

# Relationships that Nurture

Monthly tips provided by St. David's Center in partnership with Mom Enough

---

## Ways to Help Children Think About Better Solutions for Difficult Behaviors

Audio can be heard here: [Difficult Behaviors](#)

### I. To understand child behaviors, recognize that behaviors:

- Send an emotional message
- Are the child's best strategy to maintain a sense of stability or control
- Are a response to survive a perceived threat (adult may not recognize the perception of danger)
- Serve a purpose

### II. To manage behaviors, we must think about:

- Connecting behavior to emotion
  - Help the child recognize emotions trigger behaviors. One of the ways is to model your own feelings to behaviors you display: "Wow, mom was frustrated we are running late and used her big voice to show it."
- Protecting the child's control
  - Give choices when you can: "You can chose to brush your teeth before putting on your shoes or after."
  - Set up expectations with first, then statements: "First put your toys away, then you can watch the TV show."
- Interrupting opposition in the moment
  - Reframe your beliefs about child compliance; focus on moving forward and getting the child back on track
  - Power struggles allow children to practice resistance
  - Increase your tools of ignoring, distraction, redirection and partnering to problem-solve

### III. To help children think about better solutions for difficult behaviors, try to:

- Offer a way out – sometimes children need permission to be done with behaviors
- Agree to work together
- Recognize what is on their minds – validate their perception and offer your point of view
- Introduce feelings/thoughts – share your ideas about how they feel
- Consider intention as well as action
- Unpack situations together – suggest solutions and anticipate the next time