

Carpe Diem – Seize the Day Blog

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Parenting is one job that never gets a break. This past school year, kids had to deal with a lot of uncertainty. They may have started the school year virtually but maybe they were bounced back and forth between in-person, virtual and finally in-person. Having epilepsy was also a challenge to your child. Some parents may have chosen to have their children attend school in virtual mode all year. The back and forth has no doubt had an impact on your children's behavior. There may have been struggles with sibling bickering, backtalk, temper tantrums, and other child behavior problems every day. To help you going forward, here are eight tips may make a difference in families' lives.

1. Control What You Can: Your Response

Do not let your emotions get the better of you by responding in the heat of the moment with overly harsh punishments. Here is the reality: when you are giving a consequence, what matters is not how bad it stings or how much it inconveniences your child. Instead, what matters is how consistent you are.

Being consistent, measured, and predictable will work even if your child is not demonstrating their discomfort in a visible manner. Do not worry if your child says, "I don't care!" in response to the consequence you give. Stay focused on what you do have control over—your response, not theirs.

The wonderful thing about being confident in this process is that you can stay calm, and, in their corner, which is where you want to be anyway.

2. Walking Away Is Often the Best Response

The parents are frequently frustrated and burned out from constant arguing and power struggles. The technique often recommended to end a power struggle is to just walk away. When your child breaks a rule, give the consequence, and do not get dragged into an argument about whether the rule is fair or not. If your child insists on an argument, simply walk away. When you walk away from a power struggle, you show your child you no longer tolerate backtalk and arguing. You take away their power when you walk away. And by taking some time to cool down and allowing your child to do the same, you are increasing the chance that you will have a calm conversation with your child that is more effective and productive.

3. Tackle One Behavior or Issue at a Time

When we speak with parents, they are often focused on several behavior issues at once. This is understandable. Problems with school attendance, grades, chores, and motivation are all valid reasons for a parent to step in to teach their kids how to meet their responsibilities.

But, trying to do it all at once is not an effective way of bringing about behavior change. Most parents and kids just become too overwhelmed with the pressure to improve every part of their

lives at once. So, slow down and focus on just one or two behaviors. Do this and you and your child will be much more likely to succeed.

4. Role Model the Behavior You Want to See

Role modeling is a powerful way to influence good behavior. It is true that kids watch what we do more than they listen to what we say. Even if it does not seem as if you have any influence at all on your child's choices, remember that perception is not always reality. If you are practicing a consistent method of teaching and coaching your child with clear limits, clear expectations, and appropriate consequences and rewards, then you are showing them how to manage their own problems more successfully.

5. Do not Personalize Behavior

When you are in the midst of a fight with your child, it is easy (and normal) to personalize behavior that seems to be directed at you. When your child breaks a rule that you established, you feel as if they are disrespecting you, that they must not care about your feelings by breaking your rule.

But, as difficult as it might be, do not take it personally. Remind yourself that even if your child's inappropriate behavior is directed at you, it is not about you. Keep your focus on them and their inappropriate behavior and not on how their behavior makes you feel. If you can do this, you will be more effective, and you will feel better.

6. Aim for “Good Enough” Not “Perfect”

Too often, we compare our lives, our kids, and our parenting to those around us and feel as if we do not measure up. We feel as if we are not good enough parents. But do not believe your “not good enough” thoughts. All families struggle in one way or another. Even those perfect-looking families have their own struggles, you just do not see them. Behind closed doors, we all have problems. Just do the best that you can and keep trying to improve. And do not beat yourself up if you seem to fall short.

Sometimes you will let yourself get dragged into a fight when you know you should just walk away. Sometimes you will raise your voice when you know you should stay calm. But you can learn from every experience, and you can try to do it differently the next time. Remember, too, that your child is doing the best they can. At a young age, they do not have the skills and experience to manage their behavior perfectly.

We are all just doing our best to navigate through life. The more we remember this, the more it can help us to empathize when someone—your child, your spouse, yourself, or anyone else in your life—is struggling.

7. Do not Underestimate the Importance of Self-Care

Self-care is doing an activity you enjoy, such as walking, reading, or talking with someone about the issues you are facing. It is taking care of your own needs and desires.

Self-care is often overlooked in our hectic day-to-day lives. It is difficult to be an effective parent when you are stressed out and exhausted all the time. By practicing self-care, you will have the

energy to tackle your child's behavior and feel empowered to apply new parenting tools consistently. Having a self-care plan can be useful in times of stress. Managing your child's epilepsy and behavior at the same time can take a toll on your physical, emotional, and mental health. Be sure to take time for your self-care.

8. Have Patience: Behavior Change Is a Process, Not an Event

Inappropriate behaviors are learned and developed over time. And so are appropriate ones. Learning new and appropriate ways to solve problems takes time. It is important to remember that creating change first starts with the parent. It begins with what you are going to do the next time your child misbehaves. And the more consistent and repetitive you are in addressing your child's behavior and choices, the more likely you will create effective change for the long term.

Be patient. Change will happen if you stick with it. And take some time right now, before moving on with your hectic day, to acknowledge all the work you do. Know that there are other parents just like you working right alongside you. Know that you are not in this alone.

Editor's Note: The Carpe Diem – Seize the Day Blog will be distributed and posted weekly.
Always remember – **CARPE DIEM – SEIZE THE DAY!**

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