

Tips for a Debrief Discussion with Kids after Challenging Behaviors

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- **Wait until the child is calm.**
 - During times of high intensity, the problem-solving and reasoning brain shuts off. The brain and body only have time to react as if danger is present (fight, flight, or freeze). Attempting to engage in discussions in the moment will not be productive and may end in further negative feelings. To engage in a productive and healthy discussion, wait until you and the child are calm, regulated, and ready to listen.
- **Let the child know a discussion is important in developing possible solutions and better alternatives to their behaviors the next time they have big emotions.**
 - Assist the child in learning the benefit of discussing the event and their behaviors. Don't be afraid to also discuss and verbalize your feelings during the matter was well.
- **Ask for the child to recount the event to you in their own words, verbalizing any and all thoughts/feelings they were experiencing.**
 - A child's behavior is always an attempt to verbalize a need. By allowing your children to verbalize the event in their own words while also reflecting on their emotions during that time. You may start to understand how to best meet their needs.
- **Review the triggers of the event and explore the causes of their rising emotions.**
 - Utilize helpful resources such as an emotional thermometer or the angry volcano to assist the child in analyzing their triggers as well as target the point where relaxation strategies should have been utilized before behaviors became explosive. If possible, try to also discuss sensations and physical symptoms for each level.
- **Assist the child in identifying which calming technique could have been utilized before their explosive behaviors.**
 - Allow the child to verbalize to you the point where they felt a coping technique could have been used. Discuss which technique would have been best in that moment and use handouts and resources if needed (star breathing, muscle relaxing, etc.) After identifying the skill, PRACTICE. Review together the coping skill(s) they picked and practice them in the moment.
- **Discuss any consequences that need to be established due to their actions.**
 - **Consequences should always be utilized for learning purposes and not to scare or intimidate a child.** Consequences given should also best fit the behavior or action that you would like to fix. For example;
 - If the child was aggressive to a person, you may suggest they need to write a letter of apology and hand it to them to amend the relationship.
 - If the child was destructive to property, you may suggest that to replace or repair the item, they have to do chores around the house or allocate their allowance towards covering costs.
- **Review and acknowledge that while their behavior was not appropriate and possibly dangerous. It does NOT mean they are a bad kid or naughty.**
 - A child's internal monologue and core beliefs stem from what they are told. Instead of using labeling words such as "naughty" or "bad" try to explain to the child that they made some inappropriate choices when their feelings became too big. Review and summarize what was discussed to assist in verbalizing emotions and thoughts, as well as what strategies were identified for next time. ***Make sure to always end with the reminder that they are still loved no matter what.***