

My Aspergers Child: How to Stop Meltdowns and Tantrums in Out-of-Control Aspergers Children

We want you to have an opportunity to learn new information and skills that fit with your existing beliefs about parenting and communication. After you read and implement the principles offered in this eBook, your family is likely to notice:

- a decrease in negativity and blaming
- a reduction in the family's stress-level
- improved interactions between you and your child
- less frequent tantrums, meltdowns, and shutdowns

How many times have you told someone, "I've tried everything -- and nothing works with this kid?"

Are you extremely frustrated with your Aspergers child's behavior?

Does it seem to be getting worse?

Has it been bad for a long time?

Have you tried your best to come up with solutions to the problems, but without the success you hoped for?

If so, you're probably feeling angry, hurt, hopeless and helpless. You may even want someone else to take a shot at controlling your Aspergers child (e.g., your ex, another family member).

When we, as parents, begin to feel as though we are losing our grip on our Aspergers children, we often tell ourselves things like:

- Surely my child is just going through some kind of phase.
- Why me? What did I do to deserve this abuse?
- If he doesn't want to listen, he can just stay grounded forever!
- I can't trust her anymore. She steals from me ...she lies to me.
- Maybe he should go live with his father.
- If I threaten to do this or that, she'll shape up.
- I really have failed as a parent. It's probably my fault.
- I give up! I'm in a hopeless situation with this kid.

These are the stages that a parent of an out-of-control Aspergers child goes through:

1. Denial – Trying to convince yourself that the problem is not as bad as it appears.
2. Anger – Feeling hurt by, or even afraid of, your child’s behavior.
3. Bargaining – Trying your best to come up with a solution with little or no success.
4. Depression – Feeling helpless, hopeless, and a sense of loss; possibly becoming angry with yourself; letting others take a shot at controlling your Aspergers child.
5. Acceptance – When you stop blaming your child AND yourself for past problems and simply go about the business of using the new, non-traditional parenting strategies discussed in this eBook.

Symptoms parents can expect to experience when dealing with an out-of-control Aspergers child:

- Difficulty concentrating
- Apathy
- Anger
- Guilt (“If only I had done . . .”)
- Shame (“I’m not a very good parent.”)
- Sleep disturbances
- Loss of appetite
- Increased cravings for junk food
- Withdrawal from others
- Irritability
- Intense sadness or tears when a memory is triggered
- Loneliness, or a sense of separateness from your Aspergers child
- Numbness

Helping Yourself Through The Parenting Struggles—

Here are some things others have found useful in dealing with their out-of-control Aspergers child. Choose the ones that fit for you, or make up your own methods of self-care. Treat yourself with the same care, tolerance, and affection you would extend to a valued friend in a similar situation.

- Expect and accept some reduction in your usual efficiency and consistency.
- Try to avoid taking on new responsibilities or making major life decisions for a time.
- Talk regularly about your parenting struggles with someone you trust.
- Accept help and support when offered.
- BREATHE / RELAX / SLOW DOWN / BE EXPRESSIVE / LAUGH
- Be particularly attentive to maintaining healthy eating and sleeping patterns.
- Keep reminding yourself that your responses are normal responses to a stressful situation. Give yourself permission to do whatever you need to do to take care of yourself. Your body and mind will tell you what you need to do--your job is to listen to them.
- Get plenty of rest when you're tired, and use the energy you have if you experience hyperactivity at times.
- Have moments of prayer and meditation.
- Don't force yourself to be active if you don't have the energy.
- Do things that feel good to you--take baths, read, exercise, watch television, spend time with friends, fix yourself a special treat, or whatever else feels nurturing and self-caring.
- Allow yourself to cry, rage, and express your feelings when you need to. Try not to numb your feelings with alcohol or drugs. This will only complicate your situation.

Author Kathy Woodard offers some valuable tips for mothers under stress: “How to Deal with Supermom Stress”—

One of the top stressors for women today is what many are calling the “supermom syndrome.” Many of us are led by society today to believe that in order to be successful Moms, we have to do it all, and give all. Nonsense. We all want to do our best as Moms, as we should. But at some point, for our own mental health, our best has got to be good enough. Here are some great ideas to reduce the syndrome at your house.

It’s ok not to be perfect. Let me say that again. It’s ok, not to be perfect. I think many of us hold ourselves up to a level of perfection that merely hurts our ability to be a good Mom. So what if the living room isn’t clean

on Monday nights?...you had bedtime stories to read. Who cares if you had to choose a work presentation over your child's field trip...you'll go next time. Not allowing ourselves any slack simply causes more stress in our lives, and prevents us from savoring every precious moment of being a Mom. Lighten up. It's ok not to be perfect!

Don't buy into societies hype that in order to be a good parent, you must offer your child every experience under the stars. Over and over again, psychologists talk about the dangers of over scheduling our kids, but it seems few are listening. It is not healthy for your child to learn to be so busy that he/she never learns to be with and like himself, to dream, use his imagination, or just be bored! Limiting your family to one extracurricular activity per child will help reduce family stress both in time and money. Do not let society guilt you into doing more...after all, this is the same society rules that say it is ok for our children to starve themselves to look like movie stars, or to play Nintendo for 12 hours straight. Is that what you want for your Aspergers child?

Make time for yourself. Make a rule that you will take 10, 20, even 30 minutes a day and shut out the world. Close the bedroom door, take a bath, take a walk...just have that time to yourself. You deserve it, and your family owes you that much. Do not feel guilty asking for it either! Tell the kids Mom is not to be disturbed unless someone is bleeding or something is on fire...then enforce the rule! Oprah says it well...if your cup is empty, how will you fill up the ones you love?

That being said, it is important to recognize your family as an essential part of your life. Stopping to smell the roses when it comes to your family will help you to keep your life in perspective, and therefore, reduce your daily stress. Make sure you take time for yourself, but also take time to spend with your family outside of the daily chores and running around. Let your children help you cook dinner, play cards together in the evening, take a walk around your neighborhood with your Aspergers child. Make sure you read to those little ones every night, and make sure you do those great voices with the characters! Laugh with your family, choose your battles wisely, and savor every moment of their precious childhood...before you know it, they will be tending their own families! (And won't you feel good knowing what an example you were, cherishing your family as you do!)

Finally, make sure you remember who you are as a person. Not as Mom, or wife, or business associate, but as who you are. Cultivate old pastimes, and expand your world by developing new ones! Learn to play piano, paint, or to speak a different language. Read. Celebrate your spiritual life, and let yourself grow in the world that has been gifted

to you.

Parent Quiz --

How do I know if I need to make some serious changes in the way I parent?

Please review the following statements. Are they true for you *rarely*, *sometimes* or *frequently*?

1. I have a hard time saying “no” to my child.
2. When I say “no” to my child, “no” eventually becomes a “maybe” which eventually becomes a “yes”.
3. I have blamed myself for my child’s misbehavior.
4. I sometimes feel guilty about my parenting (e.g., “I haven’t done enough” or “I haven’t done a very good job”).
5. I often feel distant from my child.
6. I feel that my child has no appreciation for all I’ve done for him/her.
7. I try to be my kid’s “friend.”
8. I sometimes feel sorry for my child.
9. I have ‘gone off’ on my kid ...then out of feelings of guilt, I let him have his way.
10. My kid uses guilt-trips on me a lot.
11. My kid usually gets his way in the long run.
12. He can be verbally/physically aggressive.
13. She refuses to do any chores.
14. He is very manipulative.
15. I feel guilty because of having to work and not being able to spend enough time with my kid.
16. I feel sorry for the kid because of divorce or an abandoning father/mother.
17. I don’t want my kids to have to go through what I went through.
18. My kid is in charge (the tail is wagging the dog).
19. My kid feels entitled to privileges, but not responsible for his actions.
20. She does not get along well with authority figures.
21. He believes the rules do not apply to him.
22. She is resentful about something that happened in the past.
23. He has attention-deficit problems too.

Do these phrases describe your Aspergers child's behavior fairly accurately?

1. Often loses temper or has meltdowns
2. Often argues with adults
3. Often actively defies or refuses to comply with adults' requests or rules
4. Often deliberately annoys people

5. Often blames others for his or her mistakes or misbehavior
6. Is often touchy or easily annoyed by others
7. Is often angry and resentful
8. Is often spiteful and vindictive
9. Often bullies, threatens, or intimidates others
10. Often initiates physical fights

Help Is On The Way...

Many of the parents that come to my *parent-group* are *therapy-drunk*. What I mean is their Aspergers child has been in ***anger-management therapy*** for his violent outbursts, the family has had ***family therapy*** in order to develop conflict management skills, mom and dad have had ***couples therapy*** (or marital counseling) to resolve communication problems, and mom has had ***individual psychotherapy*** for her depression. ENOUGH IS ENOUGH. **You don't need any more therapy!**

I find that when parents have a few simple parenting-tools in dealing with the out-of-control Aspergers child, they actually do a much better job of influencing him/her to change his behavior than a counselor, psychotherapist, etc.

Can I give you an idea real quick? A *change agent* is someone who influences another person to make some improvements in his behavior. I will show you how to be the change agent -- and you'll do a much better job than others because you're the kid's parent, and you will see him nearly every day as long as he continues to live at home. I would only have about 4 hours of influence time if I were doing "family therapy" with you and your Aspergers child ...you will have thousands of hours of influence time. Those parents who use the strategies you are about to learn are reporting good success and improvements at home.

We are going to come up with some very effective strategies. But doing them halfway or giving up once you start will do more harm than not doing them at all. You must commit to being consistent and following through in order for this to work.

You managed your child for several years. But guess what? He or she has fired you as the manager and said, "I'll take over from here." The best you can do now is to be re-hired as a consultant.

You can't control your Aspergers child, but you can influence him or her. And if the parent fails to influence the child, the world will CONTROL the child -- and the world is not concerned about what is right or fair.

Know that your child WILL resist change. For a while, it may seem as though things are getting worse. This is because your child is adjusting to the changes you make. But don't be fooled!!! Your child will try very hard to make you believe that your

parenting changes are not working and that your discipline has no effect.

No Half Measures! --

When parents implement the parenting strategies in this eBook, the *change cycle* looks something like this:

1. Initially, **things get worse** (i.e., your Aspergers child does not like your new parenting strategies and begins to act-out even more)
2. After a few weeks, problems between parent and child eventually occur **less frequently**, but with the **same intensity** (e.g., instead of five heated arguments a week, there are only two)
3. Problems between parent and child occur **less frequently AND with less intensity** (e.g., only one argument a week that is not very heated)

Will problems go away totally -- and stay away forever? No. But problems are likely to occur with less frequency and severity over time. And you will be able to cope better due to a reduction in your stress-level.

What exactly is a Meltdown?!!

A meltdown is a condition where the Aspergers youngster temporarily loses control due to emotional responses to environmental factors. It generally appears that the Aspergers youngster has lost control over a single and specific issue however this is very rarely the case. Usually, the problem is the accumulation of a number of irritations which could span a fairly long period of time, particularly given the strong long-term memory facilities of the Aspergers youngster.

The Cycle of Meltdowns

Meltdowns typically occur in three stages that can be of variable length. These stages are (1) the “acting-in” stage, (2) the “acting-out” stage, and (3) the recuperation stage.

The “Acting-In” Stage

The “acting-in” stage is the initial stage of a tantrum, rage, or meltdown. During this stage, kids and teenagers with Aspergers exhibit specific behavior changes that may not seem to be related directly to a meltdown. The behaviors may seem minor. That is, kids with Aspergers may clear their throats, lower their voices, tense their

muscles, tap their foot, grimace, or otherwise indicate general discontent. Furthermore, somatic complaints also may occur during the “acting-in” stage. Kids also may engage in behaviors that are more obvious, including emotionally or physically withdrawing, or verbally or physically affecting someone else. For example, the youngster may challenge the classroom structure or authority by attempting to engage in a power struggle.

During this stage, it is imperative that a mother/father or educator intervene without becoming part of a struggle. The following interventions can be effective in stopping the cycle of tantrums, rage, and meltdowns – and they are invaluable in that they can help the youngster regain control with minimal adult support:

1. Intervention #1 involves displaying a chart or visual schedule of expectations and events, which can provide security to kids and teenagers with Aspergers who typically need predictability. This technique also can be used as advance preparation for a change in routine. Informing kids of schedule changes can prevent anxiety and reduce the likelihood of tantrums, rage, and meltdowns (e.g., the youngster who is signaling frustration by tapping his foot may be directed to his schedule to make him aware that after he completes two more problems he gets to work on a topic of special interest with a peer). While running errands, moms and dads can use support from routine by alerting the youngster in the “acting-in” stage that their next stop will be at a store the youngster enjoys.

2. Intervention #2 involves helping the youngster to focus on something other than the task or activity that seems to be upsetting. One type of redirection that often works well when the source of the behavior is a lack of understanding is telling the youngster that he can “cartoon” the situation to figure out what to do. Sometimes cartooning can be postponed briefly. At other times, the youngster may need to cartoon immediately.

3. Intervention #3 involves making the Aspergers child’s school environment as stress-free as possible by providing him/her with a “home-base.” A home-base is a place in the school where the child can “escape.” The home-base should be quiet with few visual or activity distractions, and activities should be selected carefully to ensure that they are calming rather than alerting. In school, resource rooms or counselors' offices can serve as a home-base. The structure of the room supersedes its location. At home, the home-base may be the youngster’s room or an isolated area in the house. Regardless of its location, however, it is essential that the home-base is viewed as a positive environment. Home-base is not “timeout” or an escape from classroom tasks or chores. The youngster takes class work to home-base, and at home, chores are completed after a brief respite in the home-base. Home-base may be used at times other than during the “acting-in” stage (e.g., at the beginning of the day, a home base can serve to preview the day’s schedule, introduce changes in the typical routine, and ensure that the youngster’s materials are organized or prime for specific subjects). At other times, home-base can be used to help the youngster gain control after a meltdown.

4. Intervention #4 involves paying attention to cues from the Aspergers child. When the youngster with Aspergers begins to exhibit a precursor behavior (e.g., throat clearing, pacing), the educator uses a nonverbal signal to let the youngster know that she is aware of the situation (e.g., the educator can place herself in a position where eye contact with the youngster can be achieved, or an agreed-upon “secret” signal, such as tapping on a desk, may be used to alert the youngster that he is under stress). A “signal” may be followed by a stress relief strategy (e.g., squeezing a stress ball). In the home or community, moms and dads may develop a signal (i.e., a slight hand movement) that the mother/father uses with their youngster is in the “acting-in” stage.

5. Intervention #5 involves removing a youngster, in a non-punitive fashion, from the environment in which he is experiencing difficulty. At school, the youngster may be sent on an errand. At home, the youngster may be asked to retrieve an object for a mother/father. During this time the youngster has an opportunity to regain a sense of calm. When he returns, the problem has typically diminished in magnitude and the grown-up is on hand for support, if needed.

6. Intervention #6 is a strategy where the educator moves near the youngster who is engaged in the target behavior. Moms/dads and teachers move near the Aspergers youngster. Often something as simple as standing next to the youngster is calming. This can easily be accomplished without interrupting an ongoing activity (e.g., the educator who circulates through the classroom during a lesson).

7. Intervention #7 is a technique in which the mother/father or educator merely walks with the youngster without talking. Silence on the part of the grown-up is important, because a youngster with Aspergers in the “acting-in” stage will likely react emotionally to any adult statement, misinterpreting it or rephrasing it beyond recognition. On this walk the youngster can say whatever he wishes without fear of discipline or reprimand. In the meantime, the grown-up should be calm, show as little reaction as possible, and never be confrontational.

8. Intervention #8 is a technique that is effective when the youngster is in the midst of the “acting-in” stage because of a difficult task, and the mother/father or educator thinks that the youngster can complete the activity with support. The mother/father or educator offers a brief acknowledgement that supports the verbalizations of the youngster and helps him complete his task. For instance, when working on a math problem the youngster begins to say, “This is too hard.” Knowing the youngster can complete the problem, the educator refocuses the youngster's attention by saying, “Yes, the problem is difficult. Let's start with number one.” This brief direction and support may prevent the youngster from moving past the “acting-in” stage.

When selecting an intervention during the “acting-in” stage, it is important to know the youngster, as the wrong technique can escalate rather than deescalate a behavior problem. Further, although interventions at this stage do not require

extensive time, it is advisable that grown-ups understand the events that precipitate the target behaviors so that they can (1) be ready to intervene early, or (2) teach kids and teenagers strategies to maintain behavior control during these times. Interventions at this stage are merely calming. They do not teach kids to recognize their own frustration or provide a means of handling it. Techniques to accomplish these goals are discussed later.

The “Acting-Out” Stage

If behavior is not diffused during the “acting-in” stage, the youngster or adolescent may move to the “acting-out” stage. At this point, the youngster is dis-inhibited and acts impulsively, emotionally, and sometimes explosively. These behaviors may be externalized (i.e., screaming, biting, hitting, kicking, destroying property, or self-injury) or internalized (i.e., withdrawal). Meltdowns are not purposeful, and once the “acting-out” stage begins, most often it must run its course.

During this stage, emphasis should be placed on youngster, peer, and adult safety, and protection of school, home, or personal property. The best way to cope with a tantrum, rage, or meltdown is to get the youngster to home base. As mentioned, this room is not viewed as a reward or disciplinary room, but is seen as a place where the youngster can regain self-control.

Of importance here is helping the individual with Aspergers regain control and preserve dignity. To that end, grown-ups should have developed plans for (1) obtaining assistance from educators, such as a crisis educator or principal, (2) removing other kids from the area, or (3) providing therapeutic restraint, if necessary.

The Recuperation Stage

Following a meltdown, the youngster with Aspergers has contrite feelings and often cannot fully remember what occurred during the “acting-out” stage. Some may become sullen, withdraw, or deny that inappropriate behavior occurred; others are so physically exhausted that they need to sleep.

It is imperative that interventions are implemented at a time when the youngster can accept them and in a manner the youngster can understand and accept. Otherwise, the intervention may simply resume the cycle in a more accelerated pattern, leading more quickly to the “acting-out” stage. During the recuperation stage, kids often are not ready to learn. Thus, it is important that grown-ups work with them to help them once again become a part of the routine. This is often best accomplished by directing the youth to a highly motivating task that can be easily accomplished, such as activity related to a special interest.

Preventing Tantrums, Rage, and Meltdowns

Kids and teenagers with Aspergers generally do not want to engage in meltdowns. Rather, the “acting-out” cycle is the only way they know of expressing stress, coping with problems, and a host of other emotions to which they see no other solution. Most want to learn methods to manage their behavior, including calming themselves in the face of problems and increasing self-awareness of their emotions. The best intervention for tantrums, rage, and meltdowns is prevention. Prevention occurs best as a multifaceted approach consisting of instruction in (1) strategies that increase social understanding and problem solving, (2) techniques that facilitate self-understanding, and (3) methods of self-calming.

Increasing Social Understanding and Problem Solving

Enhancement of social understanding includes providing direct assistance. Although instructional strategies are beneficial, it is almost impossible to teach all the social skills that are needed in day-to-day life. Instead, these skills often are taught in an interpretive manner after the youngster has engaged in an unsuccessful or otherwise problematic encounter. Interpretation skills are used in recognition that, no matter how well developed the skills of a person with Aspergers, situations will arise that he or she does not understand. As a result, someone in the person's environment must serve as a social management interpreter.

The following interpretative strategies can help turn seemingly random actions into meaningful interactions for kids with Aspergers:

1. Analyzing a social skills problem is a good interpretative strategy. Following a social error, the youngster who committed the error works with an adult to (1) identify the error, (2) determine who was harmed by the error, (3) decide how to correct the error, and (4) develop a plan to prevent the error from occurring again. A social skills analysis is not “punishment.” Rather, it is a supportive and constructive problem-solving strategy. The analyzing process is particularly effective in enabling the youngster to see the cause/effect relationship between her social behavior and the reactions of others in her environment. The success of the strategy lies in its structure of practice, immediate feedback, and positive reinforcement. Every grown-up with whom the youngster with Aspergers has regular contact, such as moms and dads, educators, and therapists, should know how to do social skills analysis fostering skill acquisition and generalization. Originally designed to be verbally based, the strategy has been modified to include a visual format to enhance child learning.

2. Visual symbols such as “cartooning” have been found to enhance the processing abilities of persons in the autism spectrum, to enhance their understanding of the environment, and to reduce tantrums, rage, and meltdowns. One type of visual support is cartooning. Used as a generic term, this technique has been implemented by speech and language pathologists for many years to enhance understanding in their clients. Cartoon figures play an integral role in several intervention techniques: pragmaticism, mind-reading, and comic strip conversations. Cartooning techniques,

such as comic strip conversations, allow the youngster to analyze and understand the range of messages and meanings that are a natural part of conversation and play. Many kids with Aspergers are confused and upset by teasing or sarcasm. The speech and thought bubble as well as choice of colors can illustrate the hidden messages.

Why the Problems Seem Hidden—

Aspergers kids don't tend to give a lot of clues that they are very irritated:

- Often Aspergers child-grievances are aired as part of their normal conversation and may even be interpreted by NTs as part of their standard whine.
- Some things which annoy Aspergers kids would not be considered annoying to neurotypicals -- this makes NT's less likely to pick up on a potential problem.
- Their facial expressions very often will not convey the irritation.
- Their vocal tones will often remain flat even when they are fairly annoyed.

What happens during a Meltdown?

The meltdown appears to most people as a tantrum or dummy spit. There are marked differences between adults and kids. Kids tend to flop onto the ground and shout, scream or cry. Quite often, they will display violent behavior such as hitting or kicking.

In adults, due to social pressures, violent behavior in public is less common. Shouting outbursts or emotional displays however can occur. More often though, it leads to depression and the Aspergers youngster simply retreats into themselves and abandons social contact.

Some Aspergers kids describe the meltdown as a red or grey band across the eyes. I've certainly experienced this. There is a loss of control and a feeling of being a powerless observer outside the body. This can be dangerous as the Aspergers youngster may strike out, particularly if the instigator is nearby or if they are taunted during a meltdown.

Depression—

Sometimes, depression is the only outward visible sign of a meltdown. At other times, depression results when the Aspergers youngster leaves their meltdown state and confronts the results of the meltdown. The depression is a result of guilt over abusive, shouting or violent behavior. I will cover depression in a different post.

Dealing with Meltdowns and Tantrums in Aspergers Kids—

There's not a great deal of that you can do when a meltdown occurs in a very young child. Probably the very best thing that you can do at their youngest ages is to train yourself to recognize a meltdown before it happens and take steps to avoid it.

Example: Aspergers kids are quite possessive about their food and my youngest will sometimes decide that he does not want his meat to be cut up for him. When this happens, taking his plate from him and cutting his meat could cause a tantrum. The best way to deal with this is to avoid touching it for the first part of the meal until he starts to want your involvement. When this occurs, instead of taking his plate from him, it is more effective to lean over and help him to cut the first piece. Once he has cut the first piece with help, he will often allow the remaining pieces to be cut for him though I would still recommend that his plate not be moved.

Once the youngster reaches an age where they can understand, probably around seven years give or take a few. You can work on explaining the situation. One way you could do this would be to discreetly videotape a meltdown and allow them to watch it at a later date. You could then discuss the incident, explain why it isn't socially acceptable and give them some alternatives.

When I was little, I remember that the single best motivation for keeping control was once, when my mother called me in after play and talked about the day. In particular, she highlighted an incident where I had fallen over and hurt myself. She said, "Did you see how your friend started to go home as soon as you fell over because they were scared that you were going to have a tantrum". She went on to say, "When you got up and laughed, they were so happy that they came racing back. I'm proud of you for not losing your temper".

I carried this with me for years later and would always strive to contain myself. I wouldn't always succeed but at least I was trying.

Meltdowns and Punishment—

One of the most important things to realize is that meltdowns are part of the Aspergers condition. They can't avoid them; merely try to reduce the damage. Punishing an Aspergers youngster for a meltdown is like punishing someone for swearing when they hit their thumb with a hammer. It won't do any good whatsoever and can only serve to increase the distance between you and your youngster.

In addition, meltdowns aren't wholly caused by the current scenario but are usually the result of an overwhelming number of other issues. The one which "causes" the meltdown is the "straw that breaks the camel's back". Unless you're a mind reader, you won't necessarily know what the other factors are and your Aspergers youngster may not be able to fully communicate the problem.

Every teacher of Aspergers students and every mom or dad of an Aspergers child can expect to witness some meltdowns. On average, meltdowns are equally common in boys and girls, and more than half of Aspergers kids will have one or more per week.

At home, there are predictable situations that can be expected to trigger meltdowns, for example:

- bath time
- bedtime
- car rides
- dinner time
- family activities involving siblings
- family visiting another house
- getting dressed
- getting up
- interactions with peers
- mom or dad talking on the phone
- playtime
- public places
- visitors at the house
- watching TV

Other settings include:

- answering questions in class
- directives from the teacher
- getting ready to work
- group activities
- individual seat work
- interactions with other children
- on the school bus
- the playground
- transitions between activities

All Aspergers kids from time to time will whine, complain, resist, cling, argue, hit, shout, run, and defy their teachers and moms & dads. Meltdowns, although normal, can become upsetting to teachers and moms & dads because they are embarrassing, challenging, and difficult to manage. On the other hand, meltdowns can become special problems when they occur with greater frequency, intensity, and duration than is typical for the age of the Aspergers kid.

There are nine different types of temperaments in Aspergers kids:

1. Distractible temperament predisposes the Aspergers kid to pay more attention to his or her surroundings than to the caregiver.

2. High intensity level temperament moves the Aspergers kid to yell, scream, or hit hard when feeling threatened.
3. Hyperactive temperament predisposes the Aspergers kid to respond with fine- or gross-motor activity.
4. Initial withdrawal temperament is found when Aspergers kids get clingy, shy, and unresponsive in new situations and around unfamiliar people.
5. Irregular temperament moves the Aspergers kid to escape the source of stress by needing to eat, drink, sleep, or use the bathroom at irregular times when he or she does not really have the need.
6. Low sensory threshold temperament is evident when the Aspergers kid complains about tight clothes and people staring and refuses to be touched by others.
7. Negative mood temperament is found when Aspergers kids appear lethargic, sad and lack the energy to perform a task.
8. Negative persistent temperament is seen when the Aspergers kid seems stuck in his or her whining and complaining.
9. Poor adaptability temperament shows itself when Aspergers kids resist, shut down, and become passive-aggressive when asked to change activities.

At about age 1 1/2 some Aspergers kids will start throwing meltdowns. These bouts of meltdowns can last until approximately age 4. Some call this stage the terrible twos and others call it first adolescence because the struggle for independence is similar to what is seen during adolescence. Regardless of what the stage is called, there is a normal developmental course for meltdowns.

Aspergers kids during this stage will test the limits. They want to see how far they can go before a mom or dad or teacher stops their behavior. At age 2 Aspergers kids are very egocentric and cannot see another person's point of view. They want independence and self-control to explore their environment. When Aspergers kids cannot reach a goal, they show frustration by crying, arguing, yelling, or hitting. When children's need for independence collides with the moms & dads' and teachers' needs for safety and conformity, the conditions are perfect for a power struggle and a meltdown. The meltdown is designed to get the teacher or mom or dad to desist in their demands or give them whatever they want. Many times Aspergers kids stop the meltdown only when they get what is desired. What is most upsetting to caregivers is that it is virtually impossible to reason with Aspergers kids who are having a meltdown, and arguing and cajoling in response to a meltdown only escalates the problem.

By age 3 many Aspergers kids are less impulsive and can use language to express their needs. Meltdowns at this age are often less frequent and less severe. Nevertheless, some preschoolers have learned that a meltdown is a good way to get what they want.

Most Aspergers kids have the necessary motor and physical skills to meet many of their own needs without relying so much on an adult. At this age, Aspergers kids also have better language that allows them to express their anger and to problem-solve and compromise. Despite these improved skills, even kindergarten-age and school-age Aspergers kids can still have meltdowns when they are faced with demanding academic tasks and new interpersonal situations in school.

It is much easier to “prevent” meltdowns than it is to manage them once they have erupted.

Here are some tips for preventing meltdowns and some things you can say:

1. Avoid boredom. Say, “You have been working for a long time. Let’s take a break and do something fun.”
2. Change environments, thus removing the Aspergers kid from the source of the meltdown. Say, “Let’s go for a walk.”
3. Choose your battles. Teach Aspergers kids how to make a request without a meltdown and then honor the request. Say, “Try asking for that toy nicely and I’ll get it for you.”
4. Create a safe environment that Aspergers kids can explore without getting into trouble. Childproof your home or classroom so Aspergers kids can explore safely.
5. Distract Aspergers kids by redirection to another activity when they meltdown over something they should not do or cannot have. Say, “Let’s read a book together.”
6. Do not ask Aspergers kids to do something when they must do what you ask. Do not ask, “Would you like to eat now?” Say, “It is supertime now.”
7. Establish routines and traditions that add structure. For teachers, start class with a sharing time and opportunity for interaction.
8. Give Aspergers kids control over little things whenever possible by giving choices. A little bit of power given to the Aspergers kid can stave off the big power struggles later. “Which do you want to do first, brush your teeth or put on your pajamas?”

9. Increase your tolerance level. Are you available to meet the Aspergers kid's reasonable needs? Evaluate how many times you say, "No." Avoid fighting over minor things.
10. Keep a sense of humor to divert the Aspergers kid's attention and surprise the Aspergers kid out of the meltdown.
11. Keep off-limit objects out of sight and therefore out of mind. In an art activity keep the scissors out of reach if Aspergers kids are not ready to use them safely.
12. Make sure that Aspergers kids are well rested and fed in situations in which a meltdown is a likely possibility. Say, "Supper is almost ready, here's a cracker for now."
13. Provide pre-academic, behavioral, and social challenges that are at the Aspergers kid's developmental level so that the Aspergers kid does not become frustrated.
14. Reward Aspergers kids for positive attention rather than negative attention. During situations when they are prone to meltdowns, catch them when they are being good and say such things as, "Nice job sharing with your friend."
15. Signal Aspergers kids before you reach the end of an activity so that they can get prepared for the transition. Say, "When the timer goes off 5 minutes from now it will be time to turn off the TV and go to bed."
16. When visiting new places or unfamiliar people explain to the Aspergers kid beforehand what to expect. Say, "Stay with your assigned buddy in the museum."

There are a number of ways to "handle" a meltdown.

Strategies include the following:

1. Hold the Aspergers kid who is out of control and is going to hurt himself or herself or someone else. Let the Aspergers kids know that you will let him or her go as soon as he or she calms down. Reassure the Aspergers kid that everything will be all right, and help the Aspergers kid calm down. Moms & dads may need to hug their Aspergers kid who is crying, and say they will always love him or her no matter what, but that the behavior has to change. This reassurance can be comforting for an Aspergers kid who may be afraid because he or she lost control.
2. If the Aspergers kid has escalated the meltdown to the point where you are not able to intervene in the ways described above, then you may need to direct the Aspergers kid to time-out. If you are in a public place, carry your Aspergers kid outside or to the car. Tell the Aspergers kid that you will go home unless he or she calms down. In school warn the Aspergers kid up to three times that it is necessary

to calm down and give a reminder of the rule. If the Aspergers kid refuses to comply, then place him or her in time-out for no more than 1 minute for each year of age.

3. Remain calm and do not argue with the Aspergers kid. Before you manage the Aspergers kid, you must manage your own behavior. Spanking or yelling at the Aspergers kid will make the meltdown worse.

4. Talk with the Aspergers kid after the child has calmed down. When the Aspergers kid stops crying, talk about the frustration the Aspergers kid has experienced. Try to help solve the problem if possible. For the future, teach the Aspergers kid new skills to help avoid meltdowns such as how to ask appropriately for help and how to signal a mom or dad or teacher that the he or she knows they need to go to “time away” to “stop, think, and make a plan.” Teach the Aspergers kid how to try a more successful way of interacting with a peer or sibling, how to express his or her feelings with words and recognize the feelings of others without hitting and screaming.

5. Think before you act. Count to 10 and then think about the source of the Aspergers kid’s frustration, this child’s characteristic temperamental response to stress (hyperactivity, distractibility, moodiness), and the predictable steps in the escalation of the meltdown.

6. Try to intervene before the Aspergers kid is out of control. Get down at the Aspergers kid’s eye level and say, “You are starting to get revved up, slow down.” Now you have several choices of intervention.

7. You can ignore the meltdown if it is being thrown to get your attention. Once the Aspergers kid calms down, you can give the attention that is desired.

8. You can place the Aspergers kid in time away. Time away is a quiet place where the Aspergers kid goes to calm down, think about what he or she needs to do, and, with your help, make a plan to change the behavior.

9. You can positively distract the Aspergers kid by getting the Aspergers kid focused on something else that is an acceptable activity. For example, you might remove the unsafe item and replace with an age-appropriate toy.

Post-Meltdown Management—

1. Do not reward the Aspergers kid after a meltdown for calming down. Some Aspergers kids will learn that a meltdown is a good way to get a treat later.

2. Explain to the Aspergers kid that there are better ways to get what he or she wants.

3. Never let the meltdown interfere with your otherwise positive relationship with the Aspergers kid.
4. Never, under any circumstances, give in to a meltdown. That response will only increase the number and frequency of the meltdowns.
5. Teach the Aspergers kid that anger is a feeling that we all have and then teach her ways to express anger constructively.

The out-of-control Aspergers child is 100% successful at getting your attention -- whether it's positive attention or negative attention!

He enjoys energy and attention. He seeks energy and attention from you too (e.g., your being animated, arguing, lecturing, getting angry, threatening him, etc.). Unfortunately, he has discovered that you are much more energetic, attentive and interesting when he misbehaves.

Attention-seeking children are not out to get you as a parent -- they are out to get your energy, intensity and attention. They want you to be exciting to them. Unfortunately, you are much more exciting when things are going wrong.

So, whenever you use a "traditional" parenting strategy (like arguing, lecturing, getting angry, threatening), it is actually a reward to your Aspergers child -- he gets what he wants -- your energy and attention! He is able to push your energy-producing buttons ...**AND THIS IS EXCITING TO HIM !**

Therefore, try very hard not to show any emotion when reacting to the behaviors of your intense, attention-seeking kid (put on your best "poker face"). The worst thing to do with this kid is to react strongly and emotionally. This will just make her push you that same way again. You do not want the kid to figure out what really bugs you. You want to try to remain as cool as possible while she is trying to drive you over the edge. This is not easy. Once you know what you are going to ignore and what will be addressed, it should be far easier not to let your feelings get the best of you.

Note: Destructiveness and disagreeableness may be purposeful in out-of-control Aspergers children:

- They like to see you get mad.
- Every request can end up as a power struggle.

- Lying becomes a way of life, and getting a reaction out of others is the chief hobby.
- Perhaps hardest of all to bear, they rarely are truly sorry and often believe nothing is their fault.
- After a huge blow up, the intense, out-of-control child is often calm and collected. It is the parents who look as though they are going to lose it, not the child. This is understandable. The parents have probably just been tricked, bullied, lied to or have witnessed temper tantrums which know no limits.

Intense, out-of-control Aspergers kids produce strong feelings in people. They are trying to get a reaction out of people, and they are often successful. Common ones are:

- Inciting spouses to fight with each other and not focus on the child
- Making outsiders believe that all the fault lies with the parents
- Making certain susceptible people believe that they can save the child by doing everything the child wants
- Setting parents against grandparents
- Setting teachers against parents
- Inciting the parents to abuse the child

Legitimate Reasons for Parent-Child Conflict -

Why does conflict exist between parent and child?

1. Parent and kid get defensive when talking to one another because there is an emotional link between the two. Think about it. When you don't care about someone (e.g., Joe Blow), it doesn't matter much what that person says or does. But when you love and care for someone -- and when you want that person to love and respect you -- it hurts when they do unloving, uncaring things. And that hurt comes out as anger.
2. How many times has your out-of-control Aspergers child called you a "bitch"? (Hopefully never.) Strong-willed kids hate when their parent "bitches," and they try to get the parent to stop bitching by getting angry at the parent in order to create distance. But bitching equals importance. The parent bitches because her kid is important, and because she doesn't want her kid to destroy the relationship. Unfortunately, the kid doesn't know this and views "bitching" as criticism and harassment. As a result, the parent's good message gets lost.

3. When a kid seems insensitive or selfish, it is because he is in too much emotional pain to be able to consider the parent. Pain interferes with listening and with understanding where the parent is coming from. This is particularly hard to understand when the kid hides his pain with rage or with the "silent-treatment."
4. Parents are freaked-out by the fact that they are losing control of their kid's behavior. And this fear can come out as anger and rage directed toward the out-of-control kid.
5. Sometimes family members behave in manipulative, hurtful ways not because they think this will change the other person's behavior, but because they honestly feel they are doing the best they can given the circumstances.
6. Everybody in the family thinks they're doing right. If we think others do bad things because they have evil intentions, we may give up trying to influence them, become afraid of them, get angry with them, seek revenge, etc. Family members aren't "bad," they're just desperate to find a solution to the problems and haven't found one yet.
7. Family members are sharing a common experience (e.g., hurt, fear), but are expressing their emotions in different, and sometimes strange ways (e.g., dad has an intimate relationship with the computer, mom sleeps a lot, kid #1 stays away from home all the time, kid #2 eats too much and has a weight problem).
8. We may think, "If I just try harder/stop trying/act nicer/get mean, the other person will change" – doesn't work! We have to change the way we approach the problem(s). That's why you're reading this ebook!

Change Your Perspective—

- Mentally go beyond the problem and project yourself to a future time where the problem could not possibly matter anymore.
- Develop a part of you that serves as an impartial and dispassionate observer of your out-of-control Aspergers child, regardless of circumstance.
- Visualize your out-of-control daughter as a mother going through her own parent-child conflict. Visualize your out-of-control son as a father having to deal with HIS verbally abusive son.

- When you resist (e.g., struggle with, try to change) your difficult kid, it's usually you that breaks. As soon as you accept the situation for what it is, you can begin to access your resources and act constructively to influence his/her behavior.
 - BREATHE MORE, THINK LESS.
 - Somewhere in this difficult experience is an opportunity.
 - ASK FOR GUIDANCE >>> TRUST >>> DETACH FROM THE OUTCOME >>> DON'T TAKE ANYTHING PERSONALLY >>> NEVER GIVE UP.
 - What you learn from dealing with the difficult kid will make you stronger and help you in many other areas of your life.
 - YOU MAY NOT UNDERSTAND IT ... MAY NOT AGREE WITH IT ...AND MAY NOT LIKE IT, BUT YOU DON'T HAVE TO TORTURE YOURSELF WITH THOUGHTS ABOUT IT.
 - Experiment. Try novel approaches. Do the last thing you would ever think to do first!
 - LET NO ONE OR NO THING STEAL YOUR JOY.
 - Know that anything is possible.
 - YOUR KID IS A WORK IN PROGRESS.
 - THE OPPOSITE OF ANGER IS PATIENCE.
 - Let go and let God.
 - All things must pass.
 - WHAT GOES AROUND COMES AROUND.
 - Just think for a moment about how old you are, and about all you've been through.
 - All things work together for good. It's likely that something wonderful is emerging from your current difficult kid-situation -- and that you haven't seen it yet. EVERYTHING HAPPENS FOR A GOOD REASON.
 - YOUR MOST DIFFICULT PEOPLE ARE YOUR GREATEST TEACHERS.
 - YOUR MOST DIFFICULT SITUATIONS STRENGTHEN YOU.
 - THE LESS YOU TRY TO CONTROL OTHERS, THE MORE CONTROL YOU GET.
 - RATHER THAN FOCUSING ON WHAT YOU DON'T WANT AND WHAT IS GOING WRONG, FOCUS ON WHAT YOU DO WANT AND WHAT IS GOING RIGHT.
 - RATHER THAN FOCUSING ON HOW YOU ARE BEING MISTREATED, FOCUS ON HOW YOU CAN TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF.
-

Assertive parenting will be the key to your success as you begin implementing these new *non-traditional* parenting strategies. Approaching problems assertively is something new to most parents, however.

Most of us, as parents, have vacillated between **passive-parenting** and **aggressive-parenting**. In other words, we let our Aspergers child have her way time and time again. Then, when we finally had enough and attempted to set some limits, in came in the form of *raging* at our child. Then we felt guilty for raging and went back to being passive again.

Here is a method that is neither passive nor aggressive:

FAIR FIGHTING—

Make sure your out-of-control Aspergers child understands what a “time-out” is long before any problems occur:

- A time-out is used when people are too mad to discuss a problem rationally.
- A time-out puts time and distance between you and the person you’re upset with so that both parties can cool down to prepare for discussion.
- When a problem occurs, allow your out-of-control Aspergers child to take a time-out if needed.
- One hour is a good length of time for a time-out.

After one hour (if a time-out was needed), problem-solve using the following guidelines:

1. The two of you will only discuss the problem(s) as long as you are both sitting down. If either of you stands up, there is a break so you can both cool down.
2. The parent delivers an assertive message to get the discussion started:

When you... (state what the out-of-control kid did)

I felt... (an emotion – not a thought)

I’d rather you... (kid’s new behavior that replaces old behavior)

3. Ask your Aspergers child to repeat back what they just heard you say.

4. If your Aspergers child does not paraphrase correctly, return to step.
5. If your Aspergers child paraphrases correctly, ask open-ended questions and make

comments such as:

- What do you think about what I just said?
- What are you feeling right now?
- It must be hard for you to imagine your life being any different.
- It must be difficult being you.
- You look ticked-off, who has been hassling you, how can I help you?
- How long will this (problem) last?

You do not need to tell your out-of-control youngster about the rest of the guidelines that you will be using:

6. Slow down. Breathe deep and slow. Talk slow. Move slow.
7. Relax your facial muscles. Make your eyes soft. This will shift your mood and send a clear non-verbal message that you are not out for a fight.
8. Pay attention to what your out-of-control Aspergers child is saying. Listen, listen ...then listen some more.
9. Paraphrase what you are hearing.
10. Toward the end of the discussion, begin to look at the humor in the situation that has been the focus of discussion. Find something funny about it. Begin to smile. See the problem as becoming less heavy.
11. To close the discussion, give your out-of-control Aspergers child a hug.

Note: If you and your out-of-control child are having difficulty with a few ground rules, then it may be time to sit down together to negotiate limits and expectations. You may even want to lay these rules out on paper in the form of a contract. Many parents find it useful to sit down and draw up a contract with their children. The contract should include really basic and important rules to provide for the safety of the child and the well being of the family and it should state clear consequences for any broken rules.

Here's a sample contract--

Whenever I am angry at, or in disagreement with you, I will:

- Tell you immediately how I am feeling, even if I am angry or in disagreement. (If I am too mad to think straight, I will take a time-out first.)
- Allow you to express feelings openly as well.
- Ask you to allow for a compromise win-win solution.
- Ventilate feelings, and then jointly brainstorm solutions.
- Arrive at a solution in which we both win.
- Act on solutions in which we both win.
- Make sure my actions are consistent with the agreement.
- Make sure my behavior is consistent with my feelings and what I said in the agreement.
- Give you permission to point out when my behavior deviates from our agreement.
- Monitor my emotions and re-negotiate our solution if they are not consistent with our compromise.
- Let you know if I get upset over the compromise with no masking of my feelings.
- Confront intimidation openly and honestly.
- Ensure that our relationship is based on honesty.
- Accept your uniqueness and individuality, allowing each of us to be ourselves.
- Return to Step 1 and begin again if I find I am still angry or in disagreement with you.

Both parties sign and date the contract.

Letting Go of Resentment –

In order to let go, we must first forgive!

Forgiveness:

- is a way to let go of resentment.
- means letting go of the past.
- is for you, not the out-of-control child you forgive.
- is a gift you give yourself.
- lets you get on with your life.
- takes time. Maybe you're not able to forgive yet. Perhaps the pain is too fresh. You don't have to hurry.
- is a process. It doesn't happen 100% overnight.
- allows you to feel better about you.
- is a choice. It's not something you do because you "should" forgive, or because someone tells you to.
- allows you to heal old wounds so you can get on with the really important things in life.
- gets you un-stuck.

Forgiveness does NOT mean:

- forgetting. You need to remember what happened so you can protect yourself.
- you're letting anyone off the hook (except yourself).
- you have to tell the out-of-control child that you have forgiven him/her.
- you have to trust your out-of-control child again. Trust is earned. He/she will have to earn your trust back before you can trust him/her again.
- you're saying to the out-of-control child, "What you did to me is "OK."
- you're trying to alleviate his/her feelings of guilt.
- you're trying to make that out-of-control child feel better about himself/herself.
- you're trying to make the out-of-control child feel better about you.

You may need to forgive yourself too. Sometimes we can't forgive others until we forgive ourselves.

I offer you this exercise in forgiveness. With your hand on your heart, take a deep breath and affirm:

"I completely forgive my Aspergers child. I know I've done the best I could given the circumstances. If I was in another state of mind, or if I had more information, I may have parented differently..."

...I ask God to help me reach the place of forgiveness for myself and for my child. I love and accept myself with all of my problems and perceived limitations. I don't need this resentment any longer. I am now able to replace it with forgiveness and hope."

Here is an email from one of the parents I worked with:

"It hurt to accept that I made some significant parenting mistakes. I felt embarrassed, ashamed, foolish and guilty. But these feelings did not help me with my kid. Without beating up on myself, I had to admit my mistakes, accept them, and respond to them. This was difficult. I had to do this, both in my head, and in my gut..."

...It was much harder to accept responsibility for my parenting mistakes than it was to merely admit to them. It was even harder to find an appropriate way to respond, which was to make amends for my mistakes. I could not just pick things up as they were, pretending that the mistakes did not happen. They did! I realized that there is no such a thing in life as a quick fix. I wanted to fix things up quickly. But I knew that was really a bit of trying to pretend that the mistakes did not happen and that my children were not hurt by some of my poor parenting choices.

I am committed to following the strategies in the parenting ebook. I have forgiven myself, and I have forgiven my child. We are starting over – and things are slowly, but surely, improving."

The Dependency Cycle—

We basically give our children two things: STUFF and/or FREEDOM.

- Examples of STUFF: designer clothes, T.V., computer, video games, money, etc.
- Examples of FREEDOM: activities, freedom from rules, freedom from chores, freedom from discipline, freedom from parental expectations, etc.

Here is the dependency cycle that we as well-intentioned parents have unintentionally set-up ...it goes like this:

1. We want to bond with our children, and we want them to be happy because we love them. And we want them to have it better - or at least as good - as we had it.
2. As a result, we give our children too much stuff (e.g., designer clothes, T.V., computer, video games, money, etc.), and/or too much freedom (e.g., activities, freedom from rules, freedom from chores, freedom from discipline, freedom from meeting parental expectations, etc.). In other words, we OVER-INDULGE the kid.
3. Eventually our children become dependent on us to give them stuff or freedom or both because we are not teaching them to EARN stuff/freedom for themselves.
4. Because they are not “learning to earn,” our children become emotionally underdeveloped (i.e., we have a kid who is chronologically 16-years-old, but is emotionally more like 9-years-old). And they become resentful because of their dependence on us for stuff or freedom or both. But at the same time, they come to expect a lot of stuff or freedom or both -- they take it for granted -- they feel entitled to it -- and they want more ...more ...and more of it.
5. Consequently, we as parents end up feeling detached from our children -- not bonded. And our children seem so damn unhappy! And they are experiencing problems in other areas as well (e.g., school).

Info on over-indulgence...

Overindulgent parenting is associated with children who:

- are verbally/physically aggressive
- are overly dependent on parent
- have less concern for others
- are self-centered
- are obnoxious and temperamental
- lack motivation
- are manipulative

The reasons parents indulge their children:

- don't have much money, so give too much freedom
- feel guilty (e.g., because of having to work all the time, not being able to spend enough time with the kid)
- response to a major life event (e.g., death or illness of parent or loved one)

- feel sorry for the kid (e.g., because the child has Aspergers, or because of divorce, or an abandoning father/mother)
- parent is afraid of the kid

The results of overindulgence:

- the kid is in charge rather than the parent (the tail is wagging the dog)
- kid feels entitled to privileges but not responsible for his actions
- kid does not get along well with authority figures
- kid believes the rules do not apply to him
- kid depends on the parent to give him what he wants, but at the same time, resents being dependent ...and this resentment comes out as anger and ungratefulness and a strong desire for more and more and more
- kid is used to not having to be responsible for anything
- kid finds school boring
- kid gets labeled ADHD by school officials and mental health professionals

Parents who overindulge have trouble:

- knowing when to be the kid's buddy and when to be her parent
- saying -- and sticking with -- "no"
- enforcing discipline and setting limits
- believing they are overindulging their children

An email from another parent:

"I realized I was very good at allowing both of my Asperger's children to be independent, but I was not very good at setting clear and firm limits for behavior. My children easily discovered rules that could be broken if their protests were long and loud enough.

Often times, I just want to avoid the hassle of a conflict. It was easier for me to let the rules slide than to deal with the fuss. Also, it was sometimes hard to refuse my children anything, because I did not want them to be unhappy. I thought unhappy children equals bad parents. And I guess at some level I was afraid my children would become angry and hate me if I set some boundaries. Now I know that

children want to know that their parents are in charge; they need structure and limits.”

Here is how we are going to get the dependency cycle turned around.

SELF-RELIANCE CYCLE—

Our children *earn* STUFF and/or FREEDOM.

- Examples of STUFF: designer clothes, T.V., computer, video games, money, etc.
- Examples of FREEDOM: activities, freedom from rules, freedom from chores, freedom from discipline, freedom from parental expectations, etc.

We are now going to reduce dependency by fostering self-reliance...the self-reliance cycle goes like this:

1. We want to bond with our children and we want them to be happy and responsible for their behavior and choices.
2. So, we help our children “**learn to earn.**” We help our children purchase material things with their own money (e.g., from an allowance, money earned by doing chores, etc). And, we help our children earn freedom (e.g., by following rules, doing chores, accepting appropriate discipline for misbehavior, meeting reasonable parental expectations).
3. This helps children develop self-reliance which, in turn, boosts emotional development, reduces their resentment, sense of entitlement, and their need for more ...more ...and more.
4. Consequently, we as parents feel bonded to our children – and they are happier and become more responsible!

SESSION #1 ASSIGNMENTS--

1. I’m asking you, the parent, to humble yourself a bit. This evening, say to your Aspergers child something like this:

"I discovered that I've made some mistakes in parenting you. And I apologize. But I have an obligation to you to make some changes. I'll explain each change to you as it comes, and I will give you time to adjust to the change."

It doesn't matter how your child responds to this statement. This statement gives your child a "heads-up" that change is coming, and it models that it's O.K. to do the following:

- admit one's mistakes
- make amends
- take responsibility
- accept change

2. Ask your child at least one question each day that cannot be answered with a simple "yes" or a "no" to demonstrate that you are interested in what is going on in his/her life. For example:

- "What did you have for lunch today at school?"
- "What did you do today in gym class?"

Don't be surprised if your child simply says, "I don't know" or "I don't remember" or "Who cares?" It doesn't matter how your child responds. The important thing is that you asked!

3. Each evening before bedtime, say to your child, "I love you ___ (child's name goes here)." Expect nothing in return. (Men, it is especially important for you to do this one!)

4. Eat dinner together at least one evening this week (either at home or out).

Tell your children that you expect them to be around for dinner at a specific time. You won't be surprised if someone decides not to have any part of eating dinner together. Eat at the dinner table, or go out to eat anyway. It doesn't matter who actually shows up for dinner. The important thing is that you are developing the habit of weekly "dinnertime." Sooner or later, the "resistant" child will show up for a meal.

Please do all of the above. Each assignment has a huge purpose behind it. NO half measures! **Half measures will be the "kiss of failure."**

Note: Out-of-control Aspergers children usually have very low self-esteem. The effects of low self-esteem can create a vicious cycle of poor performance, a distorted view of self and others, an unhappy personal life, and a lack of self-confidence.

POOR PERFORMANCE: Lack of self-confidence may result in making little or no effort toward realizing projects or goals. But failures that result from a lack of effort are not a true reflection of his/her abilities.

DISTORTED VIEW OF SELF AND OTHERS: Children with low self-esteem will not give themselves credit for their accomplishments. They think their peers look better in comparison. They may also believe that things just happen to them. ...that they do not make them happen.

UNHAPPY PERSONAL LIFE: A grumpy child is no fun to be around. He may find it hard to develop close relationships -- and he may often feel unhappy and lonely during his childhood years.

LACK OF SELF-CONFIDENCE: Children with low self-esteem often have little confidence in their abilities. They may think they are doomed to fail again because they failed before.

Two Potential Areas For Conflict

Conflict between you and your out-of-control Aspergers child can occur:

1. When your child wants something from you—

(e.g., to acquire material items, receive privileges, gain attention, avoid following a rule, avoid doing a chore, avoid receiving a discipline, avoid meeting a parental expectation, etc.)

2. When you want something from your child--

(e.g., when you want your child to following a rule, do a chore, accept an appropriate discipline, meet a reasonable parental expectation, etc.)

First, we are going to look at what to do when your child wants something from you.

The Art of Saying “Yes”

When you kid wants something from you, and your answer is "yes," be sure to use it as an opportunity for your Aspergers child to EARN the privilege.

Here are some examples:

Child: “I’m going to Marquis’ to play some basketball.”
Parent: “All right. As soon as you get your homework done.”

Child: "I'm hungry."
Parent: “O.K. Let’s cook something together, and then we both wash the dishes.”

Child: “Can Shaun spend the night Saturday?”
Parent: “Yea. But your room must be picked-up.”

Child: “I need some money.”
Parent: “How much ...and what are willing to do to earn it?”

The Art of Saying “No”

When you kid wants something from you, and your answer is "no," do the following:

1st - Say “no” once -- and only once.

2nd - Your children will say “why not” and will want to argue.

3rd - State your reason for saying “no” only once, and let them know what they can do to earn what they are asking for.

For example: “I’m saying ‘no’ because _____. If you will _____, then you will be allowed to _____.”

4th - Your children will continue to try to whittle your “no” into a “maybe” and then into “yes.”

5th – Say “I am not going to argue” (put on your best poker face here - remember not to show any sign that you are angry).

6th - If your children threaten to ignore your “no,” then a clear warning should be given immediately:

“If you choose to ____ without my permission, then you choose the consequence which is ____.”

7th - If the warning is ignored, then quickly follow through with the consequence:

“Because you chose to ____ without my permission, you chose the consequence, which is ____.”

8th - If your children refuse to accept the consequence, take everything away (or at least their favorite stuff and/or activities) and ground them for 3 days. If they have a rage-attack when they find out they are grounded for 3 days, the 3-day-discipline does not start until they calm down. If they violate the 3-day-discipline at any point, merely re-start the 3 days.

9th - Tell them exactly what they must do to get off discipline, but stick to the designated time limit:

“If you will ____, you will be off discipline in 3 days.”

Here's an example of how the art of saying 'no' plays out:

Child: Mom, I’m going to Kara’s house.

Parent: No, not tonight (say 'no' only once).

Child: Why not?

Parent: Because it’s 8:30 p.m., and your curfew is 9:00 p.m. The last time I let you go to Kara’s this late, you didn’t return home until nearly 10:00 p.m. You can go to Kara’s tomorrow if you have your chores done and you go earlier in the evening (here you are stating your reason for saying “no” only once, and telling your child what she can do to earn the privilege).

Child: I did not get home at 10:00 p.m. I got home just a few minutes after 9:00 p.m. (distorting the fact).

Parent: I’m not going to argue (with a poker face).

Child: I’m just gonna run over there and pick up my school book. I’ll be right back (sweetening the deal).

Parent: I'm not going to argue.

Child: Well, you let Sara go to her friend's house after 9:00 p.m. the other night (applying a guilt trip).

Parent: I'm not going to argue.

Child: (mocking the parent) I'm not going to argue ...I'm not going to argue ...is that all you can say? You suck! (applying an insult).

Parent: (showing no emotion) I'm not going to argue.

Child: You can't tell me what to do! I'm going! (ignoring your request).

Parent: If you choose to go to Kara's, then you choose the consequence, which will be grounding for 3 days and no phone privileges (parent's warning).

Child: We'll see about that (child leaves and returns at 10:00 p.m.).

Parent: (when the child returns) Because you chose to ignore my request, you also chose the consequence, which is grounding for 3 days and no phone (enforcing discipline).

Parent: You will be ungrounded in 3 days and get the phone back if you come straight home from school every day this week (telling child exactly what he/she must do to get off discipline).

Points to keep in mind:

Make your time-line anywhere from 1 evening to 7 days (3 days works best!). When disciplining strong-willed or out-of control children, grounding and taking away all privileges (e.g., TV, phone, video games) work best. The 3-day-discipline works because it fits the way children think, not the way parents think (3 days is an eternity to a kid). If your child is grounded and breaks another house rule, simply restart the 3 days.

For example: A kid completed 1 day of a 3-day discipline for getting suspended from school. On the second day, he sneaks out of the house to be with his buddy. The parent simply started the same 3-day discipline over again. This keeps restrictions from piling up. He is more likely to hang-in when he can see light at the end of the tunnel.

You can't control your out-of-control Aspergers child, but you can control the things he enjoys (e.g., television, video games, freedom for activities, junk food, toiletries, favorite cloths, bedroom doors, cell phones, etc.).

While the out-of-control kid may not be willing to work for the things you want,

he will usually work for the things he wants. By controlling the things he wants, you can influence him to change unwanted behaviors.

Where do I put the stuff that I take away from my kid?

Some parents designate a closet with a pad lock to store confiscated stuff. Some parents put the kid's things in the trunk of their car or at a neighbor's house. Others have been known to throw the less expensive items in the trash (toiletries, some cloths, junk food, etc.).

How am I supposed to get the kid's computer in the trunk of my car?

Be creative. There is always a simple way to confiscate. Just take the computer keyboard rather than the whole computer. Just take the cable cord to the television. Play Station controllers, DVDs, CDs, and cell phones are easy to hide. If the item is too big to carry out of the kid's room, just disable it (e.g., take possession of a vital cord that connects the CD player to the speakers in the kid's entertainment center).

What if some of my stuff comes up missing?

If your Aspergers child returns the favor by taking or hiding some of your things, calmly tell him that the 3-day-discipline won't start until your things are returned. If he continues to keep your things, you may need to call the police and be willing to press charges in order to convince him that taking your stuff is actually theft and has additional consequences.

What do I do when I've issued the 3-day-discipline (e.g., for violating curfew), but then my son creates a new problem before completing the discipline (e.g., calls me a "bitch", then breaks a plate by throwing it in the sink too hard)? Do I start the 3 days over even though the "broken plate episode" is unrelated to the curfew violation, or does this new problem get a different consequence?

You only restart the 3-day-discipline if the original crime is re-committed (in this case, if your son violates curfew again).

When parents issue a 3-day-discipline, it is very common for kids to introduce additional behavioral problems (temper tantrums, threats, etc.) as a way to (a) get the parent side-tracked from the original consequence and (b) get the focus off of them and onto the parent's anger.

If the parent falls for this, she ends up issuing additional consequences on top of existing consequences, restrictions against the kid begin to pile up, and before long, the kid is grounded for 3 months with no privileges -- and both the parent and the kid have forgotten what the original problem was.

Don't let this happen to you. Do not let your son get you distracted from the original problem and the associated consequence for that problem. Here's how you do this:

If your son commits another "crime" (figuratively speaking) during a 3-day-discipline, put this new crime in the "Deal-With-It-Later" file. You literally write the problem down on a piece of paper (e.g., 'son called me a bitch and broke a plate') and put this note-to-yourself somewhere where you can find it after the original 3-day-discipline is completed.

After the original 3-day-discipline is completed, you then confront your son regarding the second problem he introduced by saying, "Just for your information, in the future, if you choose to _____ (in this case, "call me a bitch and break my dishes"), then you'll choose the consequence which is _____ (here you just follow the strategy "When You Want Something From Your Kid" in the Anger Management Chapter of the Online Version of the eBook).

So, does your son get "off the hook" for calling you a name and breaking a plate? In a way, yes -- but only for the time being. He will have to answer to you if the name-calling and plate-breaking occur again in the future.

Pick your battles carefully - but perhaps more importantly, pick them one-at-a-time. Do not try to fight 14 battles at once. You'll just blow a blood vessel in your brain, and your Aspergers child will be successful at getting you to chase your tail.

Use your "Deal-With-It-Later" file frequently. You'll save yourself a lot of time and energy that would otherwise be spent in chronic power struggles.

Q: How do you eat an elephant?

A: One bite at a time.

When you say take everything away (during the 3 day discipline) do you really mean EVERYTHING? Is this always necessary?

It's not necessary to take everything away in most cases. Usually the kid only has a few things that she/he enjoys (e.g., phone privileges, iPod, computer). Thus, in most cases the parent can just confiscate the really important stuff.

However, there have been times when parents have literally taken away everything. Most recently I had a mother who took it all away (but only for 3 days, as directed). Her son only had the clothes on his back and a mattress on his floor (she even took his bedroom door off the hinges and removed all the 'junk food' from the house).

Now this may sound drastic -- and it does take some work, but when parents follow the program (and this particular mother is), they achieve outstanding results.

When taking everything away, you can put stuff in a locked closet, the trunk of your car, a neighbor's house, etc. But again, it's not usually necessary to go this far.

SESSION #2 ASSIGNMENTS-

1. Continue session #1 assignments.
2. Pay close attention to your child's guilt trips this week.
3. Catch yourself feeling sorry for your child this week.
4. Use The Art of Saying "Yes" whenever your answer is "yes."
5. Use The Art of Saying "No" whenever your answer is "no."
7. Consider paying money for discipline: Give the child weekly chores to earn an allowance. When the child misbehaves, forewarn he/she will be charged a fee for misbehavior. If forewarning does not work, take a portion of the allowance away or withhold a portion of future allowance.
8. Catch your child in the act of doing something right at least once each day – accuse him/her of being successful!!!

For example:

"I noticed you picked your jacket up off the floor ...I appreciate that!"

"I see that you're doing your chore without having to be asked ...thank you!"

"You got home by curfew ...that's you being responsible!"

"Your sister annoyed you and you walked away ...that's good self-control!"

"I see that you're upset, and I appreciate that you're handling your strong feelings well."

"I see that you're frustrated with the assignment and that you're sticking with it."

"I like that you were honest when it would have been easy to lie ...that's respectful!"

"You've been using much more self-control when you're mad."

"You did what I asked right away ...you followed directions beautifully!"

9. Or, catch your child in the act of not doing something wrong at least once each day (this is cheating, but do it anyway). When you catch your child not doing something wrong, you are creating opportunities for success that would not occur otherwise:

"I noticed you haven't argued with your brother this evening ...thank you!"

"I noticed you were not on the phone much this evening ...that's being thoughtful!"

"I appreciate that you have not been ditching school or violating curfew ...that's using good judgment!"

"I haven't received any calls from school lately ... that's you being successful."

Your Aspergers youngster has control issues:

Stage 1: Child's belief – I'm in control only when I am being noticed or served.

If parent provides opportunities for positive attention, the problem usually does not grow.

If parent does not provide opportunities for positive attention, child will get attention by acting-out (negative attention). If parent gives in to the negative attention OR gets mad and punishes the child for seeking negative attention, child may stop for a short time, but soon repeats the acting-out behavior and moves on to stage 2.

Stage 2: Child's belief – I'm in control only when I'm the boss, or when I'm proving that no one can boss me.

If parent withdraws from power struggle, sets firm limits, and takes action without getting angry, the problem usually doesn't get worse.

If parent lets the kid be boss OR fights back in anger, misbehavior continues and gets worse – and the child moves on to stage 3.

Stage 3: Child's belief – I'm in control only by hurting others as I feel hurt.

If parent sets firm limits, does not take the attack personally, the problem does not get much worse.

If parent gives in, gives up, OR lashes out at the child in anger, misbehavior continues and worsens – and the child may move on to stage 4.

Stage 4: Child's belief – I'm in control only by convincing others not to expect anything from me ...I am unable ...I am helpless.

If parent gives up and goes along with the child's perception that he/she is helpless/weak/unable, child's condition remains.

Act "as if" you, the parent, are not angry!

When our child is angry, and we react with anger toward his/her anger, the result is anger X 2. It's like trying to put out a fire with a flame-thrower rather than a water hose – it just makes it worse. As hard as it is to do, we have to respond to our child's anger with a poker face – show no emotion!

When we react to our child's anger with more anger, we may get the child to shape up for that moment, but when the next problem comes along, his/her anger will be even worse. We are in a power-struggle then (in other words, his anger is at a level 5 ...we respond at a level 5 ...the next time, his anger is at a level 6 ...we respond with a 6 ...the next time his anger is at a 7 ...we respond with a 7 ...and so on).

If the parent gives in OR lashes out in anger (passive response to kid's behavior vs. aggressive response), the child progressively gets angrier and angrier.

1. Kid wants to frustrate you; forgets to do the things you ask; plays dumb; shows anger by what he doesn't do; whines and complains a lot.

If you, the parent, respond passively or aggressively -- either one -- he moves to the next anger-phase.

2. Kid ignores you; gives you the silent treatment.

If you respond passively or aggressively, he moves to the next anger-phase.

3. He believes there is something wrong with you and he tells you so; he wants you to feel bad 'cause he's mad; he tells you it's your fault.

If you respond passively or aggressively, he moves to the next anger-phase.

4. He uses profanity ...shouts ...yells.

If you respond passively or aggressively, he moves to the next anger-phase.

5. He says things like "It's going to go my way or else I'm running away" ...I'll tear up the house while you're at work " ...I'll go live with my dad" ...I'm going to drop out of school" ...etc.

If you respond passively or aggressively, he moves to the next anger-phase.

6. Physical violence enters the picture here. This violence may be partially controlled because the kid knows what he is doing, even though later he might claim it was an accident. The kid plans to stop when he gets his way ...if the parent gives in, he'll back off.

Some of the things that may occur in this last stage:

- destruction of property
- domestic battery
- cops are called – sometimes by the kid
- parent files incorrigibility charge
- kid may not be conscious of his actions
- kid may become suicidal
- he may physically hurt the parent

Therefore, the parent must respond assertively rather than passively or aggressively ...which brings us to the second potential area for conflict:

When You Want Something From Your Kid

How to be assertive rather than passive or aggressive:

When you want something from your Aspergers child, use the following strategy...

1. Clearly state your expectation.

"Be sure to wash the dishes." "It's time for you to get the trash out."
"I need you to pick up your dirty laundry."

2. If your child does what she is told to do, reward her with

acknowledgment and praise.

"You did a great job of doing the dishes." "Thank you for getting to bed on time. "I appreciate that you picked up your dirty clothes."

Note: "Rewards" such as hugs, kisses, and high-fives increase your children's motivation to do what you ask them to do.

3. If your child refuses or ignores your request, then a clear warning (with your best poker face) should be given immediately in the form of a simple "If/Then" statement.

"If you choose to ignore my request, then you choose the consequence, which will be _____ " (pick the least restrictive consequence first, such as no phone privileges for one evening).

4. If the warning is ignored, then quickly follow through with the discipline.

"Because you chose to ignore my request, you also chose the consequence which is no phone tonight."

5. If your child refuses to accept the consequence (e.g., she gets on the phone anyway), take everything away (or at least her "favorite" stuff and/or activities) and ground her for 3 days. If she has a rage-attack when she finds out she is grounded for 3 days, the 3-day-discipline does not start until she calms down. If she violates the 3-day-discipline at any point, merely re-start the 3 days rather than making it 7 days or longer.

6. Tell your child exactly she/he can do to EARN her way off discipline.

"If you do the dishes tonight and tomorrow, then you will be off discipline in 3 days." "If you get the trash out every night, you'll be off ground in 3 days."

Consider the following when using this approach:

1. Make the discipline fit the "crime."

For example:

- Child comes home after curfew > he/she is grounded the next day
- Child shoplifts > he/she must confess, apologize, make restitution, and accept the consequences

- Child destroys property > he/she must pay for the damage

2. Let your children know exactly what they can do to earn their way off the discipline – be very specific!

Unclear examples:

- Parent: “You won’t get ungrounded until you learn to behave.”
- Parent: “When you have a better attitude, I’ll think about letting you go to your friend’s house.”
- Parent: “You’ve lost all privileges until you can show some respect.”

Clear examples:

- Parent: “You will be ungrounded in 3 days as long as you come straight home from school each day this week.”
- Parent: “We are going back to the store. We will find the manager. You will have to tell him/her what you stole, apologize for stealing, pay for the item you took with your money -- and you will have to answer to the shoplifting charge.”
- Parent: “You will get your allowance back when the hole in the wall is paid for. You get \$5 a week. It will cost about \$15 to fix the hole. So you’ll get your allowance reinstated in three weeks.”

AVOID POWER STRUGGLES AT ALL COST—

Power struggles can create frustration, anger and resentment on the part of the parent and the out-of-control Aspergers kid. Resentment can cause a further breakdown of communication until it seems as if all you do is argue with your out-of-control kid.

In order to end such arguments, it must be the parent that begins to take charge in a positive way. However, the most effective step, to simply stop arguing, can also be the most difficult. It sounds quite simple, just stop arguing, but in reality, it takes discipline and effort to change the pattern of behavior. By refusing to participate in the argument, the power of the out-of-control kid disappears. The out-of-control kid only continues to have power over you if you allow them to.

To stop the power struggle, prepare yourself ahead of time. Sit down, after your out-of-control kid is in bed for the night and it is quiet, and make a list of the times that you most often argue. Is it getting ready for school, doing homework,

completing chores, getting ready for bed, etc? For each situation, determine a few choices that you can give your Aspergers child.

When preparing the choices, make sure to list only those that you are willing to carry out. If you are not willing to pick up your out-of-control Aspergers child and bring them to school in their pajamas, don't threaten to or they will know that they still have control of the situation. Once you have decided on the choices you will give your out-of-control Aspergers child, stick to them and practice your self-control to not yell. Walk away, leave the room, and wait outside if you have to. But an argument can only happen if there is more than one person. With just one person, it is simply a temper tantrum.

Some examples of choices to give your out-of-control Aspergers kid:

- You can be home by curfew tonight, or you can stay inside the house all day tomorrow.
- You can get dressed, or you can go out exactly as you are.
- You can clean your room, or you can sit home while your friends go out.
- You can clean up the dishes, or you can sit with no TV tonight.
- You can be pleasant at the dinner table, or you can leave the room and eat your dinner alone, after we are finished.

Always reiterate to your out-of-control Aspergers child that their behavior is their choice. They will reap the rewards or deal with the consequences of their behavior. As difficult as it may be, do not yell, and do not talk to them after the choice has been given. Let them struggle with the decision of which choice to make.

Old habits are hard to break, so it may take awhile for your out-of-control Aspergers child to understand that you are serious and are no longer being controlled by their emotional outbursts. Keep your cool and continue about your day, not letting them see the frustration you feel. And always, always, go through with the outcome that you have described to them. Be consistent. Most importantly, when they make the right decision, be sure to give them a big hug and let them know how proud of them you are.

Discipline is not punishment...

It is a means of helping the child learn acceptable ways to deal with personal feelings and desires. Punishment, on the other hand, is a reaction to misbehavior that is usually hurtful and may even be unrelated to the misbehavior. Punishment is ineffective because it does not teach appropriate

behavior. Though it may prevent a repeat of the behavior in the short term, it does not teach the child "what to do instead," so it rarely works in the long term. Punishment may release the parent's angry feelings and make the parent feel better, but it can create fear or humiliation in the child, and rarely leads to the creation of a respectful relationship.

When children misbehave, parents and other adults need to help the child learn appropriate behaviors. Punishment may give immediate results, but does punishment build self-control? Do children learn to cope with their strong feelings and tough problems if they are punished? Research supports the conclusion that discipline works better than punishment. Children who are punished become very different people than children who are disciplined.

Note: If you are a single parent, then you are the designated "bad guy." Your child probably directs most - if not all - of her anger and rage toward you. But her anger is displaced. She is upset about many different things for many different reasons. Thus, as difficult as it may be, do not take her attacks personally. To get angry with her for being angry with you is like trying to put a fire out with a flame-thrower rather than a water hose.

Now here are your Session #3 Assignments:

1. Continue session #1 assignments
2. Continue session #2 assignments
3. Use the assertive parenting strategy "When You Want Something From Your Kid" as needed
4. Have fun with your child
5. Give your child at least one chore each day

Let the kid decide when he/she will complete a required chore. Here's an example of this technique:

A parent asks a child to clean his room before he takes-off over to a friend's house. Five minutes later, the child declares that he is finished and starts to leave. Upon quick inspection, the parent notices that the child's room is still a mess. So she says, "Your chore is not completed. Take as much time as you need, but you may not leave until your room is clean." Statements like take as much time as you need are powerful in

helping the child understand that his behavior determines when he may have the things he wants.

Remember, we are helping our children learn to earn so they will:

- Be less dependent on us
- Begin to develop emotionally, not just physically
- Become less resentful and angry
- Loss their strong sense of entitlement
- Develop an appreciation for material things and privileges because they are earning them now
- Begin to respect us again

The following are some ideas of appropriate chores for Aspergers children:

Eating & Food Preparation: planning meals, including budgeting and shopping; cooking/food preparation; setting and cleaning table, serving and clean-up.

House Cleaning: cleaning their own room; other public areas the child uses, especially the bathroom. This includes straightening up after using the space as well as regular periodic cleaning (dusting, vacuuming, etc.).

Laundry: Sorting for color and cleaning requirements; washing and drying clothes without shrinking them; folding and putting away.

House Maintenance: yard work; house painting; simple home maintenance and repair; car maintenance (wash/wax, change tire, change oil and filter).

Do the chore with your child the first time or two, to demonstrate technique as well as to help establish the standard. Ask children to stop and evaluate their work once they think they are finished, before going to get a parent to check their work.

Children are certainly capable of remembering a schedule of things that are important to them. However, chores are just not that important to them.

Furthermore, they do not feel responsible for them. After all, it is your house, not theirs! They do not feel the same level of ownership in the way the house looks. This explains why they can sometimes show impressive cleaning skills when their friends are coming over or they are left at home for the weekend, but do not remember the chores at other times. For regular chores, save yourself the hassle and remind them. Some children bristle at this reminder, however, because they think that they do not need the reminder.

To avoid this resentment, you might include the reminder in a general review of schedule and responsibilities for the day, or make a reminder/check-off sheet for chores (including your own). Then you can present the list as a reminder for yourself, also.

Another strategy is to ask your child to monitor the compliance with chores for the family, including your compliance. They feel more investment in the tasks, and you may share more empathy with your child when you experience their reminders to do your chores.

Additional Parenting Tips To Consider—

Parents can ignore behavior when possible.

Ignore behavior that will not harm your child (e.g., bad habits, bad language, arguing with a sibling). It's hard to do nothing, but this lack of attention takes away the very audience your child is seeking.

Parents can use prediction.

Tell your child your predictions regarding the negative outcomes of his/her poor choices (use labels when needed). For example: "If you continue to steal, people will call you a thief, and when things come up missing, they will blame you." "If you continue to lie, people will call you a liar, and even if you tell them the truth, they won't believe you." When your predictions come true, your out-of-control child will begin to trust your judgment.

Parents can use natural consequences.

Do not shield your child from the results of her choices unless it puts her in danger. For example:

- Child doesn't go to bed on time >>> she gets up and goes to school anyway even though she's tired and sleepy
- Child doesn't study for her math test >>> she fails
- Child doesn't maintain his car >>> it falls apart and he rides his bike thereafter

Parents can use not-so-natural consequences.

Consequences can be by parental design. For example:

- Child leaves her toiletries in disarray throughout the bathroom each school morning >>> after forewarning is ignored, parent confiscates all items for a period of time (technique works with clothes and toys as well)

Parents can rearrange space.

Try creative solutions. For example:

- If school notes and homework are misplaced, assign a special table or counter for materials
- If chores are forgotten, post a chart with who does what when

Parents can use grandma's rule: When/Then.

Tie what you want to what they need (e.g., when you come home from school on time, then you can have a friend over).

Parents can use work detail.

Post a list of jobs that need to be done, such as washing the car, weeding the garden, etc. Let the children choose a "work detail" as a way to "make up" for rule violations.

"Hiring" a substitute.

A child may choose to "hire" someone to do his/her chore (e.g., by paying a wage of \$5.00), or mutually agree to trade chores.

Parents can model correct behavior.

Patently show the child the "right way" to behave or do a chore.

Parents can practice humility.

When you are wrong, quickly admit this to your child. This will model (a) making amends and (b) that it's safe to make mistake. Admitting your mistakes teaches your child to respect others.

Have your child rehearse new behaviors.

In addition to telling your child the correct way to do something, have him/her rehearse it (e.g., dealing with bullies, not slamming the door when entering a room, walking through the house rather than running).

Parents can be decisive.

Some parents have always been indecisive about what course of action to try with their child. They jump from one parenting technique to the

other without giving any one technique enough time to be effective, or they try a new parenting technique once and then give up in frustration because it didn't work. Some parents will say, "We've tried everything and nothing works with this kid." What I usually see is parents floating from one parenting tool to another without sticking with one particular tool for a significant period of time.

Parents can use adjustment.

Here are several ways to adjust:

- Realize the same discipline may not work for all children, because of the unique features of different children
- Try to blend a combination of several parenting tools to create a more effective discipline
- Don't believe it when your children seem unaffected by discipline. Children often pretend discipline doesn't bother them. Continue to be persistent with your planned discipline, and consider yourself successful by keeping your parenting plan in place. When children pretend a discipline doesn't bother them, parents often give up on a discipline, which reinforces the child's disobedience. Remember, you can only control your actions, not your children's reactions.

Parents can use humor to deal with family-stress.

For example: Instead of reacting to your Aspergers child's temper tantrum, start singing, "The hills are alive with sound of music..."

Parents can use 'reverse' psychology.

For example, "That's not like you ...you're able to do much better."
This line works because your Aspergers child will live up – or down – to your expectations.

Remember that kids want structure.

Most children are actually starved for structure – it helps them feel safe (remember 'basketball court' example).

A special note to fathers:

The #1 thing your Aspergers daughter needs to hear from you: ***"You're beautiful ...you're worth fighting for!"***

The #1 thing your Aspergers son needs to hear from you: ***"I'm proud of you ...you've got what it takes!"***

An email from another parent:

“I think my biggest problem was that I did not change the things that were not working. I kept using the same parenting strategies and hoped for different results. This turned out to be almost as big a problem as not trying to fix problems in the first place.

For example, I thought that threatening to do this or that was an effective form of discipline -- but since I had to use it each day to correct the same problem, it should have been obvious that it was not a good strategy. I have more tools in my parenting toolbox now, most of which work fairly well.”

Begin Using a “Guidance Approach” to Parenting—

Research tells us that it's very important to respect the child's stage of development and not to label a child as a behavioral failure. Seven principles outline the basics of a guidance approach:

1. Children are in the process of learning acceptable behavior.
2. An effective guidance approach is preventive because it respects feelings even while it addresses behavior.
3. Adults need to understand the reasons for children's behavior.
4. A supportive relationship between an adult and a child is the most critical component of effective guidance.
5. Adults use forms of guidance and group management that help children learn self-control and responsiveness to the needs of others.
6. Adults model appropriate expression of their feelings.
7. Adults continue to learn even as they teach.

The guidance techniques that follow provide tips to remember in stressful situations --

Technique Number 1: Being Positive

Focus on "do" instead of "don't." Children tune out negative messages. Examples of changing "don't" into "do":

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| 1. Don't leave the milk out. | 1. Put the mike back in the refrigerator. |
| 2. Don't park your bike there. | 2. Your bike belongs in the bike-rack/garage. |

Technique Number 2: Problem Solving

Protect and preserve your children's feelings of being lovable and capable. Examples of ways adults hinder or foster growth of self-concept:

Situation	Destructive responses	Better responses
Mark spills the juice he is carrying.	"Can't you ever do anything right?"	Here's the sponge. Wipe and you can try again.
Your seventh-grader slams the door and yells, "You're not fair!" after you break up a sibling argument.	"Don't you tell me what's fair! You're getting a smart mouth!"	"It's not easy to settle arguments. When you're ready to talk it over, come out and we'll see if we can solve this problem together."

Technique Number 3: Offering Choices

Offer children choices only when you are willing to abide by their decisions. Give them only the choices of behavior they can, in reality, choose.

Situation	Likely to lead to trouble	Instead, try
It's shopping day, and your groceries are in short supply.	"What would you like for breakfast today?"	"Would you like toast and jam or cereal for breakfast?"
Your 14-year-old often "forgets" her chore	"Get out here and walk this dog."	"Are you going to take the dog for a short walk now or a long hike after dinner?"

Technique Number 4: Considering the Environment

Consider changing the environment instead of the child's behavior. Adult/child conflicts may arise because some part of the physical setting or environment is inappropriate or because adults expect more control or more mature behavior than children can achieve.

Behavior	Environmental changes
Your school-age children walk in the house and drop coats and school bags at the back door.	Install low, sturdy hooks near the entry.

Technique Number 5: Being Realistic

Observe children, learn what is developmentally appropriate for their ages and then determine the most acceptable way for them to continue what they're doing.

Problem	Solution
Ten-year-old Scott wants to help his parents with their preparation of a German dinner. Efforts to persuade him to watch television have failed.	Figure out the tasks Scott can do, then find a workplace for him in the kitchen and let him pitch in.
Sixteen-year-old Susan is a good driver who wants to drive to school every day.	Discuss car availability and work schedules. Develop a plan together to allow driving when possible.

Technique Number 6: Setting Limits

Give children safe limits they can understand. Recognize their feelings, even if they cannot accept their actions. Maintain a calm sense of democracy, and work at being consistent. Children view the world differently than adults. Rules need to be explained clearly and simply. Be certain they know your expectations for their behavior.

Situation	Response
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<p>It's school pictures day, and your eighth-grader is having a bad morning. She continues to talk about how awful she looks, and she doesn't want to go to school.</p>	<p>I can see that you're frustrated with your hair this morning. Is there something I could do to help? What are your ideas?</p>
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Technique Number 7: Modeling Behavior

Set a good example. Speak and act only in ways you want your children to speak and act. Research indicates that the parent model is still the most influential source of learning for children. If you make mistakes, apologize and be honest. A warm, loving, communicating relationship is important. Everyone makes mistakes. Children are loving and forgiving of parents, if that's what parents model. The importance of parents as models for children cannot be overstated.

Statement	Better statement
<p>"Laura, if you hit your sister, I'll hit you."</p>	<p>"Hitting hurts people. You may hit the coach cushion, but you may not hit your sister."</p>
<p>"I'm sick and tired of all your excuses. You never listen to me!" (Parent loses temper.)</p>	<p>"I'm really sorry I lost my temper. I had no right to take my frustrations about work out on you. I'll try to leave work issues at work." (Parent sets example for taking responsibility for actions.)</p>
<p>"Quit your complaining about homework. If you really cared about me, you wouldn't complain to me all the time. (Parent continues to complain.)</p>	<p>"You sound really frustrated by all the homework you have. Maybe I can help you break it down into more manageable parts."</p>

Technique Number 8: Thinking Broadly

Look at the whole picture. A child's behavior is often related to stress in some part of the family system. Changes in your behavior or in another family member may result in the child's changing behavior. Giving children attention is not the same as spoiling them. "Acting out" behavior may be a cry for

attention. It is important to take time to be with children emotionally (by talking things out) as well as physically. Assess the following areas in your child's life when concerns arise:

- Recent family changes or conflicts
- Sibling relationships
- School environment
- Peer relationships
- Physical or health conditions
- Neighborhood or community environment

Getting Off to a Fresh Start

Parents can take the first step toward a developmentally appropriate plan of discipline by examining the current methods or techniques they are using. Ask: Is this suited to the age of the child? Am I correcting, lecturing, doing all the talking, or am I showing and teaching my child an appropriate way to handle things? Am I always talking out of anger? Using commands? Have I used too many threats or criticizing remarks?

Each week try to practice a new technique. It takes time to change old habits and patterns. Don't be surprised if your children react to the changes in you in a negative way at first. Children learn how to adapt to and react to parents, and any changes mean they need time to change too. They may be confused at first. In a short time, though, you will be able to notice changes in you and your children.

Preventing Problems

Demonstrate coping skills. You are your children's first and most influential teacher.

Be clear about rules. Consistent and fair rules help children learn control in their own behavior. Such rules set limits that children can learn and depend on, regardless of their ages. Rules should be simple and few, clear, necessary and reasonable for the ages of the children. Some adults have only one basic rule: you may not hurt yourself, others or things. Hurt can be explained as physical or emotional as children grow.

Help children solve problems, make choices and understand consequences. Engage them in conversation. Try guiding the child through the problem by asking "What would happen if ..." questions. This will help them learn to make more appropriate choices. Be patient! This is not learned as a result of one or two problem situations! Parents must continue to use this method and congratulate their children's efforts to think things through. Acquiring problem-solving skills is a process that takes time and repetition.

The following summarizes the differences between discipline and punishment.

Children are disciplined when... Children are punished when...

they are shown positive alternatives rather than just told "no" their behavior is controlled through fear

they see how their actions affect others their feelings are not respected

good behavior is rewarding to them - and at times rewarded they behave to avoid a penalty or when they get a bribe

adults establish fair, simple rules and enforce them consistently the adult only tells the child what not to do

Children who are disciplined... Children who are punished...

learn to share and cooperate feel humiliated

are better able to handle their own anger hide their mistakes

are more self-disciplined and take responsibility for their actions tend to be angry and aggressive and blame others

feel successful and in control of themselves fail to develop control of themselves

Your Role as a Parent

It is important to see children as part of the total family system. Sacrificing everything for their sake is probably not a wise long-term decision or investment. Parents also have needs that must be met. However, a child needs to know and feel that -- no matter what -- his parents love him. Parents can tell their child that they may not like the behavior they have just observed, but they will always love him.

Setting Rules for Your Aspergers Children About Alcohol, Tobacco, and Illegal Drugs—

Talking to your children about the dangers of alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs is an important step in keeping them safe and healthy. However, many parents neglect to take the next step: making sure that their children have clear rules about alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drug use. Unless you are clear about your position, children may be confused and thus tempted to use. Make sure you explain to them that you love them and are making these rules to keep them safe.

Here are some things to keep in mind when making and enforcing rules.

Be Specific

Tell your children the rule and what behavior you expect. For example, you could say, "You are not allowed to smoke cigarettes. Our family doesn't smoke because it's unhealthy," or, "Alcohol is for adults. The law says that you have to be 21 to drink. Our family follows the law." You might also tell your children that if they are at a party where alcohol or illegal drugs are being used, they can call you for a ride home.

Develop consequences for breaking any of the rules. If your children are old enough, they can help suggest appropriate and reasonable consequences. It may help to write up a list of rules and consequences for breaking each rule.

Be Consistent

Be sure your children understand that the rules are maintained at all times, and that the rules hold true even at other people's houses. Be sure to enforce the rule every time it is broken. It is important to set a good example; if you have a rule about drunk driving, make sure not to drive when you've been drinking or get in a car with someone who has. Children notice when their parents say one thing and do another. Another thing to think about, especially around the holidays, is that many of us use alcohol as a "special occasion celebration," perhaps allowing our children to have a sip of champagne or wine. This may also send mixed messages to your children, especially if you have a specific rule against drinking.

Be Reasonable

Don't change the rules in mid-stream or add new consequences without talking to your children. Avoid unrealistic threats. If you do find that your children have been experimenting with alcohol, tobacco or illegal drugs, try to react calmly and carry out the consequence you have previously stated.

Recognize Good Behavior

Always let your children know how happy you are that they respect the rules of the household by praising them. Emphasize the things your children do right instead of focusing on what's wrong. When parents are quicker to praise than to criticize, children learn to feel good about themselves, and they develop the self-confidence to trust their own judgment.

Behave Yourself!

"Behave yourself!" "Leave your brother alone." "I thought I told you to clean your room." If you've caught yourself saying these things "a thousand times," you may need to review the rules and expectations you have for your child and, more important, how you communicate them. One reason some children don't do what we want is because we aren't clear enough with our messages. Now is a great time to sit down with your child to talk about how you expect her to behave in and outside of your home.

The first "rule" for parents is to be clear. Instead of saying, "Please clean up your room," say "Please make your bed and pick your clothes up off of the floor." You also can try, "Be home by 6:00" instead of "Don't be late." The second rule, especially important with strong-willed children, is to tell your child what will happen if she doesn't comply: "If you don't wear your helmet, you're not riding your bike." Or, to keep things positive, you can try something like, "If you want to ride your bike, I expect you to use your helmet at all times." You get the picture.

What To Do

Think about a rule that you have a hard time getting your child to follow. Consider how you've talked to him about it. The next time your child breaks a rule, try applying these four steps:

1. Focus on the behavior. Don't shame or embarrass your child into behaving by saying, "When are you going to grow up?" Instead, say, "I want you to stop taking apart your sister's dolls."
2. Be specific and direct. For example, instead of saying, "It's bedtime," say "It's 9:00 p.m.; please go upstairs to take your shower."
3. Use your normal voice. Raising your voice or screaming shows your child that you're not in control. Don't sound irritated; speak with a firm voice that matter-of-factly says, "You're going to do XYZ now."
4. Tell your child what will happen if she breaks the rules. Allow your child to make an informed choice whenever possible. Most important, if she does break the rule, you must follow through with your stated consequence.

The bottom line is that children need us to be clear about our rules and expectations, and they need to know that their actions, good and bad, will have

consequences. If they choose to break the rules, they choose to deal with the consequences. Even more, if we choose the right words when we talk to our kids, we may find that getting them to follow the rules is much less stressful for everyone!

Praise Your Aspergers Child's Positive Choices

Nine-year-old Jack had trouble following his family's rules about packing his backpack the night before school. In the morning, Jack could often be found racing around the house in search of misplaced homework and lost textbooks while his mother scolded him about following the rules. One evening, however, Jack decided to follow the rules. He packed his backpack and placed it by the front door before he went to bed. The next morning there was no racing around and no scolding from his mother. But, would she say something about the change?

The story above might look like a lesson in raising children, but it's really about motivation. What makes Jack follow the rules? What can his mom do to help him to continue to follow the rules? The answer lies in the brain where reward and punishment mechanisms are at work.

People decide which actions to carry out based on rewards and punishments. A reward is something that you will work for. A punishment is something that you want to avoid. In Jack's case, the punishment is his mother's scolding. He feels frustrated when he can't find his homework and textbooks. Jack's reward is that he feels happy and relieved when he knows where his homework and textbooks are. His reward might also include his mom saying something nice because he followed the rules.

Recognition doesn't need to be fancy. Catch your child "being good" and praise him for it. Take every chance you get to support your child's decision to follow a rule or to meet your expectations. This is called positive reinforcement and helps your child develop self-confidence and trust in his own judgment while seeing the benefit of following your rules.

Jack's mom could give her son a hug and say, "Jack, I'm so proud of you for packing your backpack last night. Great job!" It's a small gesture, but praise from his mom will help motivate Jack to follow the rules in the future.

Some rules certainly are more serious than packing your backpack the night before school. When it comes to alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs, rules—and the consequences for breaking them—carry higher stakes.

What to Do...

- Talk to your child about why using tobacco and illegal drugs and underage drinking are unacceptable.

- Let your child know why you don't want her to use drugs: you love her too much to ever want her to get hurt or get into trouble.
- Talk together about your family values. When a child decides whether or not to use alcohol, tobacco, or illegal drugs, a crucial consideration is, "What will my parents think?"
- Talk about your child's positive choices and you will motivate her to continue to make good decisions.

When Kids Break the Rules

Most parents, as well as teachers and other authority figures, have to deal with young people who break the rules. As kids move from childhood to their teen years, they often push limits, ignore advice, and question authority. You may wonder how to get them to stop, act right, and do as they're told.

Forget it—you can't stop nature. As kids start to grow up, they begin to declare their independence. Don't mistake their strong opinions, personal likes and dislikes, questions, and criticism for rebellion. Take a closer look at their behavior. Consider that they might be trying to develop their own unique grown-up identities. Remember, you want them to become successful adults, thinking and acting for themselves.

But, what about when a child breaks the rules on purpose? "I'll show him who's in charge!" may be your first thought when a child tests or breaks rules. However, this approach will likely make things worse. Yet, giving in or giving up is just as bad.

So, what to do? Start by looking at your style. What worked when a child was younger may begin to fail as she moves toward the teen years. As kids get older, they want to be taken seriously. They want to be heard and to make their own decisions. They don't want to be treated like children.

When it comes to rules, pre-teens and teens more and more want to know the logic behind them. They may not accept rules unless they agree with them. As a result, they are more likely to rebel when parents simply lay down the law and demand that it be followed. Instead, strike a balance:

- Talk about limits and expectations. Rules work best when parents allow their children to have some say in them.
- Put it in writing. Draw up a contract that lays out rules, expectations, and consequences.
- Don't sweat the small stuff. Some battles aren't worth fighting—save your energy for major issues, like those that affect a child's health or safety.
- Be consistent. On-again, off-again rules quickly lose their meaning.
- Have good reasons. Rules mean more when they're based on facts and on principles such as fairness and kindness.

- Be a good role model. Children are more likely to go along with a rule that you follow yourself.
- Be prepared to say no. Not every request is reasonable.
- Be ready for a test. Kids sometimes break rules to see how serious you are.
- Don't retreat. Let kids learn by experiencing the consequences of their actions.
- Stay positive. Let kids know that you value them and their successes.

What Is Discipline?

Your 8-year-old refuses to put away her toys. Your 11-year-old isn't turning in his homework on time. Your 14-year-old has come home late for the third time in a row. How would you handle these situations? One of the biggest challenges in raising children is providing proper discipline. What do you think of when you think of discipline? Is it about punishing a child to make her behave? Or is it about teaching proper behavior?

Punishment, which sometimes comes in the form of name calling, isolating a child, or using physical force, may give you immediate results, but is often ineffective and too harsh. These actions don't really teach anything about appropriate behavior, and too much punishment can harm a child's self-esteem. It can even make her afraid of her parent or guardian. Is this really helping? Does it prevent future misbehavior?

Discipline is about teaching children appropriate behavior and helping them become independent and responsible people. A key part of growing up is learning how to deal with the results of one's actions.² Here are some ways to encourage appropriate and responsible behavior:

- **Give positive attention for desired behavior.** If your child comes home on time, thank him for doing so.
- **Help children express their feelings and communicate.** If your child is hitting her sister, talk to her to find out where the anger is coming from and discuss other options to release it.
- **Let children make choices when appropriate.** Instead of handing your child a list of chores, take a list, sit down with him, and decide together which chores will be his responsibility.
- **Help your child see that choices have consequences.** When your child chooses to stay up late to watch television on a school night, the next day she will realize how tired she is.
- **Act as a model of the appropriate behavior.** If you're about to lose your temper, remember to count to 10 before speaking. This will remind your child to do the same and handle conflicts in a calm, rational manner.

Using the discipline methods listed above can provide a child with several benefits, including good decision-making skills, feelings of self-worth and self-control, and

good communication skills. These benefits create a solid foundation for responsible behavior.

Choices and Consequences—

Some Helpful Rules About Consequences:

- **Follow through.** Serious rule or not, you, as a caregiver, must follow through with the consequences you've established for your children. If your child breaks the rules, she must take the consequences. If you don't follow through, you send the message that your rules aren't important and that it's okay to break them.
- **Be consistent.** "C'mon, just this one time?" Have you ever let your child do something you don't normally let him do, with the caveat, "just this one time"? Remember that being consistent reinforces for your child the type of behavior you expect. Similarly, if you discipline your child one day for talking back but ignore it the next, he learns that sometimes he can get away with being disrespectful. Consistency will determine the success of whatever discipline methods you use. Each time you ask your children to do something, you also have a job. Be predictable—follow through.
- **If you don't mean it, don't say it.** Sometimes children can get us so angry that, in the heat of the moment, we state a consequence that we're not going to follow through with, at least not entirely. Make sure you're willing to do what you say. If you won't really ground your child for a month, don't say you will. It weakens your effectiveness when you ease up later.
- **Make sure your consequences are logical and/or natural.** If you keep catching your child inline skating without her safety gear, take the skates away for a short time. Or, if she returns late from a friend's house, don't let her go the next time she wants to go. If a situation arises for which you can't think of a logical consequence, take a little time to think about how you can "teach the lesson" without being too harsh. Consider asking your child what she thinks would help her stop breaking the rule. A natural consequence can be applied with little effort on your part. For example, if your children drink all of the soda by Wednesday (and they know it's supposed to last until Saturday), don't buy more until then. Instead, they can drink milk, juice, or water.
- **Make sure your consequences aren't too harsh.** Related to the last two suggestions, it's important that you don't overdo the punishments. For example, don't threaten to ground your child for a month for not making his bed or for teasing his siblings. Where do you go from there when and if your child does something more serious?

It's normal for children to test your rules and do their own research to see if you really mean what you say. Following these rules about consequences may keep you from having to discipline your child for the same misbehavior over and over again.

Here are your session 4 assignments:

1. Get all the players together for meetings.

For example, if you get a call from school that your Aspergers child was being disruptive in class, there are probably at least 5 players -- you, your spouse, the kid, the teacher that sent your Aspergers child to the principal, and the principal. Meet with all of them face-to-face if possible.

Keep in mind that the out-of-control kid is very manipulative and has convinced the parent that both the teacher and the principal are out to get her ...has convinced the teacher and principal that the parents are unfair ... has convinced the mother that the father is abusive, etc.

Never believe anything your Aspergers child tells you about how others treat her. All the players need to talk directly with each other. Do not include the kid in these discussions. Everyone needs to agree on what happens when the out-of-control kid does certain things. What do we do if she disrupts class, annoys others incessantly, fights, has a rage attack, states she is going to run away?

2. Limit television and video/computer games.

Also co-view television with your Aspergers child. The non-intense kid does not act-out the violence he views on television or in his games. He can make an easy distinction between fantasy and reality. The intense kid does not make this distinction. The intense, out-of-control kid cannot control his aggressive impulses as well, thus making it more likely he will want to reproduce the intensity he views on television and in his games.

3. Use Active Listening.

When it seems that all your out-of-control Aspergers child does is bitch, moan, groan, whine, and complain--

DO NOT:

- agree with her -- it will encourage complaining
- disagree with her -- it will compel her to repeat her problem
- try to solve her problems for her -- you can't!
- ask why she is so 'bitchy'

DO:

- have patience with her endless negativity
- have compassion for her since she believes her life is beyond her control
- have commitment to the lengthy process of getting her to focus on solutions

Listen for the main points.

Simply be a *sounding board*. Don't try to come up with solutions FOR her.

Shift the focus to solutions.

Ask, "What do you want?" If she responds with "I don't know," say "Guess, make something up, if you did know, what would it be?" If her answer is absurd, inquire again, "Based on these facts, what do you want?" If she comes up with a reasonable answer, ask her what she is going to do to bring it about.

If all this does not produced any real change, draw the line by saying "If you happen to think of some possible solutions, please let me know!"

4. Find something fun to do with your out-of-control Aspergers child.**Here are some tips on what parents can do:**

- Set aside time on a regular basis for fun with your child. Decide together when this will be and how often.
- Make sure everyone has input into the choice of activity, taking turns with the final choices.
- Set clear guidelines about budgetary constraints when planning outings that require money, and be sure to include some free activities too (for example, nights at home, roller-blading, walks, etc.)
- Try to have at least one meal together each week. Make sure that this time does not deteriorate into a complaint session about your child.
- When spending fun time together, avoid topics that set off fireworks, like chores, homework and school. Rather, use the time as an opportunity to talk about things everyone can discuss like the events of the day, personal interests or ideas.
- Check out the local newspapers for ideas on what to do together and ask children to do the same, or have them research a particular place they might like to visit.
- Most of all, have fun and enjoy each other's company.

Here are some ideas for 'family fun' on a budget:

1. Bake bread.
2. Bake cookies or a cake.
3. Cook an ethnic dinner.
4. Do soap carving.
5. Go and visit grandparents.
6. Go bike riding together.
7. Go bowling.
8. Go camping.
9. Go fishing.
10. Go swimming.
11. Go to a movie together.
12. Go to the library
13. Go wading in a creek.
14. Go window-shopping.
15. Have a bonfire.
16. Have a family meeting to discuss whatever.
17. Have a family picnic in the park. Let the kids help prepare the food -- make sandwiches, pack an ice chest, make cookies for dessert.
18. Have a late evening cookout.
19. Have a neighborhood barbeque.
20. Have a water balloon fight in the backyard.
21. Learn a new game.
22. Make candles.
23. Make caramel corn.
24. Make homemade ice cream.
25. Plan a vacation.
26. Plant a tree.
27. Play basketball.
28. Play cards.
29. Play Frisbee.
30. Put a puzzle together.
31. Roast marshmallows.
32. Share feelings.
33. Sit on the porch in lawn chairs and watch people and cars go by.
34. Take a hike through a state park.
35. Take a walk through the woods.
36. Take a walk through your neighborhood. Say hello to everyone you meet, whether you know them or not.
37. Take advantage of entertainment the schools have to offer (e.g., band concerts, school plays).
38. Take family pictures.
39. Take flowers to a friend.

40. Try a walk in the rain.
 41. Try stargazing.
 42. Visit a college campus.
 43. Visit a museum.
 44. Visit a relative.
 45. Visit different parks in town.
 46. Visit the fire station.
 47. Visit the neighbors.
 48. Watch a television show together.
 49. Work on a family scrapbook.
 50. Write letters to friends.
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When your out-of-control Aspergers child lies...

The out-of-control kid is often caught up in 'distorting the truth'. Do not let lying become a habit.

Out-of-control kids lie for the following reasons:

- they feel that they are not liked (for reasons often unknown) and will tell lies to make the listener like him/her more
- they have learned that some forms of distorting the truth get them some attention; this sometimes compensates for their feelings of inadequacies
- to avoid being punished or to avoid consequences that they believe will happen with a truth
- to get others into trouble (these kids are often in trouble themselves)
- to avoid tasks (they will say that their homework is done in order to do something more pleasurable)
- control the situation

Parenting belief that encourages lying:

- Little white lies are not that bad
- I should trust my kid
- I should give my kid one more chance

Have a strong commitment to the truth. Exaggeration suggests that an

out-of-control kid has unmet needs for attention; decide if you need to make changes with the time you spend with your Aspergers child. We must remember, chronic or habitual liars rarely feel good about themselves.

Look for patterns in your Aspergers child's lying; does the lying only occur at specific times or in specific situations? Try and determine what the out-of-control kid's needs are that makes him/her want to lie.

Interventions:

- Always model 'telling the truth', avoid 'little white lies.
 - Teach your Aspergers child through role-playing, the value of telling the truth. This will take time and some patience.
 - Role-play the potential devastating consequences of lying.
 - Do not accept excuses for lying, lying is not acceptable.
 - Out-of-control kids should understand the hurtful consequences of lying and whenever possible, they should apologize for lying.
 - Logical consequences need to be in place for the kid who lies.
 - No matter what, kids need to know that lying is never acceptable and will not be tolerated.
 - Out-of-control kids often lie to keep their parents or teacher happy; they need to know that you value the truth much more than a small act of misbehavior.
 - Out-of-control kids need to be part of the solution and or consequences. Ask them what they are prepared to give or do as a result of the lie.
 - Remind your Aspergers child that you're upset with what he/she did. Reinforce that it's not him, but what he did that upsets you and let him know that you are disappointed. You know the saying - bring them up before you bring them down. For instance: "It is so unlike you to lie about your homework, you're so good at getting things done and staying on top of things."
 - Praise the truth! Catch them telling the truth at a time when you know they would like to sugar coat a situation.
 - Avoid lectures and quick irrational decisions (e.g., "If you lie again, you'll be grounded for a year!").
 - Never forget that ALL out-of-control kids need to know you care about them and that they can contribute in a positive way. It took your Aspergers child a long time to become a master of distorting the truth, exaggerating, and lying chronically. Be consistent, patient and understand that change will take time.
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Dealing With Truancy—

Truancy can be broadly divided into two categories:

- those children that skip off school once in a blue moon
- those who are away from school more often than they are there

Why Do Kids Skip School?

1. Truancy - like smoking, drinking, drug taking - is a cry for help. The US Department of Education states in its Manual to Combat Truancy that truancy "is the first sign of trouble; the first indicator that a young person is giving up and losing his or her way." When your child decides to skip school, not just once, but chronically, this usually means that the school (the custodian of the child) is somehow not serving this individual.

2. Truancy is often a standard response to trouble at home.

3. Some experts cite bullying at school as a significant cause of truancy. Here the desire to escape ongoing exposure to torture causes the victims to take the matter into their own hands. When you scratch the surface of many incidents of truancy in kids, you come up with actions that are sometimes appropriate, or at least understandable responses to inappropriate circumstances.

What to do--

- Be involved with your Aspergers child's school.
- Get to know their teachers, the school administrators by attending Parent's Night and other school functions.
- Volunteer to help where you can. Schools are always looking for parents help with chaperoning dances or field trips, or running the concession stand at sporting events. The more involved you are in your Aspergers child's school the less likely they are to try and get away with skipping class.
- Keep the lines of communication open with your Aspergers child when it comes to their school environment. Allow them to vent to you if they need to about a teacher, a certain class, etc. We all need to blow off steam. If there seems to be a major problem, work with the school and the teacher to find an answer.
- Let your child know what the consequences are for being truant. Find out what your local area's laws are for truancy.
- If truancy becomes a problem, set up an Action Plan. Write down all of your expectations, the limits, and the consequences.

- If your Aspergers child is between 5 and 16 and is registered with a school, remind him that you are legally responsible for making sure he attends school regularly -- and that YOU could get into trouble too if he skips school.

Dealing With Sibling Rivalry

Parents of teenagers or preteens may be troubled by the amount of fighting, both verbal and physical, that goes on between their children. This is a common problem in homes and one many parents find particularly difficult and upsetting. One father said, "They are constantly bickering and yelling. There's no peace in the house anymore. They won't listen to me, and nothing I do seems to have any effect on them. Why do they hate each other so?"

If parents experience these kinds of problems and concerns, it may help if they try to gain a better understanding of sibling battles and then develop a plan for dealing with them in their home.

Why Do They Hate Each Other?

In this society, people have the expectation that they will love and get along well with everyone in their family. They always expect to feel positive toward their parents, brothers, sisters, spouse and children. Most people, however, have at least some times when they don't feel very loving toward each other.

Relationships within a family are close, both emotionally and physically, and very intense. When the television show parents have been looking forward to is being drowned out by the cheerleading practice in the basement, or when the turkey leg they were saving for a snack is missing from the refrigerator, or when their spouse is gleefully telling a crowd of friends how they dented the car fender, they are not likely to feel loving. Because they are so close, family members have a greater power than anyone else to make other members feel angry, sad, confused -- and loving. This is as true for children and adolescents as it is for adults.

Most siblings have probably been good friends **and** good enemies as they have grown. Having a sibling provides an opportunity to learn to get along with others. Especially when siblings are younger, they may fight bitterly, but they will probably be playing together again an hour later.

For example, a child will say something hateful to a sibling, knowing full well they will still be siblings and friends when the fight is over. If the same thing was said to a playmate outside the family, that playmate might take his or her marbles and go

home for good. Thus, children learn from relationships with siblings just how certain words or actions will affect another person without the fear of losing the person's friendship.

Why Do They Fight?

Siblings fight for a number of reasons:

- They fight because they want a parent's attention, and the parent has only so much time, attention and patience to give.
- They fight because they are jealous: "He got a new bike. I didn't. They must love him more than they love me."
- They fight over ordinary teasing which is a way of testing the effects of behavior and words on another person: "He called me..." "But she called me...first."
- They fight because they are growing up in a competitive society that teaches them that to win is to be better: "I saw it first." "I beat you to the water."

Children need not weeks or months but years to learn some of the socially approved ways to behave in relationships. Lessons about jealousy, competition, sharing and kindness are difficult to learn, and, indeed, some adults still haven't learned them.

Adolescents fight for the same reasons younger children fight. But adolescents are bigger, louder and better equipped physically and intellectually to hurt and be hurt by words and actions.

From a parent's point of view, they "ought" to be old enough to stop that kind of behavior. What parents may forget is that adolescents are under pressure from many different directions. Physical and emotional changes and changes in thinking cause pressures, as do changing relationships with parents and friends.

Adolescents may be concerned about real or imagined problems between their parents. They feel pressure about the future as adults and about learning to be an adult.

In many ways, adolescents are in greater need than ever for parental love, attention and concern and for a belief that they are as good as their siblings. The adolescent may not recognize these needs or may be too embarrassed to express them verbally, so fighting with siblings as a way to get parental attention may actually increase in adolescence.

In truth, children don't really hate each other, at least not all the time. As children mature and learn to control their energies and anxieties, chances are they will be good friends.

What Can Parents Do To Make The Fighting Stop?

Parents can recognize the reasons for the fighting and make up their minds that they will not tolerate it. It's not easy to stick to that resolution! However, many parents have found that sticking to that resolution is the most important factor in bringing peace to their home.

Parents should tell adolescents that while it's normal to have disagreements, the constant fighting upsets them and they value peace at home. They can say they will no longer be the judge and jury over the siblings' disputes and they will not stand for it! Then, they must stand by the resolution.

One father reported that every time a fight started, he would say to his adolescents, "You're fighting. I'm leaving." And then he would go out to work in the yard or take a drive or run an errand -- but he simply walked away from the fighting. A mother used a similar tactic. When the fighting began, she said, "Call me when it's over." Then she went to her bedroom, slamming the door to emphasize her point. Another parent made his adolescents leave the house when they began fighting.

In each of these cases, the parents demonstrated that fighting would not get their attention and they would not get involved in the fight. Other parents have had success in imposing penalties for fighting, such as fines deducted from allowances or a certain amount of grounding for each fighter. These parents are showing adolescents the cost of fighting is higher than the reward. Whatever tactic parents use, if they are consistent and stick to their guns, they will almost certainly be successful in reducing the amount of fighting between their children.

Living with fighting adolescent siblings is not pleasant. If parents can remain calm in the face of battling kids, if they can retain their sense of humor and if they put up a determined and united front, they will find the war in their living room will end before long.

A Parent's Checklist—

As a parent, do you:

- Set aside some time to be alone with each child?
- Recognize that each child is different?
- Make sure your adolescents realize they are each unique and have a special set of strengths?
- Praise adolescents for being who they are not just for what they can do?
- Avoid initiating competition among children?
- Realize adolescents and younger children need to be given the right to decide not to share at least some of the time?

- Be sure older children are not usually forced to give in to younger ones because "he's little" or "she doesn't know better?"
- Talk to the adolescents about their fighting?

Believe there can be something good in sibling fighting?

EMAILS FROM WORRIED & EXASPERATED PARENTS--

"I'm trying the strategies you talk about -- and things do seem to be getting worse as you said they might. My Aspie son told me he is going to run away from home. What's my next move?" -- Lisa

Well first of all, don't threaten him. Avoid the temptation to say things like, "If you walk out that door, I'm calling the cops" or "If you leave, you're grounded for a month." or "Fine, go ahead and run ...I'll pack your shit and you can go live with your dad."

Instead say, "You know that I can't control you -- and if you really want to run away from home, I can't stop you. I can't watch you 24 hours a day, and I can't lock you up in your room. But no one in the world loves you the way I do. That is why we have established some house rules. Running away from home will not solve any problems. You and I know it will only make matters worse."

If your son follows through with his threat to run away, do the following:

1. Call the police. Don't wait 24 hours -- do it right away.
2. Get the name of the officer you speak with.
3. Call back often.
4. Call everyone your son knows and enlist their help.
5. Search everywhere, but do not leave your phone unattended.
6. Search your son's room for anything that may give you a clue as to where he went.
7. You may also want to check your phone bill for any calls he made in the last few weeks..

When your teen comes home, wait until you and he are calmed down before you address the matter. Then say (with your best poker face), "When you ran away, I felt worried and afraid. But I have an obligation to protect you. Therefore, if you choose to run away again, you'll choose the consequence -- runaway charges will be filed and a juvenile probation officer will want to meet with you."

If your son runs again, follow through with this consequence.

"My son with Aspergers shoplifted from Walmart a few days ago. He took an expensive jacket. The store is pressing charges. I guess he'll have to go to court now. I don't want my son to grow up to be a thief. What can I do?" -- Charlene

Most teens shoplift because they:

- think the store can afford the loss
- think they won't get caught
- don't know how to handle temptation when faced with things they want
- feel peer-pressure to shoplift
- don't know how to work through feelings of anger, depression, unattractiveness, or lack of acceptance

In any event, take your son back to the store and find the manager. Then have your son confess, apologize, make restitution (i.e., pay for the item he took), and accept the legal consequences.

Know that once children steal, it is easier for them to steal again. If police arrest teens for stealing, especially shoplifting, it is rarely their first time.

"My son brings home straight F's on his report cards. I ground him for the entire grading period, but he continues to fail in nearly all subjects. I know my son is a bright kid and can do the work when he wants to. What can I do to motivate him?" -- B. R.

Unfortunately, you can't motivate him! Do yourself a big favor and get out of the business of playing principle, vice-principle, dean, school counselor, teacher, etc. It's not your job - school is your son's job.

If he were working at McDonald's, for example, you wouldn't show-up there to see whether or not he was putting the pickle between the top bun and the beef patty, that he was frying the fries at the right temperature, that he was putting the right amount of ice in the cups, etc. You would know that your son's performance - or lack thereof - is between he and his boss. And if he gets fired - it's all on him. The same is true for school. What goes on there is between your son and his boss -

the teacher.

If the problem is behavioral, that falls in your court. If the problem is poor academic performance however, that should be the teacher's concern alone.

I know teachers will want to recruit you to help them with their job (e.g., *check that homework, sign this slip*, etc.). (Your garbage man would appreciate it if you got out of bed at 5:00 in the morning, put on your robe, and went out to the curb to help him load your trash in his truck, too.) Simply say to the teacher, *"Poor academic performance is a constant source of tension in my home ...I'm not going to monitor it anymore. If he's misbehaving - call me. Otherwise, his poor performance is his problem."*

The more you take responsibility for your son's academics, the less responsibility he will take. The problem is an ownership problem. Let go of ownership of your son's education. No more nagging about homework. No more asking about assignments. This problem belongs to your son. When you give up ownership, your son will have to make a choice - he'll have to decide if he will or will not accept ownership of his schoolwork. And he'll lose the power of pushing your education buttons, to frustrate and worry you.

Out-of-control kids intentionally get low grades to push their parents' buttons. Often parents are in a never-ending cycle of their kid's sabotage. Since parents are continuously telling their kids how important grades are, their kids use this information to anger them. The more parents try, the less out-of-control kids work.

Many people who are successful in life performed poorly in school. Remember your high school reunion, and remember the people you never expected to do well -- but did. Your son is not going to end up sitting on the street corner with a tin can waiting for coins to be handed him from sympathetic passersby. Get rid of the fear that poor school performance will damage his future. When he decides it's time to succeed, he will. I've never meet a kid yet that didn't realize - at some point - that he at least needed to get a GED.

Proven Stress Reducers for Parents with Out-of-Control Aspergers Children—

Have you had trouble sleeping lately? Suffer from headaches, stomachaches, or heartburn? Or do you seem to develop one cold after another? Perhaps that's your body's way of reacting to too much stress.

Stress is a normal part of life, but working parents with out-of-control children have more than their share. You need to be sure that the stress in your life doesn't adversely affect your health. If you can't fight or flee, learn how to flow.

1. *Accept differences and things you cannot change*—Some problems simply cannot be solved or else the solution is way down the road. Don't let it bother you if coworkers do things differently from the way you do. Relax, there's more than one way to reach a goal. Cooperation is always better than confrontation.
2. Add an ounce of love to everything you do.
3. Allow 15 minutes of extra time to get to appointments. Plan to arrive at an airport one hour before domestic departures.
4. Allow yourself time-everyday-for privacy, quiet, and introspection.
5. Always set up contingency plans, "just in case." ("If for some reason either of us is delayed, here's what we'll do." Or, "If we get split up in the shopping center, here's where we'll meet.")
6. *Aromatherapy*—Use highly concentrated oils from plants and herbs to relax, recharge, and increase your sense of well being. They are also good for dealing with environmental stress caused by loud noises and bright lights; physical stress from repetitive-strain syndrome, muscular fatigue, and backaches; mental stress created by financial and job concerns; and chemical stress caused by consuming too much junk food and coffee, or breathing polluted air in your office or factory. You can purchase essential oils in health, beauty, herb, and natural-food stores. Use these oils in your place of employment simply by placing a few drops of oil on your wrist or earlobe, in small humidifiers, light bulbs, spray atomizer, room diffusers, or in water bowls
7. Ask questions. Taking a few moments to repeat back directions, what someone expects of you, etc., can save hours. (The old "the hurrieder I go, the behinder I get," idea).
8. *Avoid the source of stress*—Don't make major changes in your life until after your baby is born. Beware of the holiday season; let someone else do the work this year. Clean up the clutter on your desk. Give up stressful volunteer tasks.
9. Be prepared to wait. A paperback can make a wait in a post office line almost pleasant.
10. Become more flexible. Some things are worth not doing perfectly and some issues are well to compromise upon.

11. Create order out of chaos. Organize your home and workspace so that you always know exactly where things are. Put things away where they belong and you won't have to go through the stress of losing things.
12. Do one thing at a time. When you are with someone, be with that person and with no one or anything else. When you are busy with a project, concentrate on doing that project and forget about everything else you have to do.
13. Do something for somebody else. Make a meal for someone who is in need.
14. Do something that will improve your appearance. Looking better can help you feel better.
15. Doing nothing which, after being done, leads you to tell a lie.
16. Don't forget to take a lunch break. Try to get away from your desk or work area in body and mind, even if it's just for 15 or 20 minutes.
17. Don't put up with something that doesn't work right. If your alarm clock, wallet, shoe laces, windshield wipers, whatever are a constant aggravation, get them fixed or get new ones.
18. Don't rely on your memory. Write down appointment times, when to pick up the laundry, when library books are due, etc. ("The palest ink is better than the most retentive memory."-*Old Chinese Proverb*)
19. *Don't hold back the tears*—Crying is a healthy way to relieve anxiety. Of course, there are times when it wouldn't be appropriate: in front of a client, for instance.
20. Eliminate (or restrict) the amount of caffeine in your diet.
21. Eliminate destructive self-talk; "I'm too old to...", "I'm too fat to...", etc.
22. Every day, do something you really enjoy.
23. Focus on understanding rather than on being understood; on loving rather than on being loved.
24. Forget about counting to 10. Count to 1,000 before doing something or saying anything that could make matters worse.
25. Get enough sleep. If necessary, use an alarm clock to remind you to go to bed.
26. Get up and stretch periodically if your job requires that you sit for extended periods.
27. Get up fifteen minutes earlier in the morning. The inevitable morning mishaps will be less stressful.
28. Have a forgiving view of events and people. Accept the fact that we live in an imperfect world.
29. Have an optimistic view of the world. Believe that most people are doing the best they can.
30. If an especially unpleasant task faces you, do it early in the day and get it over with. Then, the rest of your day will be free of anxiety.
31. Inoculate yourself against a feared event. For example, before speaking in public, take time to go over every part of the experience in your mind. Imagine what you'll wear, what the audience will look like, how you will present your talk, what the questions will be and how you will answer them, etc. Visualize the experience the way you would have it be. You'll likely find that when the time comes to make the actual presentation, it will be "old hat"

- and much of your anxiety will have fled.
32. *Keep up a social life*—Visit friends, take a colleague to a play, go out to dinner with another couple. Make time for fun. Allow time in your busy week for your favorite recreation and watch how the tension disappears.
 33. Learn to delegate responsibility to capable others.
 34. Learn to live one day at a time.
 35. Make duplicates of all keys. Bury a house key in a secret spot in the garden and carry a duplicate car key in your wallet, apart from your key ring.
 36. Make friends with non-worriers. Nothing can get you into the habit or worrying faster than associating with chronic worrywarts.
 37. One of the most obvious ways to avoid unnecessary stress is to select an environment (work, home, leisure), which is in line with your personal needs and desires. If you hate desk jobs, don't accept a job, which requires that you sit at a desk all day. If you hate to talk politics, don't associate with people who love to talk politics, etc.
 38. *Organize your workload*—Tasks are more manageable if you deal with them one at a time. When you have too many things to do at work, draw up a plan of attack in order of priority. Complete the tasks one after the other and soon you'll find the weight lifting from your shoulders
 39. Plan ahead. Don't let the gas tank get below one-quarter full. Keep a well-stocked emergency shelf of home staples. Don't wait until you're down to your last bus token or postage stamp to buy more, etc.
 40. Pollyanna-Power! For every one thing that goes wrong, there are probably 10 or 50 or 100 blessings. Count'em!
 41. Practice preventive maintenance. Your car, appliances, home and relationships will be less likely to break down/fall apart "at the worst possible moment."
 42. Prepare for the morning the evening before. Set the breakfast table, make lunches, put out the clothes you plan to wear, etc.
 43. Procrastination is stressful Whatever you want to do tomorrow, do today; whatever you want to do today, do it *now*.
 44. Relax your standards. The world will not end if the grass doesn't get mowed this weekend.
 45. *Return stress to its rightful owner*—Some of the aggravation you feel is really someone else's problem. Tell your mate that he'll have to entertain his clients himself; tell a coworker to learn the system instead of always asking you. Start saying no to the other people who lean on you. Explain that you have more than enough to do, and suggest that they should do it themselves.
 46. Say "No!" Saying "no" to extra projects, social activities, and invitations you know you don't have the time or energy for takes practice, self-respect, and a belief that everyone, everyday, needs quiet time to relax and be alone.
 47. Schedule a realistic day. Avoid the tendency to schedule back-to-back appointments. Allow time between appointments for a breathing spell.
 48. Simplify, simplify, simplify...
 49. Take a hot bath or shower (or a cool one in the summertime) to relieve tension.

50. *Talk about it*—Share your concerns with a coworker or a friend. It may or may not lead to a solution, but you'll feel much better after unburdening yourself. If sharing with a friend doesn't seem to help, be sensible and seek the counsel of a professional.
51. Talk it out. Discussing your problems with a trusted friend can help clear your mind of confusion so you can concentrate on problem solving.
52. *Thought Stoppers*—If you're worried about the meeting tomorrow or how you'll be able to pay for future day care, slowly pass the word "stop" through your mind. Replay the letters S-T-O-P over and over. Or count backward from five to zero. Imagine each letter or number in vivid color.
53. *Try physical activity*—Exercise, yoga, or perhaps a stroll around your workplace during the day is a wonderful stress reliever. Even cleaning your work space in your first trimester can relax you.
54. Try the following yoga technique whenever you feel the need to relax. Inhale deeply through your nose to the count of eight. Then with lips puckered, exhale very slowly through your mouth to the count of 15 or for as long as you can. Concentrate on the long sighing sound and feel the tension dissolve. Repeat 10 times.
55. Turn needs into preferences. Our basic physical needs translate into food, water, and keeping warm. Everything else is a preference. Don't get attached to preferences.
56. Unplug your phone. Want to take a long bath, meditate, sleep, or read without interruption? Drum up the courage to temporarily disconnect. (The possibility of there being a terrible emergency in the next hour or so is almost nil). Or use an answering machine.
57. Use your weekend time for a change of pace. If your work-week is slow and patterned, make sure there is action and time for spontaneity built into your weekends. If your work-week is fast-paced and full of people and deadlines, seek peace and solitude during your days off. Feel as if you are not accomplishing anything at work? Tackle a job on the weekend, which you can finish to your satisfaction.
58. Wear earplugs. If you need to find quiet at home, pop in some earplugs.
59. When feeling stressed, most people tend to breathe in short, shallow breaths. When you breathe like this, stale air is not expelled, oxidation of the tissues is incomplete and muscle tension frequently results. Check your breathing throughout the day and before, during and after high-pressure situations. If you find your stomach muscles are knotted and your breathing is shallow, relax all your muscles and take several deep, slow breaths. Note how, when you're relaxed, both your abdomen and chest expand when you breathe.
60. When the stress of having to get a job done gets in the way of getting the job done, diversion (a voluntary change in activity and/or environment) may be just what you need.
61. Worry about the pennies and the dollars will take of themselves. That's another way of saying: take care of the todays as best you can and the yesterdays and the tomorrows will take care of themselves.

62. *Worry Time*—When you start to stress about something, set it aside in your mind (or write it down) and then go back to your work. Set aside a few minutes every day to deal with your worries in a more productive way.
 63. Writing your thoughts and feelings down (in a journal, or a paper to be thrown away) can help you clarify things and can give you a renewed perspective.
 64. Zzzzz's – Get plenty of quality sleep!!!
-

Bullet Points—

BACK-TALK

Purpose:

- Children want power
- Control others
- Seek revenge
- Wear-down the parent until she gives in

Parenting belief that encourages back-talking:

- Unconditional love means my children should receive and do what they want.
- I should shield my children from the consequences of their actions, as well as the complications of life.
- My parents raised me improperly; therefore, I will correct their mistakes by parenting my children differently.

Parent's management of back-talk:

- You can love your children unconditionally while teaching limits to them.
- Make the children's back-talk ineffective by never giving-in to their demands.
- Say something like: "You are back-talking to get your way, and you will not get your way by back-taking."
- You can teach your children to get what they want by working for it (e.g., performing chores, paying for it with their own money).
- Tell your child that you predict they will have difficulty in other areas of their life if they continue to back-talk.
- Allow your children to suffer the full consequences of their back-talk to school principals, teachers, coaches, etc.
- Do not let your parent's strict parenting style hurt your parenting of your own children by being too permissive.
- Advise your children to make amends to anyone they have disrespected.

SULKING, NAGGING and WHINING

Purpose:

- Gain attention
- Get special privileges
- Pressure the parent to give in
- Guilt-trip the parent

Parenting belief that encourages sulking, nagging and whining:

- I can create good self-esteem in my children if they are constantly happy.
- I should negotiate with my children to help them feel they are part of the decision-making process.
- My child must really be in emotional pain or she wouldn't be sulking and whining so much.

Parent's management of sulking, nagging and whining:

- Know that your child's sulking, nagging and whining are not real emotions, but manipulative games to get what he/she wants.
- If you respond—even once—to children's fake emotions, their sulking, nagging and whining will dramatically increase.
- Say something like: "You are faking emotions to get what you want, and you will not get what you want when you sulk, nag or whine. I will show you how you can earn what you want, but I am not going to give it to you."

INSINCERE CRYING

Purpose:

- Gain attention
- Manipulate others
- Gain sympathy

Parenting belief that encourages insincere crying:

- My child is in genuine pain and needs to be pampered.

Parent's management of insincere crying:

- Distinguish between sincere crying and insincere crying.
- Know that toys, games, expensive activities, more freedom, etc. does not sooth emotions.
- Model the expression of natural and normal emotions.
- Caringly confront and truthfully tell your children that they are playing a manipulative game.
- Show them how to earn what they want.

- Help your children to attach good thinking to their natural emotions. For example:

When your children feel appropriate guilt because they hurt someone, suggest that they need to make amends to release their guilt. When your children feel anguish because a loved one died, explain that anguish is a normal emotion that teaches them how much they cared for their lost loved one. When your children feel embarrassed by their misbehavior, tell them that embarrassment is a signal that they need to change their behavior.

TEASING and BULLYING

Purpose:

- Desire status
- Get the upper hand

Parenting belief that encourages teasing and bullying:

- Boys will be boys.
- My child should be able to express himself completely.

Parent's management of teasing and bullying:

- Allow your children to experience the full consequences that come with bullying (e.g., discipline by school authorities).

TANTRUMS

Purpose:

- Command an audience (universal in all cultures)
- Coerce the parent into giving him what he wants

Parenting belief that encourages tantrums:

- Unconditional love means my children should receive whatever they want and do whatever they want.
- I can eliminate my child's frustration by giving-in.

Parent's management of tantrums:

- Ignore tantrums.

- Review your child's favorite demands (which in the past have been quickly fulfilled), and in advance, decide which jobs you are going to require when she makes these demands.
- Know you are NOT withholding love by saying "no".
- Avoid explaining why the answer is "no".
- Offer no audience to children when they perform tantrums; give no response.
- Later, show them how to earn what they want.

BLAMING and CREATING SCAPEGOATS

Purpose:

- Avoid responsibility
- Avoid a discipline

Parenting belief that encourages blaming and scapegoating:

- Others are often to blame for my child's problems.
- I had an unhappy childhood because of the way my parents raised me.
- My child's misbehavior is my fault.
- If I take the blame, my child will feel better.

Parent's management of scapegoating:

- Learn to recognize when you lose control of your anger.
- Learn to recognize when you scapegoat your parents.
- Hold your children accountable when they blame and scapegoat others.

LYING

Purpose:

- Exaggerate to inflate self-esteem or gain attention
- Distort the truth to get out of trouble or avoid an undesirable task
- Withhold information to control the situation

Parenting belief that encourages lying:

- Little white lies are not that bad.
- I should trust my child.
- I should give my child one more chance.

Parent's management of lying:

- Have a strong commitment to the truth.
- Exaggeration suggests that a child has unmet needs for attention. Decide if you need to make changes with the time you spend with your child.

- Reduce susceptibility to guilt trips

STEALING

Purpose:

- Rush for excitement
- Make parents angry
- Call attention to issues they find disturbing within their family
- Have feelings of entitlement

Parenting belief that encourages stealing:

- I don't want my kid to get into big legal trouble.
- The storeowner is over-reacting to this little mistake.
- This cop is a real jerk.
- My child is smarter than to do something like this.

Parent's management of stealing:

- Know that once children steal, it is easier for them to steal again.
- Know that if police arrest children for stealing, especially shoplifting, it is rarely their first time.

Have your child confess, apologize, make restitution, and accept the consequences.

SUMMARY POINTS —

The development of self-reliance is key— When you are undecided about what to say or do in any particular situation, always ask yourself the following question:

“Will this action that I'm about to take promote the development of self-reliance in my Aspergers kid, or will it inhibit the development of self-reliance?”

If what you are about to say or do is supportive of self-reliance, say it or do it. If it is not supportive, don't!

If things get worse before they get better, you are on track. But when things have been going well for several months, and then they start getting worse again -- you have forgotten to use your tools! If this happens, don't beat up on yourself – simply get back on track by reviewing the material in your eBook.

You program your Aspergers child for success or failure— Your child is like a computer, and you are the computer programmer. Your child takes your disapproval and criticism as instruction. For example, if the parent says to the child, “You’re such a slob,” the criticism downloads in the child’s unconscious mind as “I am a slob” and he acts-out the criticism as if it were instruction to be sloppy.

The good news is that your child takes your compliments and encouragement as instruction as well. For example, the parent’s compliment, “You do such a great job of not blowing-up when your younger brother annoys you” downloads in the child’s unconscious mind as “I am in control of my strong emotions,” and he acts on the compliment as if it were instruction to be calm even we he is annoyed.

Other things to consider:

1. After issuing a consequence, never retract it.
2. Allow your out-of-control Aspergers child to make wrong choices – this gives him wisdom; experience is a great teacher.
3. Be able to differentiate between your Aspergers child’s wants and her needs.
4. Consider having only one television and one computer in the house.
5. Don’t nag – simply follow through with the consequence.
6. Don’t try to save your Aspergers child from negative consequences and painful emotions associated with poor choices.
7. Expect your out-of-control Aspergers child to resist your new parenting strategies.
8. Give equal love to all your Aspergers children, but parent them differently.
9. Give only one warning -- then follow through with the consequence.
10. Give your Aspergers child at least five chores to do each week.
11. If you have tried to correct your parent’s mistakes by attempting to be a “better” parent, know that (a) you turned out all right, and (b) you may be erring on the other end of the extreme.

12. If you slip into a rage against your Aspergers child, apologize - but don't try to compensate by over-indulging him.
13. If your Aspergers child hibernates in his bedroom, take that television and computer out of there.
14. Keep an eye out for your Aspergers child's guilt-trips.
15. Know that a weaker parenting-strategy supported by both parents – even if they are divorced -- is better than a stronger strategy supported by only one.
16. Learn to say -- and stick with -- “no.”
17. Only give your Aspergers child gifts on very special occasions (e.g., birthdays, Christmas, graduation).
18. Pay attention to your feelings of guilt about how you have parented, and know it is a sign that you are – once again – beating up on yourself.
19. Remember that over-indulged kids are too comfortable – they need some discomfort before they will change.
20. Remember that parenting is not a popularity contest – ***you are not a buddy!***
21. Respond to your Aspergers child's anger with a poker face.
22. When taking away privileges, take away the privilege for a short period (3 days works best). If it lasts too long, resentment builds, the kid forgets the infraction, and the lesson is lost.
23. When you catch yourself feeling sorry for your Aspergers child, know it is a sign that you are – once again – taking on too much responsibility.
24. When your Aspergers child needs to be cheered-up, do so with active listening, empathy, paraphrasing, validation, and hugs rather than giving her a lot of stuff and freedom (e.g., unearned privileges, food, gifts, fun activities).
25. Don't dabble with these parenting strategies - be consistent and you will out-will the strong-willed, out-of-control kid!

Dear Parents,

You literally have the toughest job in the world, because you are helping with the development of an Aspergers child. And Aspergers children are the most complex individuals on earth. So when you begin to doubt yourself or feel discouraged or feel overwhelmed, remind yourself that this is not an easy job for anyone.

Here's to a better home environment,

Mark Hutten, M.A.

P.S. BE SURE TO WATCH ALL THE *ONLINE INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEOS* THAT CORRESPOND TO THE TEXT IN THIS EBOOK!!!