**Using consequences (suitable for 3-7)**

**A consequence is something you do after your child behaves in a certain way. A consequence can be positive or negative. Try to give positive consequences for your child’s positive behaviour more often than you give negative consequences for unwanted behaviours.**

Try to adjust consequences to your child’s needs and abilities. Choose consequences that match your child’s age and understanding and make them fair and reasonable.

**Examples of consequences:**

* If your child shares their toy - you praise them
* If your child goes to bed without a fuss – you read an extra story
* If your child throws sand – they have a break from the sandpit for a short time.
* If children are fighting over a toy, the toy is put up on the shelf for 10 minutes.
* If your child snatches toys – you leave the play area for 5 minutes.
* If your child refuses to get dressed - you explain that they won’t be able to do what you had planned for the day and that they would only be able to stay inside the house.
* If they argue with other children – you take them away from the play area for 5 minutes to sit down and think.

It’s always best to try to focus more on giving your child praise and attention for behaving in ways that you like. This usually results in you needing to use negative consequences less.

**Tips for making consequences more effective**

* Link good behaviour with an enjoyable activity and praise – “Well done for putting all your toys away – now we can read a book together”
* If you use consequences in the same way and for the same behaviour every time - your child will know what to expect. It may help to think up consequences in advance, before the behaviour occurs, rather than to try to do it when you are upset. It helps your child to learn from the consequence if it is logically related to the behaviour, for example removing a toy if it is thrown.
* If you keep consequences short your child will be able to try again to behave in a way that you like.
* Toddlers have a short attention span. It will work better to give consequences right after a behaviour so your child can remember what they did that you liked or did not like.
* As your child gets older, you can explain what the consequences will be.  “We will leave the park if you snatch from other children”.
* Older children may benefit from knowing why they have been removed from a situation and how long the consequence of their action will last – bend down to make eye contact with them, explain calmly what has happened and how long they should wait until they can re-join an activity. A digital timer or egg timer can be a helpful tool.
* You could try removing them from an activity to a specific area in your house so that they can associate this space with time to think and reflect. Make sure the space is completely safe.
* Make sure you follow through or your child will learn that you don’t mean what you say.
* Avoid imposing a consequence in anger. It helps to apply consequences calmly and in a neutral tone. Shouting and smacking can turn things into a major battle.