



Northern Virginia Family Service

Early Childhood Division

Head Start/ Early Head Start



Mental Health Newsletter November 2018

Trauma-Friendly Tips for Behavior

- **Motivate**, don't punish. **Think about it.** When your boss or someone you love says... 'Do this or I will fire you or fight you' the response is not positive. Instead you would like to hear something like, 'Do this and it will help me so much, I will be so pleased with you.' Same goes for children. Find something they like that motivates them. Do this and I will make sure to read your favorite book before bed! Yay!
- **Persuade or Convince**, don't grab or threaten. **Think about it.** If someone comes up to you and tries to push or shove you, generally the response is not positive. Remember 'you catch more flies with honey than vinegar' or if you can sweetly and genuinely convince them people have a more positive response.
- **Encourage a conversation**, don't shut the conversation down. **Think about it.** When someone is supposed to be helpful to you but they are not listening, that makes people angry or shut down. Children have the same response. Try and have a conversation about what is going on and why.
- **Empathize**, don't discourage or discount. **Think about it.** When you are going through something difficult, little or small, it never feels good to be devalued or minimized. It feels better when people can at least say that they understand where we are coming from. Children are the same. 'I know it is difficult to put away your toy, but it will be waiting for us later, and I promise to remember to let you play with it when we come back.'
- **How are you feeling?** If you are feeling angry, stressed, sad, or other emotions, your children can sense it. Also, our feelings tend to motivate our actions. We want to calm down ourselves and then move forward with our children. 'Sorry hunny. Mommy is upset right now. Give Mommy a second please.'
- **Boundaries and Empowerment!** Separate the child from the choice. **CHILDREN ARE NOT BAD** but they can make bad choices. Instead, work with and guide your child to better choices. CHILDREN themselves can not change but **THEY CAN CHANGE THEIR CHOICES.**
- **ADAPT! Try new things.** Sometimes redirection will work for a while and then something changes in the child. If it works, GREAT! If it doesn't work, try something else a few times.
- **BEHAVIOR DOESN'T CHANGE OVERNIGHT! Think about it!** It usually takes a few tries to change behavior. It takes about 10 repetitions to create a habit and about 40 to break a habit. This is why starting and maintaining good habits is so important. If you start a bad habit, it is much harder to break!
- **Unconditional Love! Think about it!** People respond positively to others who are not judging but caring. People will generally even follow the direction of someone that actively loves them than do something they like to do because they want the care, affection, and attention more than other things.
- **Realistic Expectations! Think about it!** Each individual is different and unique. We need to make sure that we have realistic expectations for those individuals. A 2 year old should not be responsible for taking care of themselves or an infant because developmentally they are still babies themselves and don't understand what is needed to care for the other child. On the other hand, a 2 year old can begin to help wash the table, clean the dishes, and other very simple tasks.