

DISCIPLINE TECHNIQUES FOR PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

Preschool children have intense emotions but limited knowledge to understand them and limited language skills to express them. They are egocentric and are not rule-oriented. Temper tantrums, irrational fears, and other emotional outbursts are common. If the teacher understands the developmental basis for these behaviors, he/she will react in a way which guides children toward more acceptable forms of behavior. Problems which arise should be viewed as opportunities to teach - to provide children with knowledge about their behavior and the consequences of that behavior - not to threaten or punish.

Before children behave in an inappropriate manner, use these techniques.

- 1) Positive Reinforcement - Reinforcing children's positive behaviors is the most effective way to develop acceptable behavior. Children will not need to engage in negative attention-getting behaviors. Use statements such as:
"You're really working hard on that puzzle."
"You know how to share with your friends."
"Thank you for putting that book away."
Don't overuse statements such as, "I like the way that...."
Children should understand the reasons for behaving are not just to please the teacher.
- 2) Teacher Modeling - Model appropriate behaviors yourself. Model how to be considerate of others, empathy, using words to express anger, etc. Teachers should follow same rules that children are expected to follow.
- 3) Cueing - Let children know the limits ahead of time. Preview rules before activities - LCA's, group times, outside, etc. If you know a child has a problem at particular times of the day, remind them just before:
"Clean-up will start in 5 minutes."
"I know you're going to work hard to get on your cot quickly today."
- 4) Focus on just a few major rules. Ignore minor problems.

When problems arise, use the following techniques.

- 1) Immediately stop serious behavior which would result in injury to persons or destruction of materials.
- 2) Comfort a child who has been hurt before directing attention to aggressor.
- 3) State the rule or appropriate behavior to the child.
 - a) Rule should be stated in positive terms.
 - b) Use short, specific statements.
"Use your inside voice." (Not, "Don't shout.")
"Put the puzzle in the shelf." (Not, "Clean up.")
- 4) Deal with the feelings of those involved.
 - a) Accept child's feelings.
Don't force child to say, "I'm sorry."
Don't tell child to stop crying.
 - b) Reflect child's feelings.
"I know you're angry, but I can't let you hit."
"I know you're sad that Mommy had to go to work."
 - c) Explain other people's feelings.
"It hurts Mark when you hit him."
"It's hard for Kathy to wait so long for a turn."
- 5) Use redirection before behaviors get out of hand.
"Tell me what you two are playing."
"Alan, can you help me with"
- 6) Don't force children to share a specific toy.
Ask child when they will be finished and let them make the decision to give up the toy. Help other child find alternative activity while waiting. Materials like Legos and playdough can be split easily. In these cases direct child to give some to the other person.
- 7) As children develop knowledge and language skills use questioning techniques to lead children to recall rules.
"What do you need to do with the book?"
"How do you think she feels?"
- 8) Encourage children to work out their own problems when they complain about another child.
"Tell him how you feel."
"You can remind him of the rule."
- 9) If a child continues with an unacceptable behavior after being reminded and discussing the rule, give the child a choice of two acceptable alternatives.
"You may build with the blocks or you may choose another center."
"You may use the flannelboard or read a story."

- 10) If a child still cannot behave in an appropriate manner, the teacher may apply consequences for the child's behavior. The consequences should be related to the problem.
"I cannot let you throw blocks. You need to choose another center."
"My friends cannot hear the story. You need to leave the rug."
- 11) Time-out should only be used as a last resort!!!
Children should only be removed when other measures have been tried and have failed. It should be viewed as a time for a child to regain control of their behavior, not to punish the child.
Children should not be threatened with time-out.
Time-out should not be humiliating.
Let child return when he/she feels ready and can talk to teacher about behavior.
If child does not return on own, then teacher should go to talk to child within 3 minutes. If teacher is leading group time, other teacher should attend child.
When child returns to activity, reinforce child for choosing appropriate behavior.

↳ Vaughan's example... called it a 'hide-out'

General Techniques for Talking to Children

- 1) Speak to child directly. Do not call across the room.
- 2) Stoop or sit so that you are on child's eye level.
Don't force child to look at you.
- 3) Speak in a calm, kind, but firm voice.
- 4) Focus on behavior, not child's personality.
Use "I" messages.
"The water is splashing on the floor." (Not, "You're so messy."
"I'm really angry that the toy got broken." (Not, "You're always tearing things up.")
- 5) Avoid "good/nice" and "bad" connotations.
"You know how to share." (Not, "You're a nice friend.")
"That's not a school word." (Not, "That's a bad word.")

5. The teacher hears shouting in block center. When she looks over there, she sees George holding a large block up in the air and shouting at Tommy, "I'm going to hit you!"

6. As Martha is getting out of her chair in Art center, she loses her balance and falls. She knocks over a container of paint which begins dripping from the table to the floor.

7. The teacher is sitting and reading a story with three children in library center. Mark (who has been upset since his mother left) comes over and stands in front of them crying very loudly.

8. After the clean-up song is sung, Leslie continues to work on her picture in art center.

9. Maria and Adam are working in construction center nailing bottle caps onto blocks of wood. They begin to fight over the only hammer.