

Early

Learning & Education PROGRAMS

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Behavior management is challenging for many educators and parents. One of the reasons why it is a struggle is because adults usually react to negative behavior as it happens instead of taking steps to plan ahead and prevent it. When adults change their perspective and give extra support to the social and emotional development of young children, they often discover that instances of negative behavior disappear.

The Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL) created a pyramid model for implementing behavior supports and interventions in child care programs. The focus is to enhance the social-emotional development of children with relationships, well-planned environments, materials, and

activities that equip children with tools for managing their own behavior. Visit the website at the end of this article for more information.

Create nurturing and positive relationships with children. This will help them feel secure and ready to learn. Establish consistent routines, expectations, and responses to build trust.

Create visual schedules and steps for routines that children can manipulate and refer to throughout the day so they know what to expect.

Design an environment that allows you to say "yes" more often than "no." Use furniture and rugs to define how many children can be in a space.

Add duplicate toys and materials to the environment in order to prevent arguments.

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TALKING ABOUT BEHAVIOR

Talking to a parent about their child's negative behavior can feel awkward and uncomfortable. In order to work with parents in supporting a child's self-regulation, it is important to establish a relationship with the whole family that is based on mutual respect, understanding, and a positive outlook. As you read the other articles in this newsletter, consider the following question: How do you communicate information about behavior to children's families in ways that help all of you work together to support children's self-regulation?



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



Connecting with Parents

Engaging parents in their child's education can be beneficial for the whole family. Research shows that when children have parents who participate in their education, the impact of their support affects long-term learning, health, and well-being. Creating a partnership with parents allows educators to individualize the services they provide for the child, share important information about the child's development, develop a plan for addressing specific needs, and provide resources that support the whole family.

Parents can offer educators insights and information that can be included in the child's plan for reaching developmental milestones. In turn, educators can acknowledge parental strengths by encouraging them in their new endeavors and praising them for their accomplishments. This is also an opportunity to make sure the family has the resources they need to feel safe, healthy, and resilient. Families who have adequate shelter, food, and income are healthier, more focused, and better prepared to learn and be engaged.

Start by creating a welcoming atmosphere for parents. Include elements that reflect their culture, language, or traditions. Design a parent board that displays copies of your program's calendar and schedule, notices of upcoming special events, and resources. Keep a folder of local resources in the parent area with several copies of each flyer so parents can take what they need.

Develop a system for communicating with parents regularly and assure them that anything they share with you is confidential. Greet families warmly each morning and share positive stories about their child. If you communicate regularly via text, email, phone calls, or letters, remember that it is still important to have face-to-face conversations that allow for spontaneous ideas to emerge. Take the time to build trusting relationships with parents, and they will take the time to be involved in your program.

Source: Relationship-based competencies to support family engagement: Overview for early childhood professionals by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, and National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (2018).



Food Allergies

Many children have allergies to certain foods. The most common food allergies are to peanuts, milk, fish, soy products, shellfish, wheat or gluten, eggs, and tree nuts (walnuts, pecans, etc.). Symptoms that a child is having an allergic reaction can include swelling of the throat and tongue, difficulty breathing, hives (skin rash), vomiting, abdominal cramps, or diarrhea. Children often require emergency treatment in these situations.

You can help keep children healthy by interviewing families when they enter your program to determine if their children have a diagnosed allergy and receive training from them on how to respond to allergies. Make a written plan with the parent that explains the allergy, typical symptoms, and how they have trained you to respond. Both you and the parent need to sign and date the form. Review the plan with the family, at least yearly.

If parents are not sure whether or not their child has a food allergy, ask them to try the foods that typically are associated with allergies at home first, after consulting with their pediatrician for guidance. Do not use these foods for snacks, meals, or cooking projects until parents say their child has tried it with them first. Create a form that includes a checklist of these foods that parents can complete and sign.

Remember to follow this guideline when introducing foods to infants and toddlers, too. If a parent sends one of these food items in their lunch, ask if they have tried it at home. Remember that it is not safe to give infants honey or peanuts, and the introduction of milk and solid foods should be authorized by their pediatrician. Create a detailed feeding plan for infants and toddlers with parents to avoid any miscommunication.

Source: "Fact Sheets for Families: Food Allergies" by Terry Holybee, RN (California Childcare Health Program, 2001).



Creating a Foundation for Positive Behavior

If that is not possible, then consider removing materials that tend to cause problems. Use color and lighting to create a peaceful atmosphere. Choose neutral tones for walls and furniture and allow art, photos of children and families, and posters to be the color accents. Use natural light from windows and include small lamps to add soft lighting to darker areas.

Provide materials that support social-emotional skills such as dramatic play items for acting out different roles, with puppets, stuffed animals, or dolls for storytelling, and books about feelings, friendship, and families. You can also provide the following: music that helps children identify emotions or practice self-regulation such as *Show Me How You Feel* or *The Freeze* by Greg and Steve, wall-mounted shatterproof mirrors children can observe themselves in, and activities such as matching cards that show emotions, paper plate masks that show feelings, and emotions lotto cards.

Establish a “peace place” where children can access tools for managing emotions and conflict resolution. Sit with children and explain how the items can be used. Include stress squeeze toys, hand-held mirrors, emotion cards, a pretend phone for “calling someone,” a dish towel they can wad up or stomp on, and conflict solution cards (available free from the website below).

Each day when children are calm, practice expressing emotions and taking turns. Teach children how to do deep breathing to calm themselves down. They can pretend one hand is a flower and the other is a candle. Children can smell the flower and blow out the candle. Model how to express feelings, listen, and resolve conflicts peacefully. When children become upset, you can gently remind them of the tools they have to calm down and express themselves. By helping children understand and manage their emotions, you are providing them with the skills they need for self-regulation and healthy relationships.

Source: *California Preschool Curriculum Framework Volume I*, by the California Department of Education (Sacramento, 2010) and the website <http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/strategies.html>.

BOOKS FOR EMOTIONAL LITERACY

The following books support children in identifying, understanding, managing, and expressing emotions in positive ways.

- *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* by Judith Viorst
- *Baby Faces* by Margaret Miller
- *Heartprints* by P.K. Hallinan
- *Mindful Mantras: I Can Handle It* by Laurie Wright
- *It Wasn't My Fault* by Helen Lester
- *Listen and Learn* by Cheri Meiners
- *My Many Colored Days* by Dr. Seuss
- *Owl Babies* by Martin Waddell
- *Peaceful Piggy Meditation* by Kerry Lee MacLean
- *Saturday is Swimming Day* by Hyewon Yum
- *Talk and Work it Out* by Cheri Meiners
- *The Color Monster: A Story about Emotions* by Anna Llenas
- *The Fall of Freddie the Leaf* by Leo Buscaglia
- *The Invisible Boy* by Trudy Ludwig
- *The Kissing Hand* by Audrey Penn
- *The Way I Feel* by Janan Cain
- *When Sophie Gets Angry—Really, Really Angry* by Molly Bang

RECIPES

Strawberry Kale Pasta Salad

This tasty salad is a wonderful way to encourage children to eat superfoods like strawberries and kale. Both contain antioxidants, have anti-inflammatory benefits that help protect the heart, and are a good source of fiber. Strawberries' sweet taste helps balance the sometimes bitter taste of kale. You can also improve the taste and texture of kale by slicing it thinly and quickly rubbing it with olive oil and a little salt before using it.

The following recipe serves four people. Encourage children to help wash the strawberries and kale. They can also assist with slicing strawberries and kale leaves with plastic knives, or with butter, cheese, and icing spreaders that are not sharp. Give children the opportunity to compare the cooked and uncooked pasta.

Ingredients

- 1 pound of cooked and cooled fusilli pasta
- 2 cups of diced strawberries
- 2 cups of chopped kale
- Juice from 1/2 a large lemon
- 1 tablespoon of olive oil
- Lemon zest
- Salt to taste

Directions

Take the cooked and cooled noodles and place them in a large bowl. Coat the pasta with olive oil and lemon juice. Add the diced strawberries and chopped kale and mix it well. Salt to taste and garnish with lemon zest. Serve slightly chilled.

Source: Recipe adapted from <https://www.superhealthykids.com/strawberry-kale-pasta-salad> in December 2018.

Exploring Self Identity



Infants learn about themselves through the relationships they build with their family members and caregivers. As they grow, children begin to explore their own preferences and observe differences in others. They begin to notice different languages, skin tones, styles of dress, hair color, or eye color. These observations, comparisons, and experiences help children develop their own sense of self. Caregivers can support children's explorations by designing a thoughtful environment, planning appropriate activities, and engaging in meaningful conversations.

Title: Only One Me

Age group: Infants

What you need: Yourself and the infant.

What you do: Lay the infant down so that you can see each other. Start by greeting the infant with a smile and his name. Then chant the following rhyme with simple gestures. After you are done, clap your hands and help the infant clap his. Here is the rhyme: *In this whole wide world (make a big circle with your arms), I can clearly see (fingers around eyes, looking through). There is only one you (point to child), and there is only one me (point to self)!*

What they learn: Infants hear their name as they engage in a positive interaction with their caregiver. They are also introduced to the concept of being unique as they connect language with the gestures being used.

Source: Adapted from <http://www.preschoolexpress.com> in December 2018.

Title: Singing about Feelings

Age group: Toddlers

What you need: Yourself and the children. If you are not familiar with the songs mentioned, you can find them online through free media streaming apps.

What you do: Select one or two simple songs about feelings such as *If You're Happy and You Know It* or *Shake Your Sillies Out*. Use exaggerated facial expressions and gestures to act out the songs. Invite children to choose an emotion or action to add to the song using visual cues. For

example, when singing *If You're Happy and You Know It*, use an emotions poster or cards to inspire choices. After the first verse of the song say, "What is another emotion we can feel? What does it look like?" Then follow the children's lead.

What they learn: Children learn to connect emotions with words, practice turn-taking (self-regulation) in conversations, and have an opportunity to develop a way to express emotions in a positive way.

Title: Felt Board Faces

Age group: Preschool

What you need: Flannel board and flannel pieces to make faces showing different emotions such as: large circles for heads, and various eye colors and shapes for mouths, noses, hair pieces, and ears. The pieces should reflect different skin tones, eye color, and hair color.

What you do: Introduce the flannel board and pieces with the following rhyme: *This is the circle that is my head. This is the mouth where words are said. These are my eyes with which I see. This is my nose that's a part of me. This is the hair that grows on my head. These are my ears for hearing what's said. These are the parts of me everyone sees, but there is much more to being me!* Show children how they can create different faces and expressions with the felt pieces. Place the flannel board with a basket of the felt pieces where children can access them.

What they learn: Children can manipulate felt pieces to create images of themselves or others, and explore the



Exploring Self Identity

facial expressions of different emotions. This also provides an opportunity for children to create and represent their own stories.

Source: Adapted from <http://www.preschoolexpress.com> in December 2018.

Title: "I Am" Collage

Age group: School Age

What you need: Poster board, magazines, newspapers, scissors, markers, paint, paintbrushes, and glue.

What you do: Invite children to draw a circle in the center of their poster board. In the circle they can write the words "I am..." Then they can search through the magazines and newspaper for words, pictures, or images that represent who they are and glue them around the center circle. They can use the paint or markers to fill in areas or draw images they cannot find.

What they learn: Children learn to describe who they are, what they like, and develop goals and plans for themselves. This activity also allows children to express themselves creatively while building their vocabulary skills.



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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