



Developing Responsibility And Self Management In Young Children: Goals Of Positive Behavior Management

Novella Ruffin, Family and Human Development Specialist, Virginia State University

Child care providers who are good facilitators of the social development of young children also understand the relationship between child care curriculum, care giver demeanor, and discipline in promoting responsibility and a sense of community among young children.

What Are The Main Goals Of Behavior Management?

An issue of overwhelming concern among child care givers/providers is that of managing acting out and disruptive behaviors in children.

This issue becomes more difficult when the child's behavior is seen in a group setting and when the care giver is challenged to respond to behavior concerns of more than one child.

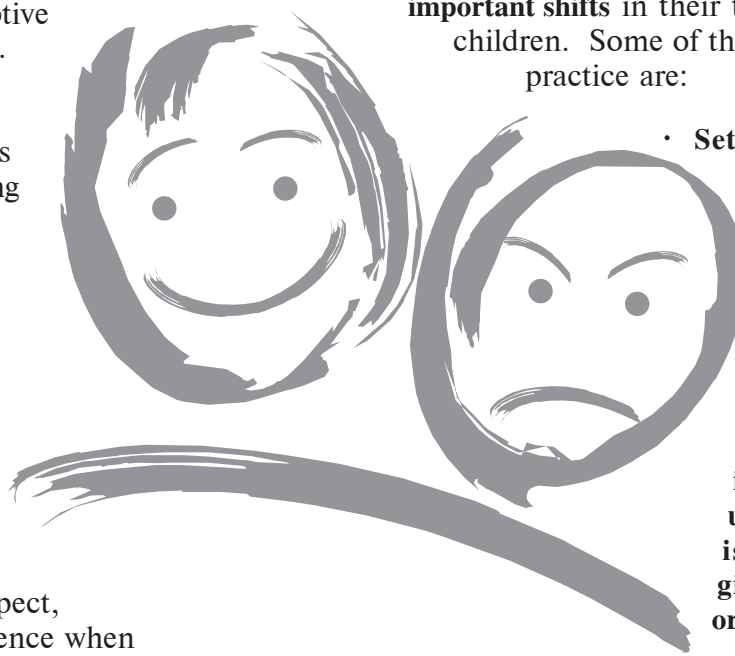
One of the most challenging roles of care givers of small children is to help guide their behavior.

This can be achieved by demonstrating respect, kindness, and persistence when interacting with young children.

All children display undesirable behavior at some time. The ability to manage young children's behavior in a **positive** manner is often challenging

and complex; however, the effective guidance of young children requires a **patient and nurturing care giver who understands the tasks of children at various ages, is aware that normal young children are naturally curious, active and impulsive, and recognizes that the main goals of positive management are to assist children to develop responsibility, to learn and develop skills to control themselves, and to take responsibility for their own behavior.**

The skill to positively manage young children often requires that care givers/providers make some **important shifts** in their thinking about managing children. Some of these shifts in thinking and practice are:



- **Set long term goals for the children in our care beyond the short term goal of keeping peace** - Long term goals of helping children to develop responsibility for their own behavior.

- **Recognize that a change in a child's behavior usually occurs when there is a change in the care giver/provider's behavior or practice.**

- **Avoid engaging in power plays, struggles with children -YOU WILL LOSE AND SO WILL THE CHILD.**

- **Recognize that positive attitudes of encouragement, understanding, and respect by the care giver are the basic conditions for desirable behavior in children** - Avoid the use of threats, put-downs, embarrassing statements, and criticisms to control children's behavior.
- **Keep in mind that children are social beings who have a need to belong and feel significant and important** - Provide/create opportunities for children to share, to be independent, to be recognized, to receive praise, and to be involved in chores.
- **Keep in mind that children are decision-makers** - Create an environment where children are encouraged to make choices and are actively involved in planning activities for the day.
- **Recognize that acting out behavior in young children is often related to their language development** - Young children's language capacity assists them to express their needs. Children may feel and express frustration when they have not yet developed the language to effectively communicate their wants and needs.
- **Make time-out a tool for building self control.** For example, let the child decide when he is ready to cooperate and return to the group. This practice helps children to begin to take responsibility for their own actions.
- **Catch a child doing something right instead of catching him/her doing something wrong.** Many times when a child is behaving desirably, such as playing nicely with a playmate, or sharing his/her toys in a friendly manner, we ignore the child or are too busy at the moment to notice. Giving a child a smile, a word of praise, or a pat on the back can go a long way in making the child feel special, significant, and a sense of belonging.

Do we want children to do as they are told by adults or to learn to tell themselves what to appropriately do? Do we want children to behave because an adult is around or to develop the skills to control their own behavior in any setting? Understanding children's development and providing careful guidance of their behavior can lead them toward developing self management, self confidence, and problem solving skills. Only then is Discipline an effective life guide.

Developmental Stages Of Children's Social Development

Newborn to Eighteen Months - Major Task: Learning to Trust

Cries for needs

Uses senses to learn about the world

Imitates

Explores "who am I and what's me."

Care giver should: Give attention, nurturance, conversation; respond quickly to cries; provide opportunities for the child to explore his world, taste, touch; through your actions, help the child feel that the world is a safe and good place where needs are met with loving care; use crib only for sleeping.

One Year to Mid-Twos - Major Task: Learning Independence

Is curious, messy, affectionate; likes to do things "by myself"; shows emerging independence; bites; has temper tantrums; explores; starts to test limits; gets into everything; begins to talk, run and climb.

Care giver should: Give respect and affection; have patience and a sense of humor; keep limits simple and consistent; avoid setting up power plays over food, sleep, or toilet; offer choices; help balance independence with limits; hold off on toilet training until child shows an interest and you see signs of the next stage; try to reason, but don't expect miracles.

Mid-Twos to Four - Major Task: Learning an Identity

Cooperates; tries hard to please; Learns many new skills; talks a lot; has lots of energy and enjoys noise; develops definite food likes and dislikes but needs less food; shows readiness to use the toilet.

Care giver should: Give affection and respect; have patience and humor; continue to set firm, consistent limits; laugh together, help the child find answers to his/her own questions; discover together.

Mid-Threes to Five - Major Task: Learning an Identity

Is bold, quarrelsome, contrary, full of energy and zest for life; goes from independence to clinging; uses "naughty" words; tells bold stories that may sound like lies; has difficulty sharing or playing cooperatively; learns many new skills and abilities.

Care giver should: Give respect and affection; have understanding and patience; provide outlets and opportunities for all the energy and developing intelligence; continue firm, consistent rules and expectations; accept the testing of limits with a sense of humor; be a model of cooperative behavior; begin to use reason and logic with the child - more possible as a child nears five.

Mid-Fours to Sixes - Major Task: Learning an Identity

Becomes more cooperative with age; shows lots of energy, wiggling, and giggling; loves to talk about self; can do many things and loves to show them off; has many new fears; still tells tales; may try out taking things that belong to others; tattles and is a poor loser; shows interest in numbers and letters; begins to play cooperatively with others, but disagreements can easily occur.

Care giver should: Give affection, clear directions, and expectations; encourage the child to try new things; provide a variety of activities that allow the child to learn by doing; let the child participate in planning activities and doing small, helpful chores; provide opportunities to show off skills.

Mid-Fives to Eight - Major Task: Learning to be Productive and Successful

Is fair minded; shows off; insists on following rules fairly, often to an extreme; begins to prefer friends of the same sex; frequently finds and loses best friends; likes special projects that feel useful, productive, and grown-up; tests limits with determination.

Care giver should: Give flexibility, affection, respect, and moments of undivided attention; give clear and reasonable limits with opportunities for negotiations; assign simple household duties with reminders; be fair and reasonable; provide opportunities to join organized activities without over scheduling; allow the child to plan personal activities.

What Is The Relationship Between Curriculum And Discipline?

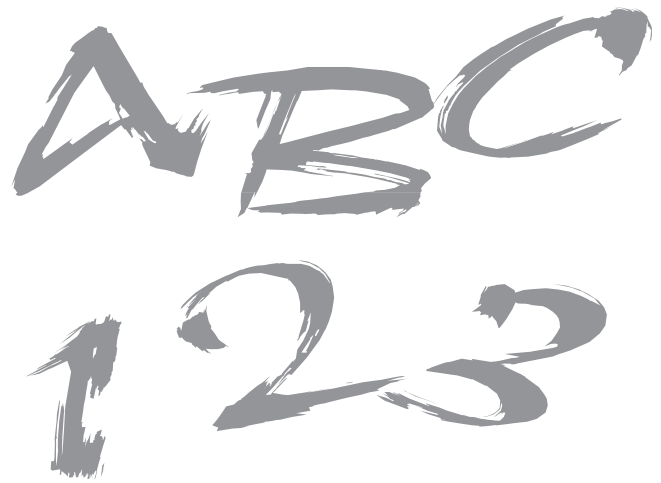
Teaching children responsibility, self control and self management as long term goals cannot be taught in a weekly theme. It is taught through the way care givers handle daily situations with children in their care. By their developmental characters, young children are egocentric; they think only about their needs. They also think about the present, the here and now. As they get

older, they learn to consider others and to think beyond the present. The curriculum should include opportunities for the child to learn social skills through taking on responsibility, involvement in age appropriate activities, and talking about feelings with young children.

Help Children Become Responsible By:

Teaching Responsibility with Discipline and Guidance

- Set a good example
- Talk with children about the feelings of others
- Help children to own their own feelings
- Encourage children to express their own needs to you



- Give children an opportunity to make things better
- Assist children in solving their own problems
- Use fair and logical consequences
- Catch them being good
- Expect good behavior

Teaching Responsibility Through Age Appropriate Curriculum

- Make “clean up” an important part of your play session
- Help children learn to care for themselves
- Give children doable tasks
- Be supportive when children experience failure as well as success
- Give the children real and meaningful work to do
- Keep your word with children
- Help children learn to be good citizens in your child care
- Have high hopes for the children

Talk about all feelings - positive and negative

- Try to use the best “feeling” word to describe what the child is feeling
- Read books about feelings—it’s a great way to discuss feelings with children.

Talking about Feelings helps children develop sensitivity to the feelings of others and to manage their own emotions

Responding to Emotional Outbursts

Many things excite and upset youngsters. It is important for day care providers to know how to respond to emotional outbursts.

Anger

When children become angry because someone else is playing with their favorite toy, an angry response from an adult will make the situation worse. Instead, try to calm the child: “I know you’re angry. Let’s talk about it when you stop crying.” As the child calms down, redirect his attention. Offer a substitute toy to play with for the time being until he can play with the preferred toy.

Fear

Some fears of children are sensible while other fears of children are appropriate but can do no harm to them, such as fear of the dark or of the toilet. Do not make fun of the child; rather, encourage the child to talk about the fear. Help children learn more about the object of their fear. For example, if children are afraid of the dark, you can use flashlights and go to the dark room and play shadow puppets. The children may learn to enjoy the dark. For fear of thunder, an example would be to teach them how to count the seconds between lightning flashes and the thunder.

Frustration

To a young child, a two-minute wait for a toy may seem forever. The child may get frustrated from the wait. Be alert. Sometimes you can anticipate the frustration, and respond by giving the child a substitute toy. You can express sympathy with the child and remind the child that he/she must take turns.

Sadness

When children are sad and crying, they should not be warned against crying or expressing themselves. It’s healthy for boys to learn that men cry, for example. Avoid telling a child that “big boys don’t cry.” Instead, help children to talk about their sadness. It may be helpful at times to leave the child alone.