Wisconsin Adoption & Permanency Support

7 STEPS TO DE-ESCALATE WITH YOUR CHILD

STEP 1: RECOGNIZE AND MANAGE YOUR OWN EMOTIONS

It's important to start by recognizing and managing your own emotions. Take a deep breath and try to remain calm and composed. If you are feeling overwhelmed or upset, take a moment to regulate your own emotions before addressing the situation with your child.

STEP 2: CREATE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

Ensure that the environment is safe and free from any potential triggers. Remove any dangerous objects or distractions that may exacerbate the situation. Creating a calm and safe environment can help prevent further escalation.

STEP 3: APPROACH YOUR CHILD WITH EMPATHY

Approach your child with empathy and a non-judgmental attitude. Show them that you care and are there to support them. Use a gentle tone of voice and maintain eye contact to convey your empathy.

STEP 4: VALIDATE YOUR CHILD'S EMOTIONS

Validate your child's emotions by acknowledging and accepting their feelings. Use phrases such as "I understand that you're feeling upset," or "It's okay to be angry." Validating their emotions can help them feel heard and understood, which can aid in de-escalation.

STEP 5: OFFER OPTIONS AND CHOICES

Offer your child options and choices to empower them and help them regain a sense of control. For example, you can say, "Would you like to take a break and calm down, or talk about what happened?" This can help your child feel more engaged and less defensive.

STEP 6: SET CLEAR AND REASONABLE EXPECTATIONS

Set clear and reasonable expectations for your child's behavior moving forward. Use positive language and avoid threats or punishments. For example, you can say, "Let's work together to find a solution" or "What can we do to make things better?"

STEP 7: FOLLOW-UP AND DEBRIEF

After the situation has de-escalated, follow up with your child to discuss what happened and how they are feeling. Use this as an opportunity to reinforce positive coping strategies and problem-solving skills. Reflect on the situation together and discuss ways to prevent similar situations in the future.

Wisconsin Department of Children and Families