

***Calming the Storm:
Developmental Realities and Guidance Techniques for Common Challenging Behaviors in Child Care***

Aggressiveness: Developmental Reality

Infants often pat others, pull hair, and throw things as they learn cause and effect.

Preschoolers:

- Wear emotions on their sleeves and express them strongly. They react to insecurities, change in routine.
- Are egocentric. They often see things only from their point of view. Frustration results when others aren't seeing things their way. "Why aren't you doing what I want? It's only logical!"
- Assert their independence. They are growing big and it seems reasonable to them to get what they want. Offer choices you can live with.
- Medical reasons: anxiety, pain, trauma, cognitive disorders, ADHD, conduct disorders, epilepsy, and others

Aggressiveness: Guidance Techniques

Infants and Toddlers:

- When an infant throws or hits, it's not considered an aggressive behavior, simply say "ouch, that hurts" and redirect them.
- Place yourself between the toddler and the other child. Attend to the injured first. Ask them if they are okay, check for injury.
- Turn to the aggressor, tell them in a firm voice "I can see that you're frustrated/mad but I won't let you hit, hitting hurts."
 - "That's not your toy, that's Billy's toy. Let's find you a toy."
 - "When Billy's done, you can play with it next."
- Redirect to another area or activity. Typically, once children gain communication skills, aggressive behavior diminishes.
- Teach ASL signs to older infants and toddlers to lessen frustration.
- Model appropriate behavior (gentle touch)
- Identify emotions (you seem mad, frustrated, sad, happy)
- Start early with problem solving behaviors (Next?)

When toddlers and young preschoolers are stressed, (divorce, move, new baby, routine change) they can become frustrated and aggressive. Provide extra hugs and consistent routine during those times.

Preschoolers:

- Place yourself between the children. Attend to the injured first, comfort them, and administer first aid, if necessary.
- Ask the child who is aggressive to step back and have a break while you are helping the injured.
- Tell child what you want to them to do when they have a problem:
 - Validate: "I can see that you're frustrated."
 - State Rules: It's not okay to hit and I won't let you hit others in our child care.
 - Listen: Why are you upset?
 - Suggest Solutions/Give Words: What is another way to solve this problem? Let's try it."
 - Redirect to a quiet area if child is still upset.
 - Remind child to come to you for help if they feel like they might hit, push, etc.
 - Role play what to do to practice.

Biting: Developmental Reality

Infants and toddlers:

- Unable to communicate emotions effectively using words.
- Lack self-control
- Bite due to overstimulation, fear, tiredness, frustration
- Teething pain

Preschoolers: While they are learning new words to assist in communication, they may resort to biting when their words fail them.

Biting: Guidance Techniques

- When an infant or toddler bites, tell him calmly and firmly, “No biting, biting hurts” redirect to another area or another toy
- Comfort child who was bitten, apply first aid as necessary
- When a preschooler bites, place yourself between the biter and injured, get down to eye level and say firmly and calmly, “No biting, biting hurts.” Suggest the biter take deep breaths to calm down.
- After helping the injured, talk to the biter about what they could have done differently, give words to use to ask for help from adults, instead of hurting others.
- Redirect child to a quiet activity and watch closely to prevent further incidents.

Recurrent Biting: See Handout on www.stacyboysen.weebly.com

If you have a child biting often:

- shadow the child and practice/role play positive behavior
- document incidents and attempts
- if you go somewhere, the child goes with you
- praise the behaviors you want to see
- fill the bucket

Defiance: Developmental Reality

Toddlers are trying out new independence and assertiveness!

- They say no and don’t even mean it.
- Toddlers live in the moment! Change is challenging...especially when it wasn’t their idea.
- Lack verbal and impulse control to express themselves politely often.

Preschoolers are trying to choose their own adventure.

- Are learning new problem solving skills to plead their cases.
- Are egocentric and only see their way of looking at things.
- Can take a while to switch gears and activities

Defiance: Guidance Techniques

- It’s natural to try and decide things at these ages. Children do not get to make many choices for themselves. Being defiant is making a choice.
- Avoid power struggles by staying calm.
- Offer choices: “would you like to clean up slow like a turtle or fast like a bunny?”
- Do a countdown, make a race,
- “When you hang up your coat, then we’ll have breakfast” (note, not if!)
- Acknowledge feelings: “I know you want to keep playing, but it’s time to go inside for lunch.”
- “When you’re ready to join the group, please hand up your coat and come in.”

Tantrums: Developmental Reality

At this age, kids are just working through limits and what they can control and can’t. It’s a tough reality when they find out that they aren’t the center of the universe and that’s what they’re learning right now at these ages.

They don’t get to make a lot of choices, so I try to offer choices that I can live with when I can, so that when they can’t have a choice, they don’t feel like the whole world is against them all the time. Like want to clean up now, or after lunch? Want to read this book or that one? Bananas or Applesauce? This sets the ground work for not freaking out if they feel like they don’t ever get their way. We’re still in control, but they don’t know it.

Tantrums: Guidance Techniques

- When meltdowns happen, take your emotions out of it...this is not your battle. It belongs to the child.
- Provide a quiet place for children to unwind and de-stress.
- Validate their feelings: "I can see you're really sad/mad!" "What a bummer!" "That feels terrible, doesn't it?" Sometimes, it helps to meet them in them in their energy level.
- Give time to work out feelings/disappointment: "Can I give you a hug? No? We'll why don't you take some time over here. I know it's tough. When you feel ready, come join us."

Hyperactivity: Developmental Reality

- Children come wired in a variety of temperament and intensity levels.
- Healthy children are naturally active and curious.
- They are continually developing and want to practice skills such as running and jumping.
- Children are impulsive and have short memories. The forget rules (walking inside).
- For preschoolers, learning requires movement.
- Children have short attention spans; 10-15 minutes is a long time for children to focus.
- Medical reasons: Allergies, learning disabilities, ADHD, depression, hypoglycemia, thyroid issues, vision and hearing disabilities, anemia, sleep issues and others

Hyperactivity: Guidance Techniques

- Work with them not against them, make movement a major part of your day.
- Notice when they are getting antsy and change activities.
- Encourage persistence when children get discouraged, praise "taking your time."
- Suggest activities that might be interesting and mind engaging to them, puzzles, table toys.
- Designate active spaces and plan large motor games (kicking, throwing balls, obstacle courses)
- Use chants, songs, to calm children and encourage them to relax.
- Invite children to take deep breaths, practice progressive muscle relaxation, use a sound machine during rest periods.

Separation Anxiety: Developmental Reality

- Separation anxiety may begin as early as 6 months of age.
- Level may vary by temperament.
- Lack verbal skills to express feelings.
- Older children experiencing S.A. may be reacting to a change in their lives: divorce, marital issues, new baby, moving.
- As imaginations increase, fears may become real, triggering anxiety.

Guidance Techniques:

- Hold and comfort infants, singing, talking, show toys.
- Sit next to the child if they don't want to be held.
- Acknowledge feelings "You are sad that your mom left"
- Reassure that parents will return.
- Ask preschoolers if they'd like to talk, sit next to them.
- Ask if a hug would make them feel better.
- Have parents bring family pictures in to comfort child.
- Give the child time to adjust to the transition.
- Redirect to activities that you know they enjoy.
- Don't encourage the family member to sneak away, stick to a routine.
- Don't take it personally.

The Best Defense is a Good Offense!

Prevention Steps for Child Care Programs: Plan, Practice, Promote!

Plan: Identify the behaviors you want to see, post them in your program (positive language with both words and pictures).

Practice: Short “how-to” sessions, think “on-the-job” training, demonstrations, frequent reminders

Promote: Acknowledge *anything* positive to get started, highlight actions to promote self-esteem and good behavior, kids who feel good about themselves behave better. Focus on what TO do, instead of what NOT to do. (Look! You used your walking feet the whole time!, You helped your friend, that was nice!., You took turns, thank you!)

TACSEI Pyramid Model for Supporting Social/Emotional Competence:

1. Build Positive Relationships Children and Families
2. Create a Supportive Environment
3. Practice Pro-Social Behaviors
4. Individualized Intervention

Questions to discuss with parents at conferences:

Using your documentation notes: 1. Identify the behavior 2. When and where does it occur? How often? Is there a specific person/toy involved (do not reveal names, confidentiality is important!)

3. Is there a disability to consider? How about a stressful situation/change at home or child care?

4. What have we tried so far? What has worked? What hasn't worked?

5. What do we think the behavior might mean? What need does it meet? Skill?

6. What are this child's strengths, and can we use them to build a plan?

7. What would we like to try next?

8. What is the provider's role? What is the family's role?

8. Set a meeting time to review.

Resources:

Coping Skills 4 Kids: http://www.copingskills4kids.net/Home_Page.html

Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention for Young Children (TACSEI):

http://challengingbehavior.fmhi.usf.edu/do/resources/teaching_tools/ttyc.htm

Teaching Tools for Young Children:

http://challengingbehavior.fmhi.usf.edu/do/resources/teaching_tools/ttyc_toc.htm

Zero to Three: <http://www.zerotothree.org/child-development/challenging-behavior/>

PBS: http://www.pbs.org/parents/inclusivecommunities/challenging_behavior4.html