



Parents using a play-based approach

KIRSTEN DU TOIT

PURPOSE OF THE CHAPTER

By understanding a child's temperament type, a parent will be equipped to support the child in their healthy social-development. The manner in which a child is supported in mastering developmental milestones has a profound influence on his or her ability to grow into a fully functional person. In this chapter the focus will be on the value of play therapy. After studying this chapter, you should be able to recognise temperament types and be aware of discipline structures, define the difference between aggression and frustration and use the skills you have learnt to control discipline problems.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After studying this chapter, you should be able to

- recognise temperament types
- have an awareness of discipline structures
- define the difference between aggression and frustration
- use the skills you have learnt to control discipline problems.

KEY CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

Child discipline is the method used to prevent future behavioural problems in children. The word discipline is defined as imparting knowledge and skills, i.e. to teach. Child discipline can involve rewards and punishments to teach self-control, increase desirable behaviours and decrease undesirable behaviours.

Aggressive behaviour involves reactionary and impulsive actions that often result in breaking household rules or the law; it is generally violent and unpredictable. Aggression in children can be a problem for those with normal development as well as those with psychosocial disturbances.

Frustration is the tense, unhappy feeling that results when we cannot do something we should be able to do or want to do.

Temperament type influences a person's entire being. It is formed as an infant and never changes, simply developing over time as the person matures and grows and makes that person who he or she is.

Socioemotional development is a child's ability to understand the feelings of others, control his or her own feelings and behaviours, get along with other children, and build relationships with adults. Children's **socioemotional needs** are to enjoy life, develop their full potential and grow into participating, contributing adults.

Parental sensitivity is the ability to correctly interpret and respond appropriately to children's signals.

Play therapy is a form of counselling or psychotherapy in which play is used as a means of helping children express or communicate their feelings.

1. INTRODUCTION

As a parent, one of your duties is to teach your child to behave. It is a job that takes time and patience. Regardless of the type, discipline offers children many benefits. It brings stability and structure into a young person's life. If there were no discipline, children would do whatever they pleased with no consideration for others.

The parent–child relationship is one that nurtures the physical, emotional and social development of the child. It is a unique bond that every parent and child can foster and enjoy. This relationship lays the foundation for the child's personality, life choices and overall behaviour. Children learn from what they see; when a parent plays with a child, the child is learning. By knowing a child's temperament type, the parent will be more equipped to set boundaries and to use discipline in an appropriate way, lessening frustrations and aggressive behaviour.

2. THE IMPORTANCE OF HEALTHY SOCIOEMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT (ERIK ERIKSON'S THEORY OF PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT)

The development of a child's self-esteem, self-control and personality depends largely on interactions with the social environment. Within the social environment of the family (parents and siblings), pre-schoolers are exposed to various experiences that shape their development as a whole person. It is thus important to take note of the developmental stages of children's socioemotional needs and to support them in forming their personality and character.

Erik Erikson's theory of human development describes eight phases within an individual's life whereby experiences demand specific adaptations (Meyer & Van Ede, 1998: 51). Erikson describes each stage as characterised by a crisis. This implies a situation whereby an orientation to opposing poles takes place. Each crisis is distinguished by definite developmental tasks and interpersonal problems brought about by a specific mode of interaction between the individual and his or her other environment. The solution of each crisis lies in the synthesis of the poles that is the marriage of the two opposites at a higher level. How the individual adapts to the demands of the crisis situation will determine how the next phase of socioemotional development will be managed.

The eight stages of human development described from birth through to adulthood are the following: (1) basic trust versus mistrust (synthesis: hope), (2) autonomy versus shame and doubt (synthesis: will-power), (3) initiative versus guilt (synthesis: purpose), (4) industry versus inferiority (synthesis: competence), (5) identity versus role confusion (synthesis: reliability), (6) intimacy versus isolation (synthesis: love), (7) generation versus stagnation (synthesis: care), and (8) integrity versus despair (synthesis: wisdom) (Meyer & Van Ede, 1998: 51).

During the second year of a child's life, it is important that he or she develops a sense of autonomy, simultaneously overcoming fears of shame and doubt. The greatest task during this phase is to gain a sense of self-control as well as control over the environment (Thompson & Rudolph, 2000: 16). The parent's sensitivity towards the child's fragile sense of independence promotes healthy development. Overly restrained or overly punished children will develop a sense of shame and doubt. It is therefore important that 2-year-olds are permitted to experience autonomy and that failure is dealt with sensitively.

From 3–6 years of age (preschooler), the child learns to show initiative and to overcome feelings of guilt. Achieving autonomy and movement, the preschooler is enabled to act more independently than before. It is recommended to empower children by giving them choices and allowing them to participate in family activities, providing discipline with logical consequences in a loving, caring manner as well as setting realistic expectations related to the abilities of the child.

3. TEMPERAMENT TYPES

Some children are “easy”. They are predictable and calm, and positively approach most new experiences. Other children are more difficult, being unable to manage their emotional experiences and expression with ease. It can be a challenge for parents or other family members if a child’s temperament type does not fit the temperament types of others in the family. Each child has his or her own unique temperament type as all humans are born with a specific temperament type. Children have a dominant temperament type and a secondary temperament type can be assessed. However, temperament type cannot be changed, only adapted. The good news is that a child’s temperament type comes from a combination of his parents’ and grandparents’ temperaments. Knowing your child’s dominant and secondary temperament type (as well as your own) will make parenting, such as discipline and negotiations, much easier and less stressful at home.

Temperament types are modified (in the first six years) by the child’s experiences and interactions with other people and the environment, and by his or her health. Personality and character develop after birth according to the child’s exposure to various factors: the way they are brought up, their environment, their parents’ temperament types and how they handle different situations to protect their temperament type. By the time children reach their school years, their temperament is well defined and quite apparent to those who know them. It is not likely to change much in the future. The child’s natural temperament type has nothing to do with parenting skills. Nevertheless, the behavioural adjustment of school-aged children depends a lot upon the interaction between their temperament and that of their parents, how others respond to them, and how comfortably they fit in with their environment and with the people around them.

According to Beer (2016: 21), there are four temperament types: (1) popular yellow, (2) powerful red, (3) peaceful green and (4) perfect blue, with each having strong and weak points in adults and children. All temperament types are equally important and it is necessary to work on each types’ weak points and build on the strong ones. In practice, these temperament types give parents insight into their child’s behaviour and how to handle discipline.

According to Beer (2016), each temperament’s major weak points, fears and depression triggers are as follows:

3.1 Popular yellow

Natural weak qualities:	They tend to be unorganised and undisciplined; they do not remember names or details and like to exaggerate.
Natural strong qualities:	These children have the ability to speak about anything at any time. They have a bubbly personality and are very friendly. They love to interact with people.
Become depressed when:	Life is not enough fun.
Do not like these people:	They dislike those who criticise them and do not react to their humour.
Fears:	They hate being unpopular or bored and structured routines.
Can improve if:	They become organised and learn to watch the time.
Reaction to stress:	They leave the scene and find excuses and something fun to do.

“Yellow” children just want to have fun. Because they are naturally very busy, talk a lot, are forgetful and are not task orientated, they tend to resemble ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) or ADD (attention deficit disorder) cases. These children are relationship oriented and people pleasers. They have a lot of friends, are drama queens, always want physical touch (sitting on your lap), cannot wait their turn and struggle to finish a task because they are impatient and looking forward to the next task. Strict boundaries need to be set as these children manipulate easily and they want to play all the time. They perform on rewards.

3.2 Powerful red

Natural weak qualities:	They are bossy, insensitive and impatient.
Natural strong qualities:	They have the ability to take control of a situation and to make choices easily.
Become depressed when:	Things are beyond their control and people do not want what they want.
Fears:	They hate losing control of anything.
Do not like these people:	They dislike lazy people who are not interested in their work and evade their duties.
Can improve if:	Others are also allowed to make decisions and they learn to be more patient.
Reaction to stress:	They work harder and dispose of the offender.

“Red” children’s main theme is control as they want to be the leader in their group. Small children want to push the trolley or do something without help and get angry easily. Impulsive behaviour is well known in this temperament type. They are often difficult to discipline as they manipulate and think they are right all the time. Strict boundaries are also necessary, and a positive reinforcement technique will have the best result. They are not afraid to say what they think and they are task orientated.

3.3 Peaceful green

Natural weak qualities:	They are unable to decide and they have a lack of enthusiasm and energy. However, they have an inner will of steel.
Natural strong qualities:	These children are balanced children. They are friendly and will try to please everyone around them.
Become depressed when:	There is too much conflict and people are not helpful.
Fears:	They hate to discuss personal problems and to take the blame. They are afraid of great changes.
Do not like these people:	They dislike people who are pushy or loud, or who expect too much from them.
Can improve if:	They are willing to do more and finish tasks more quickly.
Reaction to stress:	They hide, watch TV and overeat.

“Green” children tend to dream. They do things in their own time. They are slow in tasks but will do them eventually. Parents repeat responsibilities a lot and after a while “screaming discipline” takes place. These children are sensitive to conflict. They do not like loud noises and their parents screaming. They look like ADD candidates, but not all “green” children have ADD. They are always concerned about others and have a sensitive spirit. They want to have peace, cannot make decisions in the spirit of the moment and they do not work towards a plan. They are relationship orientated, as are yellow children. Parents and teachers that recognise these behaviours in children should discipline by using a reward system and positive reinforcement techniques; this will empower the children to work faster and to take responsibilities.





3.4 Perfect blue

Natural weak qualities:	They do not trust others. They see the negatives in any situation first and focus too much on detail.
Natural strong qualities:	These children like to be organised. They have long term goals and very high standards. They will analyse everything.
Become depressed when:	Their routine and schedules are not adhered to; if it looks like others are not paying attention or if they cannot meet their own standards.
Fears:	They worry that people do not understand (“get”) them and are scared to make mistakes.
Do not like these people:	They dislike forgetful people and latecomers, and people who are unorganised and unpredictable.
Can improve if:	They learn to take life less seriously and do not insist that everyone be a perfectionist.
Reaction to stress:	They withdraw and become depressed. They easily give up and analyse problems repeatedly.

“Blue” children want to do everything in the perfect way. They might tend to work slowly because they stress easily about making mistakes. They are not dreamers. They tend to set high goals for themselves. They need routine, planning and security, and are extremely task oriented. Blue children are easy to discipline as they listen and are obedient.

4. EMOTIONAL BUTTONS

During infancy, children experience basic feelings of happiness, fear and anger. However, during the preschool phase, emotions develop to variations of self-consciousness such as guilt, shame, embarrassment, envy and pride. Emotions are experienced intensely. By 2-years-of-age, the preschooler can give spontaneous expression to emotions such as happiness, excitement and affection. The greatest developmental task is attaining emotional self-regulation along with recognising and interpreting the emotional reactions of others. By the 4-years-of-age, greater control over impulsive emotional reactions exists. Feelings are acted out and verbalised through fantasy and play.

Before children can learn how to control emotions, they need to discover the diversity of emotions that may be experienced in various social settings. Parents play the role of exposing the child to various social situations as well as modelling emotional behaviour in response to specific social stimuli.

When parents have difficulty handling discipline, it is important to make sure that their child’s “emotional buttons” have been dealt with. A child who had negative experiences early in life may have more trouble dealing with emotions. Each child has an emotion button. This is when the child has difficulty recognising the emotion he or she experiences, and mastering and controlling it. When children experience feelings like anger or frustration, their “emotional buttons” get released and they act out. If they cannot control these “emotional buttons”, they tend to get in trouble and parents struggle with disciplining them. Children who have trouble dealing with “emotional buttons” may become depressed, aggressive or anxious. Parents often do not know how to deal with a child’s negative emotional reactions. Parents might also have emotional buttons that have not been dealt with, and this makes the handling of children’s negative emotions even worse.

A child who understands and can deal with emotions has “emotional competence”. Their emotional buttons are easier to master and the child can take control over his or her emotions. This means he or she can express feelings appropriately. The child can identify what he or she is feeling and what other people are feeling, and can therefore change his or her emotions to feeling better within certain situations.

5. AGGRESSION VERSUS FRUSTRATION

Some children feel frustrated or angry more than other children do. Frustration and anger are related emotions, but they are not the same. Children may feel frustrated when emotions or situations get between them and what they want or keep them from reaching their goals. These situations can make them feel vulnerable and upset. Anger, on the other hand, is usually a response to a threat, being embarrassed or feeling like something is not fair. Ongoing frustration can lead to anger, which is a stronger emotion. Children may express anger by yelling, pushing, fighting or acting out.

The way in which parents respond to frustrated children can have a significant impact on their upbringing. It is important for parents to help children to identify the emotions which they experience. For instance, “I can see that you are frustrated and can’t fasten your shoe, let me help you...”, rather than “Don’t get so angry, I will help you”. A parent should observe and then address the “I” message by acknowledging the child’s feelings. The feeling should then be addressed by asking the child how he feels. After that, parents should assist and support the child with a problem-solving skill.

Aggressive behaviour and disciplining problems with children have become a common problem in today’s society. Aggression is a normal feeling, but the way which a child vents his or her anger must be determined according to boundaries. Children yearn for a feeling of belonging. If children are pushed too hard or rejected by parents or friends, they are inclined to protect themselves with aggressive behaviour. It is therefore the parent’s responsibility to build optimal relationships with the child.

Research conducted by Du Toit (2001: 122) found that there is a connection between a child’s aggressive behaviour and the type of parent–child bonding. If children get support and advice from parents on how to handle their emotions, they will become aware of their negative feelings (e.g. aggression). Parents can help children to recognise and acknowledge their feelings, understand why they are feeling that way and then find a way to resolve the problem. This strengthens the parent–child bond and children learn more problem-solving skills.

When preschool children explore their skills and gain more autonomy and initiative, they may have tantrums to try to take control. Parents should set limits by ignoring the tantrum, removing the child from the situation or offering alternatives. Tantrums may also be averted, for example by knowing when a preschooler becomes tired or hungry. Parents should distract the child from a tense situation and help the child to get rid of tension by running, jumping or moving to music.

The response of a parent to any emotional outburst of a child is important, as the parent is a role model. Parents and children can often trigger each other. Parents with “emotional buttons” that they themselves have not dealt with will battle to cope with their angry child. If parents find themselves getting triggered and overreacting, they should apologise and reassure the child by giving him or her a hug and then moving on to an activity that is fun for both of them. Parents must avoid over-compensating by being overindulgent or lax about house rules for the rest of the day, however.

6. SIBLING RELATIONSHIPS

In today’s world, there are many types of families. Children are often not being raised by a traditional family unit (mother and father), but also by grandparents, other relatives, foster parents, single parents or same-sex parents. As a result, brothers and sisters come in many forms and disciplining children might be a challenge.

Siblings differ in personality, age, gender and number. Referring to temperament types, it is of utmost importance that parents recognise each child’s unique personality and temperament. This will empower parents to understand stress and conflict within the family context. Parents often worry about sibling rivalry because the children get physically or emotionally hurt. They get concerned about their children’s self-esteem or that they might become bullies, and that their children might have poor relationships as adults or will not care for each other. However, sibling rivalry teaches children how to deal with power struggles. It also teaches them to take responsibility and make choices, and this helps with negotiations and compromise.



7. THE ROLE OF PLAY THERAPY

Play therapists are qualified professionals who work with children suffering from a range of emotional and behavioural problems, usually on a one-to-one basis. They work closely with the children's parents throughout the play therapy schedule, providing feedback and guidance.

Children are referred for play therapy when parents have difficulty sorting out their negative behaviour at home or when discipline does not work. A therapist's role will be that of a facilitator and in some ways as an interpreter, helping the child to increase understanding of his or her emotions and experiences.

The following children will benefit from play therapy:

- Children that must adapt to a change in their circumstances, for example moving to a new home, starting a new school or the arrival of a baby brother or sister
- Children that were exposed to a traumatic incident
- Children whose parents are divorced or in the process of divorcing
- Children that battle with grief after the loss of a family member, friend or a pet
- Children who are introverted and shy
- Children that struggle with socialising skills
- Children that experience stress or anxiety
- Children exhibiting aggressive behaviour and a strong will
- Children who bite their nails or still suck their thumbs
- Children with ADD and ADHD
- Children with learning difficulties
- Children who have been abused
- Children who suffer from depression
- Children that have psychosomatic symptoms (i.e. there is no medical cause) such as stomach pain and cannot go to school

8. THE USE OF HORSES IN THERAPY FOR CHILDREN WITH DISCIPLINE PROBLEMS

The use of horses in therapy can assist children with discipline problems (Bennington-Castro, 2014). The benefits of horse-centred therapy include improved self-esteem and relaxation. The horses teach them to take control of their emotions, to be responsible, to behave and to listen to their parents as the horses themselves follow the instructions of the therapist/trainer.

Children that have difficulties handling their emotions and have aggressive outbursts gain much in horse-centred play therapy. Working with horses allows children to become calm, more focused and feel that they can accomplish something. They feel a sense of fulfilment and are empowered to tackle new projects, which leads to improved self-esteem. Children who need to go to therapy do not always like admitting it, because of the connotations. In horse-centred play therapy, they just say they are going to spend time with horses, which makes an unbelievable difference to their self-esteem and confidence (McCullen, 2016).



Figure 1 Horse-centred therapy can improve teamwork and listening skills of children



A kind of magic happens when a desperately unhappy child and his or her parents are brought to the field to work with these animals. A change of environment, especially from the city and school environment, to open, natural surroundings, filled with fresh air and flooded with sunshine, can have an uplifting and calming effect on the whole family.

Horses are natural social animals with personalities, attitudes, fears and moods and they are extremely sensitive towards the young children around them. They respond appropriately to human interaction, allowing children to experience a sense of connection and trust (Bayley & Maxwell, 2000: 7). A horse will react with fear to any expression of anger, bullying or frustration, functioning as a mirror in which children can immediately see the effect of their own emotions and behaviour. Building trust with such a sensitive animal is a process and takes time; time in which the child heals. The child learns to trust his or her own feelings and to respect others.

There are many ways of interacting with horses; offering treats such as carrots and apples, feeding, grooming, observing, cleaning up after them and leading them around on a long line. While working with horses in therapy, children learn patience, attention, compassion, responsibilities and better listening skills. A therapeutic bond with a horse can help grow mutual trust, respect, affection, empathy, unconditional acceptance, confidence, personal success, responsibility, assertiveness, communication skills and self-control (Roth, 2005).

Through interaction with horses, troubled children can learn the deep, healing lesson of trust.



Figure 2 Overcoming fear and learning to trust oneself and the horse



Figure 3 Leading a horse develops trust and self confidence





9. GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS

When parents are confronted with discipline problems and difficult behaviour, they need to take their own and their children's temperament types into consideration. Their parenting skills should be assessed (see <http://www.seedsofinspiration.co.za>) and consistency in discipline needs to be set. Parents must find time to play with their children on a regular basis. Here are a few ideas for fun play activities:

- In fantasy and pretend play, let the child develop the theme. Get into their world, let them go with it. Ask questions, play along and have fun.
- Play outdoors. Throw balls. Push children on swings. Jump together on trampolines. Make mud pies. Take a nature walk in your backyard.
- Play card or board games. Help them to learn to make choices, to take turns and how to win or lose. Praise them, encourage them and laugh with them.
- Get involved in a craft project together. Build a puzzle as a family. Bake cookies or paint a picture.
- Listen to music. Sing and dance along.
- Read a book. Ask questions. Ask them to change the ending or to make up a new story.
- Watch a movie. Find out what they liked and how they felt. Discover your child's interests.
- Play children's games, for example follow the leader, guess what I am or hide-and-seek.

It is important to praise children and tell them regularly what a great job they are doing. Even when they are just watching television, compliment them for sitting still and enjoying their programme.

Disciplining aggressive behaviour can be difficult at times. Parents should intervene quickly but calmly to interrupt the aggression and prevent their child from hurting another child. Use the following guidelines:

- Younger children may need timeout to calm down.
- Simple rules about appropriate behaviour are easier for a child to understand than lengthy explanations.
- Parents can affirm feelings while at the same time addressing the fact that not all feelings can be acted on.
- Parents need to make eye contact with children, use a stern voice and make physical contact (especially when their temperament type is busy or a dreamer). Research has shown that to touch a child when disciplining has a better outcome than standing in front of him or her and shouting. Touch focuses listening skills.
- Help the child to recognise his or her emotions. Use "I" messages. Give solutions as to how to handle the situation better. Explain to the child that everyone, even adults, gets frustrated sometimes. Older children need to learn a better way to handle conflict.
- Listen to the child's explanations. Listening will encourage a child to develop trust in the parent.
- Children need time to calm down.
- Use a "my house rules" poster to help preschool children to remember what is acceptable behaviour and what is expected of them. Children have a need for rules and routine. This visual technique will help the young child to know what is allowed in the house and what not. Positive behaviour can be rewarded by the "marble jar". These two techniques will be explained in section 10.
- If none of the above help in disciplining the child, seek professional help.



10. PRACTICAL IDEAS FOR PARENTS (INCLUDING PICTURES)

10.1 Hand technique

This is a practical technique to help children with problem-solving skills and to become aware of their emotions. Children learn and remember through what they see, and do not always say how they feel.

Materials:

Coloured pencils, paper, pen (and a child's hand)

Method:

- Ask the child to select a coloured pencil (this helps with choices and control).
- Use the pencil to trace the child's hand on a piece of paper (the child must choose which hand).
- Ask the child's permission to make little face pictures on his or her fingertips with a pen (make sure you state that only the therapist or the parent may draw on his or her fingertips, otherwise friendly pictures might be drawn all over their bodies).
- Press his or her fingertips on each corresponding finger on the drawing like a stamp.
- Now the stories begin:
 - **Thumb:** This is "**Mr Sharp**" (Miss Sharp if the child is a girl). *Mr Sharp was a little man that sat in a boat (the child can make a fist and his thumb pointing upwards, and pretend that Mr Sharp is rowing his boat). He had very funny hair. He enjoyed rowing his boat. One day a big wind came and tipped his boat over (the child's fist and thumb must be turned upside down). He fell under the water and had to make a quick, clever plan before the fish tickled his funny hair as it looked like grass! He wiggled his boat under the water and before he knew the boat turned right-side-up above the water again. Mr Sharp made a clever plan.* This illustrates planning and parents can use this to teach problem-solving skills to children. Do not give up, make a plan!
 - **Pointing finger:** This is the "**listen finger or police finger**". Tell the child that this finger helps him or her to listen and to make choices. Life is about choices! A police hat can be drawn as a reminder to listen and respect each other.
 - **Middle finger:** This is the "**superhero finger**". Tell the child that this is the tallest finger and it stands for what makes him or her special. Tell him or her that he or she has a special place in his or her family. Depending on a child's religion, you can change it to "**special finger**". Explain the child's unique personality traits. This helps children to realise that they are special and should never think less of themselves.
 - **Ring finger:** This is the "**heart finger**". Ask the child to name all the people that love him or her. This finger shows children that they are loved and belong somewhere.
 - **Small finger:** This is the "**cowboy or cowgirl finger**". This finger is the smallest yet strongest because all the fingers lean on this one for support when drawing. This finger is never alone or afraid as he or she has four friends. Let the child have a look at his or her other four fingers and how they cannot be separated from each other. This finger helps children to be brave and not to feel alone, because they will always have a friend.



Figure 4 My hand



10.2 My house rules

This list of “rules” will let children know what is expected of them. It will give the child that needs planning and routine a better sense of emotional security. This will also remind the busy child that there are rules in the house.

Materials:

A3 poster, colourful pens, magazines or pictures on the internet to match each rule, glue.

Method:

- Make a list of rules for the home on a big poster and leave spaces open for pictures.
- Do not focus only on negative behaviour or rules but also on positive behaviour, such as giving hugs to every family member every day.
- Find pictures in a magazine that will best describe each rule (e.g. a soccer ball for the rule that no balls are allowed to be thrown or kicked inside the house). The picture does not need to describe the exact rule, as children are visually oriented and just need a picture to understand the house rule, but be creative.
- Read the house rules one at a time and allow the children to find and paste the corresponding pictures on the poster. This will help the children to remember the rule better and to be part of the family project.

This is not a reward chart. The “My house rules” poster gives children a “picture” of what to expect and what makes parents happy. The poster has an influence on a child’s healthy socio-emotional development. It can be helpful in disciplining children. When a child misbehaves, a parent can refer to the poster and ask the child the rule, like not to kick the ball in the house. The child will remember the picture of the ball and will listen to his or her parent. This technique will help parents to talk once and then to discipline. When children know and understand their boundaries, they tend to listen better.

There is no limitation to the number of rules on the poster. Children will look at the pictures and will remember.



Figure 5 My house rules poster

10.3 The marble jar (www.perfectionpending.net) and reward surprise bag

A marble jar is used to reward good behaviour. It is all about positive reinforcement, so marbles can only be added, never taken out. This will keep the strong-willed child interested. Every day, up to five marbles can be added to the jar at the end of the day. Ask the child how his or her day went and discuss his or her behaviour. Depending on the rules of the house (use the poster in section 10.2), the child can be asked to guess how many marbles he or she deserves (to assist with understanding that there are consequences for good/bad behaviour), but parents must make the final decision. For instance, if the child refused to get in the bath or yelled at his or her parents, the parent can decide to add only four marbles. Never add no marbles or only one, as this will demotivate the child and defeat the object.

Materials:

Empty jar (not too big and not too narrow, as this technique happens over a period of time), marbles, nail polish or khoki pens, material bag with small surprise toys inside

Method:

- Explain the rules of the house to the child. See Figure 5 – this can be a guideline for parents to assess the child's behaviour at the end of the day.
- Divide the jar into three equal parts with a khoki pen or colourful nail polish.
- Explain how the marble jar works to the child. The aim is to fill the jar with marbles up to each line, at which point the child gets to choose a surprise toy from the material bag. This bag forms part of a sensory integration method, where children use their sense of touch to select an object. If they do not like what they chose, they will be motivated to get to the next line for another chance. (Older children can get extra pocket money instead of selecting a toy from a bag.)



Figure 6 The marble jar

Children should be disciplined the moment they do not listen or misbehave, and parents should avoid using the marble jar to bribe or manipulate; this is a *positive* reinforcement technique only.

11. CONCLUSION

Disciplining children in terms of their various temperament type and being aware of their emotional buttons can be stressful for a parent. A parent never knows when a tantrum or aggressive outburst could strike and knowing how to handle them is seldom any easier. Whether children are begging for a toy, refusing to bath or biting their sibling, misbehaviour is a given. Children push boundaries to learn where they are. A parent's responsibility is to teach their children how to behave within the boundaries. Children need to be empowered to identify their feelings, admit them and master it. When parents struggle with these responsibilities, a play therapist will be helpful.

There are several different play therapy techniques to use with children who have emotional or behavioural difficulties. Working with horses has had great success, especially for those with aggressive behaviour. Children have gained confidence and a sense of belonging and acceptance.

Parents need to play with their children more and spend quality time with them, focusing on positive reinforcement techniques and complimenting them on positive behaviour. They should observe their children to learn their stronger/weaker personality traits. Understanding their children and knowing their needs will be invaluable when it comes to disciplining them.



Student activities

1. Observe children during practical activities and identify their temperament types and frustration or aggression levels.
2. Make a list of house rules with each child to enhance his or her understanding of boundaries and his or her listening skills. Think of other activities you can use or teach to parents that allow them to spend more time with their child and which motivate their child to behave in an acceptable manner at home.

Reflective questions

1. What is play therapy and what is its purpose?
2. Why is the socioemotional development of a child so important?
3. Why is it necessary to understand a child's temperament type?
4. Name the four temperament types.
5. Distinguish between aggression and frustration.
6. Explain the importance of releasing negative emotion buttons.

References

- Bayley, L. & Maxwell, R. 2000. *Understanding your horse: how to overcome common behaviour problems*. North Pomfret, VT: Trafalgar Square Books.
- Beer, L. 2018. *Windows to your personality*. Vanderbijlpark: Carpe Diem Media.
- Beer, L. 2016. *Watter kleur is jou persoonlikheid? Weet wie jy is en verstaan ander mense beter*. Vanderbijlpark: Carpe Diem Media.
- Bennington-Castro, J. 2014. *How horses help with mental health issues*. Available at: <https://www.everyday-health.com/news/how-horses-help-with-mental-health-issues/> (accessed on 10 August 2020).
- Delfos, M. 2003. *Anxiety, ADHD, depression and aggression in childhood: guidelines for diagnostics and treatment*. Herndon, VA: Jessica Kingsley.
- Du Toit, K. 2001. 'n Speltherapeutieseintervensieprogram vir die versterking van die ouer-kind binding met die aggressiewe kind. Unpublished DPhil thesis, University of Pretoria.
- EQ4Kids. July 2018. A parental guide to the 4 Temperament types. Available at: <https://www.eq4kids.co.za> (assessed on 19 August 2019).
- Grey, P. 2013. Definition of Play. Available at: [http://scholarpedia.org/article/Definitions of Play](http://scholarpedia.org/article/Definitions_of_Play) (assessed on 19 August 2019).
- How to Understand your Child's Temperament. Available at: <https://www.healthychildren.org> (assessed on 19 August 2019).
- How to Use A Marble Jar to Reward Good Behaviour. 2019. Available at: <https://perfectionpending.net> (assessed on 24 August 2019).
- Kelly, K. Recognizing Frustration and Anger in Kids Who Struggle in School. Available at: <https://www.understood.org> (assessed on 19 August 2019).
- Markham, L. 2016. How to Handle Your Anger at your Child. Available at: <https://www.psychologytoday.com> (assessed on 19 August 2019).
- McCullen, L. 2016. Horses as a therapy tool. Health 24. Available at: <https://m.health24.com> (assessed on 18 April 2020).
- Meyer, W.F. & Van Ede, D.M. 1998. Theories of development. In Louw, D.A., Van Ede, D.M. & Louw, A.E. (Eds). *Human development*, 2nd ed. Cape Town: Kagiso Tertiary.
- Rothe, E. 2005. From kids and horses: equine facilitated psychotherapy for children. *International Journal of Clinical and Health Psychology*, 5: 373–383.
- Thompson, C.L. & Rudolph, L.B. 2000. *Counselling children*, 5th ed. Boston, MA: Brooks/Cole Thomson Learning.