

Limit Setting and Behavioral Expectations When Your Child is Sick

Pediatric cancer diagnosis and its associated treatment can impact both child and caregiver behaviors. It is important to keep in mind the emotional reasons that might be behind a child's behavior. Behavioral challenges can then be addressed by using four skills.

- **Emotions Behind Challenging Behaviors:**
 - Anxiety
 - Fear
 - Anger
 - Sadness
 - Frustration
 - Physical discomfort
- **Four Skills for Increasing Behavioral Compliance:**
 - **Attending:** Pay active attention to your child's appropriate behaviors. Make statements about what they are doing and become involved in play without asking questions, correcting, or attempting to direct the activity.
 - **Rewarding:** Verbally reward your child's appropriate behaviors by praising and identifying the desired behavior. This will increase the likelihood of them behaving in this way.
 - Use of behavior charts with visual cues (i.e. stickers) can be helpful to emphasize specific behavior targets.
 - **Ignoring:** The best way to decrease a behavior is to ignore it. Decide on which behaviors you can safely ignore. Typically, this includes behavior that is annoying or bad-mannered, but does not pose a danger to anyone or damage anything. To ignore a behavior, do not make physical contact, eye contact, or speak directly to child until behavior has ceased.
 - Examples of Behaviors that can be ignored: interrupting, making demands, crying for attention, tantruming, whining, screaming, showing off, pouting, acting irritable.
 - **Giving Instructions:** To help your child build new appropriate behaviors, provide specific instructions in a firm voice while providing eye contact and full attention. Be sure to tell your child what TO DO rather than what NOT to do. Reward compliance.