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Has there been a recent change that could have caused powerful feelings?

- In the family with a birth or death?
- At school with a new year, new teacher, friends?
- Has the child been ill?

Once you have an idea about what your child is feeling you can then respond to their need and be in a better position to help them change their behaviour.

If you think it may be because of:

- **Hunger** - have a snack ready when they come out of school.
- **Tiredness** - make bedtime a little earlier or cut down on after school activities.
- **Boredom** - introduce a new activity such as football club or Brownies.
- **Recent changes** - talk about the change and encourage him to explain how he feels. This will help him cope with his feelings.

Strategies to get the behaviour you want

Think about the behaviour you want and build the following ideas into your whole way of managing your children and, if they are used consistently, they will encourage cooperation.

Check the basics

Build your child's self-esteem

- Tell them often that you love them, even when you don't like their behaviour.
- Praise them for the little things they get right, especially after you have been cross (because they did something wrong).
- Give each child some individual attention every day, play a game of their choice, do some cooking or wash the car together.
- Let them know you enjoy their company.
- Make him feel confident he can behave better by reacting to unacceptable behaviour with a response like: *'That's not like you. You are usually a very kind boy'*.

Charts on which the child can record her own progress can work well with the over threes and are particularly useful with older children. You can use a simple star chart like this:

Alex's getting himself dressed chart						
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
*	*		*		*	*
*	*	*		*	*	*

Keep things positive and never put crosses in the boxes when success is not achieved. You could give an extra reward when there is a star in, say, three consecutive boxes.

Timing of Rewards

As a rough guide a three-year-old needs to receive a 'long term' reward within the day, a six-year-old can keep up their enthusiasm for three or four days, an eight-year-old can manage up to a week before receiving their reward.

So make sure you draw a realistic number of sections to colour, or rungs to climb, or stars to collect.

Family Treats

These can work well as brothers and sisters then have an interest in encouraging the target child to behave better. It is important to make it clear to the family when the treat will happen and to think of something that will work for your particular child.

Don't get carried away in your desperation for a full night's sleep or for siblings to stop fighting. Beware promising '*any toy you want*' or '*a bicycle*'. It could be an expensive week!

Sometimes brothers and sisters can demand rewards too. So set them a target for something they find difficult to do. That way you can work on the whole family's behaviour!



Don't get carried away with rewards - it could be expensive!

Rewarding older children

Older children respond very differently to rewards. They still want your love and approval but are wary of the big public demonstrations that toddlers thrive on. A quiet word of appreciation, a text message, being excused the chores, a lift to their friend's house, or money can be more powerful incentives for older children.