

Early

Learning & Education PROGRAMS

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Supporting Positive Behavior

Behavior can be both the best part and the biggest challenge of working with children. There are crazy, chaotic days where you cannot wait to get home, and there are days full of wonder and creativity that inspire you. This is because children, just like adults, have wants, needs, and emotions. The difference is that children are still learning how to express their needs and feelings in appropriate ways.

Culture, knowledge, and experience help shape our beliefs about what appropriate behavior and positive discipline means. Take a moment to reflect on your own perceptions about behavior. What is positive discipline? Are there certain behaviors that are harder for

you to cope with than others? Do you have a written discipline policy that explains what behaviors you expect from children and describes what you will do to help guide them? It is important to have a written policy because parents need to understand what you expect in order to support their child's learning.

Children also need to know what to expect. Choose a few simple ideas to focus on such as: we are safe, we are respectful, we are helpful, and we are kind. These flexible rules can be used for almost any situation. For example, "It is Jaime's turn to talk, we need to be respectful and listen." When you introduce new toys or activities, be clear and specific about your expectations before



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SUPPORTING SELF-REGULATION

Children of all ages are developing self-regulation skills, which include the ability to manage feelings, impulses, and thoughts; to pay attention; and to cooperate with others. You can see this progression in infants as they learn to soothe themselves, in toddlers that calm themselves during tantrums, in preschoolers who begin taking turns, and in school agers that resolve conflicts. Take a moment to think about the environment and schedule in your program. What self-regulation challenges do children face? How can you support them as they work through those challenges?

Source: California Preschool Curriculum Framework by the California Department of Education (Sacramento, 2010).





Emotional Literacy

Promoting emotional literacy in your curriculum and learning environment can help children develop the skills they need to manage emotions appropriately. The Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning defines emotional literacy as “the ability to identify, understand, and respond to emotions in oneself and others in a healthy manner.” Try the following tips for increasing emotional literacy in your program.

For infants and toddlers:

- Infants and toddlers need to feel safe. Be available to hold and comfort them. If a baby is crying, talk to him in a soothing voice as you cuddle and rock him. Tell him, “I see you are crying. I know you are upset. I am here. You are safe.”
- Read simple books that introduce emotions such as *My Face Book* by Star Bright Books.
- Sing and act out the song “If You’re Happy and You Know It.”



For preschool aged children:



- Choose books that discuss emotions and self-concept for children to read in your book area such as *The Way I Feel* by Janan Cain or books by Mercer Mayer.
- Add puppets to your dramatic play and book area that allow children to act out emotions or stories from familiar books.
- Children can cut pictures of faces from magazines and create a feelings poster or mood collage. Encourage them to identify the emotions on the faces.
- Add mirrors to the dramatic play area. When children make faces in the mirrors, join them and see if they can guess the emotion on your face.

For school aged children:

- Encourage them to decorate a notebook that they can use to journal about their feelings, dreams they have, or things that are happening in their life.
- Provide books that explore identity and feelings such as *Harley* by Star Livingstone, *Love You Forever* by Robert Munsch, or *Bravo, Grace!* by Mary Hoffman.

Source: The Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning website at <http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu> was accessed in January 2017.



A Healthy Environment



Healthy child care environments prevent the spread of germs and illness. Teaching children to cough into their elbows, blow their noses in a tissue, wash their hands with soap and water, exercise, and eat nutritious food can help stop the spread of germs and illness, but prevention doesn't stop there. Child care providers are also expected to clean, sanitize, and disinfect surfaces and toys that are used.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has defined the words clean, sanitize, and disinfect. Cleaning removes dirt by washing, scrubbing, wiping, or rinsing with a mild soap and water. Sanitizing is using a product intended to lower germs to a safer level and reduces the risk of illness. Disinfecting kills almost all germs on hard, non-porous surfaces such as tile, glass, or plastic.

Clean all surfaces and toys daily before sanitizing or disinfecting. Sanitize food surfaces, pacifiers, and teethingers daily. Disinfect bathroom surfaces, toilets, changing tables

(after each use), and surfaces where bodily fluids have spilled as needed. You must use a sanitizing or disinfecting product that is registered with the EPA, such as bleach.

Do not use bleach near children. Dilute concentrated bleach before use. Follow the dilution directions on the bottle and make a new solution each day. Wear protective eyewear and rubber gloves when handling bleach. Spray surfaces and allow the bleach solution to sit for the time period specified on the bottle. Ventilate the area and allow surfaces to dry before children return. Keep all chemicals in a locked cupboard that children cannot access. For more information, visit the Caring for Our Children website at

<http://cfoc.nrckids.org>.

Source: "Health and Safety Notes: Safe and Effective Cleaning, Sanitizing, and Disinfecting," California Childcare Health Program (9/2013).



Supporting Positive Behavior

children begin working. For example, "I have added scissors to our art area. Scissors are only for cutting paper and yarn. I will show you how to use them." Establish clear expectations to let children know what is acceptable.

Consequences help children understand that actions and decisions have results. A natural consequence is a natural result of an action. For example, if a child smashes a toy, then the toy has to be thrown away. A logical consequence can be used when the natural consequence is not appropriate or safe. A logical consequence is guidance directly related to the action. For example, "Jenna, I saw you throw sand at Amy's eyes. That could hurt her and we need to be safe. If you throw sand again, you need to leave the sandbox."

Catch children at their best. Notice positive behavior and acknowledge it. For example, "Mina, I saw you turn on the water for Sara. That was helpful!" This helps children learn that there are positive ways to get your attention. Be consistent in how you speak and respond to children in order to establish trust between you. Positive relationships support positive behavior.

Make sure the environment is safe, developmentally appropriate, and well-organized. There should be enough materials for all children to be engaged in exploration and learning. Children also need time outside to exercise and use up excess energy. Prepare a few indoor activities that allow children to move, such as playdough, music, or dancing. Give children opportunities to solve problems and make decisions whenever it is safe to do so. Be a detective! When negative behaviors happen, investigate why and see what can be done differently. Look for more ideas throughout this newsletter for supporting positive behavior.

Source: "Positive Discipline: Appropriate Guidance for Your Child," Children's Home Society of California (2010).



INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENTS

Develop an environment that is welcoming, easy to navigate, and that reflects your behavior expectations. Sit at the child's level and look around you. Ask yourself the following questions and consider how these issues can influence behavior:

- Does the furniture arrangement encourage children to walk or run?
- Are centers well-defined with enough materials? For example, if four children fit comfortably in the book area, are there enough books for each of them?
- Can everyone use the materials, or are adaptations needed? Consider taping sponges around pencils so they are easier to hold, or creating a daily schedule with pictures to show transitions and the order of the day.
- Do any of the children squint because it is too bright? Try providing a basket of sunglasses.
- Do children become overwhelmed when the room feels too busy or loud? Try adding a basket of earmuffs or cordless headphones they can wear, and create a "Quiet Spot" for taking breaks.

RECIPES

Power Salad

Source: Adapted from <http://www.thegardengrazer.com> in January of 2017.

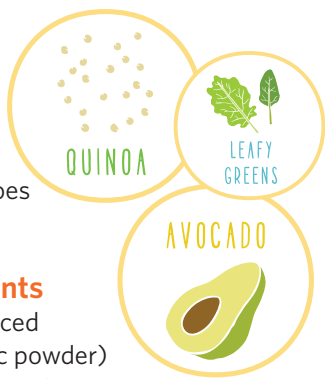
Quinoa packs this vitamin-rich salad with protein. Children can help wash and cut vegetables with a plastic knife, gather supplies, measure portions, and mix ingredients. *Servings:* 4 as a main dish, and 7 as a side dish.

Salad Ingredients

- 1 cup dry quinoa
- 2 avocados
- 3 oz. baby spinach
- 8 oz. cherry tomatoes
- 3 green onions

Dressing Ingredients

- 2 cloves garlic, minced (or 1/8 tsp. of garlic powder)
- 2 Tbsp. fresh lemon or lime juice
- 2 Tbsp. olive oil
- 1/8 tsp. salt



Directions

1. Cook the quinoa according to package directions.
2. Meanwhile, make the dressing. In a small bowl, whisk together the dressing ingredients and set it aside.
3. Roughly chop the spinach and place it in a large bowl.
4. Slice the green onions, halve the cherry tomatoes, and dice the avocado.
5. When the quinoa is done cooking, add it to the large bowl with the spinach, and toss it. The heat from the quinoa will lightly wilt the spinach.
6. Add the green onions, tomatoes, and dressing to the bowl. Stir to combine.
7. Add the avocado and lightly toss the salad.
8. Serve it immediately or refrigerate it for flavors to blend.

Calm and Focused

Emotions like frustration or anger make it hard to think clearly, focus, and behave appropriately. Learning how to stop and take a mental break can help children deal with strong emotions, increase their ability to be patient, and build their resilience.

LEARNING TO SELF-SOOTHE

Age group: Infants

What you need: Your voice and a soft blanket or small stuffed animal.

What you do: Position the infant on the floor in front of you. Gently stroke her hand or cheek with a corner of the blanket or small stuffed animal. Smile and talk to her in a soothing voice about how soft it feels. Touch the blanket to your own cheek and talk to the infant about how warm and safe the blanket makes you feel. Lay the blanket on her tummy where she can reach it. If there is a time when she is crying, gently touch her hand or cheek with the blanket and place it on her tummy. If she does not reach for it, gently guide her arms in toward her body until her hands are on the blanket. Hold this position for a few moments as you gently talk to her. If she continues to cry, pick her up to comfort her.

What they learn: Learning to soothe themselves is an important milestone for infants. Initially, they will need the support of an adult to calm down, but introducing comfort items gives them a tool they can use to eventually calm down on their own. This will build their self-regulation skills and resilience.

BUNNY BREATHING

Age group: Toddlers

What you need: A comfortable place to sit with the children.

What you do: Use your hand to make a bunny shape with the index and middle finger as the ears, and your thumb holding down your ring finger and pinky finger. Ask children to try breathing like a bunny. Ask them to scrunch up their nose like a bunny and sniff in three (3) times, then



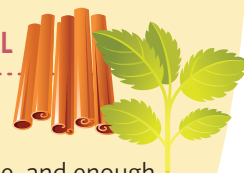
blow their bunny ears down (fold fingers down). Continue until toddlers are able to follow along. Practice this each day. This way, they can learn the technique when they are calm, and remember it better when they become stressed. Throughout the day, have children who are showing signs of frustration, anger, or stress practice their bunny breathing. Add a stuffed bunny animal or puppet as the class breathing buddy.

What they learn: Toddlers can develop their self-regulation and resilience by using this simple breathing method. It also helps toddlers increase their awareness of when they are upset and identify emotions. Share this technique with parents!

Source: Adapted from <https://youtu.be/GsAhE1hCXEU>



SMELL AND TELL



Age group: Preschool

What you need: A small bell or chime, and enough paper plates, orange peels, lemon peels, cinnamon sticks, and mint leaves for each child to have one.

What you do: Sit down in a circle and distribute the paper plates and items to smell. Ask children to close their eyes and smell the orange peel until the chime rings. Ring the chime after one (1) minute. Ask children to share their thoughts about the orange peel such as how it smelled, or if they remembered something when they smelled it. Repeat this with the other items.

What they learn: Children develop self-regulation by focusing on one item for a period of time. They learn about their sense of smell, and how it can connect them to memories. Scent can also be very calming for anxiety.

Source: Adapted from <http://www.mindbody-green.com/0-18136/7-fun-ways-to-teach-your-kids-mindfulness.html>

Calm and Focused

SQUISH AND RELAX MEDITATION

Age group: School Age

What you need: Your voice and a comfortable place for children to lay down.

What you do: Tell children it is time to relax. Invite them to lie down and close their eyes. Tell them they are going to tighten their muscles from their feet to their head. Ask them to scrunch their toes as tight as they can, then tighten the muscles in their legs, hips, stomachs, arms, necks, and finally their faces. Ask them to hold all their muscles tight as you count to three (3), and then tell them to let all their muscles relax and go loose.

What they learn: Children learn how to release tension and stress, which supports their development of resilience.

Source: Adapted from <http://www.mindbody-green.com/0-18136/7-fun-ways-to-teach-your-kids-mindfulness.html>



ABOUT CHS

For over 125 years, Children's Home Society of California (CHS) has adapted to the changing needs of children and families. Since 1891, CHS has worked diligently to protect our community's children and strengthen their families through diverse programs and services.

At CHS, we view a child not in isolation, but in the context of each family's health, stability, and resources. We believe that families are fundamentally strong and resilient. The mission of CHS is to reach out to children and families at risk with a range of services to ensure every child the opportunity to develop within a safe, healthy, and secure environment.

Therefore, CHS provides a variety of services to children and families in California and nationwide, working to improve their quality of life by offering vital information, education and resource services, and child care assistance.

CHS also serves as an expert resource for childcare providers, other social service agencies, and government agencies at the local, state, and national level. To learn more about CHS and resources available to you, please visit our website at www.chs-ca.org.

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