

FIRST SMILES: DENTAL HEALTH BEGINS AT BIRTH

Tips for Managing Child Behavior

Voice Control

Use a soft voice, pleasant tone, and speak slowly to influence and direct the patient's behavior.

Nonverbal Communication

This includes the use of appropriate touching, paying attention to your own body language, and using pleasant facial expressions.



Tell-show-do

This involves verbal explanations of what you plan to do, demonstrations of the noise, smells, visual, and tactile aspects of what is coming next, and then proceeding, trying not to deviate from the explanation and demonstration.

Positive Reinforcement

Give positive feedback at each step to reward desired behaviors. Assist children in reaching their full potential by catching them doing something right.

Distraction

This is the use of toys, other props, and staff to distract the child with talk, or even silliness, while you work.



Most children with disabilities and other special needs can be managed using traditional behavior management techniques. Keep in mind that some children with autism spectrum disorders, and children with other conditions, may be very sensitive to sensory stimuli and touch. These children may also have a host of other emotional reactions. They may need to be approached very slowly using low light and in quiet settings. They do better when things are predictable and routine. This includes putting them in the same dental chair and with the same dental assistant each time they visit the office. Careful interviewing and involvement of parents or caregivers will help predict the strategies that are most likely to be successful.

“Behavior management is as much an art form as it is a science.”

Adapted from “Clinical Guideline on Behavior Management,” Clinical Affairs Committee, AAPD.