

# Positive Parenting

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## Socially Challenging Children

Socially challenging children are those children who do not automatically learn social skills by watching their parents or friends. These children must be taught each specific skill in a step by step fashion very early in their development. As children acquire these skills they will feel better about themselves and will function better with their family and friends.

Some examples of children that may have difficulty learning these skills are those who may have:

- Learning disabilities
- Developmental problems
- Attentional problems
- Emotional disturbances
- Behavioural difficulties

These children are those who tend to say everything that comes into their minds without considering the consequences.

They are also unable to pick up the social cues that help modify their behaviour, e.g. reading facial expressions or interpreting tone of voice. They may lack the ability to know and understand what they have done wrong. Often, these children have difficulty participating in a conversation; they tend to interrupt and make inappropriate comments. These may be the children who have trouble following the written and unwritten rules of various social situations, (activity groups, clubs, parties, friend's homes).

## What Parents Can Do

1. Determine the strengths and weaknesses of your child.
2. When your child behaves inappropriately, treat it as a learning situation rather than a punishment.
3. Explain exactly what the mistake was and provide the correct response.
4. Be prepared to teach the skill over and over again. Once will not be enough.
5. Remain calm even if you are feeling angry and embarrassed.
6. Take a time-out if needed.
7. Give one instruction at a time.
8. Speak face to face, not across the room.
9. Have your child repeat the instructions.
10. Praise your child for being successful.
11. Prepare your child for any new social situation. Try to visit the location ahead of time together.
12. Prepare the situation for the child by talking to the leader, coach or teacher.
13. Take the time to explain what may be obvious to other children.
14. Teach your child daily organizational skills, e.g. time management, belongings, homework.
15. Build in opportunities for your child to be successful. Have them doing something they are good at and enjoy.
16. Provide interesting activities for your child to do at home; use a computer, care for a pet, gardening or model building.
17. Encourage friendships.
18. Work with your child's school.
19. Join a support group.
20. Access medical and family counselling services if needed.

**TIP:** Every situation is a social situation - prepare your child.