

Parenting Your Child Effectively: Change Surroundings Instead of Behavior

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This NebGuide discusses changing the surroundings instead of the behavior when parenting your children. This is a part of a series of 10 “Parenting Your Child Effectively” guides.

Sometimes we need something right now to help us calm an emotional discussion with our children. When things are difficult, we are most likely to “lose our cool” and say or do things that we wish later we hadn’t. We need something that

settles the conflict without either the child or the parent feeling put down. There are a number of guidance principles that help us discipline in stressful times.

Guidance Principle

Change the surroundings instead of the child’s behavior.
Adult/child difficulties sometimes happen because some part of the physical setting or surrounding is not right for young children, or because adults expect children to act older or more mature than they can.

Behavior	Changes
A group of preschoolers has many milk spills at every meal. Their paper cups seem to tip over every other minute.	Provide heavy-bottomed, wide plastic glasses or cups.
Fifteen-month-old Eric sits next to 4-year-old Beth at the dinner table. Eric can’t resist the temptation to reach over and play with Beth’s braids, especially when his hands are sticky with peanut butter.	Move the children farther apart. Let an adult who is very good at dodging sit where Beth sits.
Three-year-old Maria jumps from the couch to the chair and back again over and over.	
The kids are always getting into your makeup.	

Acknowledgment

This fact sheet series contains guidelines to help parents interact with their children. It was reformatted from NebGuide G991 (Revised May 1997) written by Herbert G. Lingren, Extension Family Life Specialist.

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