
Behavior Support and Management Training

Non-Violent Crisis Intervention:
Aggressive and Out-of-Control
Behavior in Children

Recognizing Aggressive and Out-of-Control Behavior and Its Causes

Behaviors Exhibited During a Crisis Situation

■ Anxiety

- Moodiness, a short temper or clinginess
- Defensiveness
- Challenges authority, confrontational

■ Acting Out

- Loss of control, child physically acts out

■ Tension Reduction

- Occurs after child acts out and begins regaining control

What Causes Aggressive/Out of Control Behavior in Children?

- Modeling-Child observes the behavior at home/on television
- Peer Reinforcement-the child's peers encourage the behavior
- Social Skills Deficit-the child lacks the skills to with stressful situations effectively
- Low Self Esteem-Unable to satisfy basic need for giving and receiving love and lack a feeling of self worth
- Psychological/physiological causes-ex. mental health condition, hunger, tired
- Attention seeking
- Displaced anger

How Can Understanding Precipitating Factors Help to De-Escalate Aggressive/Out of Control Behavior?

- Helps to prevent acting out behavior by being proactive
- Depersonalizes the crisis situations
- Helps the person intervening from becoming part of the precipitating factors

Prevention:

- Plan how you and the child will respond if behavior becomes aggressive/out of control
- Help the child build a positive self image
- Model appropriate behavior
- Avoid labeling child when he/she acts out
- Avoid power struggles
- Offer choices and logical consequences
- Teach children how to control their behavior

Interventions:

- Assess the situation promptly. If you see signs and symptoms of a child entering into crisis, intervene early.
- Be empathetic/try to understand where the child is coming from
- Offer to help
- Engage the child
- Give the child time to think
- Avoid power struggles

Intervention Continued:

- Problem solve/explore alternatives
- Acknowledge the child's feelings
- Ignore "junk" behavior
- Place the child in time-out
- Separate child(ren) involved in an altercation
- Help the child regain control
- Encourage the child to utilize self-calming techniques which may include:
 - Taking a deep breathe
 - Counting to 10
 - Drawing

Intervention Continued:

- Provide clear and non-threatening directions
- Use problem solving with the child - ask "What will help now?"
- use simple language
- Follow the rule of 5 (no more than 5 words in sentence, 5 letters in a word -- eg, "Would you like a chair?")
- Ignore challenges; redirect challenging questions
- Use reflective technique - "Am I hearing you?"

Interventions Continued:

- Offer the child choices and an explanation of the consequences of their choices
- Start with positive choices and consequences
- Don't say "you must."
- Set limits that are:
 - Clear
 - Reasonable
 - Enforceable

Fear and Anxiety:
A Typical Reaction to
Aggressive/Out-of-Control
Behavior

Unproductive Reactions to Fear

- Freezing
 - Inability to react to the situation
- Overreacting
 - Psychological-perceiving a situation as worse than it is
 - Physiological-motor skills do not function normally
- Responding inappropriately
 - Verbal-saying things that are not appropriate to the situation, using inappropriate language
 - Physical-Striking out, not being able to control actions

Controlling Fear and Anxiety

- Recognize and understand what makes your fearful/anxious
- Learn techniques to intervene in a crisis situation
- Ask for Assistance from others
- Use “7/11 Breathing”
 - Take a breath in (to the quick count of 7 in your mind)
 - Then slowly breathe out (to the quick count of 11 in your mind)

Controlling Fear and Anxiety Continued

- **Use the AWARE technique:**
- **A:** Accept the anxiety. Don't try to fight it.
- **W:** Watch the anxiety. Just watch it and when you notice it, scale your level of fear and start to breathe longer on the out-breath.
- **A:** Stands for 'Act normally'. Carry on talking or behaving as if nothing is different. This sends a powerful signal to your unconscious mind that its over-dramatic response is actually not needed because nothing that unusual is going on. Like fire fighters coming out and seeing that no emergency is happening and so going back to the fire station.
- **R:** Repeat the above steps in your mind if necessary.
- **E:** Expect the best. One of the greatest feelings in life is the realization that you can control fear much more than you thought possible.



Non-Verbal Communication: Its Impact on Successful Intervention



Body Posture and Movement

- Includes facial expressions, gestures, posture and movements
- Be aware of yourself - your look
- Avoid body postures/movements that appear challenging/argumentative or confrontational
- Maintain a calm demeanor

Its Not What You Say, But How You Say It

Three Key Components of Effective Paraverbal Communication :

Tone

- Try not to inflect impatience, inattention and condescension in you voice

Volume

- Maintain volume appropriate to the situation

Cadence

- Maintain an even rate and rhythm



Physical Intervention: Keeping Everyone Safe

Physical/Chemical Intervention

Kids First of Florida (KFF) prohibits the use of restrictive behavior management interventions (physical) or chemical restraints (medication) by KFF staff and foster parents.

Guidelines for Maintaining the Safety of a Child During an Episode of Aggressive/Out of Control Behavior:

- Have a plan and stay calm
- Request help if the child's aggression escalates to violence
- Separate children involved in an altercation
- Offer to guide the child to a safe location (ex. if a child is exhibiting out-of-control behavior and they are near a busy street, escort the child to a safer location)