

# section

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Strengthening Family Relationships  
Part 1

# Strengthening Family Relationships

## part one

### What to Expect From a Child With Neurofibromatosis

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Children with neurofibromatosis (NF) have a legitimate medical condition that can change their ability to learn and regulate their behavior. It is important for parents to set realistic expectations that consider their child's disability and age.

#### Children with NF

- can improve their behavior with the assistance of effective parenting strategies and interventions
- should be expected to make gradual rather than rapid behavior progress
- will respond more favorably to supportive and positive discipline strategies than to rejecting or punitive discipline strategies
- have the same need and desire as other children to gain acceptance from others

### Internal Versus External Control

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Deficits in executive functioning can undermine a child's ability to use *internal* control to regulate behavior, as he or she can lack an internal management system.

Because of this lack of internal control, the behavior of children with executive function deficits is more *externally* controlled. This makes an external management system very helpful in most cases. Behavior can be controlled by the conditions of a child's environment and by the development of an immediate reward system.

# strategies

## Two Management Strategies for Behavior Problems

There are many different types of strategies for helping parents manage their child's behavioral issues. Two of the primary management strategies are called *proactive* and *reactive*. A parent can consider both strategies and select the one that might prove most effective for his or her child.

### Proactive Strategies: To Prevent a Behavior

- Proactive interventions are set before the behavior occurs
- These interventions are designed to reduce the occurrence of bad behavior

### Reactive Strategies: To Respond to a Behavior

- Reactive interventions are implemented after the behavior occurs
- These interventions use rewards to encourage good behavior or consequences to discourage bad behavior

proactive  
reactive

## house rules

### Proactive Strategies: House Rules

Above all, setting up clear daily routines is one of the first and best proactive strategies for managing behavior problems. The structure created by a routine provides comfort to a child with executive function deficits, helping to reduce stress and keep emotions in control. For routines to be effective, it is important to establish house rules that every member of the family follows.

House rules provide clear behavioral expectations for the child and help to

- ✓ set and clarify behavioral limits and/or boundaries
- ✓ emphasize the importance of specific parental expectations
- ✓ make sure that there is consensus in the family about the house rules

The following tips can help you institute house rules and guidelines to support your child's behavior:

- Hold a family meeting to “brainstorm” a list of potential house rules
- Select three to five rules from the list to be the house rules
- Establish rewards and consequences for compliance or violation of the rules
- Post the rules on charts that can be easily read
- Remember to explain the rules to the child
- Each week, target a rule for emphasis
- Highlight or circle the rules on the chart and pay added attention to compliance with or violations of this rule
- Each night, review examples of instances in which your child complied with or violated a rule

State the house rules in specific, objective language

For example,



do not say,  
“Be responsible”



say,  
“Put your dishes in the dishwasher”

## tips and tools

### Helping Your Child to Develop Organizational Strategies

To follow certain rules, such as keeping his or her bedroom clean, your child may need help in understanding how to tackle the task.

Here are a few tips to help you help your child:

Designate a spot  
for every item



Have a permanent spot for your child's backpack, wallet or purse, phone, and planner, and check these items every evening before bed



Label bins and drawers



Set up a closet system with hooks

Schedule clean-up



- Photograph the expected results
- Decide the frequency and timing with your teen
- Give reminders of when the clean-up day is approaching

Link room clean-up to privileges.



Print this page for your child!

## tips and tools

### Here Is an Idea! Try a Chore Card

#### Cleaning up Your Bedroom

Check off the chores you complete.



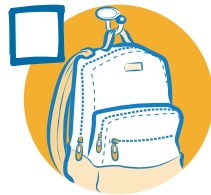
Pick up your toys and place them on the toy shelf



Pick up dirty clothes and put them in the hamper



Place your shoes on the shoe rack in the closet



Place your backpack on the backpack hook



Group your school papers on the desk into piles



Straighten the covers on the bed



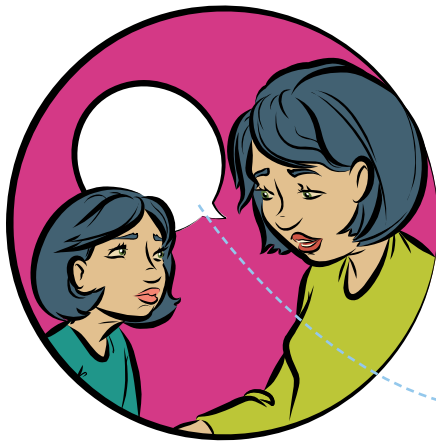
Take wet towels to the bathroom and hang them on the towel hook

## time management

### Helping Your Child to Develop Time Management Strategies

Here are a few tips and tricks that you can use to help your child enhance his or her time management skills:

- Establish daily routines, and consider making simple check-off cards or charts for routines that are repetitive, such as cleaning the bedroom or getting ready for school in the morning
- Schedule chores for older children with a set time for completion
- Give notice and time frames



My car leaves at 7:00 AM.  
If you want a ride to school  
instead of riding the bus, be at  
the door at 6:55 AM.

- Create a daily reminder list with time frames and sticky notes
- Use timers, watches, and visual aids to teach time management
- Place a large at-a-glance calendar in a noticeable place
  - Work actively with your child to get into the habit of planning ahead



Print this page for your child!

## strategies

- Incorporate your child's participation in the preparation of family plans, such as a family vacation, so that he or she gets used to seeing how the logistics of outings come together
- Embrace the use of a written planner for school and personal use
  - Example: the planner could be issued by the school, computer generated, or an electronic device

Example for a younger child:

-  1 Get out of bed when the alarm goes off
-  2 Put on clothes that are laid out
-  3 Come to breakfast when Mom calls
-  4 Brush your teeth
-  5 Go to the school bag hook by the back door to put on your shoes
-  6 Get your backpack off the hook for school
-  7 Leave for school



## strategies

Example for an older child:

### Develop a schedule for completing a task

Working backward from the completion date, mark the milestones on a calendar that outline the steps needed to complete the a project, such as writing a report for school.



Start here



notes

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activity to share with your child

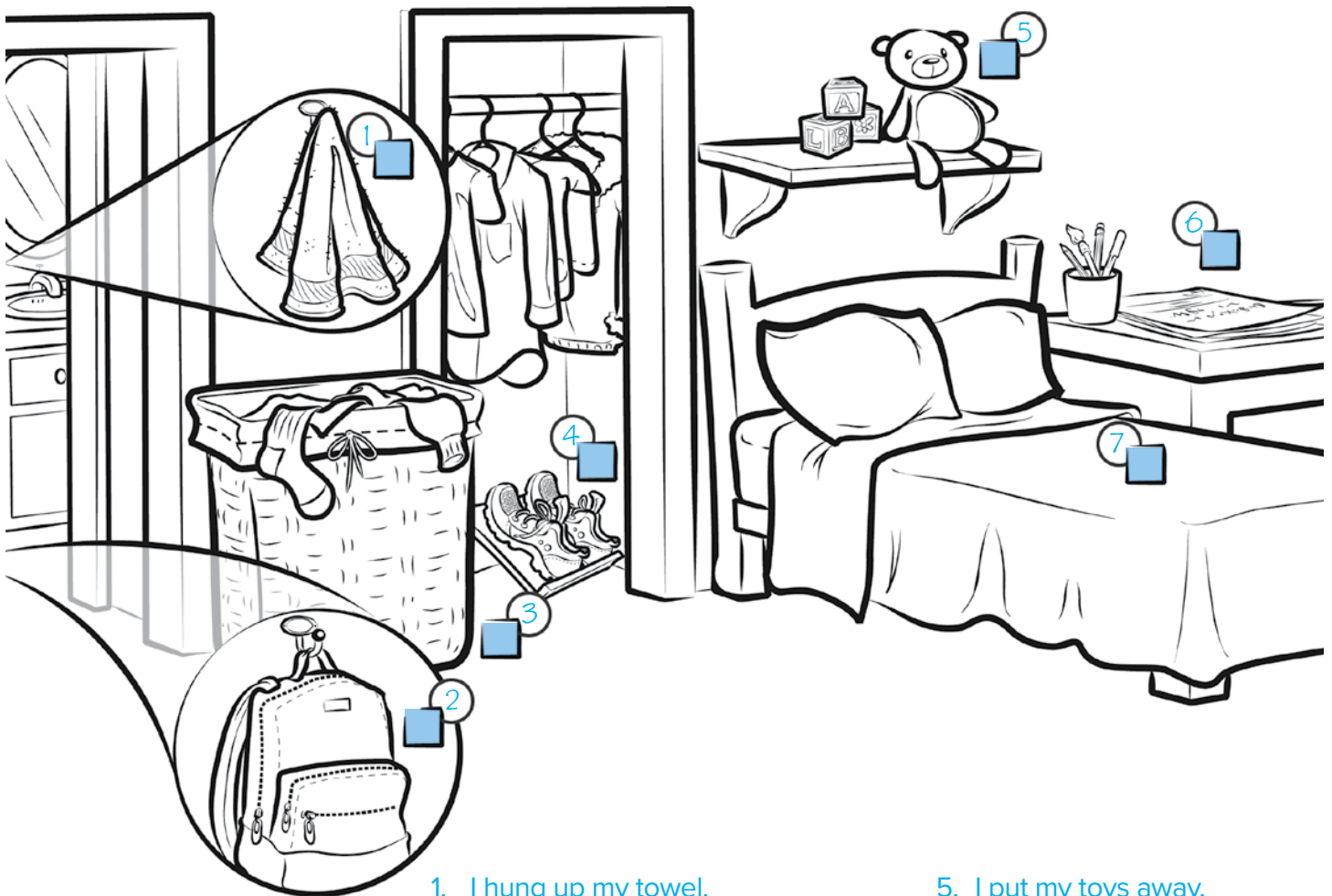
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## tidy up your room

Moxie likes keeping her room clean, and so should you. Keep this checklist in your room in a place where you will see it. Use it to make sure that your room is clean every day.



1. I hung up my towel.
2. I put my backpack in its place.
3. I put my dirty clothes in the hamper.
4. I put my shoes away.
5. I put my toys away.
6. I tidied up my school papers.
7. I made my bed.