

INTRODUCING IT: Better Kid Care - Infant-Toddler Care: Guiding Behavior

 **READ IT** +  **WATCH IT** (90 minutes)

[Better Kid Care self-study module - Infant-Toddler Care: Guiding Behavior](#) (Penn State Extension, 2015) Note: You will need to set up a free account before being able to access the module.

Through reading, watching videos and responding to questions, learn more about how to guide behavior during a child's first three years. Early stages of exploration and interactions among infants and toddlers include common behaviors such as when a child grabs toys, pulls hair, hits, pushes, pokes, and bites. This module shares why young children resort to these behaviors, and how professionals can use positive guidance to help children learn to explore their environment and solve problems without hurting others!

Extend your learning in TRY IT! through a variety of additional ideas and resources. Watch a couple videos on the role of play, learn positive phrasing for rules and directions, and sign up for a free texting service that offers caregivers easy tips and tools to use in your practice!

KNOW IT

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

- Discipline is different than punishment. It can be an opportunity to help children learn how to manage behavior.

- We need to understand how very young children think to know how to respond and guide their behavior.
- These learning behaviors in babies may be seen as challenging:
 - Mouthing other children: Babies see other children as interesting objects to explore.
 - Grabbing other toys: Babies do not understand property rights. When they see a toy, they want to explore it.
 - Putting objects into mouths: Babies explore with all their senses.
- Toddlers are becoming independent as their ability to move and to explore increases. What appears as misbehavior may just be testing abilities or exploration.
- Toddlers are too young to understand the concept of sharing, and most toddlers don't have the language skills to ask to play with a toy. We must help them to learn how to ask for toys, learn to use words to protect their play, and learn to take turns.
- Toddlers believe they are the center of the universe, which can be challenging in group settings.
- Toddlers are not developmentally ready to understand how to share – saying it and knowing how to do it are very different. Toddlers can learn to take turns, which is the first step of learning to share.
- **Redirection** is changing a child's focus from one thing to another. It helps toddlers learn what to do, and models problem solving skills that professionals can build on as the children grow.
- Toddlers rarely hurt other children intentionally. Because they do not yet understand cause and effect, they may unintentionally hurt other children through their exploration and testing.
- Toddlers are unable to understand another person's point of view. Saying to a toddler, "How would you like it if someone hit you with a block?" is pointless, because a toddler is only able to see the world from his own point of view. This skill doesn't emerge until a child is four or five years old.
- Toddlers self-control can be supported by adults through:
 - Modeling out self-control

- Labeling and talking about feelings
- Giving children language to use – remember, they are still new to acquiring and using it!
- Using re-direction
- Creating consistency in rules and routines
- To help prevent challenging behaviors, you can:
 - Give toddlers choices that are appropriate and they are permitted to make
 - Look for patterns as to when the behavior occurs and think about ways to ease those times
 - Use simple directions, one step at a time
 - Allow extra time for young children to process information and take action
 - Use space well – provide uncrowded play space and places to go for quiet
- Time-outs should be avoided with very young children. They don't help very young children learn logical consequences. They also keep children away from us when they most need us to help them become calm.
- The child given frequent time-out may come to believe that her own feelings have little value because the adult can send her to time-out at any time. They also face the danger of being labeled a “troublemaker” or “bad” or by other children.
- Every person is born with his or her own individual way of approaching and experiencing the world. This is called temperament. The three types of temperament are: easy, slow to warm up/cautious, and difficult/active/feisty
- Temperament is made up of a combination of nine components:
 - Activity level
 - Rhythmicity (regularity of habits)
 - Approach/Withdraw (reacting to new situations)
 - Adaptability adjusting to changes or the unexpected)
 - Intensity (energy of how one responds)
 - Mood (Negative/positive or cheerful or cranky)
 - Persistence (ability to stick with a task, even when difficult)
 - Distractibility (Level of focus and concentration)

- Sensory threshold (level of stimulation needed to get a response)
When the temperament of the child and caregiver are well-matched it is called “goodness of fit.”
- Mismatch in temperament can make it difficult to work with some children, and lead to the belief the child may have behavior problems. It is important to know there are no right or wrong, or better or worse temperaments.
- All young children show their emotions through behavior; stress-related behavior may be shown through excessive crying, clinging, hitting, biting, aggressive, or disruptive behavior.
- Stress may come from many different sources and on different levels. Babies and toddlers experience the greatest impact from stressful events and those effects are stronger for children with less adaptable temperaments.
- Young children are unable to de-stress themselves. They need caring, patient adults that are willing to look at underlying factors.



RECALL IT

Let’s see what you learned from this resource! **Choose the answer from choices provided. The answers are provided at the end of the guide.**

1. _____ is an opportunity to guide a young child’s behavior.
a) time-out b) punishment c) substitution d) discipline
2. To be able to guide young children’s behavior, we need to understand how they develop in:
a) Communicating b) thinking and understanding c) making friends d) responding to change
3. Preventing challenging behaviors in toddlers may be helped by :
a) offering choices b) re-directing c) giving language to use d) all of these
4. Our unique way of approaching and experiencing the world is known as:

a) mood b) personality c) affect d) temperament

5. When the temperament of a caregiver and child are well matched, it is called:

a) serve and return b) social learning c) goodness of fit d) rhythmicity



THINK ABOUT IT

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

1. What new thinking did this module offer? What did you find surprising? Will you bring any of this new information into your work? If so, what will you use?
2. Think about the children in your care. Think about those who you feel are easy to deal with, and those that may be difficult to handle. Now think about temperament – both the children’s as well as yours. Do you feel that goodness of fit factors in to how you view the children? What in your own temperament may be at odds with the children that you feel are more difficult? With this in mind, how might you adjust the way you think about them?



TRY IT!

Here are some ideas to try:

1. This self-study module asked you to periodically stop and write down notes on your **TAKE back form**. Look at your notes, and choose the top three tips/areas you would like to try. Think about one child in your care, and write down a plan for using the three identified tips with that child.
2. This resource offered many examples of ways to guide babies and toddlers’ behavior through your sensitive and caring interactions. Another great way to build your interactions – and your relationship - with children is through play.

Watch these two quick videos on play – [Building Babies' Brains through Play](#) (5:26 minutes) from UNICEF and [The Role of Play in Any Setting](#) (8:11 minutes) from the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard.

3. Help toddlers understand rules by telling them what they CAN do, instead of what they can't. Check out **Handout #1 – Using Positive Words** for ideas on how to rephrase common directions.
4. Want to regularly and easily receive tips you can use? Sign up for Head Start's [Text4Teachers free texting service](#). You'll receive useable ideas a couple times per month!
5. Better Kid Care published a list of additional resources to help you to keep learning. **Handout #2 – Guiding Behavior Resources** offers many new sites to visit!

RECALL IT! Answers: 1 – D 2 – B 3 – D 4 – D 5 - C