

Toddlers: Containing the Aggressions

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**Hanna Perkins Center
for Child Development**

Attendance

Demographic Poll

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Agenda

I. Toddlers and aggression

A. Why do toddlers become aggressive?

Do toddlers need aggression?

1. “working fuel” for personality development; skill development (speech, use of perception, thinking, remembering, muscle control)
2. fuel for becoming a separate person

C. Ways toddler show aggression

II. Containing the aggression

A. Protect the toddler

B. Understand the aggression

C. Redirect aggression

III. Group discussion and presentation

IV. Review and reflection

Breakout Group Discussion

You will be put in a breakout group to discuss:

Why do toddlers become aggressive?

The instructor will move from group to group to assist if necessary.

Why do toddlers become aggressive?

Overwhelmed with frustration

- Want to do for themselves, but do not have the capability
- Want to do for themselves but it is not safe
- Feeling helpless
- Being treated like a “baby”

Want to do for themselves

- Not being able to practice self care
- Always being carried when they can walk
- Having the adult “rush in” to do the task

Why do toddlers become aggressive?

Do not have the words to express themselves

Verbal skills are limited

Will use physical aggression

Adults aren't listening

To get attention

They are being ignored

No one is recognizing their capabilities

Not included in the activity

Someone else is getting all the attention

Breakout Group Discussion

You will be put in a breakout group to discuss:

Do toddlers need aggression?

**How does their aggression
help their development?**

The instructor will move from group to group to assist if necessary.

Do toddlers need aggression?

Toddlers need aggression

- “Working fuel” for personality development
 - Development of skills and functions
 - Speech, use of perception, thinking, remembering, understanding the world and muscle control
 - Fuel for becoming a separate person who is capable of doing for self
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- The increase of aggression in a toddler is gradual but the experience for mom and toddler is scary because it is so intense, raw and untamed by social controls, expectations or values .
 - Toddler’s level of anger can bring the adult feel their own aggression which will create power struggles.
 - When parents will give in to the child to avoid the child’s anger:
 - This cause the child to feel "all powerful" and the “boss”
 - Creates a huge behavior and emotional problems as the child develops
 - Interferes with the child’s ability to see life realistically (young children are not capability to make decisions)

How toddlers show aggression.

Ways toddlers show aggression:

- Kicking, hitting, spitting.....can you think of others?



- When adults know what to expect developmentally from toddlers they are prepared for the aggression and can better cope and deal with it.

Containing the aggression

Teacher's job is to protect the toddler: Inside and outside aggression can be overwhelming and interrupt the toddlers smooth development

Forms of Aggression

Inside Aggression

- When a toddler is overwhelmed by too much aggression, the anxiety they are feeling will cause them to have a tantrum.

Outside Aggression

- Too much anger in their environment.
 - Movies, t.v. , songs with harsh words
 - Anger, violence in the home
 - Mean behaviors: teasing, yelling, fighting

Effects of Aggression

- Aggression in the environment increases the aggression in the toddler and limits their good feelings which are needed for building resiliency, which helps children cope with disappointments and difficulties in life.
- Toddlers who push, hit, bite, scream in rage and grab toys from others does not feel safe and fears the adult will allow other toddlers to do the same to them.

The toddlers fear of aggression

Teachers job is to protect the toddler from inside and outside aggression which is overwhelming and interrupts the toddler's smooth development

“Toddlers worry that the aggression will get out of control and hurt or overwhelm themselves and others”

“Coping with the toddler's aggression in ways that serve his personality growth is the most important developmental task during this phase”

“Toddlers are relieved when the aggression is calmly contained and resolved”

“Assuring toddlers that you will keep them safe sets the tone of the classroom, the toddler can rely on the teacher's ability to help them contain their aggression”

(Toddlers and Their Mothers: Coping With Aggression E. Furman 1994)

Understanding the Aggression

Receive, modify and hold the aggression

Understand the aggression, what causes it and where it comes from. Learn to help the child put it into words so the toddler can own the feeling. When children can own their feelings, they can better manage and tolerate the feelings.

Understand the child's fear of "too big" feelings

Help the child identify the level of the feeling, so it can be contained. When children can understand that some feelings are little, or medium, they are able to respond more appropriately. "It seems like you are having a feeling that is too big to handle, maybe it is just a little feeling".

Put the child's feelings into words

"You feel angry when you can't pull your socks up by yourself, I'll help you practice so you can have a good feeling, soon you will be able to do this by yourself"

Help the child regain their kind feelings

"Remember when you were playing with Tommy and you were sharing toys. You were having a lot of fun and felt so good about yourself. It hurts your feelings when Tommy is not nice to you, but you can tell him, and soon you will have good feelings again."

Redirect the Aggression

Redirect aggression to productive “me do” activities

- Putting feelings into words, performing tasks, practicing skills and self care “lets off steam” and discharges the aggression in useful, productive ways.

Define their increased aggression as a working feeling not just anger

- “I know you are missing mommy, lets draw her a picture to let her know how much you missed her today”

Help the toddler want to feel good again

- “soon you will remember your kind and loving feelings towards me”

Let the toddler know you will keep them safe

- When children do not feel safe from harm, too much excitement and aggression you need to assure them that you will keep them safe.
- “I am not being kind if I let you have a too big feeling inside, if you are out of control, it is too scary for you. Let me keep you safe, and soon you will be able to keep yourself safe”

Protect toddlers from overwhelming feelings

All feelings are “BIG” to children

- Toddlers have no self-control or awareness of right from wrong
- Toddlers only have “have to” feelings (have to touch everything. Like infants have to put things in their mouth)
- Toddlers do not have appropriate expectations for themselves, they see themselves as big because they want to be big like the people they love.

Adults have to help toddlers stop and think before they do

- Toddlers are driven by impulse, but with practice, can learn control.

Childs fear of too much anger

- The anger feeling is inside the child, but the toddler will see anger in loud noises (ie. lawn mowers, vacuum cleaners, flushing toilets...)
- Adults must help them understand the machines are not angry, but “just a machine doing their job”

Containing (taming) the aggression

- It's the developmental task of learning to be kind and have pity.
- The process of becoming aware of other's feelings and acting with respect to their feelings.
- When adults are kind to toddlers, they learn to be kind to others.

Group discussion and presentation

Read the example and identify: Why was the child aggressive; how they are showing aggression; and identify what you did to help the toddler contain their aggression and how to redirect the aggression into productive behavior.

Anita, aged 2, grabbed the red bucket and began shoveling sand into it. Joey, the previous “owner” of the bucket, shouted: “Mine! My bucket!” When words don’t get his bucket back, Joey grabs for the bucket, but Anita pulls it away and jumps out of the sand box. Joey follows Anita, pushes her, grabs the bucket, and returns to the sandbox. When Anita approaches the sandbox once more, Joey carefully guards his bucket, wrapping his arm around it and watching Anita closely. The Toddler Teachers, who had seen the drama unfold, walk across the playground and recite the “use your words” speech for what feels like the millionth time. What else can you do?

Justin, aged 16 months, is having a great time with the cell phone in he found in the classroom. He presses buttons and makes all kinds of pictures come up on the screen. When his teacher sees what Justin is doing, and realized he has her cell phone, she grabs the phone out of his hand and says, “No way, Justin, This is not for kids.” Justin shouts back: “I want dat!” as he kicks the teacher with gusto. When the teacher picks him up to calm him down, Justin kicks again with both feet. How do you help Justin with is aggression?

During snack time, Lacey, aged 11 months, has finished her cookies and wants a bite of the cookie her teacher is eating. Lacey kicks her feet, waves her arms, and makes lots of sounds. But the teacher just gives her another spoonful of applesauce. Lacey swings her arms and knocks the spoon out of her mother’s hand. Applesauce all over the wall! Lacey bangs her hands on the high chair and starts to cry. What steps do you take now to help Lacey?

Bella, aged 30 months, is having a hard time saying goodbye to her mom at child care. As her mother starts to leave, Bella reaches out for her, sobbing, “Don’t go, Mommy!” Chandra, Bella’s friend, comes over to try and comfort Bella. Bella surprises her by roughly pushing her arm away and running to her cubby. Bella sits curled up under her coat hook, crying. When Talisa, one of the teachers, approaches Bella to see if she wants to read a story, Bella hits her. What do you do?

Review

- Toddlers become aggressive when they are overwhelmed with frustration; when they want to do for themselves, but do not have the capability or it is not safe, when they feel helpless; or are being treated like a “baby”.
- Toddlers need aggression because it is “working fuel” for personality development and helps in the development of skills and functions (speech, use of perception, thinking, remembering, understanding the world and muscle control). It is the fuel for becoming a separate person who is capable of doing for self.
- When the aggression level in toddlers increases, it is scary for the toddler. It is intense, raw and untamed by social controls, expectations or values .
- Forms of Aggression: ***Inside Aggression and Outside Aggression.***
- The effects of aggression limits their good feelings which are needed for building resiliency, which helps children cope with disappointments and difficulties in life.
- In order to contain the aggression, we must notice the toddlers changes in behavior that indicate the level of aggression is increasing; understand the “too big” feelings” the toddler is having; put the feelings into words and help the toddler regain their kind feeling again.
- Toddlers need help turning their aggression in productive, working feelings.
- Providing a safe classroom environment (including routines, schedules and rules) helps toddlers keep their aggression contained.
- Helping toddlers contain their aggression is the beginning of helping them develop empathy.



Thank
You

Please complete your evaluation

About Hanna Perkins Center

www.hannaperkins.org

Hanna Perkins Center for Child Development is a non-profit partner with parents, educators and mental health professionals to help children understand and manage their emotions for success in school and life. **Services include:**

HANNA PERKINS SCHOOL: State-chartered kindergarten, preschool, parent/toddler program and dedicated Autism Spectrum Disorders

HADDEN CLINIC: Mental health assessment, counseling and therapy—from birth to 18, and for mothers struggling with postpartum depression.

CONSULTATION AND TRAINING with schools and early learning centers.

CONTINUING EDUCATION for educators, child care professionals and others who frequently work with children.