

James Lehman's
10 Tips to Turn a Child's Attitude Around
in one minute or less



1. Assume Control

- Give simple direction
- “Where are you supposed to be? Go there.”
- “What are you supposed to be doing right now? Do it.”
- Don't make requests; don't ask for an excuse.
- If you sound like you're in control, kids will think you're in control.

2. Disconnect

- Cut off communication when child becomes obnoxious
- Ex:

Parent: “We have to do this now...”

Child becomes obnoxious

Parent: “Don't talk to me that way, I don't like it.”

- Turn around and walk away.
- If you keep making the child comfortable, child will remain in control.
- Establish control.

3. Script conversation for the next time

- Establish that the next time the child acts out, this consequence will happen.
- “The next time you disobey me in the store, you will have to go sit in the car.”
- FITS Program Leaders: “The next time you use foul language, you can't participate in the next field trip.”

- When child doesn't follow your directions, set the stage for what will happen the next time.
- Set the stage in a calm situation, not during the time of conflict.

4. No Speeches

- Don't justify your decisions
- "Do your homework." The child asks why and the parent justifies it.
- Instead: "Do your homework because that's your responsibility."
- Police Example:
 - When an officer gives a speeding ticket, he/she does not justify it.
 - Use same law and order style with children.

5. Focus on the Behavior

- Be specific
- Focus on behavior you want to see changed now.
- "Whether you're angry or not, don't call me names."
- Focus on behavior happening right now.
- "I want you to stop yelling." Instead of, "Don't be angry."
- When you address emotions, the child will pick-up on your discomfort with emotions.

6. Remove Distractions

- No audiences
- Audiences stimulate kids with behavior problems
- Don't argue or make sense of situation with audience present.
- Purpose of "time out": cuts down on stimulation.

7. Strategic Recognition and Affection

- Link current situation with past successes
- Get the child to “listen louder”
- Instead of saying, “George, you did a great job, but I need you to lower your voice,” say “George, you did a great job, and now let’s talk about yelling.”

8. Self Disclosure to the Child

- Let the child know what you’re experiencing.
- “It’s very difficult for me to help you when you’re acting out like this.”
- “It’s frustrating to solve this problem when you’re being rude.”
- This puts the ball back in the child’s court, and makes it the child’s responsibility to solve the problem.

9. Do, not Say

- Compose yourself before dealing with a behavior problem.
- Take a minute; being sarcastic, yelling, etc. demonstrates a lack of composure to the child.
- Model the behavior that you are asking the child to emulate.

10. Accept bad moods and bad days

- “You seem to be in a bad mood right now, why don’t you take 10 minutes and let’s start over.”
- Always be willing to start the day over, even if it’s much later in the day.
- “You seem to be having a hard time today, let’s start the day over.”