

HANDOUT #6: PARENT TIP SHEET: DOS AND DON'TS TO MANAGE ESCALATED BEHAVIORS

STEPS to do in the middle of an escalation:

- **Safety**—Prioritize the safety of people, pets, and property.
- **Tone of voice**—Talk to yourself with positive calming messages and deep breathing. Talk to the child in a “low and slow” voice.
- **Empathy & validation**—Out loud for the child’s overwhelming feelings.
- **Positive reinforcement**—During an escalation. Think of how a coach encourages in the middle of a game or match, using simple, clear language of what to do at key moments. But use a calmer voice than a coach!
 - Give concrete directions, such as “We are going to stay in this room right now,” “Here, squeeze these stress balls as hard as you can,” or “Go scream as loud as you need to in the garage.”
- **Support**—How can you use your Safety and Support plan?
 - When possible, be thoughtful about whether you are the best person to keep handling this situation, whether you need to get space for yourself, or whether another person may be more calming at this moment.

What NOT to do:

- **Don’t** yell or mimic the child’s behaviors.
- **Don’t** escalate the child, yourself, or the situation. This includes trying to give consequences in these moments. Remember the Three Rs- first you need to help the child calm (Regulate), feel connected to you (Relate), and then finally Reason.
- **Don’t** blame or shame yourself or the child.
- **Avoid** power struggles with the child, like insisting they follow a particular rule during these moments.

