

INTRODUCING IT: Reopening Child Care and Early Education Programs during the COVID-19 Pandemic

 **READ IT** (10 minutes)

[Reopening Child Care & Early Education Programs during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

(Society for the Protection and Care of Children, 2020)

This is a quick summary of how children may behave when they return to your care. It also explains why young children may show behaviors that are challenging and how you can help them. The document discusses how you can help yourself when the stress of managing challenging behaviors impacts you.

 **KNOW IT**

Here are the **important ideas** this resource offers:

- Stress impacts everyone's behaviors. Very young children's development can be at risk when they feel stress.
- Young children show they are feeling stress by using behaviors that challenge us or are different from the way they normally act.
- Parents can help their children with the transition. You can talk to parents about how you both can help the child.
- Caregivers may feel stress, too. It is important to be aware of how stress makes you feel, and to know how take care of yourself.
- You are so important to the child! You can use your important relationship to help the child manage stress through your consistent love and patience.

Here are some terms in the resource that may not be familiar to you:

Developmental regression is the child's return to behaviors that were used at a younger age.

Trauma - Trauma is being exposed to something scary, dangerous, or violent. Trauma can make a child feel unsafe. Trauma becomes worse when the scary or dangerous event happens many times or happens for a long time.

Secondary trauma is hearing about or observing somebody else's trauma. When we experience someone else's trauma, we can feel stress, too.

Dissociation is disconnecting ourselves from our feelings, thoughts, and knowing who we are.

Attachment needs – Attachment means having a strong relationship with a child. Attachment needs are the behaviors and responses a child needs to receive from an adult to make the child feel safe and secure.

Purposeful noncompliance – Noncompliance means when a child is disobedient. Purposeful noncompliance is a child using disobedient behavior to tell us something is making him or her feel stress.

Regulate is to control behavior and emotions.



Let's see what you learned from this resource! The answers appear at the end of the guide.

1. **True or false:** Children don't feel or react to changes in their routine or to other people's feelings.
2. **True or false:** People can be negatively impacted by other people's stress.

3. **True or false:** Behavior that is challenging can be a way for children to tell us they are feeling something that makes them feel stress.
4. **True or false:** Predictable routines, caring responses, and giving children words to express their feelings all help children to develop resilience to stress.



THINK ABOUT IT

Take a few minutes to consider these questions. If you want to, write your thoughts down.

1. How do the children in your care behave when they experience big changes in their routines? What are the things you do or don't do to help them manage a big change?
2. How do you respond to child behaviors you find challenging? What new thoughts about children's challenging behaviors did this resource offer that you can use?
3. Why do you think the resource talks about taking care of yourself? Why is or isn't this important?



TRY IT!

Here are some ideas to try:

1. Face masks can be scary to children. A face mask will make you look unfamiliar to the child. You can help the child remember who is behind the face mask.

First, take a picture of yourself without a face mask. Then take a picture of yourself wearing a face mask.

- Send these two photos to the child's family. Ask the parent(s) to talk to their child about what they will see and do at child care. Ask them to talk to the child about the face mask, and who is behind the face mask.
- Make big copies of these photos and hang them in a place where the child can see them. When the child arrives with their parent, show the child the two

pictures. Talk to the child about who you are and what you look like without the mask.

- Wear a button or tag of the photo without the face mask.
- If the child is old enough, ask the family to hold a video call with you. Begin the call without your face mask on. Show the child how you put on the mask. Explain this what you will look like when they return to your care.

2. When children feel stress, they typically use behavior to communicate their feelings. Before children return to your care, find a time to talk with the family. Find out if the child has been showing challenging behaviors at home. Ask the parents what they do to support the child during these times. Talk together about steps you can take that are emotionally supportive while the child is in your care. You can consider:

- Thinking about some phrases to say to the child ahead of time for when he or she shows challenging behaviors. For example, “I know you are upset Mama is leaving. You are feeling _____ (sad? angry? confused?). I will help you find a better way to show me how you are feeling.” OR, “I understand it feels different to be here instead of at home. It’s OK to be upset you are here. Use yourself and your behavior to soothe the child. Reassure the child he is safe and you are there to take care of him. Offer physical comfort. For preschoolers and older, talk about using words to say how they feel so you can help them. [Watch this video](#).
- Asking the parent to bring items that help the child to soothe herself, such as a stuffed animal, blanket or pacifier. Offer these to the child when feelings are becoming too big to manage.
- Noticing what activities brings out challenging behaviors in the child. Think about how you can help to support the child in doing the activity, or, how can you modify the activity to make it feel less overwhelming to the child.
- Creating a special space for the child to go to when he or she is feeling emotions that are too big for them to manage appropriately.

- Having strategies for yourself to help you manage your reaction to challenging behaviors. Practice taking deep breaths, or slowly counting to ten. Have a phrase to remind yourself that the behaviors are not directed to you personally. Try something like “This child needs me to be bigger, stronger, kinder, wiser” before responding to the behavior that is challenging you.
3. Children feel safe when they can predict and feel they know the routines. Make a daily schedule of the routines you use in your care setting. Help them learn the schedule by talking to them about the schedule. Children able to draw pictures can make a drawing for each piece of the schedule. Have them tell you about the drawing, and label the drawing with the name or description of the activity. Hang the pictures up in sequential order where the child can see them.

RECALL IT! Answers: 1. F 2. T 3. T 4. T