

Preschoolers often feel very small and powerless. For the most part they are taken wherever adults need to go and expected to do what adults tell them to do whether they want to or not. These are some of the things that make them feel powerless. Part of their makeup includes their natural drive to feel powerful in what seems like a powerless world to them.

We have compiled what we believe is helpful information for any caregiver helping a child through a difficult time.

Your child's success and happiness are important to us. We will do our best to help him or her succeed. If your child is having difficulties at home or school please set aside a time to talk with us. If your child gets a note home about negative behavior, try not to overreact. Together we can form a plan that everyone can work on for your child's best interest. Keeping record of behaviors will often help us identify indicators of where your child is having difficulty, and this could be helpful in creating a strategy for success. We are here to support you in any way we can.



Things That Damage Self-esteem

1. Children wilt when they are rushed, hurried.
2. Children wilt when told what to do all the time or are corrected all the time.
3. Children wilt when they are criticized or made to feel as if they are a burden.
4. Children wilt when they are ashamed.
5. Children wilt when they are ridiculed.
6. Children wilt when they are spoken to as if they are unimportant and powerless.
7. Children wilt when they are put to bed late and expected to awaken early.
8. Focusing on negative behavior and weaknesses rather than strengths erodes self-esteem.
9. Talking about the negative behaviors to others when the child can hear what is being said is demeaning.
10. Offering a reward for behavior that is expected teaches children to behave only if there is something in it for them. A reward is an external motivation and once that external motivation is gone the same problem exists, only the child expects more and more rewards. We must teach children to be inwardly motivated so that when no one is around they make good choices because they know it is good for them and our world.

For Additional Information

Getting it Right with Children
by Madelyn Swift

Discipline for Life
by Madelyn Swift

Moral Intelligence
by Michelle Borba



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What to do when children act out

**Helpful information
for a child going through
a difficult time**

PARENT EDUCATION SERIES

Other Considerations

Children do not always have the words to tell us what is going on inside them and often their actions are the only way we know something is going on with them.

1. Medications can change and alter a child's disposition and cause acting out.
2. Sometimes they are ill and the only way they have of telling us is to act it out by whining and protesting.
3. When one or both parents go out of town a child may act out.
4. When children have a busy weekend with no down time or a late night they may act out.
5. Children may act out if they are hungry or sensitive to certain foods, sugars or dyes.



someone who is close to them that becomes ill, an overnight visit away from home, a movie they should not have been allowed to watch, discontinuance of a pacifier, a new bed. All of these things and others have a huge effect upon children, and teachers need to know about any of these things taking place in a child's life.

7. Believe it or not PMS causes children to act out. Women tend to have more frustration, which makes dads and children react to the frustration.
8. When children cannot count on what their parent says it is a huge disappointment to them. When they are not really sure you are coming for them or that you mean what you say, it creates anxiety and that anxiety causes acting out. It is vital that you keep your word.

Strategies That Work

1. Give children as many opportunities as possible to help them feel powerful and capable. This will cost you as a caregiver extra time and patience.

2. Give children reasonable choices. You need not open the closet full of summer and winter clothing and offer them a choice of what to wear, but you could pull out several outfits and give them a choice. You need not ask them what they want for breakfast unless you are prepared to give them what they ask for, but you could offer them a choice between oatmeal and eggs. Three options would be reasonable.

3. Never ask: "Do you want to?" "Are you ready?" "Will you please?" If you ask preschoolers a question that they have permission to say, "Yes" or "No" to, more than likely they will say, "No". If you ask children who are potty training if they want to go to the bathroom they will most likely say, "No". If you ask them if they are ready for bed, of course, they will say, "No". Ask questions in ways that will end with the goal you had in mind. Example: Rather than saying, "Will you please go to the bathroom and wash your hands," try saying, "It is time to go to the bathroom and wash hands." Ask, "Do you need my help or can you do it all by yourself?" This is a magic phrase because preschoolers want to do everything by themselves. Remember what your goal is and then decide how you can use phrases that contain choices that are acceptable to you. In this way you are showing them that they matter and they are capable.

4. Model in the way you treat children the exact way you expect them to treat others. If you talk down to them, yell at them and boss them around, respond to them in frustration or an unkind manner, they will learn to treat their friends and teachers exactly the same way, and you will also be the recipient of these behaviors.

5. Whatever you give the most attention to will grow. Any undesirable behaviors such as biting, hitting and speaking bathroom words will actually escalate as you devote more attention to them. Example: In a toddler nap room you can actually say, "No more talking, no more noises," and even the children who were not making noise begin to make noise. There is something in our nature that urges us to do it. It is much more successful to say what is desired. Walk through the room and say, "It is time to rest," and it does not provoke the children to respond negatively. You may mean, "Stop talking" or, "Stop moving," but if you say it with those words, it sets you up for failure.

6. Children respond to love and kindness. Once, a teacher learned to say all the phrases we use positively, but during lunch her children were always misbehaving. This is what her table sounded like: "Feet on the floor...tummy to the table...chew with your mouth closed...wipe your mouth...eat your food...sit up." The children who were behaving would begin doing everything she told the others in a positive way to stop doing. At a separate table children talked about what they had for breakfast, what they were going to do when they got home and all kinds of subjects

they chose to discuss. If a child began to slide out of a chair the teacher could easily gain cooperation and attention just by a genuine statement of affection such as, "Where did you get your brown eyes?" Usually the child sat right up and the issue never even had to be addressed. making lunch much more pleasant for all.



7. Children thrive and bloom when we focus on their strengths and what they are doing right. They thrive when they know what is expected of them. They thrive with routine and predictability. They thrive when they are given quality time. They thrive with choices and the feeling that they are loved and capable.