

Mrs Dowdell's Parenting Pointers

Tired and emotional

Let's face it, we all have times when we get tired and emotional and children are no exception. As the end of term approaches, our children (let alone parents and staff!) are often beginning to flag and how we support them can either help or hinder. Here are some thoughts ...



Firstly, are they getting enough sleep? As a rough guideline, children aged 4-5 need 10 to 11 hours sleep per night and children over 6 need 9½ to 10 hours sleep a night. Some children need more than this, others can manage on less, but it's helpful to think about whether our children are going to bed at a reasonable time. Having good bedtime routines can really help here. Have the routines slipped a bit lately? Do you need any help or advice in getting back into good sleep habits?

Secondly, it really helps to remind ourselves of how tired they might be. School is hopefully lots of fun but it's hard work too. Every day we are encouraging children out of their comfort zones as we stretch them and help them to learn new things. They are negotiating friendships and learning how to interact with the world. Often our children can hang on in there and behave well for their teachers, but when they get home it's all too much and parents often bear the brunt of emotional outbursts.

When we think about it, we can all recognise that even as adults we don't always behave rationally or appropriately when we are tired. Often what we need is someone to listen to us and accept us and love us, even when we're being cranky. Our children are no different. Why not try giving them some space to calm down? Let them talk if they want to; let them shout if they want to. Maybe they just need a hug, maybe they'd rather you just went away and left them alone. What I have learnt from my own experience of parenting, is that when tired children wind up tired parents, no one is going to win. Somebody has to be the grown up and unfortunately that means us!



Being tired doesn't excuse bad behaviour. Sometimes they will go too far and we may have to enforce a consequence. We need to slow down enough to recognise what might be going on. Are they worried about changing classes or schools? Have they fallen out with a friend? Are they just worn out and fed up with being "good"? If we can learn to be better at empathising with our children, sometimes we can prevent things from escalating. Our instinct is often that we want to fix things for them but sometimes they just need to feel heard. It's not helpful to discipline children for expressing strong emotions, (as long as they haven't hurt themselves or others or broken anything) in fact it's really helpful to encourage children to talk out their feelings. We can all get tired and emotional, so for these last few weeks of term, shall we all agree to be kind to each other?

Can I help? Please email me at parenting@foundrylanepriamry.co.uk and we can arrange to chat some more.