

AGGRESSIVENESS IN CHILDREN

Children's aggressiveness can be a big issue in early childhood programs. Some parents, worried about their own child, may label other children in your program. When this happens, it may seem the parent is trying to undermine your efforts to help these children fit into your program.

Parents who are concerned about aggressive children, either theirs or someone else's, may often exaggerate the aggression. So, what can you do?

- Encourage the parent or parents to visit the classroom and see what really happens
- This can reassure parents that while aggressive behavior does occur, the room is far from being a constant battlefield

As early childhood educators, we need to help parents understand aggression in the context of children's emotional development. In addition to inviting parents to observe in the classroom, you might plan a family meeting that features someone knowledgeable about children's emotional development.

**SEE THE SAMPLE LETTER ON THE NEXT
PAGE THAT YOU CAN SEND TO PARENTS
TO HELP THEM HANDLE
AGGRESSIVENESS IN CHILDREN**



***“You can discover more
about a person in an hour of
play, than in a year of
conversation.”***

— Plato

Dear Parents,

Children who have not learned to control anger or frustration often resort to aggressive behavior. Aggression is a normal expression of emotion in young children. They have not yet learned acceptable ways to channel their anger.

Aggressive behavior includes hitting, throwing things, name-calling, spitting, biting, pushing or pulling, forcing someone to do or not do something, destroying property, and taking someone else's possessions.



Our program recognizes the importance of dealing with aggressive behavior. Teachers help children find acceptable ways to express their anger, negotiate to get what they want or need, and handle aggression directed toward them by peers.

We encourage children to express their feelings in words and to negotiate resolutions to conflict. We facilitate conversations between children when problems arise. Sometimes we even suggest words that help communicate the children's feelings. In time, with adult support, they are able to use these social skills to solve their own problems.

At home, when your child behaves aggressively, try redirecting his or her attention by offering a choice of other activities. Emphasize words rather than actions. With time and practice, a child will learn to say, "I'm mad because I want to play with the truck," instead of lashing out.

As adults, we can help children learn to express negative emotions in more appropriate ways. And a positive attitude on our part is the best teacher.