



4 Steps to Diffuse

Challenging Social Interactions

Coaching builds confidence and skill and can be used to help caregivers learn to diffuse the challenging behaviors children sometimes use to communicate. Caregivers can use these four steps to promote positive communication and help their child re-engage socially. Try these helpful questions and feedback while coaching caregivers when children are having a hard time communicating.

Hear what the child is communicating.

Reflective Questions

- What happened just before the behavior started?
- What do you think the child is trying to tell you with this behavior?

Helpful Information

- Responding immediately and positively shows you are paying attention.
- Tuning in to what your child is saying is your cue to them that you are helping.

Show the child you understand what they are communicating using words they grasp.

Reflective Questions

- What is the simplest way to show you understand what they feel, and why they feel that way?
- How can you adjust your voice to help the child feel understood when you talk?

Helpful Information

- Letting your child know you see their situation the same way they do begins to diffuse the tension your child is feeling.
- Keeping sentences short and simple helps children understand that you understand.

Give a response to the child's communication to help re-engage.

Reflective Questions

- Focusing on the message your child is sending, what answer do you want to give?
- If you aren't giving your child what they want, how can you say this positively?
- What are your ideas for prompting the behavior you want your child to use?

Helpful Information

- Focusing on your child's message, and not the delivery of the message, helps your child be calm and ready to learn from you.
- Providing choices offers support to your child and includes them as important in finding a resolution.

Use the steps consistently to teach your child how to get their needs met successfully.

Reflective Questions

- What part of that interaction do you think helped the most?
- What strategies can you use to help your child communicate during other parts of the day?

Helpful Information

- Using these strategies consistently with repetition teaches effective communication skills.
- Creating more opportunities for predictable communication helps your child practice.

Tip! If challenging behaviors are a priority, but not happening at visits, try role playing with the caregiver.