



Shoalhaven Managing Children Program (SMCP)

9. Preventing problems before they occur

As the old saying goes, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. It's much easier to prevent misbehaviour than to try to calm your child down and get things back onto an even keel after the outburst occurs. Some useful strategies are:

Planning and Preparation. If a particular situation (e.g. going to the shopping centre, visiting family and friends) is a problem, you can plan ahead to manage it. You can do this by:

- planning around nap times to avoid major activities with a tired child or one who has just woken up
- organising things for your child to do at this time (e.g. take snacks, your child's favourite toys etc.)
- involving your child in the task by giving things to do to help you with chores like cleaning, hanging out the washing, or shopping
- organising your own time to avoid the problem (e.g. shop or do housework while your child is at preschool so you have time for your child when he or she comes home).

Setting the Scene. This means arranging or simplifying things to be more manageable for you and your children, e.g.:

- "childproofing" the house – putting precious or breakable things (or "special" toys that may cause fights) out of harm's way, having secure fences, door locks and baby barriers, fitting safety plugs in power points, putting childproof locks on cupboards, having fire guards around heaters, etc.
- limiting the number of friends your child can have around at one time
- giving your child simple *effective instructions* (**See Tip 12 - Changing problem behaviour 1: Give effective instructions**) one at a time
- If your children are old enough, explaining what's going to happen so they don't get taken by surprise (e.g. "Grandma is coming round to look after you today because I have to go to the doctor and it's boring in the doctor's waiting room, so you can have more fun here playing with Grandma." (Make sure your explanation is part of an effective instruction.)