



# Family Centered Consulting Services

Individual, Youth & Family Therapy  
Consulting & Group Facilitation

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## **SUPPORT GUIDELINES FOR CHILDREN & YOUTH**

### **1. Set Clear boundaries**

- Review rules and expectations BEFORE activity (what's ok, what's not)
- Review consequences & rewards for making good/poor choices
- Emphasize & consistently enforce a "No Tolerance Rule" for aggressive or violent behavior
- Identify a SAFETY PLAN for managing emotions ie. anger or frustration, with specific strategies and identified safe (& alternative) places to be. Put this plan in writing and refer to it when necessary.

### **2. Use short cues if off track**

- Stop & Look (to get Youth's attention)
- Self Check (to redirect any off-track/inappropriate behavior)
- Space (to remind youth about respecting personal space/not being invasive)
- Identify a cue WITH the youth ie. 'Hang Loose' Sign to use as reminders for calming down, relaxing, practicing acceptance)
- Water Break (to take time out for self, get in control)

### **3. Catch Youth "doing it right"**

- use PRAISE - "I like the way you \_\_\_\_\_" (are being respectful, sharing, taking turns, waiting patiently, being gentle)
- give high 5's, thumbs up
- identify & point out Youth's good choices in front of peers, adults (Did you see how "youth's name" did with (positive behavior).)"
- Give opportunities to be the "center of attention" in appropriate and healthy ways
- Give opportunities for the Youth to be the "model" or "helper"
- Encourage story sharing with a beginning, middle and end (to help youth self monitor his/her talking)
- Allow for times to be SILLY and RUN AROUND, as well as dress up (acting/on stage) time

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**4. TRANSITIONS** - Prepare and be aware of transitions (any change in activity or place)

- Give 10 minute, then 5 minute, then 2 minute warnings whenever possible
- Clearly explain how the transition will look **before** activities/places change – give details about what will happen or what needs to happen (ie. behavioral expectations). eg. “When we go into the school/store/room, you need to be very quiet. How are you going to do that or what will that look like, ‘youth’s name’?”
- Give the youth a helping job or specific task to be responsible for while the transition/change is taking place (ie. carrying something, tracking or taking charge of something) to help in shifting the focus.
- Use language like: “Now we’re going to do ‘this’.” (versus “You have to stop doing ‘this.’”)
- Ask questions like:  
“How shall we get ready for \_\_\_\_\_?” (ie. going to school, saying goodbye to \_\_\_\_\_, going to the store, going with your Mom/Dad.)  
“How do you think you might feel when (event)?” “And what can you do to handle your feelings when (event)?”

**5. COOPERATIVE PLAY** – When the Youth has a competitive nature, remove the competitive component from an activity whenever possible. This can help shift the focus to just HAVING FUN versus being perfect or the best or having to win!

- Play games/do activities that require cooperation with a partner/small group so that working together to complete a task is the FUN part
- Emphasize/focus on SHARING and HELPING behaviors to get something accomplished (rather than identifying who’s best, fastest)
- Label courteous and considerate behavior and PRAISE the Youth when he/she puts others’ needs before his/her own
- Model being a “good loser” or a “good winner” when playing games. Help the Youth to manage his/her feelings by practicing the words/thinking to use for this:  
ie. when losing: handle feelings by thinking “Oh well, it’s just a game, maybe I’ll win next time”, say to the other person: “Thanks for the game, good game, would you like to play again.”  
ie. when winning: Say “Good try, good effort, thanks for playing.” and remember not to RUB IT IN!

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## 6. COMPLIANCE & COOPERATION

- Give **CHALLENGES!** Most Youth like to be challenged & kept busy. They also like to **HAVE PURPOSE!** If there is a period of “down time” or inactivity, this is usually when a youth may have difficulties.
- Use time challenges – “Let’s see if you can ‘finish your work’ before I count to 20?” OR “How quickly do you think you can clean up? I’ll set the timer/put on this song, and let’s see if you can be done before the time/song runs out!”
- Use performance challenges – Let’s see how many times/ways you can be a good friend today (check in later with Youth).
- Give **2 CHOICES** whenever possible to **EMPOWER** the Youth and also minimize the chance of power struggles.
- Repeat the **SAME** choices given if the Youth tries to challenge choices. This will help to reduce controlling behavior and foster **ACCEPTANCE**.
- When giving instruction/directions, ensure you have the Youth’s attention **FIRST** (use the **STOP & LOOK** cue).
- Even when a Youth **APPEARS** to have heard you or when he/she is **NOT** doing what you have asked, try to clarify that the Youth has heard you and is willing to comply, using these questions:
  - “What did I say?”
  - “What does that mean?”
  - “What do you need to do now?”
  - “OK, great, please do it!”

## 7. KEEP IT POSITIVE!!

- **REFRAME** mistakes and perceived losses as **OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEARNING**
- Acknowledge possible feelings of frustration, disappointment, sadness
- Focus on the positives/what the Youth can take away from the situation using statements like:
  - “What do you know now that you didn’t know before?”
  - “It’s hard when things don’t work out the way you’re hoping, but what did you learn?”
  - “What do you want to try working on for next time?”
  - “What part did you do well?”
  - “How come you think this happened?”
  - “What do you think you’ll do next time?”

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## **8. MANAGING FEELINGS**

- Daily CHECK IN – help the Youth to self assess how he/she is feeling and how his/her day has gone by asking: “On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being great and 1 being not good at all, where are you at?” This can be useful to gauge how the Youth is after a transition time. After the Youth identifies a number, ask him/her: “How come you’re at a ‘#’?”  
If he/she scales low (1-5), ask the Youth what he/she needs to be at a higher number?
- When the Youth becomes frustrated, agitated or angry, he/she often needs space and time. Identifying a place ahead of time where the Youth can go to take time for him/herself to calm down is best.
- Do not engage with the Youth VERBALLY if he/she is being argumentative, aggressive or violent, just direct him/her to the “COOL DOWN” space ie. “ ‘Youth’s name,’ you need to take some cool down time.”
- Always debrief the incident afterwards. Help the Youth identify his/her feelings and FOCUS on what he/she can do differently the next time (have a feeling face chart on hand).

## **9. LOVE, LOVE, LOVE!!**

- Hugs and high 5’s and “WAY TO GO’s!!” go a long way
- Show the Youth you care about him/her by LISTENING to his/her ideas, feelings and thoughts.
- Tell the Youth he/she’s a great kid!
- When you can’t give the Youth your full attention, ask him/her to make an agreement with you to share at another time that will work better ie. “I’d like to hear all that you want to share, and I can’t right now. Can we agree to have time for me to hear you in ‘20 minutes’ or after ‘snack is ready’? Is that OK? (versus saying: “I can’t talk to you right now!”

## **10. OTHER IDEAS**

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\*These guidelines are only some of the ways to support Youth to be successful, empowered and HAPPY in their life.

Please feel free to contact me at 250-686-8844 to discuss any of the above suggestions.