



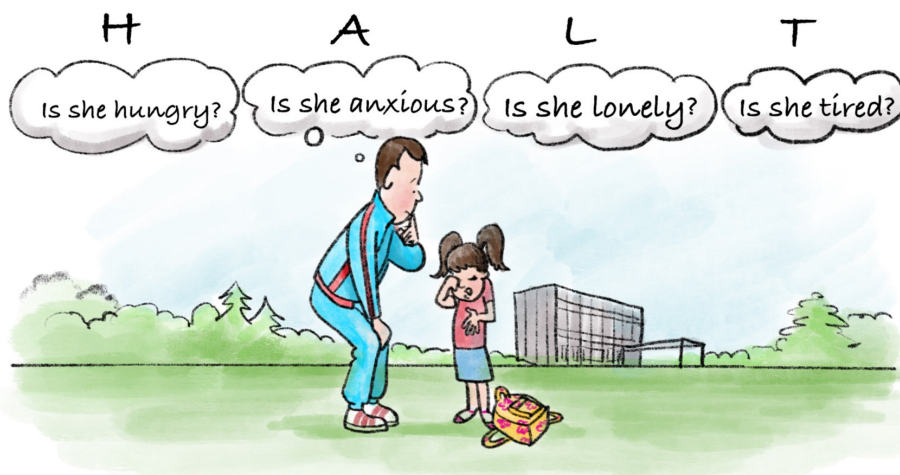
## Booklet 5: Family rules

### Headlines:

- Family rules refer to the statements and boundaries put in place to show children what behaviour is expected of them.
- They promote understanding, helping to develop children's independence.

Family rules refer to the statements and boundaries put in place for children to understand what behaviour is expected of them. When rules are consistent, communicated clearly and followed through, they create regular structure and routine that encourages desirable behaviour from children. Family rules help protect the household, the children themselves, and promote good interactions between family members. This includes having family mealtimes that encourage family members to talk to one another about how things are going and how they are feeling. This rule has been associated with improved wellbeing in young people (Utter et al., 2013) and increased resilience in families (McCubbin & McCubbin, 1988).

Family rules, on their own, do not prevent children from making mistakes. Misbehaviour can be the result of factors such as stress (Solter, 1998), witnessing parental aggression (Vitaro et al., 2002), low self-esteem (Steffens & Bosch, 2003), seeking attention (Hameed-ur-Rehman & Sadruddin, 2012), or trying to meet other needs (Solter, 1998). Given the many different factors that could impact children's behaviour, it is important to identify and understand the reasons behind them. Parents' curiosity to understand their children allows them to pinpoint the root of the problem and address the issue.



This is where the HALT model can help as a framework for parents. The HALT model was first developed for addiction recovery and stands for Hungry, Angry or Anxious, Lonely, Tired. These five factors can negatively impact the child's thoughts and thinking patterns (Qualter et al., 2015; Afridi et al., 2019; Reynaud et al., 2018; Pliszka, 1989), making children more likely to make poor decisions or misbehave. Furthermore, studies have consistently shown the benefits of active listening and communication in improving parent-child relationships and satisfaction (e.g., Caldwell et al., 2010). Good communication helps parents to understand the challenges children may be facing at school, with other children and with adults.

It is also important to note that challenging behaviour may be a result of neurodevelopmental conditions. For example, children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) can have needs that, when not met, often lead to difficulties such as misbehaviour. There may be a higher risk for challenging behaviour such as aggression, distractibility and communication difficulties (Matson et al., 2008). However, there has been evidence that intervening early with programmes based on applied behavioural analysis (ABA), which is a therapy that helps to understand behaviour and develop new learning/skills, has been an effective way of reducing challenging behaviour in children with ASD (Peters-Scheffer et al., 2011). This shows the value of detecting early signs of developmental delays (Butter et al., 2003) in order to provide children with the additional support they require.

### Showing understanding

Self-determination theory is a theory of human motivation and behaviour, which considers that people can function day-to-day and feel well when three basic needs are met. These three basic needs are termed: competence, autonomy and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This theory helps us understand why the quality of parent communication with their child has an impact on the child's behaviour and understanding in the future (such as during adolescence).

A communication style that's been shown to be effective is autonomy-supportive communication. This style encourages children and adolescents to think about their own experiences, and to act according to their goals. This requires the parent to show a strong sense of empathy and understanding towards their children. This style of communication involves offering the child choices on how they could meet parental expectations (Froiland, 2015; Van Petegem et al., 2017). For example, you might say to your child, 'I would like you to help me tidy up, would you like to put the toy cars in the cupboard or put these jigsaw pieces into the box?' Van Petegem and colleagues (2017) found that autonomy-supportive communication generally produced feelings of satisfaction as well as constructive responses to parental guidance (i.e. less opposition) compared to controlling communicative methods. Providing them with choices gives them a sense of control over their own goals, positively impacting their motivation which plays a large role in their wellbeing.

### Useful links

- <http://www.florisbooks.co.uk/blog/2020/10/14/exploring-why-children-need-boundaries-by-lois-eijgenraam/>
- <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-self-determination-theory-2795387>

# Booklet 5: Consequences

## Headlines:

- Consequences (e.g. positive, negative, natural) in the context of parenting refers to something that occurs in response to children's various behaviours.
- Distinct from "consequences", "punishment" is rooted in anger.
- Consequences can be delivered effectively by being mindful, and understanding that children learn at different rates.
- Sibling rivalry has benefits for child development and can be managed by delivering consequences.

Consequences, in the context of parenting, refer to the responses made to particular behaviours children display. There are logical consequences (i.e. positive or negative consequences) and natural consequences. Positive consequences (e.g. positive attention) might reinforce the behaviour, whilst negative consequences (e.g. time-out) might make the behaviour less likely to happen. Occasionally, children may experience consequences that occur naturally because of their actions. For example, if they did not want to eat, they would eventually feel hungry.

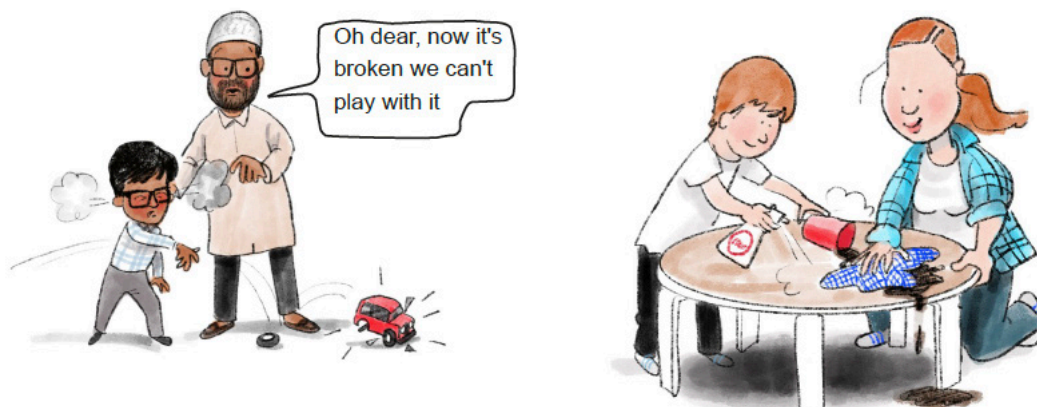
Experiencing consequences is an important way for children to learn to take responsibility for their actions. According to the idea of "reinforcement learning" (Chalmers et al., 2018), carrying out certain behaviours and then encountering their consequences helps children learn to predict what could happen if they were to repeat that behaviour. Gaining this knowledge would then allow them to navigate their future decisions. Thus, they would be able to make better choices, leading to overall improvements in their habits and behaviour.

It is important to note that consequences differ from punishment. Punishment often comes from a state of anger (Rodrigues et al., 2020), to force children to behave well. Punishment refers to a form of behaviour that inflicts emotional or physical pain, which can have a negative impact on the child's wellbeing (Lawrenz et al., 2021; Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor, 2016). It can include yelling, name-calling, making demands, and withdrawing. Consequences, on the other hand, are a result of behaviour and aim to help children learn effectively and maintain accountability and safety.

## Why might parents resort to anger and punishment?

Anger is a natural and automatic response to the complexity of parenting, including feeling stressed (Benson & Karlof, 2009), threatened, powerless, and disrespected. Challenging behaviour from children may go against parents' expectations and can also trigger reactions that they have learnt from their own upbringing (i.e. what is termed "intergenerational transmission"; Ney, 1988; Schwerdtfeger et al., 2013; Salali et al., 2015). Research has suggested that when parents are not sure of how to react to their children's behaviour, there can be a tendency to resort to anger and punishment, and this creates a higher chance of abuse (e.g., Crockenberg, 1987; Greenspan & Greenspan, 1990). This shows the importance of increasing parents' awareness of alternative responses to such challenges, including the effective delivery of consequences.

## How to deliver consequences effectively?



There is a theory of anger control (Novaco, 1975) which explains that it is important for parents to be mindful, and work to recognise unhelpful thoughts and behaviours. Being mindful greatly reduces anger, aggression, and hostility in adults (Borders et al., 2010; Wright et al., 2009). Using better anger management plans improves parent-child relationships and reduces conflict (Stern, 1999). That said, to manage effectively it is crucial for parents to first notice and make sense

of their own feelings and triggers before responding to the undesired behaviour enacted by their children. It is also important to understand that there are many approaches that can be taken to deliver consequences. The key is to think about what the child will learn about what they did and what their parent's reaction means. Using a firm and caring tone of voice, comfortable and at ease body language, and neutral and factual word choices helps to explain consequences clearly to children, and to enforce them as well. Please refer to the first link included below for a thorough guide on delivering consequences.

Finally, it is vital to understand that every child learns differently (Gurian, 2010). Some may take longer than others to show changes in their behaviour. Being patient is key to helping behavioural change to take place.

### What is sibling rivalry?

In many family homes, conflict between siblings is common and a part of normal development. Each child may show differences in their temperament and personality. Sibling rivalry can occur in a variety of different ways (Weisman, 2011). It may come about due to differences in how parents give their attention to the siblings (Brody, 2004; Berge et al., 2016), and can negatively affect others in the family, including parents. This conflict may bring up feelings of stress and worry. However, it is crucial for parents to be aware of the benefits of well-managed sibling rivalry to the children themselves. Sibling rivalries are an opportunity for children to recognise their individuality, learn from each other, learn ways to manage strong feelings, and improve their ability to socialise with others. Of course, there are potential moments of extreme or excessive, challenging behaviour. This is when delivering positive consequences can help promote positive sibling behaviour, and delivering negative consequences reduce physical/excessive fighting.

### Useful links

- [https://modules.sanfordinspire.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Delivering\\_Consequences\\_Coaching\\_Guide-2.pdf](https://modules.sanfordinspire.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Delivering_Consequences_Coaching_Guide-2.pdf)
- [http://local.psy.miami.edu/faculty/dmessenger/c\\_c/rsrscs/rdgs/emot/spanging.meta.2016.jFamPsych.pdf](http://local.psy.miami.edu/faculty/dmessenger/c_c/rsrscs/rdgs/emot/spanging.meta.2016.jFamPsych.pdf)
- <https://endcorporalpunishment.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Research-effects-summary-2021.pdf>
- <https://doi.org/10.12968/prps.2005.158.39845>
- <https://raisingchildren.net.au/preschoolers/behaviour/rules-consequences/consequences>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/parents/essentials/consequences/whyimportant.html>

## References for whole of Session 5

*All references used in this booklet can be found in the separate 'References Booklet'.*

### Selected references:

- Brody, G. H. (2004). Siblings' direct and indirect contributions to child development. *Current directions in psychological science*, 13(3), 124-126.
- Utter, J., Denny, S., Robinson, E., Fleming, T., Ameratunga, S., & Grant, S. (2013). Family meals and the well-being of adolescents. *Journal of Paediatrics and Child Health*, 49(11), 906-911.
- Van Petegem, S., Zimmer-Gembeck, M. J., Soenens, B., Vansteenkiste, M., Brenning, K., Mabbe, E., ... & Zimmermann, G. (2017). Does general parenting context modify adolescents' appraisals and coping with a situation of parental regulation? The case of autonomy-supportive parenting. *Journal of child and family studies*, 26(9), 2623-2639.