

NORTH CAROLINA CHILD CARE HEALTH AND SAFETY BULLETIN

NORTH CAROLINA CHILD CARE HEALTH AND SAFETY RESOURCE CENTER

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About The Resource Center

The NC Child Care Health and Safety Resource Center is a project of the Department of Maternal and Child Health, School of Public Health, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Funding for the Resource Center originates with the Maternal and Child Health Title V Block Grant of USDHHS's Health Resources and Services Administration/Maternal and Child Health Bureau, awarded to the University under a contract from the Division of Public Health, NCDHHS.

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Challenging Behaviors

Many children engage in challenging behavior at different times during their early development. This is normal, usually short-term, and decreases with age with appropriate guidance. There are many reasons challenging behaviors occur. For caregivers, it is important to maintain a safe, healthy and caring environment while these concerns are being addressed. Behavior guidance is one of the most interesting, challenging, and sometimes frustrating aspects of child care, but also one of the most important. Guidance strategies used by parents, caregivers, and teachers have a significant impact on a child's sense of self, both now and in the future.

From time to time teachers and caregivers struggle with behaviors and actions of children in their care. While there is no magic formula that works in all situations, it is important to know that a child's behavior occurs for a reason. Difficult behaviors are usually a reaction to difficult situations in a child's life. Five basic issues can help explain the child's reaction. By understanding these issues, adults can think about what is happening from the child's perspective and respond appropriately. The positive outcomes that come from this approach, for both caregiver and child, help to create an atmosphere that supports and nurtures the child.

1. Is this a developmental stage?
During infancy and early childhood, behavior problems may occur at the onset of a new developmental stage.



The challenges faced by the child may bring about a period of negative and undesirable behavior. Feeding and sleeping problems may also occur. A child's emerging sense of independence during the second year is an example of a developmental change that can trigger challenging behavior. Being aware of the challenge a child is facing can help a caregiver or parent be patient and loving in their responses. Giving a child choices, using humor, and being firm but supportive is helpful to a child working through these transitions.

2. Is this an individual or temperamental difference?

The root of challenging behaviors may be individual differences. All children the same age do not all act the same way. Biological factors such as visual impairments, tactile sensitivities, auditory and speech disorders, or motor disabilities may be contributing to the behavior. Or it may be styles of temperament such as shyness, adaptability, moodiness, or inflexibility that account for the differences in



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behavior. Learning more about temperament traits and recognizing them helps a caregiver modify situations that can bring about challenging behavior.

3. Is the environment causing the behavior?

The setting the child is in could contribute to the challenging behavior. Environmental conditions may frustrate, over stimulate or bore a child. An overcrowded or loud classroom can be over stimulating. A dimly lit, stuffy or too quiet setting may not provide enough stimulus for a child. Too few toys or a limited variety may lead to frustration and battling for use of toys. A lack of opportunity for active play, indoors and outdoors, may result in a child finding inappropriate ways to expend energy. Take an objective look at the child care setting and consider if changing the schedule, introducing new materials, or rearranging the classroom might reduce inappropriate behavior.

4. Has the child learned the skill?

As children learn about the people and the world around them, they are constantly faced with unfamiliar territories or situations. Perhaps visiting a friend for the first time or moving to a new classroom with a different set-up, puts a child off balance. Learning to share a toy, to wait your turn, or to play a game, can also be unsettling. When a child does not understand what is expected, it is up to caregivers or parents to calmly explain how things will work in the new situation. It is helpful to say how other children might react if, for example, the child doesn't follow the rules for taking turns with toys. Patiently repeating the message will help and is usually needed because children rarely learn a desired response on the first try.

5. Are emotional needs unmet?

The most difficult behaviors to interpret are those resulting from unmet emotional needs. Often, in these situations, a child's behavior has a

particularly driven quality about it, and the behavior occurs with regular frequency in all settings.

In these situations, incidences of challenging behavior may continue, and the child may not readily respond to adult guidance. For these children, the challenging behavior may result in injury to themselves or to others, may cause damage to the physical environment, may interfere with the development of new skills, and may socially isolate the child. It is appropriate in this situation to seek out an assessment by a trained professional. Careful observation and reflection can provide information that can be used by parents and caregivers to help guide their responses. Responding with quiet firmness and patience can be critical to the future mental health of children with unresolved emotional needs.

When caregivers and parents guide children to appropriate behavior, it helps children manage themselves and reduces behavior problems. It provides children with both the roots of security and the wings to experience new situations with confidence. Solving problems is hard, and rarely will one quick answer correct the problem. When the caregiver understands that there are often underlying reasons for troubling behavior, then healthy solutions can be found.



References:

Division for Early Childhood (DEC), DEC Position Statement on Interventions for Challenging Behavior, Adopted April 1998, Reaffirmed June 2001, Endorsed by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), retrieved 10/30/02 from www.dec-sped.org/postions/chalbeha.html.

Reinsberg, J. "Understanding Young Children's Behavior", *Young Children*, Vol. 54, Num. 4, pp.54 – 57, July 1999.

Saifer, S. (1990). *Practical Solutions to Practically Every Problem: The Early Childhood Teacher's Manual*, Redleaf Press, St. Paul, MN.

Whelan, M. S. (2000). *But They Spit, Scratch, and Swear! The Do's and Don'ts of Behavior Guidance with School-Age Children*, A-ha! Communications, Minneapolis, MN.



Biting: A Familiar Challenging Behavior!

One out of ten toddlers and two-year-olds bites! Though biting is disturbing and potentially harmful, it is not unusual for children of this age. Parents and caregivers should discourage a child from biting from the first time it occurs. The more the parent or caregiver understands about biting and why it is occurring, the better able they are to respond appropriately.

Young children may bite for different reasons. By identifying the type of biter, the caregiver can develop appropriate discipline techniques that will help the child find more acceptable ways to handle his or her feelings.

What kind of biter are you dealing with?

The experimental biter. The experimental biter may just want to touch, smell and taste other people in order to learn more about the world. He or she may take an experimental bite at a mother's breast or a caregiver's shoulder. As one's muscles are developing, the biter needs to experiment and does not understand the consequence of his or her actions. When the biting occurs, adults should use clear signals to teach the child not to bite. "No," said sharply, is an appropriate response.

Provide children with a variety of surfaces to play on and a colorful selection of toys to stimulate their desire to experiment and learn about their world.

Biting at this stage may be a reaction to teething pain. It helps to offer children appropriate things to chew on for relief: frozen bagels, teething biscuits, or a safe teething ring.

The frustrated biter. Frustration may arise when young children have not developed the coping skills needed to handle situations where they are required to wait for a toy or attention. Keeping all children safe is crucial. When biting occurs, the caregiver should first attend the child who has been injured. The biter generally does not intend to harm the other person, and adults must react by explaining that biting hurts others and is not allowed.

It can be helpful to teach the biter appropriate language to express his or her feelings or to get what is needed. Watching for signs of frustration and praising the child when he or she communicates effectively can help prevent the bite from occurring. Look at your classroom and see if any changes can be made to provide more or different toys. Evaluate the schedule and see where more individual attention might be provided for the children.

The threatened biter. Biting may be used in self-defense when a child feels threatened. Use the same interventions mentioned above and assure both children that they are safe. Situations that may bring about this reaction are

newly separated parents, death of a grandparent or loved one, or a stay-at-home parent returning to the work force. A warm and reassuring bond with the caregiver helps the child to learn appropriate ways to communicate and react.

The power biter. For children who have a strong need for control, the response they get from biting may reinforce the behavior. The best way to handle this situation is to give the biter choices throughout the day and reinforce positive social behavior. Give the child attention when she or he is not biting so biting is not used for attention or a feeling of personal power.

Do not hit or "bite back" a child for biting. This communicates that violence is an appropriate way to handle emotion. Use a calm and thoughtful approach. Look for patterns in the biting behavior so you can be ready to intervene. Work as a team with parents to identify reasons for the child's biting and respond accordingly. Teaching children positive ways to control themselves encourages the development of confidence and self-esteem.

To read more on challenging behaviors:

Books for caregivers:

- *Challenging Behavior in Young Children: Understanding, Preventing, and Responding Effectively*, by B. Kaiser & J.S. Rasminsky.
- Kinner, Gretchen (2002) *No Biting Policy and Practice for Toddler Program*, Redleaf Press, St. Paul, MN.
- Pudney, W. and Whitehouse, E. (1996). *A Volcano In My Tummy: Helping Children to Handle Anger, a Resource Book for Parents, Caregivers, and Teachers*. New Society Publishers, Gabriola Island, BC, Canada.
- Saifer, S. (1990). *Practical Solutions to Practically Every Problem: The Early Childhood Teacher's Manual*, Redleaf Press, St. Paul, MN.
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Teaching Caring Behaviors in Groups

- In child care, plan a group time to allow each child to share and build a sense of community with his or her peers.
- Plan group rules that include sticking together, no hurts, and having fun.
- Say something positive about each child every day.
- Midday circle time can help children to regroup and will allow children to tell what they have been doing during the morning.
- Children who help plan their learning and choose their own activities will feel more in control, and they will feel more competent.
- Plan transitions. Music, finger play, and poems can be signals to change activities smoothly.
- Really listen when children speak. Seek to understand the message behind their words.

Reference:

DeBord, Karen (2000), *Childhood Aggression: Where Does It Come From? How Can It Be Managed?*
Retrieved 11/3/02 from www.nncc.org/Child.Dev/aggression.html.

Books for children:

- Bang, Molly (1999). *When Sophie gets angry—Really, really angry...* Scholastic Inc., New York.
- Sendak, Maurice (1963). *Where the wild things are.* Harper and Row, New York.
- Seuss, Dr. (1996). *My many colored days.* Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., New York.



Mark Your Calendars!

January 26-29, 2003

National Smart Start Conference
Greensboro, NC
919.821.7999

February 8, 2003

A Day for Day Care
Chapel Hill, NC

March 11-12, 2003

Healthy Child Care NC Invitational Conference
Chapel Hill, NC
1.800.246.6731



December is

National Drunk and Drugged Driving (3D)
Prevention Month

Safe Toys and Gift Month

Dec. 8 – 14 is National Hand Washing Awareness Week

Dec. 1 is World AIDS Day

January is

National Eye Care Month

National Birth Defects Prevention Month

National Children's Dental Health Month

National Volunteer Blood Donor Month

Jan. 19 – 25 is National Healthy Weight Week

February is

American Heart Month

Wise Health Consumer Month

Feb. 6 is National Girls and Women in Sports Day

Feb. 2 – 8 is Cardiac Rehabilitation Week

Feb. 2 – 8 is National Burn Awareness Week

Feb. 9 – 15 is National Child Passenger Safety Awareness Week

parent



saved

Toy Shopping

Spend Wisely on Toys

- Can the toy grow with the child? Will it still be appealing in a year or more?
- Can the child use the toy in different ways? Can it be used creatively?
- Will it help the child learn about other people, nature, or how things work?

Select Various Types of Toys

Toys affect what children learn and how they feel about themselves and others. For example, when children play with baby dolls, they are practicing what it is like to be a parent. When you select different types of toys, it helps children become well-rounded people. Here are some examples:

- Hands-on toys, rattles, squeeze toys, balls, puzzles, measuring cups, spoons, and sorting toys will encourage ideas about how things work, and will foster cooperation and problem solving.
- Books and recordings build on the child's interest in things such as animals or silly words. Bright pictures and board books are good for infants; stories, poems, finger plays, songs and nursery rhymes are good for older children. Children who are read to in their early years usually become better readers.
- Art materials such as non-toxic markers, paint, safe glue, blunt scissors, paper, and wide brushes are a must. Don't forget washable clothes for the child and you! Art fosters creativity and builds skills that lead to competency in reading and writing, and of course enhances the child's ability to see beauty in life.
- Construction items such as blocks, wood-working supplies, building sets, etc. help children learn about science, number ideas, and develop muscle strength and coordination. Children over 4 years old can safely enjoy woodworking if they have lightweight real tools, nails with large heads and soft wood – AND supervision!
- Experimental materials such as sand, water, clay, and musical instruments help children learn more about math and science.

Children learn through play. Toys can help with their work of learning, growing, and developing new skills.

Watch them concentrate as they

- figure out how things work
- pick up new words and ideas
- build strong muscles they can control
- use their imagination
- solve problems
- learn to cooperate with others.

Children do not need many toys or expensive toys. Children do need time, space, and some child and adult companionship to enjoy their toys.

Here are some ideas from the National Association for the Education of Young Children to keep in mind when selecting and purchasing toys for children.

Toy Shopping Checklist

Ask yourself these questions before you buy a toy for a child. If you answer yes to most of them, the toy is probably a good purchase.

- Is this toy safe for the child's age?
- Is the toy interesting enough for the child to play with over and over again, for several minutes or even an hour at a time?
- Is the toy well constructed? Will it stand up to lots of use?
- Does the child provide the power and imagination to operate the toy?
- Will the child feel successful when using this toy? Does it challenge the child's abilities just enough?

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- Active play equipment offers physical challenges. Climbers, swings, slides, riding toys, and balancing opportunities help children build strong muscles and develop the confidence to meet physical challenges. Make sure the challenge is appropriate to the child's abilities.
- Pretend play objects such as dolls, stuffed animals, and dress-up clothes will give children a chance to try new behaviors and use their imaginations. These toys help children understand the world and how people work together.

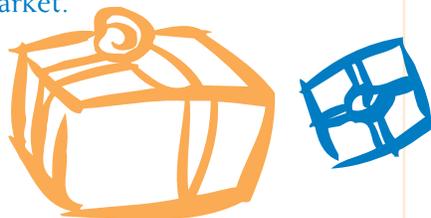
Want to know more?

American Academy of Pediatrics

www.aap.org — use search function for toys and find several good resources on selecting safe, appropriate toys.

Consumer Product Safety Commission

www.cpsc.gov — contains advice about toy selection as well as safety alerts about products on the market.



Keep the Holidays Fun and Safe!

Almost 90% of the thousands of eye injuries associated with toys and sporting equipment each year are preventable. To keep everyone safe, keep these tips in mind:

- Avoid toys that shoot or have parts that fly off.
- Inspect toys for sound construction.
- Watch for sharp edges or points.
- Avoid giving toys with small parts to young children.
- Repair or throw away damaged toys.
- Read instructions carefully and follow suggested age levels.
- Look for the letters "ASTM". This indicates that a product meets national safety standards set by the American Society for Testing and Materials.

Source: Prevent Blindness America



Product Recalls

When products are recalled, the news sometimes fails to reach parents and caregivers. Manufacturers rarely pay to advertise the news, even if the product has caused serious injury or death to children. Instead, they ask the press to get information to parents in newspapers and magazines. The information is easy to miss, and typically manufacturers retrieve only 10 – 30 percent of the units recalled.

These are some tips to help you protect your child from dangerous baby products:

- **Access the right web sites**
 - ❑ www.toy-tma.com/consumer/parents/safety/4toysafety.html
 - ❑ www.parenthoodweb.com/Library/aap_toysafety.htm
 - ❑ www.preventblindness.org/children/safetoys.html.
- **Get automatic recall notification.** To be notified automatically every time a baby product is recalled, call the CPSC at 800/638-CPSC and ask to be put on its mailing list, or sign up via its web site www.cpsc.gov.
- **Be wary of Hand-Me-Down Products** Before buying a used baby product or accepting a hand-me-down product from a friend, check with the CPSC to make sure it hasn't been recalled. A 1999 study by the CPSC found recalled products in 69 percent of second-hand stores.
- **Beware of products with dangerous track records.** Popular products like baby bath seats/rings, baby walkers, hard handled carriers and toddler beds have repeatedly proven to be dangerous. Question if you can do without these items.

For more information on product recalls go to the web page: www.kidsindanger.org/

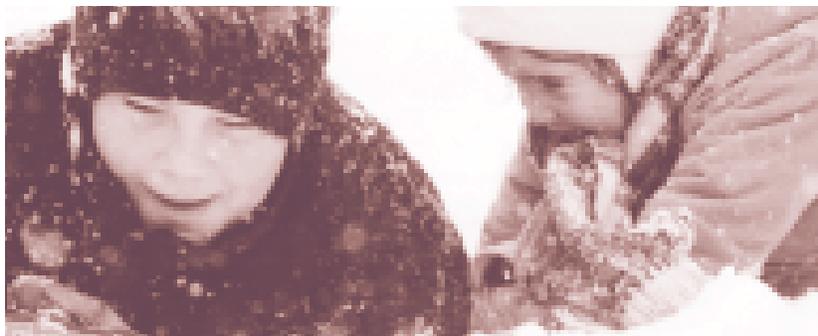




Bundle Up for Outdoors!

Too cold to go outdoors? Remember the saying, "There's no bad weather, only bad clothes!" Bundle up, dress warmly and appropriately, layer clothing, and play outdoors this winter! Getting dressed for outdoors can be a fun learning experience for children. Zipping coats, buttoning sweaters, and tying shoes will teach a child important self-help skills.

We are fortunate in North Carolina to be able to go outdoors safely year round with only a few severe weather days occurring during the year. Active play during winter months is necessary to stay healthy and to master physical skills. Rising obesity rates in young children suggest children need to be more active to help keep their weight within a healthy range. Outdoor active play is stimulating, challenging, and encourages friendships as children plan and engage in play. Exercise helps keep the children warm by burning calories. The belief that children get sick from playing outside in cold weather is false. The open air outdoors offers fresh air exchange. Because germs are not contained in a space as they are indoors, airborne illness such as colds are less likely to be transmitted outdoors. As long as children are dressed warmly, they will get sick less often than if they stay indoors. Remember to give children plenty of water when playing outside because even in winter months, children need to drink during active play.



Supervision is absolutely crucial for safety. Make sure the staff:child ratios are in compliance with standards in the outdoor environment just as they are indoors. Caregivers benefit from fresh air and exercise too and also need to dress appropriately for the weather.

Remember, the Division of Child Development requires that children in child care go outdoors every day, weather permitting (DCD Rule .0509d).

Too Cold to Go Out?

'Extreme weather conditions' may be interpreted in a number of ways. Consider the following guidelines:

- Temperatures 20 degrees or less: too cold to go outdoors.
- Temperatures 21-32 degrees: limit time outdoors to 20-30 minutes several times a day.
- Play outdoors during the warmest time of the day.
- For comfort and warmth try bundling up, engaging the children in active play, and serving warm cocoa or milk.
- Provide water for drinking. Children need to drink even in cold weather.
- In snow, protect against exposure to glare.

Activity

Brrrr – Exploring Ice.

1. On a day that promises to freeze overnight, before the children leave for the day, have them take a few containers of different sizes and shapes outside. Bring out a pitcher of water and some cups and let them put varying amounts of water in the containers. Infant and toddler teachers will have to set this up according to the ability of their children.
2. The next morning go outdoors with the children and see what happened overnight. Explore the ice – how does it feel? Did all the water turn to ice? What does the water turn to ice? What does it look like? Will it crack if tapped on? What happens to cars and trucks when you drive them on ice? Take the finger puppets ice skating. Paint the ice.
3. Extend the activity by bringing the containers inside. Show the ice to the children or have them check on them a couple of times during the next hour. Provide descriptive words for younger children. Ask the children what they are observing, what they think is happening, when they think the ice might be water again.

Ask the Resource Center

The children in my child care center are very diverse. Most are Christian, but one child is Jewish, and one child is Muslim. In addition, I have 2 children from India who are Hindus. How can I make sure these children don't feel left out during the winter holiday season?

Midwinter is a good time to celebrate the different cultural traditions within your community. Children are excited about the coming holiday. All children in your program need to feel included. One way to make sure differing cultures are honored is to invite parents to come in and share family traditions. Family members can bring books, food, songs, stories or craft activities that reflect their cultural background and seasonal rituals.

You might ask the children to talk about customs within their families.

When cultural and religious differences are embraced as positive qualities, children learn to respect their differences. In this way, children will feel included and valued. Children who may already feel isolated because of their cultural differences may begin to feel like a valued member of the group when respect is shown for their customs.

There is great cultural diversity within North Carolina.

Hanukkah is a Jewish tradition celebrating the rededication of the Temple of Jerusalem 2,000 years ago.

Los Posados, a holiday from Mexico, reenacts the story of Mary and Joseph trying to find lodging in Bethlehem.

Kwanzaa, an African American tradition, celebrates seven community principles by lighting candles each night and discussing these principles within the family circle. **Diwali**, the festival of lights, is a celebration from India symbolizing the return of the Indian God Ram.

Ramadan, a Muslim period of fasting and prayer, concludes with **Eid-ul-Fitr**, a celebration of the New Year.

Begin with the cultures found in your community and branch out to other traditions when appropriate.

Enjoy the variety!

To read more about Cultural Sensitivity around the holidays, go to:

• <http://www.naeyc.org/resources/eyly/1996/18.htm>

• <http://www.naeyc.org/resources/eyly/1998/21.htm>

• <http://www.naeyc.org/resources/eyly/1996/03.htm>



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