

"Connections"

Parenting A Child With Special Needs

By Allison Conrad, M.A., Parent of a Special Needs Child & VHAP Case Supervisor

Part 2: Develop an Action Plan (to deal with behavioral issues that occur in the community and at home):

- Discuss with your child the course of events prior to going out. Let your child know what is expected of them while out in the community.
- Remember, your child is struggling to cope in a confusing world.
- Remind yourself that eventually the tantrum will end, and you will be able to continue to do what you set out to accomplish.
- Try to refrain from making sarcastic statements or "put-downs".
- Do whatever is necessary to remind yourself to stay calm. Ask yourself, "Is it going to be helpful to either my child or myself if I lose control? Will I be able to model appropriate strategies?" Keep your language simple. Narrate what's going on in the moment that's causing distress. For example, "Lia, you're angry because you want me to buy you something that isn't on our shopping list."
- Try to identify cause-and-effect relationships for your child. For example, "Lia, when you shred my work papers, I feel angry. I'm not feeling friendly."

Part 3: Plan to Help Your Child Understand Cause-and-Effect Relationships (especially understanding the relationship between their actions / behavior and your emotional reactions):

- I ask my child to look at the expression on my face and to listen to the tone of my voice to determine how I may be feeling.
- Use phrases such as, "When you do ____, I feel angry." or, "I feel angry/happy/proud/surprised/joyful, etc. when you ____".

Put the behavior into context for your child, and when necessary, explain your "perspective". For example, one night, my daughter took the batteries out of my alarm clock before going to bed. Thankfully, I noticed that the clock had stopped before I went to sleep, and found another battery. The next morning, she couldn't figure out why I was upset with her. After all, she removed the batteries because she didn't like the sound my alarm made. I had to share my reality and ask her to think about what would happen if I didn't wake up on time in the morning. Would she be able to get up, get dressed, eat breakfast, and meet the school-bus on time? Would I be able to get to my school sites on time? How would she feel if this were to happen? What could she do differently the next time she felt compelled to remove the batteries from the clock? ■

➤ Look for our Winter newsletter coming soon!



Verdugo Hills Autism Project

Early Intervention

VHAP offers specialized early intervention services for children birth to 3 years of age. Developmental constrictions and deficits specific to each individual child and the resulting impact on the child's family are identified through a comprehensive assessment and addressed through specified goals. Parent training and participation is a key component of this program. Our multi-disciplinary approach coordinates efforts to tailor-fit the program to the child's needs.

Friends Play Klub

VHAP's Friends Play Klub is a parent-participation social skills program which focuses on helping children improve their social relationship skills.

This program provides opportunities for children to master their social and communication deficits as a result of their diagnosis. Children will be provided the tools to utilize both functional and relative skills of social interaction which are fundamental to social relationships. This group is committed to meeting each child at their own developmental level.