

Dealing with Difficult Child Behaviors

Part One in A Three-Part Self Care Series for Early Childhood Educators

Presented by Lenore Rubin, PhD., Child Psychologist with the Seattle Public Health Department and the West Seattle Preschool Association. Assisted by Julie Antoniou.

June 20th, 2011

Recap:

Children generally want to behave. Why might they misbehave?

1. The hour of the day, an immediate need, such as being hungry or tired.
2. A temperamental misunderstanding. (The child needs time to warm up, dislikes loud voices, etc.)
3. Legitimate issue such as medical, ADHD or issues of a past trauma.
4. Developmental misunderstanding
 - a. For example: A child looks at you, disobeys, and you assume that he's done it for attention. But children are scientists, looking for cause and effect and seeing if you're predictable in your reactions. Satisfied when they get a repetitive answer.
 - b. Be willing to look further for alternative answers. Some reasons that we decide on are "thought-stoppers." Why WOULD they need attention; what is it doing for them?

Start with good observation. Use a co-teacher to help you supervise and teach while you have a chunk of time to watch for triggers and reactions. Search for reasons. What is the function of the behavior for the child? What is it doing for them?

What skills might the child be missing?

1. Social skills: practice with solving problems without hitting, grabbing. They don't know how to play yet.
2. Impulsivity: actions without thought.
3. Teach child that thoughts are why they have actions. Teaches them to think first. "You hit her because you wanted that toy." Even if you guess wrong about the reason, you are still helping them connect their thoughts to their actions.
4. "Let's think, what would happen if you (behavior)?" Talking through cause and effect can help, too.
5. "Now let's practice."

Early Trauma

1. More issues with this in centers that accept subsidized childcare, an effect of poverty and stress.
2. Two biggest areas in child's life impacted by early trauma: emotional control and memory.
3. Lingering effects. Kaizer Permanente did a study about life trauma; as adults more likely to have diabetes, heart disease, hypervigilance, sleep issues, associated with obesity, Attention Defecit Hyperactivity Disorder often misdiagnosed Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Example from Ages in Stages

1. Try talking/relating to mom.
2. Find good time of day for the child, when she is feeling her best.
3. Find bad time of day; what falls apart for her? Look for root cause.
4. What can I offer?
 - a. Whole center resources, change of room/environment to “reset” child
 - b. High interest items in a box during the tough times, allow her to do it alone during the times that she needs space.
 - c. Check in with her over the course of the day; how’s it going? Can also teach her to self-regulate by self-checking her feelings, and finding ways to self-soothe.
 - d. Emotion regulation helps with visual aids and techniques (running laps, scream into pillow, color, tear a phone book, etc.) Suggests teaching one skill, one visual card cue at a time, and practice it before moving on to another one.
 - i. [Head Start Classroom Visuals](#)
 - e. Homemade books can help, my day at school, what I am working on, cues for help.
 - f. Knock them off balance. E.g. They advance to punch, and you reach out and grab their hand for a silly handshake, saying “How do you do?”
 - g. Let them off the hook. “You forgot. You’ll remember next time.”
 - h. Silly: Look at your hand, waggle it with the other hand and say, “Hand, don’ t hit.”
 - i. Replace the behavior with another one that is more acceptable.
 - j. Your love and acceptance and quality care are a gift to the hurting child, even if you can do little to change their environment.
5. Keep trying a technique more than once. It’s a judgment call how long you try, but these children need extra time to adjust and accept a new idea and need to build trust.

Rules for the Classroom

1. Just a few reasonable ones are necessary. Feet on the floor, gentle touches, inside voices. Help for self-modulation, refer back to the rules and repeat them often.
2. Impulse control and language side of our brain is always in ongoing development.

References:

[Betrayal Trauma](#): The logic of forgetting childhood abuse by Jennifer J. Freyd (trust, caregivers)

[Exchange Everyday](#) list-serve: “ExchangeEveryDay is the official electronic newsletter for Exchange Press, Inc. It is delivered five days a week containing news stories, success stories, solutions, trend reports, and much more.”

Contacts:

Lenore Rubin Lenore.Rubin@kingcounty.gov

Julie Antoniou antoniouj@yahoo.com

Next Meeting:

Preventing Provider Burnout- 1 Stars Credit

Friday July 15th ◦ 6:30-9:30 pm

West Seattle Yoga Doga ◦ *in the Morgan Junction* ◦ West Seattle

Come join us for a fun evening of socialization, relaxation, discussion, and delicious food. Educators are welcome to unwind with a complementary chair massage, facial, or pedicure/manicure. Come prepared to be pampered and to learn techniques for managing your stress-level and preventing teacher burnout. Rejuvenate that “spark” for teaching that may have gotten lost amongst the planning, cleaning, and to-do lists!