



What to do when an adult is being impatient with a child in public.

***No one person can do everything,
but everyone can do something,
and together we can create change for the better.***

When approaching an adult who is being impatient with a child, **it is important to not make any assumptions and/or judgments about what you are observing.** The situation may not be what it appears to be. Approach them calmly and with an attitude of genuinely wanting to help.

- “Looks like you’re having a rough day. Would you like some help?”
- “Children can wear you out, can’t they? Is there anything I can do to help?”
- “My child used to get upset like that.”
- “Is he tired? Does he need a nap?”
- “Looks like your little boy is giving you a hard time.” Try to relieve tension and perhaps open communication.
- “My son behaves like that sometimes, and I . . .”
- Praise the child and parent at first opportunity.
- Find something positive to say about the child to the parent. “Your child is beautiful,” or “What pretty hair she has.”
- Sympathize with the parent. “Isn’t it amazing how children think they can get what they want by kicking and screaming?”
- Strike up a conversation with the adult. See if you can redirect his/her attention away from the child.
- If the child is having a difficult time, divert the child’s attention by engaging him in conversation.
- If you are concerned about the physical safety of the child, alert the store manager.
- If the child is in danger, offer assistance. For example, if the child was left unattended in a grocery cart, stand by the child until the parent returns.

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Adapted from Virginia Child Abuse Prevention Month Coalition

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What is Child Abuse and Neglect?

[RCW 26-44-020 \(12\)](#) defines abuse and neglect as injury, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, negligent treatment or maltreatment of a child by any person under circumstances which indicate that the child's health, welfare, and safety is harmed. Abuse and neglect does NOT include the physical discipline of a child as defined in [RCW 9A.16.100](#).

Recognizing Child Abuse and Neglect: Signs and Symptoms

The first step in helping abused or neglected children is learning to recognize the signs of child abuse and neglect. The presence of a single sign does not prove child abuse is occurring in a family; however, when these signs appear repeatedly or in combination you should take a closer look at the situation and consider the possibility of child abuse.

The following signs may signal the presence of child abuse or neglect.

The Child:

Shows sudden changes in behavior or school performance.

Has not received help for physical or medical problems brought to the parents' attention.

Has learning problems (or difficulty concentrating) that cannot be attributed to specific physical or psychological causes.

Is always watchful, as though preparing for something bad to happen.

Lacks adult supervision.

Is overly compliant, passive, or withdrawn.

Comes to school or other activities early, stays late, and does not want to go home.

The Parent:

Shows little concern for the child.

Denies the existence of—or blames the child for—the child's problems in school or at home.

Asks teachers or other caretakers to use harsh physical discipline if the child misbehaves.

Sees the child as entirely bad, worthless, or burdensome.

Demands a level of physical or academic performance the child cannot achieve.

Looks primarily to the child for care, attention, and satisfaction of emotional needs.

The Parent and Child:

Rarely touch or look at each other.

Consider their relationship entirely negative.

State that they do not like each other.

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