



Milestones Learning Center Family Minutes

A resource from our family to yours

March 2024

Hitting Hurts!

Kind Hands

As a child grows, they develop a better command of their bodies and what starts as exploration of their environment with touch can grow into a form of communication. Although hitting can be a natural transition from crying to getting personal needs met, it doesn't mean it should not be addressed. Parents should not allow their child to hit them, a sibling, a family pet, or a peer. Although a child might not understand that when they hit someone, they are hurting that person. All hitting should be addressed to ensure that no one is harmed.

Why is my child hitting?

Children who do not possess enough language will resort to physical responses to express themselves; whether it be through tugging, pushing, hitting, or biting. Toddlers are frequently found struggling with problem-solving, resulting in frustration. Toddlers do not have the ability to reason. It is important to remember that a child who is hit at a young age is not doing so to cause harm, but rather to express a need. This does change for older children. It is important to model words to build a child's vocabulary to support their growing need to communicate.

Continued

"Use your words"

Although it is important to have children use their words instead of a physical response, it is not always productive to tell a child to use their words. Telling a child this assumes that they have the language they need to fully express themselves. A child who is struggling with developing language needs to have words modeled for them. It is important to not assume a child has the language they need or that they are choosing to not use language to resolve conflicts.



Yes, it is very important to teach young children that hitting is not an acceptable response for strong emotions. Having an immediate reaction to their hitting and working to resolve the root cause will help a young child understand the expectations of being safe and kind to others. Parents will at times become concerned as to why their child is hitting others. It is important to recognize that just because a child has developed the behavior of hitting, it does not mean they are, or will be, a bully. It is more often an indicator of a need to learn how to better handle a situation such as not winning a game, not having enough language to fully express themselves to be understood, or simply not being able to share.



"It's ok, my child only hits me" – NOPE! It is never ok for a child to hit. If your child is hitting you, this needs to be immediately addressed.

"Well, they hit because..." – NOPE! There is never a good reason for hitting. Hitting as a form of communication is a sign that the child needs more support in learning language or regulating emotions.

Help! How do I stop my child from hitting?

When a child develops a negative behavior, parents will often seek a root cause; pointing a finger at each other, themselves, their child's playmates. The truth is, hitting is a natural form of communication and until a child develops enough language to use, they very well might hit. As a parent, it is important to not

take hitting personally. Simply have a plan in place that works wherever and whenever the hitting occurs.

Step One: Tell your child the concern "hitting hurts."

Step Two: Remove the child from the person they hit, even if it is you.

Step Three: When your child is calm, model "gentle touch."

Step Four: Always praise your child when they are using their hands in a kind manner.

Stop and Stay Cool

Parenting is often about preventing a behavior from forming. When parents can see a situation forming that could result in their child becoming upset, giving them tools to self-regulate can help. "Stop and Stay Cool" is a **strategy kids can use to calm themselves down** when they feel strong emotions like anger or anxiety.

Stop and Stay Cool has five steps:

- Notice when you are about to lose control
- Tell yourself to stop and think
- Wrap your arms around yourself and give a big hug
- Practice breathing slowly while counting to five
- Regain control and return to the learning or social activity

What not to do. As parents we can become frustrated when a young child repeats behavior that we do not like. It is important to always remember that they are learning, and our reactions are kept to their development.

Here is a list of responses that adults should avoid:

- Do not hit back or spank.
- Do not lose your temper.
- Do not get in their face with anger or lecture them.
- Do not give the undesirable behavior more attention or energy than necessary.
- Do attempt to correct when your child is still upset.

FAMILY READ

Taco Falls Apart
by Brenda S. Miles PhD.

Meet Taco. The world expects so much from him... tacos must stay strong without much support, tacos must stay open without much room, and tacos must keep it all together, all the time! This book gets kids thinking about how their thoughts shape their feelings and behavior.

<https://www.amazon.com/Taco-Falls-Apart-Brenda-Miles/dp/1433842513>



References

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