

Understanding Your Child's Challenging Behaviors

Your child probably has challenging behaviors from time to time. It's easy to forget that she isn't born with the social skills needed to get by in life. These are skills she learns. You help her understand the differences between right and wrong, what is acceptable behavior and what is not.

Early experiences matter

Research shows that your child's early experiences influence the connections within her brain. Every experience, positive and negative, has an effect. Chaotic, stressful, abusive and neglectful environments can play a part in her growth, development, and behavior.

Understanding development

Some of your child's behaviors occur because of her development. As your child develops she also learns to behave in "socially acceptable" ways. She develops control of her emotions and feelings by interacting with caring, loving adults in her life. She learns the appropriate social skills needed throughout life by having them modeled for her. Many challenging behaviors go away as children grow and develop.

Tips and techniques

Your child may sometime need help controlling her emotions and developing self-control. Setting goals, guiding and modeling will help her learn appropriate social skills.

- **Positive reinforcement.** Find activities that she does well. Compliment her when she helps out. She may act out to get your

attention. If she does, give her positive attention when you can. Catch her being good.

- **Transitions.** Your child may have a very difficult time moving from one activity to another. She may resist the change by acting out. If she is having difficulties with transitions, you may need to provide plenty of warning that an activity or event will be changing.
- **Consequences.** When your child misbehaves, she should know she made a choice and should accept consequences of her behavior. The limits you set for her need to be reasonable and consistent. Have your child problem solve with you. Ask her, "What should we do when you tear the book?" When you help her come up with reasonable consequences, she learns to be responsible for her actions.
- **Non-negotiable issues.** When safety is a concern, problem solving and consequences are not appropriate. You can't let your child hurt herself, her friends, or items in your home. If safety is an issue, attend to the immediate concern. Then, respectfully and calmly, talk with her about her behavior and why her safety is at risk.
- **Time out.** When your child loses control of her behavior completely, a "time away", "cool down", or "a break" is necessary. The goal of "time out" is not to embarrass or punish. The goal is to give her a chance to regain control of her emotions. The ultimate goal is to help her recognize her emotions and become responsible for them.

Parents,

This information is provided to you today on behalf of a special visiting program your care provider is taking part in. If you would like to receive similar visits and learn more about how your child grows and develops, please contact your local Parents as Teachers program or call 1-866-PAT4YOU to find a program in your area, or visit our website at www.patnc.org



Tidbit on Biting

Believe it or not, biting is a common part of group care. At some point, your child will most probably be bitten *and* he will bite another child. If your toddler is biting at his care setting, don't panic. He is learning many things and getting along with others is one of them. You and your care provider can help him learn better ways to act out his feelings by understanding why toddlers bite in the first place. If your child is bitten in his care setting, remain calm. Many bites do not puncture the skin and pose no health risk for him. Your child may have a bruise where he was bitten. Rest assured, your care provider comforted him.

A bit about biting

- Biting is a short but common part of life in young children. It occurs most often between 1½ and 3 years of age.
- Biting is going to happen when two or more children are in the same setting, as in group care.
- Biting is more of a concern when the biter is over 3 years old.

Why toddlers bite

- Biting is a way to explore people and things.
- Toddlers do not have the words to say what they want or need.
- Toddlers grow their second set of molars between 12 and 24 months. Biting helps the gums feel better.
- A child who bites may be copying other children or TV characters that bite.

Keep in mind

- Your care provider is working to keep each child happy, safe, and healthy everyday.
- When biting occurs, talk with your care provider about what happened. Ask what she said to your child. If biting occurs at home, handle it in the same way.
- Remember that your care provider talked about this behavior with your child right after it occurred. Don't bring up the topic with your child hours later. Your toddler will not remember the event and the behavior will only be reinforced with the repeating of the word "bite".

Parents,

This information is provided to you today on behalf of a special visiting program your care provider is taking part in. If you would like to receive similar visits and learn more about how your child grows and develops, please contact your local Parents as Teachers program or call 1-866-PAT4YOU to find a program in your area, or visit our website at www.patnc.org

