



Dealing With Virtual Behaviors...In Real Life! Pt 2

Have you heard of the term “honeymooning” used for adjusting to something new? It is used to describe a period of time where due to a new situation, everything is “lovely” and people are intentionally on their best behavior or in the effort to get adjusted or the desire to please, problem behaviors don’t show up. Well, although things have not been “lovely” with virtual learning, there has been a very real adjustment period where learning the mechanics and structure of the situation has taken most of our attention and focus. **BUT NOW** that we (and our children) have gotten the mechanics of virtual learning down pat, there is a level of familiarity that has crept in and we are starting to see behaviors that we’d rather not. Last week we began talking about preventing and managing behaviors that have started to show up as we continue navigating virtual learning...behaviors like teens wanting to nap during the day, lack of focus during live virtual sessions, messy workstations and sometimes just flat out blow ups and explosions. This week we continue to explore the ways our children are **acting up**, while we do our best to hold **it down**.

Below, we introduce four (4) additional strategies you may desire to try at home. As with all tips and strategies that we share, we encourage parents (and caregivers) to determine what you feel is best to implement for your family and home.

We really encourage you to JOIN US for our Live discussion this week where we will cover each strategy and share some stories/examples of how to put them to use. Sometimes the best way to really grasp and get a picture of how these strategies work and can be implemented is by hearing the experiences of others.

Parents, we are right here with you – WE are making it through – parenting is not a destination, but a journey with peaks/valleys, twists/turns, highs/lows...so let’s just ride the waves and Stay Positive!

PARENTS BEWARE: A word of caution and encouragement...Beginning to implement some of these strategies can be difficult and may be met with push back from your children. This can be seen as increased behaviors and defiance. This is perfectly normal and to be expected because the introduction of these strategies is new for you and your child/teen. However, over time and with consistency there will be positive impact that will make the hard work worthwhile!

Prevention Strategy

- **Routines...Routines...Routines!!!**
 - **Use:** To establish consistency throughout your child's day, to assist with transitions and to prevent disruptions, limit room for misbehaviors to occur, and to reinforce family rules
 - **How:** Identify what activities take priority in your home and establish reasonable timelines to get these tasks done!
 - Set a REALISTIC schedule and make your child aware of the expectations prior to rolling out any schedule changes!
 - ✓ If your child's school start time is 7:30am, do not wait until 7:15am to wake your child, causing them to rush through breakfast, bedmaking, logging on, etc.
 - ✓ Plan ahead when you can, allow time for mistakes to occur or for technology to fail – allow “cushion” between chores
 - CONSISTENCY is key – encourage your child to practice the routine daily to build healthy habits...this may mean you set reminders for them, or otherwise help them learn the steps of the routine
 - ✓ Start with morning time – develop a standard, consistent schedule and identify tasks to complete during that time. Example:
 - Alarm wakes child up at 7:00am, child gets dressed/ready for the day, child is at the kitchen for breakfast by 7:30am
 - Login to Chromebook...attendance punch...morning break by 9:30am
 - Here are some other great examples of when to practice routines:
 - Midday – establish a lunch break timeframe to alleviate transitions to and from remote work
 - End-of-Work day – Set alarms, use charts or pictures, and practice a consistent end of workday; Set materials up for the next day (charge Chromebook, leave materials in backpack, leave backpack in the same space to avoid losing supplies)
 - Bedtime – identify what steps need to occur, allow ample time to accomplish these steps before sending children off to bed at consistent time each night
 - **Caution:** Be sure to identify your priorities for the week and set up timeframes PRIOR to carrying out a new routine with your children
 - It is important they be made aware of your time expectations in order to prepare for possible transitions
 - If routines are NOT followed with consistency, they fail to encourage those positive behaviors we wish to promote with

our children and may lead to inconsistency and failure to adhere to established family rules

Management Strategies

- **Directed Discussion**
 - **Use:** Best used when a child occasionally forgets a basic rule
 - **How:** First gain your child's attention
 - Ask your child to tell you the expectation/rule is
 - Prompt your child to role play the appropriate behavior (the correct behavior can then be practiced more if needed)
 - Example for younger children (3-12):
 - Behavior: Your child is running in the home
 - Parent Response: Call your child back to you, ask them "how do we move around in the house?" Child responds by reciting established rule: "we walk". Parent then asks them to return to the door and walk through the house, demonstrating the correct behavior
 - Example for pre-teens/teens:
 - Behavior: Your pre-teen/teen is observed using their cell phone during virtual school time
 - Parent Response: Ask your teen to remind you of the rule about using their phone during class time. Tell your teen to return to class and show how they should engage in class without using their phone
 - ✓ If the problem, persists you may use a logical consequence by taking your child's phone away during class hours.
 - **Caution:** Use this strategy after your child has not demonstrated the desired behavior and/or has not followed ESTABLISHED house rules. This strategy is most effective when the rules are CLEAR and your child has been made aware of them previously. Do not attempt to use Directed Discussion on rules that your child/teen has not yet learned – instead, Use "Clear, Calm Instruction" to make your child aware of the desired behavior FIRST

Management Strategies for Responding to Emotional Behaviors:

- **Stop-Still-Sense**
 - **Use:** A calming strategy used to manage emotional behaviors of pre-teens/teens after multiple attempts at redirection have been unsuccessful, behaviors have escalated and the exchange becomes highly emotional
 - **How:** This strategy is twofold and takes modeling on the part of the caregiver as well as adherence and demonstration on the part of the pre-teen/teen
 - Because emotions can be high here, it's important that the instructions be given CLEARLY and CALMLY
 - **STOP what you're doing:**
 - ✓ Caregivers: Stop engaging in the verbal exchange; If you are busy or distracted doing something else, stop everything that you're doing and give full attention to the teen
 - ✓ Teens: instructions should be given for the teen to stop what they're doing and give their full attention to the parent

- **Be STILL:**
 - ✓ Caregivers: You should be assessing at this point where you feel the teen is emotionally and have a mindset to deescalate any tensions
 - ✓ Teens: instruction should be given such as, “Let’s take a few minutes to calm down before we finish this conversation.” Parent should say, I’ll check back in in 10 minutes (or amount of time parents thinks is sufficient to calm)
 - If the teen is emotional, you may ask them to be still by sitting or standing calmly
 - If the teen is angry and there has been an angry exchange, it may be better to ask them go to their room (or other designated place apart from you), or you may leave the room
- **SENSE In:**
 - ✓ Caregivers: Model sensing in (paying closer attention to what and how your body feels i.e. heart beats, body temperature, thoughts, breaths etc.) for your teen. Remain calm and practice calming techniques such as:
 - **Deep Breathing**- taking a deep breath in through your nose and exhaling slowly through your mouth (repeat as many times as needed)
 - **Grounding** – sitting and recognizing that your feet are grounded on the floor, feeling that your body is safely secured by the chair you’re sitting in
 - **Taking Sips of Water** – take a drink of water and take time to notice as you drink how the water feels in your body, notice where it goes; attempt to focus on the sensation of the water traveling down your throat
 - **Looking Up** - simply looking up towards the ceiling
 - **Rolling Your Neck** – with your eyes open, slowly look to the right and move your head/neck around while noticing objects, colors, lights or anything that jumps out at you while moving your eyes across the room
 - **Singing/Humming** - Try singing your favorite tune or hum the tune. Pay attention to how your breathing changes and how your face feels singing or humming
 - **Tapping/Taking a Walk** – Try tapping side to side alternating hands or going on a walk or even rocking side to side
 - **Pray/Meditate** - take time to pray, meditate or think positive calming thoughts
- **Check Back In:**
 - ✓ Caregivers: Go back to the teen and say something like, “Now that we’ve had time to calm down, let’s finish our discussion.”
- **Caution:** This strategy should be discussed AHEAD of TIME, during a time when tensions or emotions are not high, so that your teen knows what to expect

- Note, that if you fail to remain calm, or if the teen is not cooperating with calmness, it can be difficult to sense in and may require time for both parent and child to step away for some time until calm can be achieved
- **Chill-Chair-Calm**
 - **Use:** A calming strategy for children when all other strategies have been unsuccessful, and child may be having a tantrum or other emotional behaviors **This is an alternative to Stop-Still-Sense, used for younger children*
 - **How:** have the child to stop the current behavior and have a seat in a predetermined location while practicing some of the calming techniques listed above
 - CHILL out! - The main difference here from many other strategies is that this is for YOU caregivers – attempt to calm your mind and body before reacting with anger or frustration
 - ✓ Try not to be reactive to your child’s behaviors, instead practice personal Sensing In immediately (see above)
 - Send your child to the “Chill” CHAIR (pre-identified location – could be a chair, cushion, pillow, carpet square or a “C” marked on the floor)
 - CALM down time for the child (see some suggested calming strategies above)
 - Check Back In:
 - ✓ Caregivers: Go back to the child and after the child has practiced and demonstrated self-calming, allow them to reengage in the previous activity, demonstrating the desired behavior
 - **Caution:** This strategy should be talked about AHEAD of time...yes, tell your child that they have a chill chair (or space) for times when they need to calm down
 - Chair time for children between 3-5 should be about the time of their age, no longer than 5 minutes. Children 6-10 should be between 5-10 minutes. It is strongly suggested that caregivers use timers to ensure time guidelines are honored.