



A GUIDE TO UMBRELLA PARENTING

ACHIEVING STRESS-FREE BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

Often the things we want our children to change are actually normal behaviours for their age and the concern is actually the frequency that the behaviour is happening.

Let me share a personal example: in our house, we are working on decreasing the frequency that squabbles happen between the kids over silly things, a behaviour that definitely pushes my buttons. We all know that consistency is essential for success, but following through on every infraction is a recipe for parenting exhaustion. On top of that, it's unrealistic to expect siblings to be conflict-free. When we expect kids to reduce these kinds of behaviours to zero we actually give them the message that we expect perfection from them, a message that often leads to anxiety and self-doubt. A parenting conundrum!

Parenting from the umbrella perspective is about helping our children accept and navigate the imperfections of life. It's about building the skills they will need to cope with challenge, not eliminating the challenges.

Here's a fresh take on changing behaviour that allows you to follow through every time but drastically reduces stress on both you and your child.

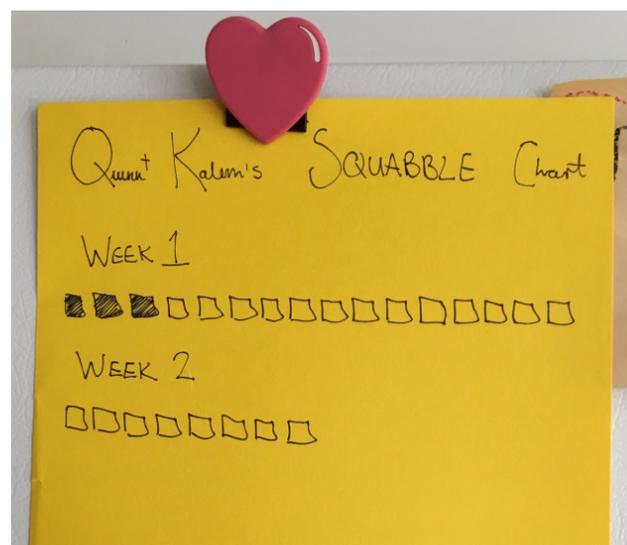
STEP 1.

Discuss with your child a reasonable number of times for the chosen behaviour to occur in the first week of this challenge. This number should be achievable for the child. (Bigger than the ultimate goal you would like to see, but smaller than the current frequency the behaviour is happening).

Explain that the change is something you are going to work towards over time and that you don't expect them to be perfect. You do, however, expect them to try.

STEP 2.

Create a chart for the fridge with the number of boxes your child has estimated.



STEP 3.

Decide on something fun to do at the end of the week if all of the boxes haven't been coloured in.

STEP 4.

When the behaviour happens, keep your cool and simply colour in a box. The goal is to make it through the week without colouring all the boxes.

Remember to give your child a little bit of time for problem solving the behaviour before you colour in a box. In the example of sibling rivalry, I wouldn't colour in a box if the kids can work out the problem themselves in a healthy way, without me stepping in. This helps them practice their conflict resolution skills.

STEP 5.

At the end of the week, celebrate the success and make the next week a bit more challenging by reducing the number of boxes based on how they did that week. This will keep them engaged in the task. Think Goldilocks - not too hard, not too easy.... just right.

