encourage and guide your child to play with others, they'll learn lots.
 - Use lots of redirection; divert their attention to something else.
 - Give them choices between two things, rather than an open "what would you like to do".

Support for families

Life with a child with special needs can be very complicated. You may find you have lots of appointments, be dealing with stress or grief, or have extra tasks to do at home. Keep in touch with your friends, go to local support groups and keep your family in the loop. No one can parent on their own. You need people you can talk to, who can support you, and who you can have fun with.

Your other children may also need support to understand what is happening. Try to spend time with them so they don't feel excluded.

**“Allow
time”**



There are lots of support groups for families. Most of these are listed on Family and Community Services national directory of support for families www.familyservices.govt.nz.

***“The stages
might be slower,
but it’s so
exciting”***



You can get more information on local groups from:

Parents of Vision Impaired (NZ) Incorporated

Phone/Fax 07 838 3439

Email paul@pvi.org.nz

www.pvi.org.nz

IHC Library and Information Service

Phone 04 472 2247

Fax 04 472 0429

Email webmaster@ihc.org.nz

www.ihc.org.nz

CCS Information Service

Phone 04 801 0854 or 0800 227 200

Fax 04 382 9353

Email info@no.ccs.org.nz

www.ccs.org.nz

Parent to Parent

Phone 07 834 1108 or

toll-free 0508 236 236

Fax 07 834 1108

Email p2pnational@compuserve.com

www.parent2parent.org.nz

The National Foundation for the Deaf

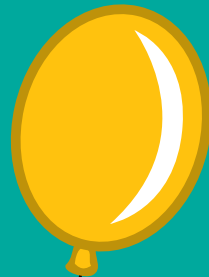
Phone 0800 867 446

Tel/TTY 09 307 2922

Fax 09 307 2923 or 0800 332 343

Email enquiries@nfd.org.nz

www.nfd.org.nz



S.K.I.P

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SKIP supports parents and caregivers
to raise children in a positive way.

For more information go to:

www.skip.org.nz

Email **info@skip.org.nz**

Phone **04 916 3385**

For more information on parent support go to

www.familyservices.govt.nz

and click on Family Services Directory.



**family &
community services**
ratonga ā-whānau, ā-hapori

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