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Ask Dr. Harold Recovering from Holiday Overload

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You then move to teaching her some strategies for what to do about how she is feeling. For example, when I am angry I take a walk or go talk to someone. Triggers and cue are the next area to attend to. We all have our difficult situations and internal indicators as to when our emotions are getting out of control. Help your child to identify early on if she is getting upset or bored and then what strategies she can use to interrupt the cycle that ends up with everyone getting emotionally stressed.

Strategies

The main strategy for parents to help our kids is to help them identify what is going on with their behavior and emotions. If we can do this, we can help our kids to know the process they go through to get stressed out or lose control of their emotions or behaviors. Then and we can help them plan better to manage their emotions and behaviors.

Teaching manners is a strategy that has become the field of social skills training. In concept, though, our parents taught us social skills by teaching us manners. Manners are expectations for behaviors that can be very important. Manners are the social expectations that your kids can learn how to manage. They are our first social skills, they are not a surprise, and they are expected even when we are tired or hot or bored. Once children see the consistency in expectations from us, they can start to learn and build on their learning to meet the expectations.

What to do if all of our strategies fail? Remember you are still the parent and they are still your wonderful and beautiful children. Claim victory and move on to the next strategy. If you run out of strategies, start over. If we start building skills with our kids now that we want to see at the next family get together, we just might get there.

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So I hope you survived the holidays. With all of the added events and schedule changes this can be difficult for kids and they can often get out of control. And let's face it, the situations we put them in during the holidays are the out of control part. So here is a little advice on starting to build back up those social skills or manners that went away during the holidays.

Behaviors

Think for a minute about what behaviors you would like your kids to be able to do better in the coming year. When you consider behavior you must consider three aspects. First, consider your child and his/her developmental level. Is the behavior one that is in his skill set and age group? If it isn't a skill he has, time to start teaching. If it isn't in his developmental level, time for you to learn to have realistic expectations. Second, consider the environment. Just like adults, some environments are more comfortable and less stressful for kids. Without telling them how they are, you can teach them to let you know if they are hot, tired, or hungry. These are the three most common culprits. Third, consider the state of mind or emotion of your child. A child who is "bored" needs a different skill taught than one who is angry.

Emotions

When we first get our emotions, they show up without notice and we don't know what they are or where they came from or what they are called. Our job as parents is to fill in those blanks. The younger your child is the more you can help her label what is going on. As they age you need to help her find out what she is feeling on her own.