

What the Experts Say, Session C: Guiding Children's Behavior

It's all about relationships.

- Children learn how to respond to others by the way they are treated.

from Mod. 3, Caring for Young Children: building healthy relationships, brains, and bodies. Center for Early Education and Development, 6/13. Funding by the MN Department of Human Services

Environments make a difference.

- Safe places to play ("child-proof") mean fewer ways to get hurt and fewer things to damage.
- Safe places to run, jump, or throw means they don't do these things in places where they (or others) might get hurt.
- Organized toys are easier to put away.

What other things can you think of that can make a difference in the ways environment can help (or hinder) as you guide behavior?

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Routines make a difference.

- **Routines:**
 - are activities that happen at about the same time and in about the same way each day
 - help children feel comfortable and able to learn what behavior adults expect.
 - help young children gain a sense of trust, security and emotional stability.
 - support learning and help young children cope with transitions.

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Pay close attention and think ahead.

- When adults pay close attention to children they are able to teach behavior before misbehavior happens.
- Anticipate where there might be problems.
- Move closer to the children.
- Say what you expect to see children do instead of what not to do.

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Child development term: Self-regulation

- Children who are "self-regulated" are able to:
 - calm themselves down.
 - think before they act.
 - plan different ways to respond when they have strong feelings.
- "Self-regulation has two sides:
 - the ability to control our impulses and to **stop** doing something that we are not supposed to do.
 - the ability to *do* something even if we don't want to

Infants and toddlers are not expected to "have" self-regulation, but the seeds of self-regulation are planted during this time and supported as children get older.

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Ways to help children know how to act

- Give clear expectations that are specific.
- Tell children what *TO* do instead of what *NOT* to do ("Walk, please" instead of "Don't run.")
- Give children a place to "take a break."
- Help children recognize their own body signals when they are starting to experience a strong emotion.

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Handout 3.1 Guiding behavior:

Ways adults may teach children what they are supposed to do and not do*

Describe what you expect to see	Tell the child's parent
Show/model the behavior	Give the child a choice (For example, "you can pick up the blocks or you can pick up the doll clothes.")
Ask the child to tell you the rule	
Use a loud voice (yell)	Routines
Take away something the child likes	Let children know what is coming ahead of time (advanced notice)
Threaten to take away something the child likes	Set a timer
Notice and say when the child is doing something right	Explain <i>why</i> a behavior is ok or not ok.
Teach by telling a story	Be proactive: notice another child who is behaving appropriately ("Miriam is sitting and ready to eat. Thank you, Miriam.")
Redirect	
Time out	Be proactive: stand near the child who seems to be starting to have a problem.
Take a break	
	Other



To think about: *What other approaches or strategies can/do you use? Which strategies correct behavior and what helps the child know what TO do?*

Which strategies result in compliance in the moment and which ones are more likely to teach for long term benefits?

How do you adjust your strategies by the age of the child? How do you adjust by the individual child's personality?

*Not all of these strategies are effective or recommended. They are a list of things that adults may do, but the purpose is to think about what is most effective for helping the child manage their own behavior over the long term.

FAMILY PLANNING SHEET

What _____ does during _____ :
(child's name) (routine)

Why I think he/she does it:

What can I do to prevent the problem behavior?	What can I do if the problem behavior occurs?	What new skills should I teach?