

Helping your child to manage difficult behaviours

Helping your child to follow instructions

Week 2

Who are we?

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CONFIDENTIAL

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Today's content



Thinking about our own experience of instructions



Children testing instructions/boundaries



Tips for giving instructions



What can your child understand?




How can we make instructions more effective?



Ideas to support your child's understanding

What's your experience of instructions?

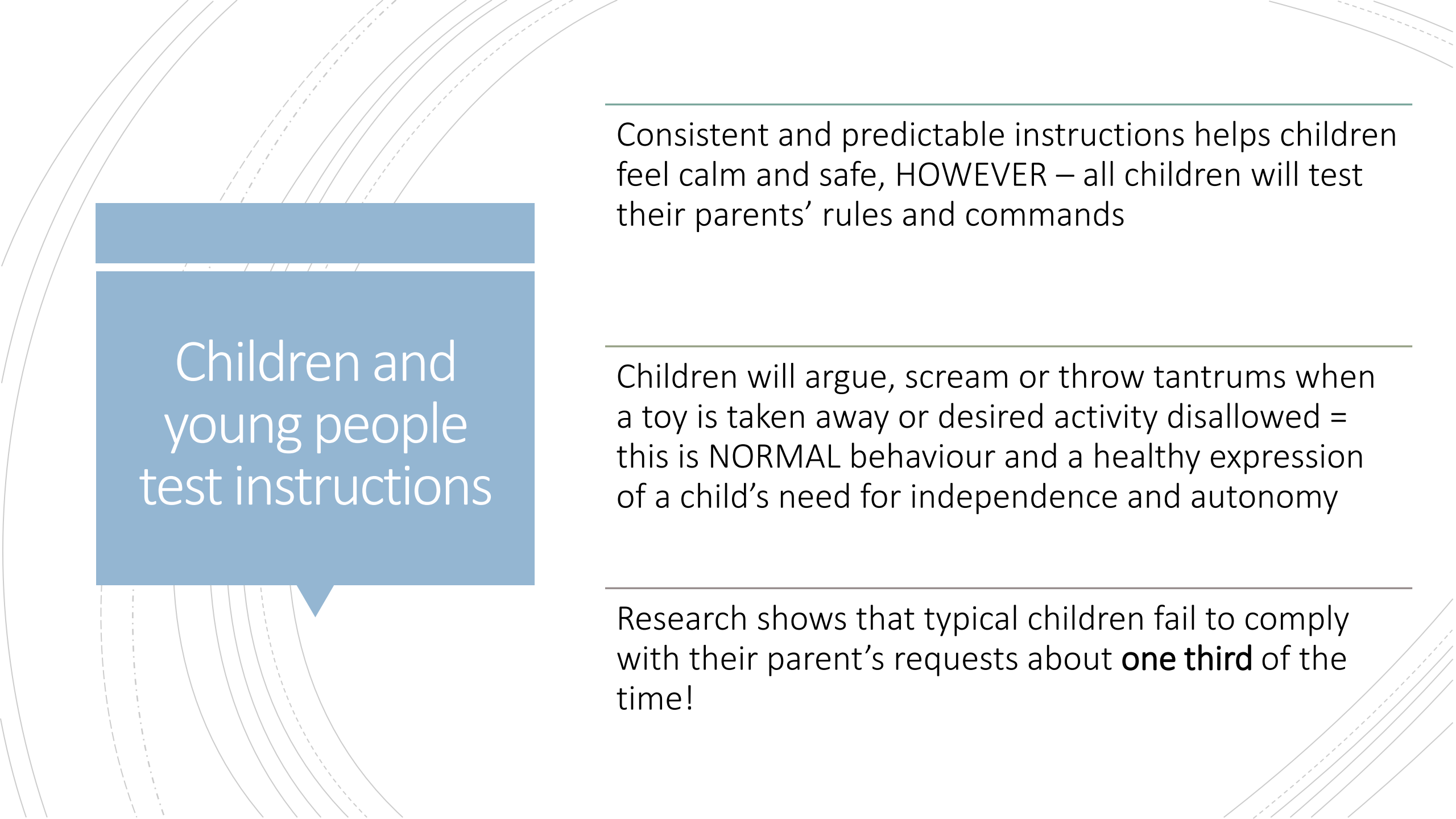
Cast your mind back to being a child yourself, can you think of how instructions felt growing up?



How does your child respond to instructions at home?



How does giving instructions feel to you at home?



Children and young people test instructions

Consistent and predictable instructions helps children feel calm and safe, HOWEVER – all children will test their parents' rules and commands

Children will argue, scream or throw tantrums when a toy is taken away or desired activity disallowed = this is NORMAL behaviour and a healthy expression of a child's need for independence and autonomy

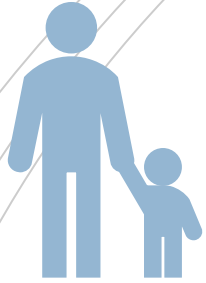
Research shows that typical children fail to comply with their parent's requests about **one third** of the time!

Reframing protests

When these protests happen – try not to take them as an attack on you personally = remember your child is simply testing your rules to see if you are going to be consistent



Try to review your child's protests as learning experiences: ways that they can explore the limits of their environment, to learn what is allowed



Tips for giving instructions

- Be **simple, clear and brief**: keep it straightforward
- Be **polite** (modelling prosocial behaviour)
- Ask the child **to do** something (rather than not do something)
- **Give the child space to comply**: wait 5 seconds (count in head) before repeating the instruction
- Praise given if instruction followed, consequence if not
- Longer tasks – break them down and praise after completion of each stage of the task

What can your child understand?

Developing understanding of 2 information carrying words.

“put teddy on the bed”

Finds items using attributes.

“find me a small one”

Follows instructions with 2 parts.

“get teddy and sit on the floor”

Understands spoken instructions without stopping what they are doing to look at you.

Understands simple instructions

“make teddy jump”

Understands words such as ‘first’, ‘last’, ‘might’, ‘may be’, ‘above’ and ‘in between’

Follows complex directions using sequence words

“show me your picture before you hang it up.”

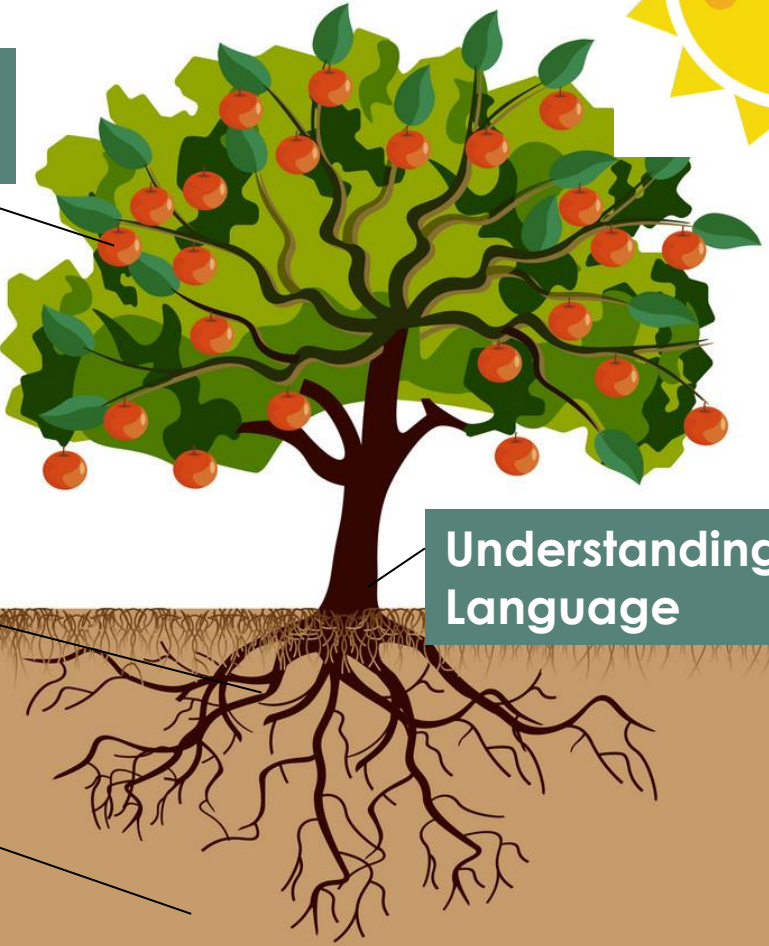
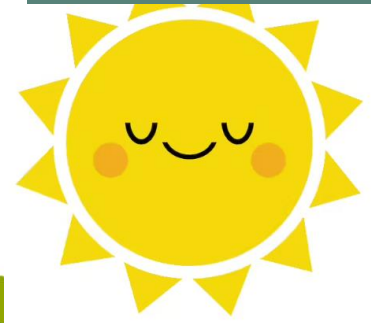
Understands simple sequences

“first we are going to the shop, next we will play in the park”

Understands feelings and descriptive words

“carefully”
“slowly”

Opportunities



Talking and
Speech Sounds

Social
Interaction
and Play

Understanding
Language

Attention and Listening

Emotional Regulation

- Our emotional state and ability to manage our feelings directly impacts our communication skills
- Communication skills also have a direct impact on our ability to manage our emotions

How can we make our instructions more effective?

Ask yourself:

Is this instruction **NECESSARY**?
Is this instruction **FAIR** and **REALISTIC**?
Have I got their **ATTENTION**?

Decide ahead of time if an instruction is necessary

Ensure that the instruction is **realistic and fair**
Be prepared to see it through (consequences for not following an instruction)

Prevention is better than cure

Is there a way that we can structure the day so compliance is easier to achieve?
e.g. having child complete homework before screen time, rather than trying to get them to put the screen away to start their homework

Ensure the child is listening

Stop what you are doing, go to your child, get down on their level, invite eye contact, say their name

Instructions as triggers...

Common mistakes	Why?
Chain instructions	It doesn't give them space to comply Instruction gets lost
Question instructions	Gives them a choice
Vague instructions	Doesn't tell the child what you want – misinterpreted
“Let's...” instructions	Can be confusing if you will not complete the task with the child
Instructions plus rationale	Too much information – instruction may become lost in rationale
Repeated instructions	Annoying to you and irritating to the child
Unnecessary instructions e.g. interrupting a child's favourite show to tell her to put her toys away, when there is no urgency for this task to be completed	Children are told where to be and how to act constantly throughout their day, so try not to give instructions that are not needed, particularly when they have the potential to trigger challenging behaviour
Poor body language e.g. giving an instruction while looking away or engaging in another activity, without ensuring the child is paying attention	Child may not know that the parent is speaking to them, or may be too absorbed in something to register what is being said Can make it seem as if instruction is not important

Lots and lots of instructions (without maybe realising)

At home, on average how many instructions do you think you give to your kids?

Based on home observations and research – the average parent gives around 17 commands in half an hour

In families with more challenging behaviour, number rises to an average of 40 commands in half an hour

Breaking down a task for instructions



- For example – could break down the task of ‘get ready for school’ to:

- Put their lunch box in their bag (praise)
- Put their shoes on (praise)
- Put their coat on (praise)

→ Rather than connecting all these instructions together or giving a general ‘get ready’ instruction

Effective instructions example

Come to the child's level and ensure you have their attention, then say: 'Santi, turn off the TV and bring your homework to the dining table now, please'

Wait 5 seconds:

If Santi has complied: Praise (e.g. 'Thank you, Santi, that's fantastic. Once you've finished your homework, we can watch a film together tonight')

If Santi has not begun to comply: Repeat Instruction

Wait 5 seconds:

If Santi complies: Praise

If Santi has not begun to comply: At this stage, take no action or respond as you usually would (consequences will be added to this process next session)

Behaviour

Child running around screaming

Children fighting over a toy

Child playing dangerously on a climbing frame

Child still playing with toys at bedtime

Ineffective Response

“Stop it you’re driving me mad”

“Oh sweetie you know that’s not nice, it’s really important to share your toys, remember? Now don’t look at me like that. Please? Do it for mummy”

(from the other side of the playground, not facing the child) “Do not come crying to me if you fall off!”

“C’mon, let’s wrap it up”

Behaviour

Child running around screaming

Children fighting over a toy

Child playing dangerously on a climbing frame

Child still playing with toys at bedtime

Effective Response

“(Name), please walk quietly”

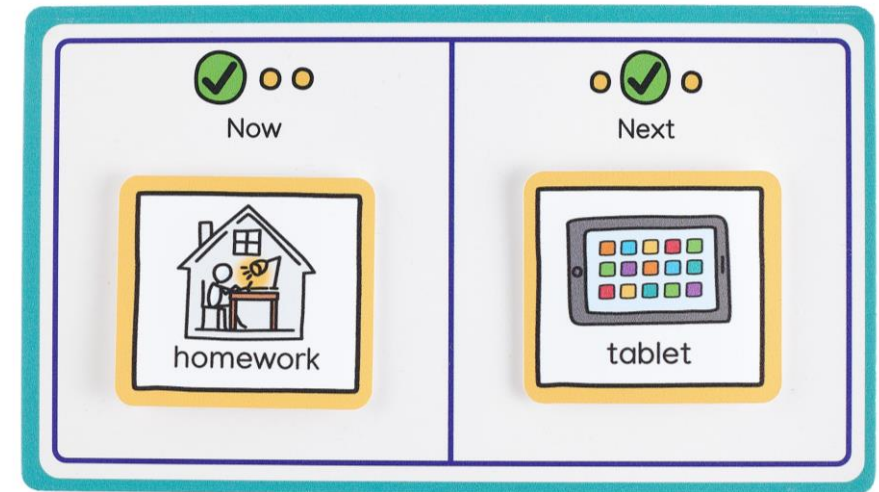
“(Name) give me the toy”

“(Name), come down”

“(Name) give me the toy and lay down”

Ideas to support your child's understanding

- Visuals and gestures
- Pauses
- Short, simple sentences
- Repetition
- Comments



Thank You!