

What your child wants you to know about...

# Behavioral Problems

Sometimes it is hard for me to behave. I know this is upsetting for you, especially when you know I can follow the rules most of the time. Behaving is still hard work for me so I have to try hard to do what you want me to do. Even when I try my hardest, sometimes things get in the way.

**First, please remember that missing you and crying for you is not a behavior problem. It means that I love you.**

- **Remind me that you love me too.** My biggest worry ever is that you could get so mad at me; you could leave me. Please be careful how angry you get when I've done something wrong. Let me know you love me, even when I don't do what I am supposed to. Please be careful what you say to me... words can hurt more than actions. When we can't be together, always let me know when you will come back because I will miss you while we're apart. You are my most important person.
- **Protect me.** It is really hard for me to do what I am supposed to do when I am scared. I am still little, so many things can scare me. Be careful what I see and hear at home and on TV. Please be careful how you handle my body, especially if you are angry, this scares me more than anything. You are so much bigger than me.
- **Take care of my body.** It is really hard to behave when I am tired, hungry or sick. Being tired, hungry or sick makes me worry more about the feelings I am having inside my body than what my body does. If I am sick, I need to be with you or someone who loves me.
- **I will do best when I know what is going to happen next.** I do best when I have a regular routine each day. If our routine is going to change, please talk to me about it. It is hard for me to do what I need to do if I get caught by surprise. It also helps when my rules are simple and stay the same. If you have to change them, it will be easier for me to follow them if you tell me first.



- **Talk to me about what is happening.** One of the things I am really good at is seeing and hearing what goes on around me. This helps me learn all the things I need to know... but sometimes I get confused. I can see and hear people being angry at each other, I can hear that someone is leaving or coming to stay and I can tell when people are excited about something, but I don't always know why. Help me understand what is happening around me. It will help me let you know if I am confused so you can help me understand. When I am ready for new things, it is easier for me to behave the way you need me to behave.
- **Please don't trick me.** Sometimes grownups try to help children not get upset by not telling them what is going to happen. Usually this happens because the grownup is worried I will cry or complain. I might cry or complain when you tell me but I will still have you to help reassure me and help me know what to do. This will help me know that you love me. When you sneak away, I get scared and confused and don't learn how to say goodbye to people I love. If I have to do something that might scare me, like go to the doctor or dentist, or something that might make me uncomfortable, please tell me. I know you don't want to see me scared or angry but it is so much scarier to have these feelings without you there to help me. Helping me with hard feelings makes me love and trust you even more!
- **Talk to me about feelings.** I have a lot of them. I feel all of the same things you do but I don't understand yet, what to call them. When you see my feelings, tell me what they are so I can begin to learn how to talk about them. If I can learn to talk about them, I won't have to show you my feelings with my behavior as much. I will be able to tell you when I am happy, sad, angry or scared. Then we can use words to solve the problem or understand what is happening. Read to me. There are a lot of books for children about feelings. This is another good way for me to learn about them so I can use my words.