

## De-Escalating Agitated Children

### General Goals:

1. To help the child calm down and remain in control.
2. To help the child make a good/appropriate decision.
3. To facilitate cooperation, not merely compliance.
4. To assess the need to which the child is responding, and help the child figure out an appropriate way to meet that need.

### Strategies for Parents and Caregivers:

#### 1. Speech

- Avoid yelling and making threats (which are different than consequences).
- Speak calmly and clearly in brief sentences.
- Tell the child the specific behavior that you desire of them.
- Phrase your request in terms of the choices that the child had, such as, “You can clean your room now and then have more free time, or be in your room longer until it is clean. What is your decision?”
- Do not make authoritative demands of the child or encourage control battles.
- Acknowledge the child’s feelings and state ways they can cope with them appropriately. If the child is particularly agitated, explain when you will be available to discuss the feelings with them further.

#### 2. Posture

- Do not intrude on the child’s personal space.
- Do not point your finger in the child’s face or stand over the child in a way that can be interpreted as threatening.
- Look the child in the eye unless you are trying to minimize the attention you are giving for an attempt to manipulate you.
- Tell the child they have 10 – 30 seconds to respond to your request to allow them to save face.

If you have concerns about your child’s ability to regulate his or her emotions or tolerate frustration, please feel free to call Dr. Lazar for a consultation.

Joel Lazar, Phd.  
[www.joellazarphd.com](http://www.joellazarphd.com)  
(619) 540-6038