



# BRIGHT FUTURES HANDOUT ► PARENT

## 7 AND 8 YEAR VISITS

Here are some suggestions from Bright Futures experts that may be of value to your family.

### ✓ HOW YOUR FAMILY IS DOING

- Encourage your child to be independent and responsible. Hug and praise her.
- Spend time with your child. Get to know her friends and their families.
- Take pride in your child for good behavior and doing well in school.
- Help your child deal with conflict.
- If you are worried about your living or food situation, talk with us. Community agencies and programs such as SNAP can also provide information and assistance.
- Don't smoke or use e-cigarettes. Keep your home and car smoke-free. Tobacco-free spaces keep children healthy.
- Don't use alcohol or drugs. If you're worried about a family member's use, let us know, or reach out to local or online resources that can help.
- Put the family computer in a central place.
  - Know who your child talks with online.
  - Install a safety filter.

### ✓ YOUR GROWING CHILD

- Give your child chores to do and expect them to be done.
- Be a good role model.
- Don't hit or allow others to hit.
- Help your child do things for himself.
- Teach your child to help others.
- Discuss rules and consequences with your child.
- Be aware of puberty and changes in your child's body.
- Use simple responses to answer your child's questions.
- Talk with your child about what worries him.

### ✓ STAYING HEALTHY

- Take your child to the dentist twice a year.
- Give a fluoride supplement if the dentist recommends it.
- Help your child brush her teeth twice a day
  - After breakfast
  - Before bed
- Use a pea-sized amount of toothpaste with fluoride.
- Help your child floss her teeth once a day.
- Encourage your child to always wear a mouth guard to protect her teeth while playing sports.
- Encourage healthy eating by
  - Eating together often as a family
  - Serving vegetables, fruits, whole grains, lean protein, and low-fat or fat-free dairy
  - Limiting sugars, salt, and low-nutrient foods
- Limit screen time to 2 hours (not counting schoolwork).
- Don't put a TV or computer in your child's bedroom.
- Consider making a family media use plan. It helps you make rules for media use and balance screen time with other activities, including exercise.
- Encourage your child to play actively for at least 1 hour daily.

### ✓ SCHOOL

- Help your child get ready for school. Use the following strategies:
  - Create bedtime routines so he gets 10 to 11 hours of sleep.
  - Offer him a healthy breakfast every morning.
- Attend back-to-school night, parent-teacher events, and as many other school events as possible.
- Talk with your child and child's teacher about bullies.
- Talk with your child's teacher if you think your child might need extra help or tutoring.
- Know that your child's teacher can help with evaluations for special help, if your child is not doing well in school.

**Helpful Resources:** Family Media Use Plan: [www.healthychildren.org/MediaUsePlan](http://www.healthychildren.org/MediaUsePlan)

Smoking Quit Line: 800-784-8669 | Information About Car Safety Seats: [www.safercar.gov/parents](http://www.safercar.gov/parents) | Toll-free Auto Safety Hotline: 888-327-4236

# 7 AND 8 YEAR VISITS—PARENT

## ✓ SAFETY

- The back seat is the safest place to ride in a car until your child is 13 years old.
- Your child should use a belt-positioning booster seat until the vehicle's lap and shoulder belts fit.
- Teach your child to swim and watch her in the water.
- Use a hat, sun protection clothing, and sunscreen with SPF of 15 or higher on her exposed skin. Limit time outside when the sun is strongest (11:00 am–3:00 pm).
- Provide a properly fitting helmet and safety gear for riding scooters, biking, skating, in-line skating, skiing, snowboarding, and horseback riding.
- If it is necessary to keep a gun in your home, store it unloaded and locked with the ammunition locked separately from the gun.
- Teach your child plans for emergencies such as a fire. Teach your child how and when to dial 911.
- Teach your child how to be safe with other adults.
  - No adult should ask a child to keep secrets from parents.
  - No adult should ask to see a child's private parts.
  - No adult should ask a child for help with the adult's own private parts.

Consistent with *Bright Futures: Guidelines for Health Supervision of Infants, Children, and Adolescents*, 4th Edition

For more information, go to <https://brightfutures.aap.org>.

American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN®



The information contained in this handout should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances. Original handout included as part of the *Bright Futures Tool and Resource Kit*, 2nd Edition.

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## 7-8 YEARS

### Safety for Your Child

Did you know that injuries are the greatest threat to the life and health of your child? Injuries are the leading cause of death of school-aged children. **Yet you can prevent most injuries!**

At age 8, children are now taking off on their own. They look to friends for approval. They try to do daring things. They may not want to obey grown-up rules. But your child can learn safety rules with your help and reminders. Your child now goes out more without you and could drown, be hurt on a bike, or be hit by a car. And your child still can be hurt or killed while riding in a car if he is not buckled by a seat belt in a belt-positioning booster seat.

#### Sports Safety

Ask your doctor which sports are right for your child. **Be sure your child wears all the protective equipment made for the sport**, such as shin pads, mouth guards, wrist guards, eye protection, or helmets. Your child's coach also should be able to help you select protective equipment.

#### Water Safety

No one is safe alone in water, even if he or she knows how to swim. **Do not let your child play around any water (lake, stream, pool, or ocean) unless an adult is watching. Never let your child swim in canals or any fast-moving water.**

Teach your child to always enter the water feet first.

#### And Remember Bike Safety

**Make sure your child always wears a helmet** while riding a bike. Now is the time to teach your child "Rules of the Road." Be sure he or she knows the rules and can use them. Watch your child ride. See if he or she is in control of the bike. See if your child uses good judgment. Your 8-year-old is not old enough to ride at dusk or after dark. **Make sure your child brings the bike in when the sun starts to set.**

#### Car Safety

**NEVER start the car until you've checked to be sure that your child is properly restrained in a booster seat.** Your child should use a booster seat until the lap belt can be worn low and flat on the hips and the shoulder belt can be worn across the shoulder rather than the face or neck (usually at about 4 feet 9 inches tall and between 8 and 12 years old). Be sure that you and all others in the car are buckled up, too. Install shoulder belts in the back seat of your car if they are not already there. Serious injuries can occur with lap belts alone. **The safest place for all children to ride is in the back seat.**



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## Firearm Hazards

It is best to keep all guns out of your home. If you choose to keep a gun, store it unloaded and in a locked place, with the ammunition locked separately. Ask if the homes where your child visits or is cared for have guns and how they are stored. Your child is at greater risk of being shot by himself, his friends, or a family member than of being injured by an intruder.



**Would you be able to help your child in case of an injury? Put emergency numbers by or on your phone today. Learn first aid and CPR. Be prepared...for your child's sake!**

## SAFETY IN A KID'S WORLD

**Dear Parent:** Your child is old enough to start learning how to prevent injuries. The games below are designed to help your child think about safety. Read the messages with your child and talk about them together. Then take this safety sheet home and post it where everyone can see it.

**It takes time to form a safety habit. Remind each other what it says. Make safety a big part of your lives.**



### Bike Safety

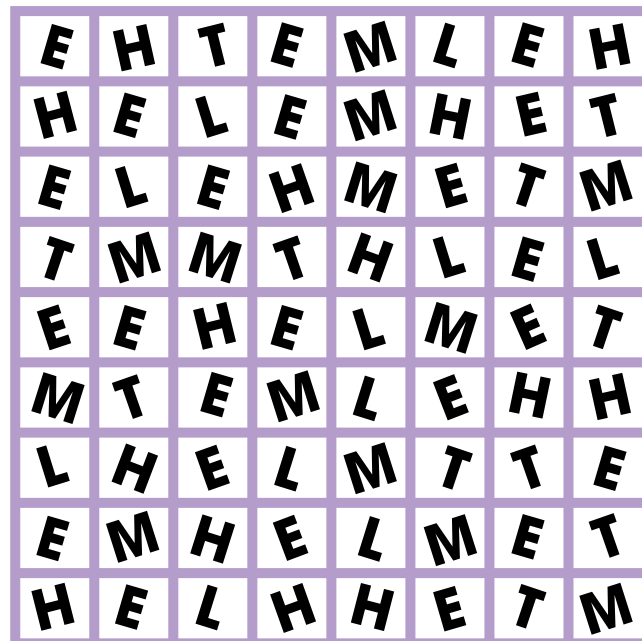
Always wear a 

when you ride your



**Get the Helmet Habit!**

**Directions:** Can you find the word "HELMET" in 9 different places (any direction)?



1. When turning or stopping,

2. LOOK both ways,

3. Always ride

4. Always stop at

5. When you ride on the sidewalk

6. Smart riders always

at street corners and driveways.

STOP signs and the curb.

wear their helmet.

watch out for people.

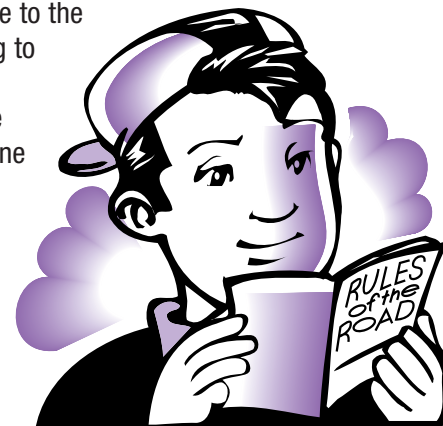
always use hand signals.

to the right.

### "Rules of the Road"

teaches you to ride your bike safely.

**Directions:** Here are 6 important "Rules of the Road." Draw a line from the first part of the rule to the correct ending to complete the sentence. The first one is done for you.



# Positive Parenting Tips for Healthy Child Development

## Middle Childhood (6-8 years of age)

### Developmental Milestones

Middle childhood brings many changes in a child's life. By this time, children can dress themselves, catch a ball more easily using only their hands, and tie their shoes. Having independence from family becomes more important now. Events such as starting school bring children this age into regular contact with the larger world. Friendships become more and more important. Physical, social, and mental skills develop quickly at this time. This is a critical time for children to develop confidence in all areas of life, such as through friends, schoolwork, and sports.

Here is some information on how children develop during middle childhood:

### Emotional/Social Changes

Children in this age group might:

- Show more independence from parents and family.
- Start to think about the future.
- Understand more about his or her place in the world.
- Pay more attention to friendships and teamwork.
- Want to be liked and accepted by friends.

### Thinking and Learning

Children in this age group might:

- Show rapid development of mental skills.
- Learn better ways to describe experiences and talk about thoughts and feelings.
- Have less focus on one's self and more concern for others.

### Positive Parenting Tips

**Following are some things you, as a parent, can do to help your child during this time:**

- Show affection for your child. Recognize her accomplishments.
- Help your child develop a sense of responsibility—ask him to help with household tasks, such as setting the table.
- Talk with your child about school, friends, and things she looks forward to in the future.
- Talk with your child about respecting others. Encourage him to help people in need.
- Help your child set her own achievable goals—she'll learn to take pride in herself and rely less on approval or reward from others.
- Help your child learn patience by letting others go first or by finishing a task before going out to play. Encourage him to think about possible consequences before acting.
- Make clear rules and stick to them, such as how long your child can watch TV or when she has to go to bed. Be clear about what behavior is okay and what is not okay.
- Do fun things together as a family, such as playing games, reading, and going to events in your community.



- Get involved with your child's school. Meet the teachers and staff and get to understand their learning goals and how you and the school can work together to help your child do well.
- Continue reading to your child. As your child learns to read, take turns reading to each other.
- Use discipline to guide and protect your child, rather than punishment to make him feel bad about himself. Follow up any discussion about what *not* to do with a discussion of what *to* do instead.
- Praise your child for good behavior. It's best to focus praise more on what your child does ("you worked hard to figure this out") than on traits she can't change ("you are smart").
- Support your child in taking on new challenges. Encourage her to solve problems, such as a disagreement with another child, on her own.
- Encourage your child to join school and community groups, such as a team sports, or to take advantage of volunteer opportunities.

## Child Safety First

More physical ability and more independence can put children at risk for injuries from falls and other accidents. Motor vehicle crashes are the most common cause of death from unintentional injury among children this age.

- Protect your child properly in the car. For detailed information, see the American Academy of Pediatrics' Car Safety Seats: A Guide for Families.
- Teach your child to watch out for traffic and how to be safe when walking to school, riding a bike, and playing outside.
- Make sure your child understands water safety, and always supervise her when she's swimming or playing near water.
- Supervise your child when he's engaged in risky activities, such as climbing.
- Talk with your child about how to ask for help when she needs it.
- Keep potentially harmful household products, tools, equipment, and firearms out of your child's reach.

## Healthy Bodies

- Parents can help make schools healthier. Work with your child's school to limit access to foods and drinks with added sugar, solid fat, and salt that can be purchased outside the school lunch program.
- Make sure your child has 1 hour or more of physical activity each day.
- Limit screen time for your child to no more than 1 to 2 hours per day of quality programming, at home, school, or afterschool care.
- Practice healthy eating habits and physical activity early. Encourage active play, and be a role model by eating healthy at family mealtimes and having an active lifestyle.

A pdf of this document for reprinting is available free of charge from <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/positiveparenting/middle.html>

## Additional Information:

<http://www.cdc.gov/childdevelopment>  
 1-800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636) <http://www.cdc.gov/info>

# Executive Function Activities for 7- to 12-year-olds

These games provide challenges and practice for executive function and self-regulation skills among school-age children. For children in this age range, it is important to steadily increase the complexity of games and activities.

## Card games and board games

■ **Card games in which children have to track** playing cards exercise working memory and promote mental flexibility in the service of planning and strategy. *Hearts*, *spades*, and *bridge* are popular examples.

■ **Games that require monitoring and fast responses** are great for challenging attention and quick decision-making in children at this age. *Spit*, for example, requires attending to your own play as well as your opponents' progress.

■ **For younger children, card games requiring matching** by either suit or number continue to test cognitive flexibility. *Rummy* games, including *gin rummy*, are popular examples. Games with more complicated sets of options, such as *poker* and *mahjong*, may challenge older children.

■ **Any game involving strategy** provides important practice with holding complicated moves in mind, planning many moves ahead, and then adjusting plans—both in response to imagined outcomes and the moves of opponents. With practice, children can develop real skill at classic games of strategy like *Go* or *chess*, while challenging working memory and cognitive flexibility. Many more modern strategy games exist as well. *Mensa*, the high IQ society, holds



a yearly competition testing new games, and provides an interesting list of favorites.

■ **Children this age also enjoy more complex games** involving fantasy play, which require holding in working memory complicated information about places visited in imaginary worlds, rules about how characters and materials can be used, and strategy in attaining self-determined goals. *Minecraft* is a popular computer game of this sort, while *Dungeons & Dragons* is a longtime card-based favorite.

## Physical activities/games

■ **Organized sports** become very popular for many children during this period. Developing skill at these games practices children's ability to hold complicated rules and strategies in mind, monitor their own and others' actions, make quick decisions and respond flexibly to play. There is also evidence that high levels of physical activity, particularly activity that requires coordination, like soccer, can improve all aspects of executive function.

■ **Various jump rope games** also become popular among children of this age. Children can become very skilled at *jump rope*, *double Dutch*, *Chinese jump rope*, and other such challenges. Developing skill in these games requires focused practice, as well as the attention control and working memory to recall the words of the chant while attending to the motions.

■ **Games that require constant monitoring** of the environment and fast reaction times also challenge selective attention, monitoring, and

*continued*

inhibition. For younger children, hiding/tag games, particularly those played in the dark, like *flashlight tag* and *Ghost in the Graveyard*, are fun. Older children may enjoy games like *laser tag* and *paintball*. Many video games also provide practice of these skills, but can include

violent content, so care should be taken in selecting appropriate options and setting reasonable time limits. Common Sense Media, a non-partisan media information organization, provides useful reviews of popular games.

## Music, singing, and dance

■ **Learning to play a musical instrument** can test selective attention and self-monitoring. In addition to the physical skill required, this activity challenges working memory to hold the music in mind. There is also some evidence that the practice of two-handed coordination supports better executive function.

■ **Whether or not children learn an instrument, participating in music classes** or community events can still require them to follow rhythmic patterns, particularly when improvisation is involved (e.g., clapping or drumming). This can challenge their coordination of working memory, attention, cognitive flexibility, and inhibition.

■ **Singing in parts and rounds**, as is done in children's singing groups, is also a fun challenge, requiring a similar coordination of working memory, monitoring, and selective attention. As children's musical skills grow,



adults can present them with steadily increasing challenges.

■ **Dancing**, too, provides many opportunities to develop attention, self-monitoring, and working memory, as dancers must hold choreography in mind while coordinating their movements with the music.

## Brain teasers

Puzzles that require information to be held and manipulated in working memory can be terrific challenges.

■ **Crossword puzzles** are available for all skill levels and draw on manipulation of letters and words in working memory as well as cognitive flexibility.

■ **Sudoku** provides a similar challenge but

works with numbers and equations rather than letters and words.

■ **Classic spatial puzzles** like *Rubik's Cube* require children to be mentally flexible and consider spatial information in devising potential solutions.

■ **Cogmed and Lumosity** provide computer game puzzles and challenges that are designed to exercise working memory and attention.

## Resources

### Common Sense Media

- [www.common Sense Media.org](http://www.common Sense Media.org)
- [www.common Sense Media.org/game-reviews](http://www.common Sense Media.org/game-reviews)

### List of winning games from American Mensa's Mind Games competitions

- [mindgames.us.mensa.org/about/winning-games/](http://mindgames.us.mensa.org/about/winning-games/)

### Other programs

- [www.cogmed.com](http://www.cogmed.com)
- [www.lumosity.com](http://www.lumosity.com)

### Tips for using video games

- [www.mindinthemaking.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/PFL-learning-and-videogames.pdf](http://www.mindinthemaking.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/PFL-learning-and-videogames.pdf)

# Healthy Communication with Your Child

## Guidelines for Parents

Many parents think that the main purpose of communication is to get information to their children. Telling children to eat their vegetables and reminding them to look both ways before crossing the street are expressions of love and caring. That is sending *information* about diet and safety. But communication has another important function. Communication is a two-way bridge that connects you and your child's feelings. Healthy communication – the kind that builds a strong two-way bridge – is crucial in helping your child develop a healthy personality and good relationships with you and others. It gives your child a chance to be a happy, safe, healthy person, no matter what happens. The American Academy of Pediatrics has developed this brochure to help you understand what healthy communication is and how to practice it.

### Why is healthy communication important?

Healthy communication is important because it helps your child:

- Feel cared for and loved
- Believe she matters and is important to you
- Feel safe and not all alone with his worries
- Learn to tell you what she feels and needs directly in words
- Learn how to manage his feelings so that he does not act on his feelings without thinking (or overreacting)
- Talk to you openly in the future

Healthy communication also helps you:

- Feel close to you child
- Know your child's needs
- Know you have powerful tools to help your child grow
- Manage your own stress and frustrations with your child

### What are the building blocks of healthy communication?

Building the two-way bridge of communication requires:

- **Being available** – Children need to feel that their parents are available to them. This means being able to spend time with your child. Even spending 10 minutes a day communicating with each of your children alone makes the bridge of communication stronger.

Being available also means quickly getting yourself into a quiet and "tuned-in" mood before you start listening to your child or talking about something important. Being able to understand and talk about *your* feelings as well as your child's is another important part of being available.

- **Being a good listener** – Being a good listener helps your child feel loved even when he is upset and you can't do anything to fix the problem. Ask your child for his ideas and feelings before beginning to talk about yours. Also, try to understand exactly what he is saying to you. What your child is trying to tell you is important to him, even when it may not be to you.

You do not have to agree with what your child is saying to be a good listener. It helps your child calm down, so later he can listen to you.

- **Showing empathy** – This means tuning in to your child and letting her know you appreciate her feelings. You can show empathy even if you disagree with your child. Empathy is about appreciating feelings for their own sake. It is not about who is right or wrong. Showing empathy means checking out whether you understand what your child is feeling. Ask whether your understanding of how she is feeling is right.
- **Being a good sender** – Be a good *listener* first. If your child already feels heard and cared for, he will be in a better mood to listen to you.

Make sure that what you say, your tone of voice, and what you do all send the same message. For example, if you laugh when you say "NO!" your child will be confused and will not know what you really want.

Use *words* to communicate what you want your child to do. Even when setting limits with a toddler you can use words while holding him back.

Use feeling words when you praise your child's behavior. For example, you can say "I am so happy!" when your child puts away her toys. It is also helpful to use "you" and point out the good behavior (as in "You have done a great job with your homework!"). Encourage your child to praise herself as well. Praise helps children get through the bad times.

Use "I" statements to tell you child what displeases you about her behavior. For example, saying "When I couldn't find you, I felt worried and angry" is better than saying in an angry tone "You Disappeared! Where were you?" Tell you child what you feel and think. Don't tell your child what she should think or feel.

- **Being a good role model** – Young children learn better by copying what their parents do than by being told. Children will copy your way of communicating. If you yourself use a lot of feeling words, it will help your child to learn to do the same. When parents use feeling words instead of screaming, doing something hurtful, or calling someone a name, children learn that using feeling words is a better way to deal with strong feelings. Saying feelings rather than acting on them helps children control themselves. You can help your child learn to label his feelings by deciding what feeling words are OK to say at home or in school.

## The flip side of healthy communication: verbal abuse

Children usually bounce back quickly when they are hurt. For example, your child may cry when she falls and scrapes a knee, but ten minutes later she has forgotten all about the fall and is running outside again. The same thing might happen when someone at school calls your child a name. If it only happens once, your child will probably forget it. However, children who suffer the same type of hurts over and over again do not bounce back quickly. Children who are verbally abused are deeply hurt by what their parents say and by how they say it.

### What is verbal abuse?

There are three kinds of verbal abuse:

- **Name-calling, frequent criticism, and blaming:** Criticism is making “you” statements and calling your child names. For example, saying “You are stupid” is name-calling and criticism; saying “I am upset with you and I wish you would stop doing that” is not. Criticizing, name-calling, and blaming only make things worse in the long run.
- **Violating children’s boundaries, yelling, threatening to hurt or abandon them, and lying:** Sometimes, a parent’s strong emotions are too much for a young child to handle. Children build walls between themselves and their parents then this happens. Children who back up, hide, or put their hands over their eyes are often trying to protect themselves from too much strong emotion. They are usually not trying to show disrespect.

Children are not little adults. They cannot block out screaming and loudness the way adults can. Loud talking or yelling while standing over children makes them feel scared and unsafe. It hurts their emotions, just as physical abuse hurts their bodies and emotions. Yelling and loudness are even more hurtful when children are tired, sick, hungry, or scared about something. The younger the child is, the more this is true.

Children believe threats of harm or threats that you will leave them. Threats scare children more than you can imagine. They do not help your child behave better.

Lying also violates your child’s boundaries. Children will believe lies because they do not usually have enough information to be able to tell lies from the truth.

- **Silence:** Children feel long silences (hours or days) very strongly. They do not know what these silences mean. Children read horrible things into their parents’ silences. Silence sends a strong message of anger or dislike. It makes your child feel confused and helpless. If you are silent because you are depressed, it is better to tell your child that you are sad or ill and that it is not about him. When you are silent, you are not being a good sender.

Parents may get silent because:

- They are afraid that they will say something that will make things worse.
- They do not know what to say or do.
- They have such strong feelings of anger or sadness that they cannot talk.
- They are ill.
- Their own parents use silence to control them.

Parents verbally abuse children because they:

- Never learned healthy communication.
- Do not know other ways to control their children's behavior.
- Do not know that children are hurt by verbal abuse and that it makes things worse.
- Have not learned how to manage their own strong feelings.
- Are under a lot of stress.
- Think their children need to develop a "thick skin" to survive.
- Were treated the same way by their parents, teachers, and other adults.

### Preventing Verbal Abuse: handling parental stress and anger

Parenting is a very hard job. There are times when you will feel so stressed that you think that you cannot handle one more thing. At those times, a crying baby, a toddler throwing a temper tantrum, or a fifth-grader refusing to do her homework might push you over the edge. It is important to find ways to help your child to behave that do not involve hurting her feelings. It is also important to find ways to prevent stress, and to calm yourself down when you are stressed, so that you do not say or do something harmful to your child.

Here are some things you might do to calm yourself

- Take a few deep breaths very slowly.
- Wait five (5) minutes before starting to talk to your child.
- Try to find a word to label you feelings.
- Say it to yourself or write it down.
- Share your feelings with your spouse or another adult. Call a friend.
- Keep your attention on the present. Do not add up past problems.

Parents who are under a lot of stress may find it hard to control strong feelings like anger, fear, frustration, or helplessness. They may not realize that their anger is a reaction to feeling worried, confused, hurt, or overwhelmed with stress. For example, you would probably feel worried if your child got lost in the supermarket. If you were in a rush, you might be angry when you find her. You might yell at your child for having wandered away instead of saying, "I was worried that I might not find you!" When you can learn to calm down and figure out what is really making you angry, you can avoid hurting your child out of anger.

Some people find that using the **RETHINK** method helps them control their anger, before they say or do something they might regret.

**RETHINK** stands for:

**RECOGNIZE** your feelings.

**EMPATHIZE** with the other person.

**THINK** of the situation differently. Use humor.

**HEAR** what the other person is saying.

**INTEGRATE** your love with your angry thoughts.

**NOTICE** your body's reaction to feeling anger and to calming down.

**KEEP** your attention on the present problem.

Using **RETHINK** can help you get control over your anger before you lash out at your child. If using the **RETHINK** method or trying other ways to calm yourself down does not work, try talking to your spouse, your pediatrician, counselor, minister, parent, or close friend. There is nothing to be ashamed of in admitting you need help in controlling your anger. All parents get frustrated and angry with their children. Asking for help with the difficult job of parenting is always better than losing control.

*The information contained in this publication **should not** be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.*