



NATIONAL CENTER ON
Early Childhood Health and Wellness



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. As they develop these skills, children often display a variety of behaviors that can be challenging for adults to understand and cope with in a classroom or home environment. Challenging externalizing behaviors include 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.

Identifying the strategies that best support children who may be struggling to appropriately engage with others or express their emotions can be difficult. When staff and parents learn effective responses to challenging behavior, children are more likely to have positive relationships and successful experiences in school. Here is a selection of helpful tools to assist with the challenging behaviors that are a typical part of the process of learning self-regulation.

For Practitioners

Discovering Feelings

Discovering Feelings is a booklet that assists caregivers in helping a child to be aware of and label their feelings. When children can describe how they feel, they are less



All behavior is a form of communication.

likely to engage in challenging behavior. A trainer's guide is included for conducting professional development for this tool's use in early education.

Teachers' Choice! Digging Deeper into Challenging Behavior, Part 1 and Part 2

These two *Teacher Time* webinars focus on challenging behaviors. The episodes address why a child might be engaging in challenging behavior, the meaning behind the behaviors, and preventive strategies.

Dual Language Learners with Challenging Behaviors

Teachers and caregivers will find this article useful in identifying strategies for working with dual language learners exhibiting challenging behaviors.

Challenging Behaviors: Resources from ZERO TO THREE

Explore a variety of resources from ZERO TO THREE related to young children and challenging behavior. You will find articles, podcasts and videos related to tantrums, defiance, aggression, biting, crying, and irrational behavior.

Challenging Behavior: Prevention Strategies for Children with Disabilities

In this 50-minute video, Dr. Mary Louise Hemmeter discusses challenging behaviors for young children who also have disabilities. A summary of the key points and a transcript of the presentation are available.

What is Executive Function? And How Does It Relate to Child Development?

Young children with compromised or delayed executive function skills can display challenging behaviors. Learn how and why training in executive functioning can support self-regulation via this evidence-based information from the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University.

National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations

Explore the extensive resources for training and professional development on supporting children's social emotional competence. Topics include [reducing suspensions and expulsions](#), [behavior interventions](#), [positive behavior intervention and support](#), and a [series of briefs called *What Works*](#) that outline best practices in promoting social emotional development.



Positive Solutions for Families

These articles and tips from the Center for Social and Emotional Foundations of Early Learning provides practical strategies that parents may use when communicating to toddlers with challenging behaviors. Resources cover emotions and feelings, social cues, biting, and cooperation skills.

Partnering with Families

Understanding Children's Behavior as Communication

Explore ways early childhood staff can partner with families to understand and respond to children's behavior as communication. Find slides, activities, and handouts for working with families of children ages birth to 5.

For Families

Nurture Them, Nurture Yourself

Parents who nurture themselves and their children are modeling positive life skills. This brochure can be shared with parents to provide tips and tools to positively respond to their child's behavior.

Biting – A Fact Sheet for Families

Biting is a common but upsetting behavior of toddlers that must be addressed when it occurs. This fact sheet provides tips for parents and program staff on how to better understand issues around biting.



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Contact Us: The National Center on Early Childhood Health and Wellness welcomes your feedback as well as your suggestions for topics for future resources!

Please forward your comments to: health@ecetta.info or call us at 888-227-5125.

School readiness begins with health!