

RAISING YOUR SPIRITED CHILD

Lesson #2 Intensity

Introduction

<p>Introduce Topic</p>	<p>Intensity is the driving force behind a spirited child's strong responses. Cool kids may fuss or fidget when they are hungry or tired, but spirited kids are likely to shriek or lose control. Many people feel that cool kids react with less intensity because their parents are better or more effective, when, in fact, their physiological stress mechanisms are less easily activated.</p> <p>Spirited children don't react more intensely to embarrass or anger their parents, but because their body's physiological reactions are higher than those of cool kids. Stress hormones are produced as a result of these responses causing them to experience more physical stress. Intense people don't choose to produce more stress hormones or react so strongly. It happens automatically.</p>
<p>Demonstrate (Optional)</p>	<p>Intense vs. Cool Kids - Vinegar and Soda Volcano Analogy (See pgs. 88-90 of Raising Your Spirited Child Workbook)</p>

Identifying Cues

<p>Discuss</p> <p>Ask participants to identify cues that indicate their child's intensity is rising. (List on flipchart)</p> <p>List additional examples. (see pg. 92 Raising Your Spirited Child workbook for more cues)</p> <p>Ask participants to list situations or patterns where their child's intensity increases.</p>	<p>There are subtle, nonverbal cues that parents and caregivers can learn to pick up. These cues can inform you that your child's level of intensity is rising. By learning to identify these cues early on, you can take preventive actions before your child becomes overwhelmed and has a full-blown meltdown.</p> <p>What behavior do you see before your child loses it?</p> <table data-bbox="576 1554 1429 1701"> <tr> <td>gets louder</td> <td>becomes sarcastic</td> <td>becomes quiet</td> </tr> <tr> <td>becomes bossy</td> <td>swears</td> <td>clings</td> </tr> <tr> <td>becomes sassy</td> <td>whines</td> <td>indecisive</td> </tr> <tr> <td>gets grumpy</td> <td>becomes wild</td> <td>flops on floor</td> </tr> </table> <p>What situations cause your child's intensity to rise? Do you recognize any patterns?</p>	gets louder	becomes sarcastic	becomes quiet	becomes bossy	swears	clings	becomes sassy	whines	indecisive	gets grumpy	becomes wild	flops on floor
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Discuss	<p>As you catch the cues that lead to rising intensity, describe or tell your child what you see. Our goal is to teach them to catch their own growing intensity and rely on their inner control to calm themselves rather than our external control.</p> <p>Children need to learn to express their strong reactions with words rather than actions. If they can tell us they are angry, they won't have to kick us to get their message across.</p> <p>We need to help children understand their intensity and feel good about it. Ignoring intensity does not make it go away.</p> <p>Remember, you can't teach kids new words or skills when they are reacting intensely or losing control. You need to wait until they have calmed down and the incident has passed. Then you can point out to them what you saw and how they might handle it differently if it happens again.</p>
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Effective Strategies For Managing Intensity

Discuss	<p>We often add to the level of our children's intensity by trying to tire them out. Spirited kids need soothing or calming activities to help them reduce their intensity and regain control.</p> <p>Strategies:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Exercise <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lowers blood pressure and resting heart rate ▪ Effective in managing intensity in parents and kids 2. Repetitive motion (especially of the jaw) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Young children – sucking (bottle, pacifier, thumb); swinging, rocking, riding a rocking horse, riding in a baby carrier ▪ Older children and adults – drinking from a straw, chewing gum, swinging, rocking, jumping rope, going for a walk 3. Deep breathing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tend to hyperventilate or hold breath when intensity rises ▪ Teach children to use deep breathing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - blow bubbles - pretend to blow out candles on birthday cake - count to ten 4. Humor <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Not sarcasm or ridicule ▪ Do the unexpected <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - silly response - different voice - use funny mask or puppet
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<p>Ask participants for any additional strategies that they use that haven't been discussed.</p>	<p>5. Change the Scene or Activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The key to changing the scene is to momentarily distract and disconnect from the source of intensity ▪ Encourage sensory activities to diffuse intense feelings. Spirited kids are very sensual. Using their senses calms them. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - play-doh or silly putty - back scratches or massage - infant massage - dim lights in the room - sensory table or bucket filled with water, sand, salt, oatmeal, cornmeal - reading - dress up (imagination) - water <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - bath - play in sink - paint with water - cool, wet washcloth - play in wading pool <p>NOTE: No TV. Spirited kids absorb the stimulation and become wilder the longer they watch.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Time-out <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - not as a punishment - purpose is to regain control - choose a quiet, comfortable spot (go with them, talk softly, rub their back) - When time-out is provided as an opportunity to pull out of the action to rest and relax rather than a punishment to endure, children can feel comfortable taking a break. - they will eventually learn to calm themselves
<p>Activity</p>	<p>Select one high-intensity time in your day. Plan soothing activities/strategies you can do before the situation. Plan steps you can take if the intensity starts to rise.</p>

Dealing With Your Own Intensity

<p>Discuss</p>	<p>Parents need to recognize and deal with their own intensity before we can help our kids deal with theirs.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Keep breathing (our brains need the oxygen) 2. Ask for help 3. Step away from it (“I love you too much to argue.”) 4. If you need to yell, make it healthy (save for big crisis – no words)
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Summarize	<p>The strong and immediate reactions of the spirited child are a result of the intense physiological response to stress. Its potential to create chaos makes intensity one of the most challenging temperamental traits to manage effectively.</p> <p>Spirited kids need soothing or calming activities to help them reduce their intensity and regain control.</p>
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