



NATIONAL CENTER ON
Early Childhood Health and Wellness

Mental Health Newsletter

Social Emotional Development and Challenging Behaviors

Social and emotional skills are integral to every child’s healthy development and contribute to their success in school and in life. In the context of this development, there are a variety of behaviors that can be challenging for adults to understand and cope with in a classroom or home environment including externalizing behaviors such as hitting, biting, scratching, screaming, and taking toys away from others. Challenging behaviors may also include internalizing behaviors such as not talking to other children, not engaging with peers or adults, or not knowing how to play with peers. It can be difficult to identify the right strategies to support children who may be struggling to engage with others appropriately or who may be having difficulty expressing their emotions in a constructive manner. When staff and parents learn about effective strategies to respond to challenging behavior, children are more likely to have positive relationships and successful experiences in school. In this issue of the Mental Health Services Newsletter, find out more about strategies to prevent challenging behavior and effectively respond to it when it does occur.



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What's Relevant on ECLKC

[Digging Deeper: Looking Beyond Behavior to Discover Meaning](#)

Digging Deeper: Looking Beyond Behavior to Discover Meaning is a unit of four lessons that explore and apply the Responsive Process—Watch; Ask 'I Wonder' Questions; and Adapt: Using 'Flexible Responses' to the behaviors of very young children. Program staff, education coordinators, trainers, and parents may use this information to build or refresh their observation skills and responses to children's behaviors.

[Discovering Feelings](#)

"Discovering Feelings" booklet is designed to assist caregivers in helping to label a young child's feelings so the child is better able to associate "feeling terms" with actual emotions. When children can describe how they feel and when others can understand their feelings, children are less likely to engage in challenging behavior.

[Discovering Feelings \(Consultant's Notes\)](#)

This tool provides infant early childhood mental health consultants and other professional trainers a guide for conducting professional development using the Discovering Feelings booklet. The trainers guide includes: suggestions for using the Discovering Feelings in training (include sample activities), trainer tips, suggested time frames for training and suggested supplies needed.

[Dual Language Learners with Challenging Behaviors](#)

Children communicate so much through their behavior. Teachers and caregivers will find this article useful in identifying strategies for working with dual language learners exhibiting challenging behaviors.

[Strategies for Understanding and Managing Challenging Behavior in Young Children: What Is Developmentally Appropriate - and What Is a Concern?](#)

Understanding social and emotional development of infants and toddlers helps parents and staff to develop proactive strategies for supporting them. In this TA Paper, Early Head Start staff members will find information about developmental issues and strategies for supporting young children's social emotional needs.

[Presentation Summary for Challenging Behavior: Prevention Strategies for Children with Disabilities](#)

This summary of Dr. Mary Louise Hemmeter's presentation discusses challenging behaviors for young children who also have disabilities. One goal of the presentation is to describe that children who exhibit challenging behaviors do not necessarily have disabilities. And, conversely, that not all children with disabilities have challenging behaviors.

For Families

[Nurture Them, Nurture Yourself](#)

All children misbehave or exhibit challenging behavior sometimes. How a parent responds can make a big difference in how a child develops. Treating a child with kindness and respect helps him or her to treat others with kindness and respect. Parents who nurture themselves and their children are teaching their child positive lifelong skills. This brochure can be shared with parents and staff to provide tips and tools to positively respond to your child's behavior.

[Biting – A Fact Sheet for Families](#)

Biting is a common but upsetting behavior of toddlers. It is important for caregivers to address biting when it occurs. This fact sheet provides tips for parents and program staff on how to better understand issues around biting.

[Positive Solutions for Families](#)

This tip sheet provides practical strategies that parents and teachers may use when communicating to toddlers with challenging behaviors.

Other Resources

[The Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University](#)

The way caregivers and families respond to a young child exhibiting children behavior has great impact on the child's development. The Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University has a number of resources to dedicated to supporting adults' core capabilities in parenting



[The Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning \(CSEFEL\)](#)

CSEFEL is focused on promoting the social emotional development and school readiness of young children birth to age 5. CSEFEL is a national resource center funded by the Office of Head Start and the former Child Care Bureau for disseminating research and evidence-based practices to early childhood programs across the country.

[The Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention for Young Children \(TACSEI\)](#)

TACSEI takes the research that shows which practices improve the social-emotional outcomes for young children with, or at risk for, delays or disabilities and creates free products and resources to help decision-makers,

caregivers, and service providers apply these best practices in the work they do every day. Most of these free products are available on the website to immediately view, download and use.

[ZERO TO THREE \(ZTT\)](#)

ZTT THREE provides a variety of resources related to young children and challenging behavior. This site contains resources, podcasts and videos related to understanding and supporting young children exhibiting challenging behavior.

Make Sure to Watch these Webcasts Focused on Challenging Behavior

[Teachers' Choice! Digging Deeper into Challenging Behavior, Part 1](#)

This is the first presentation in a series of two Teacher Time webinars focused on challenging behaviors. This episode addresses why a child might be engaging in challenging behavior and what the meaning behind it might be.

[Teachers' Choice! Digging Deeper into Challenging Behavior, Part 2](#)

This is the final episode of a series of two Teacher Time webinars focused on challenging behaviors. This presentation focuses on preventative teaching strategies.



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The National Center on Early Childhood Health and Wellness welcomes your feedback on this newsletter issue as well as your suggestions for topics for future issues. Please forward your comments to health@ecetta.info or call (888) 227-5125.

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School readiness begins with health!