

Ideas Into Practice

Segment 5: Responding to Behavior Problems and Resolving Conflicts

Option A: Redirecting Children's Behavior

As discussed in this segment, a powerful classroom management strategy is to redirect children who are performing undesirable behavior. If a child is trying to snatch a peer's scissors, for example, a caregiver might say, "Oh, Hannah, look! There's another pair of scissors over here you can use. You don't need to take Emily's."

Step 1: For a few days, practice this strategy. Every time a child performs an undesirable behavior or breaks a rule during this period, try redirecting the child's behavior before using any other strategy. Avoid reprimands or consequences, at least until you have tried guiding the child to a more desirable way of behaving. Here is an example:

A child is getting up and running around at lunch time, disturbing other children who are trying to eat. Instead of firmly telling the child to sit down, a caregiver practices redirection, saying, "Raymond, if you're all done eating, why don't we take your plate and cup over to the trash and wash our hands. Come on, I'll go with you."

Step 2: Write anecdotal records on your experiences.

Step 3: After a few days of practice, write a brief report, answering the following questions:

- How well did redirection work? Did children perform more desirable behavior when using this strategy? Were there any cases where the method did not work and firm reprimands were required?
- Were there individual children for whom redirecting worked best? Were there any children for whom the method did not seem to work? Why?
- Which were your most effective examples of redirection? Why did these work so well?
- Will you begin to use redirection more often in your classroom, based on this experience? Why or why not?

Option B: Practicing Conflict Resolution

Step 1: During the **next three conflicts** between children that arise in your classroom, try out the steps of the conflict resolution process discussed in this segment:

- Keep the children together when the conflict occurs.
- Ask them to discuss what is happening and help them to clarify the problem.
- Ask them to come up with solutions to the problem. If children have trouble thinking of solutions, suggest several options for them to choose from (e.g., "You could sit together on the blue carpet square, or one of you could get another blue square for your friend to sit on. Which do you want to try?")

- Check later with children to see how the solution worked.

(You might want to review the portion of this segment focusing on conflict and reread the videotape of a teacher implementing some of the steps of this strategy.)

Step 2: Write anecdotal records on how the conflict resolution process worked for each of these three conflicts.

Step 3: Study your notes and write a brief report on the strengths and weaknesses of the method, guided by the following questions:

- Which conflict was the most difficult to resolve? Why?
- Which steps in the method seemed to be most effective? Which ones did not seem to work well?
- To what degree were children able to participate in resolving their own conflicts?
- How would you evaluate your own performance? Were there steps that were hard for you to implement?
- Will you try the conflict resolution process more often in your classroom, based on this activity? Why or why not?

Option C: Videotaping Your Own Interactions with Children

As described in this segment, children are likely to copy the behavior of adults. So, modeling is a very powerful way that caregivers can teach children positive behaviors. How positive are you in the classroom? Do you believe you are showing children through your own behaviors how to be kind, warm, enthusiastic, and joyful?

Step 1: Sometimes it's challenging for caregivers to monitor their own interactions. Ask a colleague to videotape you interacting with children in at least three different settings (e.g., outdoors, during free play, during group time) and on at least three different days.

Step 2: In a private place, watch the video and study your interactions.

Step 3: Write a brief report on what you see, guided by the following questions:

- What was your overall feeling about the way you interact with children? Which things did you see that troubled you, if any? Which things did you particularly like about your interactions?
- How often did you model warmth and kindness toward children? How often were you too gruff or short with them? What were children's responses to these behaviors?
- To what degree did you model enthusiasm and curiosity? Did you appear to be happy to be at work during the videotaping?
- What are some things you might change about your manner or your behavior in order to help children learn more positive social behaviors?