

# YOUR CHILD ON STEROIDS

## WHAT TO EXPECT AND HOW TO MANAGE



**Steroids are very effective treatments, however steroids do tend to come with some side effects. We hope this handout can be informative as you navigate some of these effects with your child!**



**This document will focus on mood and emotion changes, cognitive changes, and sleep disturbances**



# MOOD AND BEHAVIOR CHANGES

**We commonly see children have fast emotion fluctuations, ranging from angry and irritable, to anxious or depressed. These emotions will seem to be at “high volume” and can be out of character for your child.**

**Increase structure and consistency. This will promote a sense of security within your child as they adjust to new big feelings.**

Make sure routine remains stable. Use a visual schedule or calendar so they know what to expect and when.

Avoid big changes during this time period.

Use “when, then” statements. For example, “when you finish your carrots, then you can have dessert.” This helps your child understand the expectation for a desired behavior.



## **Validate emotions!**

It's totally okay to be mad, sad, or worried. You can say something like “it's okay to be mad. It's not okay to hit mommy. I need to take space until you can show me calm body and calm voice.”

## **Engage in Self Care!**

This may seem counter intuitive, but you cannot pour from an empty cup. If you are taking space and engaging in activities that fill your energy tank, you will be able to respond calmly and thoughtfully to your child. This will also model healthy coping for your child.




# MOOD AND BEHAVIOR CONTINUED..

## Behavioral Management Techniques



### Selective Attention

This is when we attempt to use our attention as a reward for only prosocial/positive behaviors. Kids do not often differentiate between good and “bad” attention, it’s all a reinforcer to them. Think of the child in the back seat of the car, kicking the driver seat, and the parent repeatedly asking them to stop. What are they likely to do? If you answered, kick more, you’re probably right! When your kiddo is acting out of character, you may be trying to help or correct the behavior by saying something or responding with actions. We ask that you try to ignore the troubling behavior (both with words, body language/eye contact). Then, when your child asks for help, comfort, or engages in coping or self-leisure, we give a LOT of attention and praise. By doing this, your child will quickly learn what they need to do to handle big emotions.



### Use labeled praise often!

When your child asks for help, takes a deep breath, or walks away when angry, make sure to let them know they did a great job doing that.

### Utilize a sticker chart

Provide rewards for prosocial behavior. Start small, with the child able to earn rewards easily and then titrate up slowly to increase motivation. Include things like “coping skill practice” for rewards, too!

### Create a quiet corner in the house

With your child’s help, create a safe space for your child to go when they need time and space to cool down. Including things like sensory toys may be extra beneficial as well!

### Ignore minor problems during this time period.

We may reduce some expectations for a brief moment to allow the child to navigate changes in their body.

# COGNITIVE CHANGES

**Your child may be easily distracted, get confused,  
or have a hard time remembering things.**



## **Help your child with compensatory strategies**

- Explain expectations before a task, not after.
- Give one simple command at a time.
- Give lots of warnings for transitions or changes in schedule.
- Use visuals, lists, and reminders.
- Break tasks down into small, simple steps.



## **If your child has a 504 plan or IEP, employ the school's help with homework and classwork. Here are some suggestions of what you could ask for:**

- Provide seating arrangement to minimize distractions; close to teacher, away from door, windows, and distracting classmates.
- Teachers could provide patient with appropriate, one-step directions (e.g., get patient's attention; make one direct request at a time; remove distractions; repeat instructions; obtain frequent feedback to insure understanding).
- Provide reinforcement for complying with seat-work and other academic activities requiring on-task behaviors.
- Calling on patient often to keep them engaged in learning.
- Allowing patient to be a classroom helper to allow them to expend energy appropriately and increase their self-esteem in the classroom.
- Arranging for a "listening buddy" patient can ask for repeating of instructions.
- Asking for additional time for tests and assignments.

# SLEEP DISTURBANCE

**You may notice sleep changes with your child- either too much or too little**



**Try moving bedtime to a later time, 1-2 hours, to push sleep cycles out further.**

**Record words of encouragement, things the child can say to themselves when they awake to self soothe.**

“My room is a safe place. I am safe.”

**Use a behavior chart**

Break down bed time routine, self-soothing into smaller more manageable chunks in which patient could earn smaller rewards for attempting behaviors (i.e., can earn a total of 30 minutes extra screen time the next day, gets 2 minutes for listening to recording of script); see samples.

**Place a white noise machine inside room.**

**Watch guided imagery on youtube prior to bed or if awoken**





# NEED MORE ASSISTANCE?

## Contact your psychosocial team!

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