



## **Coping with Tricky Behaviour during Lockdown and beyond**

- 1) Keep the 'basics' going every day – a balanced diet, fresh air and exercise, a regular sleep routine. Not just for your kids, but for yourself as well – parenting is full on and you need to look after your own wellbeing in order to support theirs.
- 2) Praise the behaviours you want to see more of – be specific e.g. “that’s brilliant tidying”.
- 3) Avoid feeding the behaviours you want to see less of – remove the audience from an irritating habit (such as producing fart noises on Alexa!)
- 4) Distraction is a great way to redirect your child towards something more productive / less annoying, especially if they are simply bored and acting up. Distraction should take the form of something which your child enjoys or is interested in – a game / a Zoom chat with some friends / a walk to collect interesting leaves or feathers, etc.
- 5) If your child is ‘hyper’ and won’t easily calm down, they might just need to burn off some energy. Can you get them outside with a ball or take them for a long walk or a bike ride each day? Alternatively, if they are overstimulated, try a calming activity which requires concentration such as a puzzle or jigsaw to focus their mind on that one thing.
- 6) It’s important to model making mistakes and putting them right so that children know that mistakes are a normal part of life. It’s good not to be ‘perfect’ – it helps your child understand that you don’t expect them to be perfect either.
- 7) Young children have a limited ability to regulate their emotions and make considered decisions; the part of the brain responsible for that process, the pre-frontal cortex, takes up to 25 years to develop. So kids may become overwhelmed by big feelings of anger, frustration or sadness, and lack the ability to process these or make sense of them. This can come out as explosive temper tantrums or sudden tears. We just need to ‘contain’ our child when this happens (which may be more frequently than usual during Lockdown). Let them feel the feeling without trying to either fix or quash it. Be ready to listen if they want to talk about it afterwards (possibly much later that day or the next day). Forgive and reassure them.
- 8) Parents are under enormous pressure during lockdown, trying to negotiate work (or a sudden lack of work) alongside children being at home far more than usual...notwithstanding very real worries about everyone’s health amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. We need to be realistic about what’s achievable for ourselves during a Lockdown week. If the kids are fed, rested, have had some fresh air and learnt something, then frankly you’re winning.