

Managing difficult situations can often be made easier by trying to prevent the situation before it occurs. The first step is to be alert to when the person's level of stress is accumulating, as it has the potential to impact their ability to communicate, perform regular tasks, or even respond to your directions (verbal communication may be the most difficult for the person to respond to). During difficult situations, it is important to maintain a calm and positive relationship, so check your own feelings and how they project to the other person. You should practice stress prevention and self-control techniques regularly – before a situation occurs. Organise your support network (try to organise someone to discuss situations with and provide you with reassurance). **Any difficult situation should be seen as an opportunity for learning and growing, rather than as a disappointment.**

## Principles to Implement

- Attempt to be calm in all situations. **Rehearse your positive responses in advance**
- Endeavour to rid yourself of any feelings of punishment you may be covering.
- Be as non-threatening as possible, (don't present a front on posture)
- Be aware of your voice – keep it slow and controlled, although a strong and distinct statement may be required to interrupt a serious action.
- When communicating with spoken words use positive rather than negative terms.
- Demonstrate and use non-verbal prompts.
- Think about whether there is a way to support the person without taking control.
- Look for the meanings under words and establish what the person is feeling: are they trying to express and unmet need. (e.g. distress, confusion, anxiety)
- Redirect the person to a positive action or different environment
- Establish any triggers, and as much as possible try to plan activities and routines around lessening those triggers.
- Don't assume the person wants what you want or sees what you see.
- Don't expect the person to understand or empathise with you.

## What to Avoid

- When speaking **to** the person:
  - negative words – don't do that, wait a minute, later not now
  - conditional sayings such as 'if you are good' or 'if you don't do this'
  - questions or statements that may suggest an inability to complete a task
  - complicated and long sentences
  - Slang phrases
- When talking **about** the person:
  - they are just trying to gain everyone's attention
  - don't let them have their own way
  - just ignore them and they will stop
  - don't talk about the person in their presence as if they were not there or can't understand.
- Behaviours
  - bossy postures and/or tone of voice , hands on hips
  - don't come up from behind and touch the person by surprise
  - avoid punishments
  - talking to or treating the person as a child.
- Negative Strategies
  - methods involving punishment e.g. withdrawal of pleasant experiences
  - ignoring or raising the voice when under pressure
  - leaving the person out of group conversations or activities
  - avoiding family or friends for fear of embarrassment
  - strongly encouraging to participate in activities they dislike or are afraid of
  - keeping the person in an environment which is increasing anxiety