

Raising them strong

Supporting deadly behaviour

**A resource for Aboriginal carers of children
and young people in out-of-home care**



**Family &
Community Services**
Community Services

Who is this booklet for?

This booklet is to help Aboriginal carers help children and young people whose behaviour may be difficult to manage. It has practical tips about what you can do when kids play up and how to respond to some of the normal but challenging behaviour that children can show.

If you are worried about a child's behaviour and are not sure what to do, ask for help. You can ask a caseworker from your agency, a health worker, doctor, teacher or another carer.

What's in this booklet?

- ▶ Toddler tantrum
- ▶ Swearing
- ▶ Hitting
- ▶ Risk-taking, including alcohol and drugs
- ▶ Respect



**Don't let a
problem continue
and get worse.
Find some help.**

General tips

- ▶ Take every opportunity to **notice good behaviour**. Children and young people remember criticism more than praise. Praise them six times for every time you criticise them.
- ▶ Remember that a child or young person is not 'bad', the behaviour can be.
- ▶ **Let them know that you love them** but do not like their behaviour.
- ▶ **Keep yarning.** Communication is most important to you and the child or young person having a good relationship through all the ups and downs.
- ▶ Be consistent. If you **make a rule, stick to it**. If the rule is 'bedtime is 8pm' then stick to it. Don't give in.
- ▶ With teenagers, agree on rules and fair consequences together **before** things happen. If a rule is broken, follow through with the consequences. Don't give in.
- ▶ **Establish routines.** Children feel safe when they know what is going to happen next.





Understanding the behaviour

Tantrums are very common in toddlers and young children. They happen for many reasons. A child may be:

- ▶ tired
- ▶ stressed or frustrated
- ▶ hungry
- ▶ too excited or over-stimulated

Sometimes, things happen that a toddler cannot cope with, such as another child taking away their toy. You can help the toddler learn how to cope without having a tantrum to express their feelings.

What you can do

- ▶ Try to avoid the things that may cause a tantrum. Make sure the toddler has plenty of rest and food, and not too much excitement.
- ▶ You may notice signs that a tantrum might be about to happen or know that certain situations often cause a tantrum. Try to distract the toddler. Turn their attention to something interesting to stop a tantrum before it starts.
- ▶ If a tantrum does happen, try to be calm and ignore it until it stops. Getting angry will not help.
- ▶ If you cannot wait for a tantrum to finish, for example, if you are in a supermarket and you have to leave, gently pick the child up and leave.
- ▶ Keep your cool when things go wrong.

Do not reward tantrums, although you may need to comfort the child.

Remember to encourage and reward a toddler when they are not having a tantrum.



**Catch them
being good!**

SWEARING



Understanding the behaviour

Around the ages of three to five years children experiment with language and learn to express themselves.

Sometimes they might use a swear word:

- ▶ because it sounds funny
- ▶ because of the reaction they get or are trying to get
- ▶ to express frustration or anger, in the same way that many adults do.



What you can do

- ▶ Work out if the child is:
 - ▶ just playing with words
 - ▶ trying to get your attention
 - ▶ angry or frustrated.
- ▶ If the child is trying to get your attention or is just playing with words, ignore the swearing and the child. Don't say anything and don't look at the child.
- ▶ If the child is responding to something that has made them angry or frustrated, help them put what they are feeling into words such as "Your building was knocked down. It was an accident but you feel angry." Then, calmly talk with the child about not swearing. Keep it short and simple, such as "We don't use that word in this house." You might suggest another word they could use.
- ▶ Praise the child when they express themselves in acceptable ways.
- ▶ Make sure the child doesn't watch TV programs with swearing.
- ▶ Show in your behaviour how to express anger or frustration in an acceptable way.



What not to do

- ▶ Try not to laugh when the child uses a swear word. This will only make the child say it again.
- ▶ Try not to use swear words yourself. Children will think it is okay and copy you. If you do happen to swear, apologise to the child for using the word.

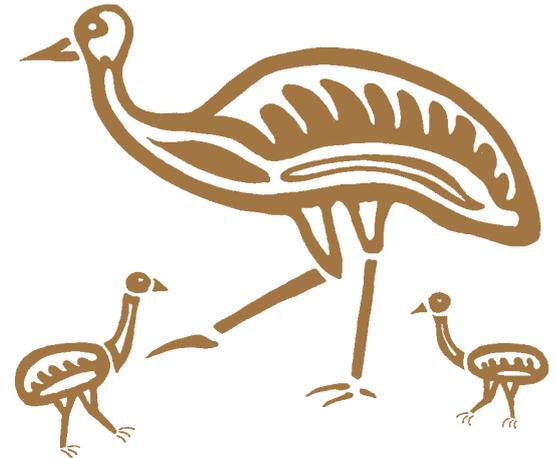
HITTING



Understanding the behaviour

A young child may hit out for different reasons:

- ▶ anger
- ▶ frustration
- ▶ fear
- ▶ anxiety
- ▶ being overtired and not coping
- ▶ not having the words to say what they are feeling.



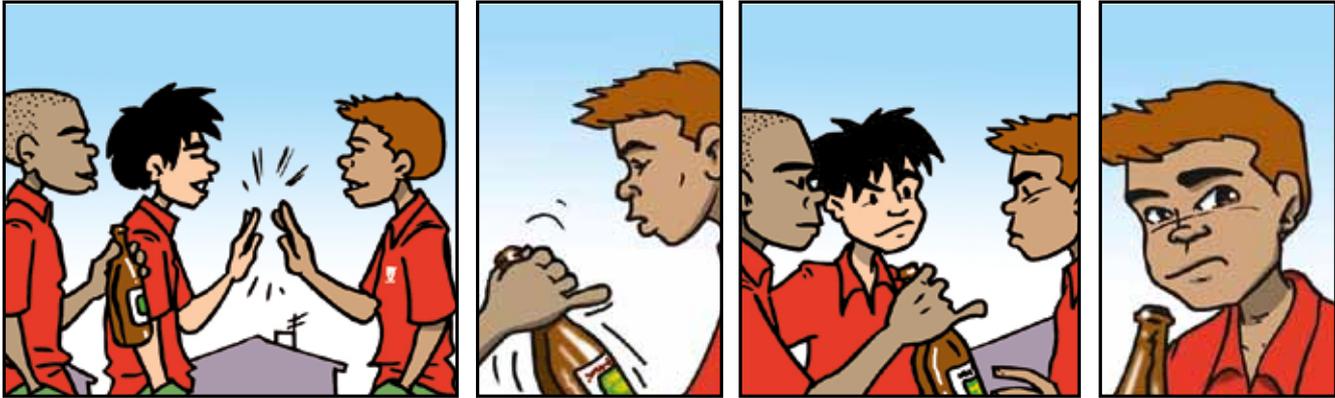
What you can do

- ▶ Try to work out what the child is feeling so you can understand why they are hitting.
- ▶ Firmly and calmly explain that hitting is not okay.
- ▶ Don't use too many words. If he is tired, talk about it more later when he is rested.
- ▶ If he is frustrated or angry, say what you think he is feeling, such as "You really wanted to get that ball first. You must be disappointed but you must not hit. Come over here and we will play together."
- ▶ If the child is scared or anxious, comfort him to make him feel secure and explain that hitting is not okay.
- ▶ Suggest options for the child to turn his attention to, like kicking a football or building a cubby house with chairs and blankets.



Never hit a child yourself.





Understanding the behaviour

Why do teenagers take risks?

Taking risks is a normal part of growing into an independent adult.

Teenagers take risks to

- ▶ explore their own limits
- ▶ challenge the boundaries set for them
- ▶ belong to a group when peer pressure is very strong.

Young brains do not fully develop until 25 years old, which means that teenagers are emotional, impulsive and do not always consider consequences.

Young people need to learn how to judge risks and say 'no' to danger.



What you can do

Talk with them about

- ▶ the risks they may face and how to manage them
- ▶ how to work out how risky something is
- ▶ how to say 'no' and still be part of the crowd
- ▶ what they think and what's important to them
- ▶ possible dangerous consequences
- ▶ what the boundaries should be and if they break the rules, follow up with consequences.

Be there for them

- ▶ Tell them that they can contact you anytime, anywhere for help or to come and get them.
- ▶ Be a good role model for them. If you are worried about them drinking, then make sure you drink responsibly.
- ▶ Know what they are doing, who their friends are and show interest in their lives.



Set clear boundaries

- ▶ Let them know that you don't approve of risky activities such as drugs and underage or binge drinking.
- ▶ Learn about drugs and alcohol so you can talk about them and the risks involved.
- ▶ Re-direct them to okay activities that have some thrill or challenge but are less dangerous such as some sports (rock climbing, kayaking, abseiling) or performing in music, drama or dance.





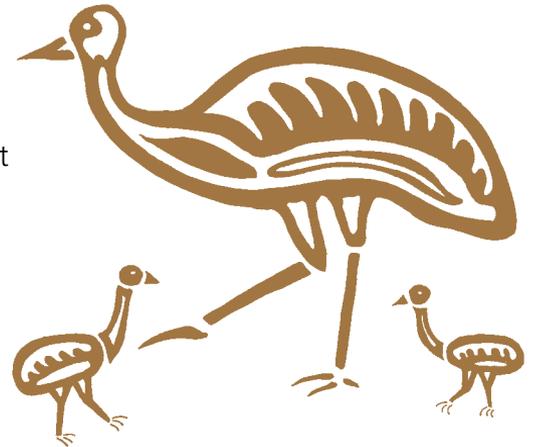
Understanding the behaviour

- ▶ As they get older, teenagers naturally want more independence. As they test out their independence they will make mistakes. You can guide and support them to learn from their mistakes.
- ▶ Developing teenage brains make teenagers' behaviour emotional, sometimes over-sensitive, moody or aggressive.
- ▶ Brain development also affects the decisions teenagers make and how they solve problems. They are starting to think in a different way and test new ideas.



What you can do

- ▶ Help teenagers develop healthy adult brains by encouraging them to do lots of activities such as sport, music, learning language, connecting with their cultural environment, reading and studying.
- ▶ Gradually give teenagers more responsibility as they get older.
- ▶ Help them develop decision-making skills by giving them choices.
- ▶ Work out together what the rules and consequences are about behaviour and communication such as "Curfew is 11 o'clock. If you are going to be late, you must ring."
- ▶ When incidents happen, stay calm.
- ▶ Choose your battles: ignore minor, irritating behaviour and avoid arguing, nagging and sarcasm.
- ▶ Follow through with consequences for important incidents.
- ▶ Focus on the behaviour not the young person.
- ▶ Use humour whenever you can but don't laugh at them.
- ▶ Don't be afraid to say 'no' because sometimes they want you to. By saying no with good reason, you are showing them that you care about them.



SERVICES AND CONTACTS

AbSec

Aboriginal Child, Family and Community Care State Secretariat. Aboriginal carers and carers of Aboriginal kids can visit AbSec's website for the latest news and information about carer support groups www.absec.org.au

ASFCSS

AbSec's Statewide Aboriginal Foster Carer Support Service
Freecall: 1800 888 698
T: 02 9264 0088
E: foster@absec.org.au
www.absec.org.au/foster-care

LEAVING CARE

Link-up NSW

Helps Aboriginal adults separated from their families as children, and Aboriginal families separated from their children
T: 02 4759 1911
www.linkupnsw.org.au

Marungbai Aboriginal Service

Supports Aboriginal young people who have been in care
Freecall: 1800 422 555 or
T: 02 6551 3973

HEALTH & MEDICAL

Aboriginal Health & Medical Research Council

AMS provides primary health care to local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
T: 02 9212 4777

EDUCATION & TRAINING

Aboriginal Education Council

T: 02 9660 5696
www.aec.org.au

AECG NSW

Aboriginal Education Consultative Group provides advice on behalf of Aboriginal communities on education and training
T: 02 9550 5666
www.aecg.nsw.edu.au

NSW Department of Education and Communities

Aboriginal Education and Training
www.aboriginaleducation.nsw.edu.au

Tranby Aboriginal College

An alternative, independent learning environment
Freecall: 1800 601 988
www.tranby.edu.au



OTHER ABORIGINAL NETWORKS AND SUPPORTS

AbSec member agencies that provide care and support services:

Biripi Aboriginal Medical Corporation

(G.L.M.A.C.S.)

Taree: 02 6551 2088

Burrun Dalai Out of Home Care & Family Support Service

Kempsey: 02 6562 1913

Coffs Harbour Aboriginal Family Community Care Centre

Coffs Harbour: 02 6648 3683

Hunter Aboriginal Children's Services

Maitland/Newcastle:

02 4016 8040

Link-Up (NSW) Aboriginal Corporation

Lawson: 02 4759 1911

Deans Park: 02 9837 2200

Ngunya Jarjum Aboriginal Child & Family Network

Casino: 02 6662 8044

South Coast Medical Service Aboriginal Corporation

Nowra: 02 4421 8426

Wundarra Services P/L

Coffs Harbour: 02 6651 2991

Katungul Aboriginal Corporation

Narooma: 02 4476 2155

Kari Aboriginal Resource Inc

Provides a clinic for children entering out-of-home care, plus fostering and community programs. 02 9822 4922
www.kari.com.au



This booklet is part of the Raising Them Strong resource project that includes booklets, topic cards and a DVD. It was developed with Aboriginal foster and kinship carers, carer support workers, caseworkers and the Aboriginal Child, Family and Community Care State Secretariat (AbSec).

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For copies call 02 9716 2663 or visit www.community.nsw.gov.au and go to the resource order form.



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