

CORE SKILL: REGULATE

Managing Behaviors I



What You Need to Know

Young children are learning so much all at one time and are eager to try out their new and emerging skills. Children aren't usually actively misbehaving when they push boundaries or break rules. Often, they are simply testing out their new skills. For example, a child climbing on top of the bookshelf isn't trying to "misbehave" – they are trying out their climbing skills to get a better view! Or sometimes children simply forget in the moment what they are expected to do.

Sometimes children show challenging behaviors because they are still learning *positive* ways to express themselves and reach their goals. Sharing, waiting, walking, and taking turns aren't easy to do! For example, toddlers often hit because they don't yet have the language or positive strategies to get/express what they want. You can help children develop their capacity for managing their behaviors by helping them learn positive and acceptable ways to express themselves.

Things to Consider

Adults tend to point out what young children are doing *wrong* more often than what they are doing *well*. By doing this, adults may **accidentally reinforce negative behaviors** by paying more attention to those behaviors instead of the positive behavior. It's more powerful/effective to pay the most attention to the behaviors that *you want to see*.

Development of Positive Behavior Skills

Between 9 and 18 months, children may:	Between 16 and 36 months, children may:
Look to familiar adults for assistance and guidance with actions and behavior.	Begin to manage and adjust actions and behaviors with the guidance of familiar adults.

Setting the Stage

Children are better able to manage their behaviors when they are *actively* engaged in an activity and understand what they are *supposed to be doing*.

- ◆ Age-appropriate, **hands-on** activities.
- ◆ Minimal wait time and transitions.
- ◆ Use timers or countdowns so children know what to expect.
- ◆ Provide warnings (verbal and visual) before transitions. Warn children when a transition is about to occur and provide a concrete event/activity to transition to. This will give them something to look forward to and reduce the desire to remain engaged in their current task. For example, "We will play outside for one more minute. Then we will go inside and eat a snack."
- ◆ A structured schedule and routines. Be sure to prepare children ahead of time if there is a modification in their schedule. Consider using a visual schedule that children can refer back to often so they know what to expect.
- ◆ Clear and consistent expectations. State expectations before an activity/task. For example, "We are going to play with playdough! The playdough must stay on the table while we play. Ready to play on the table?"
- ◆ Games to practice control (e.g., freeze game, follow the leader, imitation, or yoga).



Intentional Teaching Practices to Support Managing Behaviors I

Monday OBSERVE	OBSERVE Carefully observe the context surrounding challenging behaviors. Are there certain times of the day or areas of the room where problems tend to occur? Are your expectations reasonable (e.g., are children asked to wait too long or given a task that is too hard)? Are behaviors (positive or negative) being reinforced throughout the day?
Tuesday FOCUS	Acknowledge Positive Behaviors Notice and acknowledge when they are in control of their movement and displaying behaviors that you want to see. <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ “Thank you for putting your instrument in the basket.”◆ “You are being very gentle with the stuffed animals.”◆ “I like that you are sitting with our friends while we read this book!”◆ “You are using a safe body while we walk to the playground. Thank you for using walking feet.”
Wednesday SCAFFOLD I	Promote Autonomy (Choice) Help children feel that they have a say in what they can do by offering them choices: <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Instead of, “It’s nap time. Let’s go brush your teeth and get your blanket,” say, “It’s nap time. Do you want to brush your teeth or get your blanket first?”◆ “Would you like to paint or use crayons?” Note: this makes children <i>more</i> likely to comply when choice is not an option.
Thursday SCAFFOLD II	Use Cues and Visuals Use cues and visuals to prompt or remind children about what they <i>should</i> be doing: <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ “Quiet” or “Sit” visual picture signs.◆ Music or lights to signal that it’s time to transition.◆ “Stop/Go” signs to practice behaviors or indicate off-limit areas.◆ Communication frustration often results in undesired behaviors because children may not know how else to communicate their thoughts. Support dual language learners and children with limited speech by hanging core vocabulary boards for them to point to and use to communicate their thoughts and feelings. Some core vocabulary words include, <i>yes, no, my turn, help, stop, go, again, finished, me, you</i>, etc.
Friday KEEP IT GOING	Consider what you learned from observing children on Monday as well as their reaction to your Focus and Scaffolds. Find ways to build the activities in the Setting the Stage into your regular routines and to anticipate and respond effectively to help children manage their behaviors.

CORE SKILL: REGULATE

Managing Behaviors II



What You Need to Know

This week you will continue to explore additional Intentional Teaching Practices for helping children manage their behaviors. Remember, you can use Intentional Teaching Practices to reduce the frequency or intensity of challenging behaviors that you see in your classroom, but challenging behaviors will still occur sometimes. Pushing boundaries is a natural part of a toddler's learning process! Toddlers need your support to learn how to regain control of their behaviors and successfully re-engage in classroom activities when things go a little too far or when they "can't keep it together" anymore.

Things to Consider

Children show aggressive or challenging behaviors for a variety of reasons, none of which are to be "mean" or to "bully." The key to effectively addressing these behaviors is to figure out *why* the child is showing them (e.g., what do they want or need that they don't know how to get positively?). For example, if a child bites another child because they want a toy, you know that they need your help learning how to ask for a turn. If they bite because the child is crowding them, they need your help learning how to ask for space or how to solve that problem by moving. Or, if they bite because their teeth hurt, then you know that they need something to chew on. Biting is not the real problem — it's the *symptom* of the problem. Knowing the function or purpose of the child's behavior helps you accurately focus on supporting the skill(s) that they need to get what they want *without* biting!

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Intentional Teaching Practices to Support Managing Behaviors II

Monday OBSERVE	OBSERVE Continue to observe children's behavior. Focus on understanding the function or the purpose of a child's actions when challenging behaviors occur. It's critical to know why a child is showing a behavior in order to offer the positive replacement behaviors needed for reaching their goal.
Tuesday FOCUS	Give Effective Commands Focus children's attention on the positive behaviors that you <i>want</i> to see by giving simple and clear commands that let them know exactly what they should be doing (not what they should stop doing). <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Specific: "Please put the blocks in the basket!" rather than, "Clean-up!"◆ Stated positively: "Walk, please!" rather than, "Don't run!"◆ A statement (not a question): "It's time to go inside," rather than, "Are you ready to go?" Provide visuals to help children follow directions. For example, "It's not safe to run while we eat our snack. Please sit (<i>holding 'sit' visual and pointing towards their chair.</i>)"
Wednesday SCAFFOLD I	Engage Children in Alternative, Appropriate Behavior Help children keep control by keeping them actively engaged: <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Modify an activity or material to make it "acceptable" behavior: If a child is holding their hand to the faucet and spraying water over the floor, you could direct them to play in the water table and provide a spout for pouring water.◆ Engage children in an unrelated activity: If two children are pushing while your hands are full changing a diaper, you could ask them to do a special job for you.◆ Offer an alternative or distraction: provide bubbles or sing songs while children are waiting for their turn for something exciting.
Thursday SCAFFOLD II	Link Behaviors and Outcomes On Thursday, empower children by helping them make the connection between their actions and outcomes (both positive <i>and</i> negative): <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ "You moved that shelf, and now our pet is safe. Thank you!"◆ "You gave your friend a doll, and that made them happy!"◆ If a child is throwing a toy, you could say, "If you keep the toy on the table, you can keep it. But if you throw it, I will put it away." Note that this is presented in a <i>positive</i> way and the consequence is logically linked to the child's behavior.
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