



Changing Behavior

Exploring Positive Discipline

Created for Wildwood Resources 2021 (3 hours of Social Emotional Continuing Education)

Young children can be fascinating, frank, fun, and at times, frustrating. They are constantly exploring their world, trying out new behaviors, and behaving in all sorts of ways that show their need for guidance on what is good behavior. But how do you guide behavior in children so young?

Certainly, it is very important for caregivers of young children to have patience and to love children. Unfortunately, that is not enough. There are so many moments in a childcare setting that leave us with a sense of wonder at the amazing purity and growth of young children. However, there are also moments that test our patience and make us wish we had more tactics, more skills, and more tricks to get children to do the right thing and remember how to do the right thing.

Of course, any type of physical punishment is strictly forbidden in a childcare setting. Not only can it do great damage to a young person's physical body and psyche, but physical punishment is illegal and should not be used under any circumstances. If words are used to berate a child, the caregiver runs the risk of damaging a child's self-esteem and may have the opposite effect of the intended. The child may turn his ears off to what you are requesting of him rather than doing what you want. What can you do? As a caregiver you must maintain order and safety for all the children in your care. You can't let children hurt themselves or others, and you must take special care to allow them freedom to explore and learn in the setting you provide.

It is a difficult balancing act that any provider takes on when caring for and educating children. Understanding how to help children explore and learn while also ensuring safety and order is the ultimate goal of this course.

Infancy: Trust vs. Mistrust (*Hope*)

~ Age range: 0 to 12-18 months

Explanation

When parents and caregivers successfully guide children through this first stage, the child develops the virtue of hope. If a child's basic needs are met consistently, he begins to trust that they will always be met, and he develops the hope and trust that the world will always provide. Most often, this stage is largely dependent on the quality of the mother/child relationship, but also

relies on caregiver/child interaction when it is a large part of the child's day. In this stage, a child needs minimal uncertainty and maximum comfort. In a non-home care situation, it is especially important that the caregiver is dedicated to providing the affection, stability, and care that would otherwise be present at home. Because the child's understanding is brought about principally through interaction with primary caregivers, it is vital that those caregivers realize how to successfully support the child's journey through the stage.

Parent's/Caregiver's Job:

Provide the child with love, affection, security, warmth, and consistency. Adults must also assure the child has their basic needs met in a timely fashion: food, safety, and comfort.

Outcome:

A child gains trust that the parent or caregiver will provide for him. As a child develops this trust, separation anxiety will lessen, and the child will develop a belief and certainty that the mother (or other) will return. The child has confidence in the future and feels that the world will provide for him. If caregivers do not provide an adequately safe environment or are not able to respond appropriately to a child's physical and emotional needs, a sense of distrust will develop that will be more difficult to overcome in later stages. If a child's basic needs are not being met, the child may become frustrated and develop feelings of worthlessness and a belief that his needs will not be met. Developing trust in infancy sets the stage for a lifelong expectation that the world will be a good and pleasant place to live.

Toddler: Autonomy vs. Shame/Doubt (*Willpower*)

~ Age range: 18 months to 3 years



Explanation:

During the toddler stage, children are finding their own voice and their own will, they are gaining the skills to make decisions on their own and to act on their own. In the first stage, children had to depend on someone else to fulfill all their needs. From eating, going to the bathroom, moving from place to place, or exploring the areas around them, they were limited and relied on others to fulfill their wishes. As they enter the second stage, they have gained enough gross motor skills to walk easily from place to place, which aids their exploration of their will and wants. Toddlers have also gained enough fine motor skills to reach for and grab what they want. What some call the "terrible twos" is just the process of young human beings realizing for the first time that they can move where they want, grab what they want, look at what they want, and use the restroom when they want. Very recently in their lives, children were fairly helpless. In the second stage, they come into their "will".

Parent's/Caregiver's Job:

Give children patient and encouraging support with limits. If children are encouraged to

realize the proper use of their will to learn and explore, they will develop a strong secure base that will enable them to trust their own judgments and wants. Of course, proper boundaries must also be established for the safety of the child and those around him. Without proper boundaries to guide him and through unsuccessful and painful outcomes, he will begin to question his own will and decisions. Caregivers must allow adequate autonomy (independence) within the limits of safety and propriety. Create situations, introduce objects, and build an environment for the child to safely explore. This will encourage a sense of confidence in his ability to successfully try out his wants and needs. When he oversteps his boundaries or does something wrong, make sure to keep his sense of self-esteem intact, even when warning or punishing.

Outcome:

The child has a strong self-worth and an intact self-esteem. He is comfortable in his own decision-making skills about how he should interact with the world and whether his interactions are approved by his caregivers. The child has gained the virtue of willpower and the autonomy to safely exercise that willpower in his engagement with the world and the people in it. This autonomy aids him in acquiring subsequent virtues and qualities because it instills in him a confidence for taking safe chances and learning from the outcomes of his actions.

If parents or caregivers are overly restrictive, overly punitive, or seek to unnecessarily limit the child's activities, they run the risk of developing a sense of shame in the child. He will become unsure of his own decisions and be tentative to explore new areas and learn new things. This doubt will limit his acquisition of later virtues until he learns to overcome it.

Preschool: Initiative vs. Guilt (*Purpose*)

~ Age range: 3 to 6 years



Explanation:

In this stage, autonomy is accompanied by a new virtue: initiative. Children in this stage have more experience imitating adults and peers, and they begin to understand that they are capable of planning and undertaking tasks on their own.

In addition to their added experience, children have new mental and locomotor powers, and a greater understanding of the basic laws that govern the physical world. This allows them to formulate more complex goals for play. Because children of this age are more engaged socially with each other and caregivers, new challenges arise that were not present as toddlers. They need purposeful, active behavior to overcome these challenges and assume responsibility for their engagement with the world. Imitation is no longer enough. They begin to create their own play situations, make up stories, come up with novel uses of toys, and use original dialogue. In all these avenues of play, children experiment with adult scenarios to explore their ideas about the adult world.

It is also at this time that the child begins to develop a conscience. Hand in hand with this new conscience is the new word “Why?” which they use often to understand the moral of decisions. Children in this stage may engage in “risk-taking” behaviors in order to assert their independence. They may also start engaging in irrational, aggressive behavior out of frustration and their inability to achieve their goals. Though children in this stage are spending more time with other children, their most important relationships continue to be with the immediate family and caregivers.

Parent’s/Caregiver’s Job:

Seek to develop a sense of responsibility within the child, which increases initiative. Adults may introduce more challenging games, activities, and responsibilities, and support children’s efforts to expand their play into new realms of complexity. The child may feel irrational guilt for being unable to accomplish goals because she has not yet developed emotional knowledge to deal with her failures. Encouragement and support, as always, help to alleviate this frustration.

Outcome:

If the child successfully learns to plan and execute her own activities, she will learn to trust her own initiative. She will be confident that her plans will come to a fruitful conclusion, and that she will be able to plan even more complicated tasks for herself as she gets older.

If a child does not learn to trust her initiative, guilt may prevent her from trusting her ability to actively engage in the world, leaving a sense of shortcoming that will be difficult to deal with as she progresses to further stages.

Positive Discipline Introduction *Discipline (v): to teach or train*



The true meaning of discipline is very different from the common usage prevalent today “Discipline” has come to mean punishment. True discipline, however, is an act of teaching that gives a child a new skill or trait and is one that need not include punishment

(physical or otherwise) at all. Positive discipline trains a child to do what is right, rather than what is wrong. It builds the correct behavior and creates a closer relationship between caregiver and child. Positive discipline allows for methods of managing behavior that also dissuades the child from the wrong behavior while modeling appropriate and positive adult behavior.

Have you ever heard an adult scream at a child to stop yelling? This is an example of modeling the incorrect behavior you are trying to stop. A child sees the adult engaging in the very behavior he is telling the child not to engage in and learns the opposite lesson than intended. Physical punishment takes on the same dimensions. Children will more often do what we do, and not what we say. If a child experiences an adult physically punishing him, and yet that adult also tells him not to hit others, he senses that something is not quite right. Should he do what that adult says, or do what the adult does? Just like adults, kids follow the example that is set for them. It is therefore important that the way in which we guide behavior also shows children how to be loving, caring, supportive, and firm at the same time.

Firmness and consistency are just as important as modeling. Positive discipline does not advocate letting children get away with bad behavior.

Positive discipline begins with respect for the child. Though children are young, they deserve caring support as they navigate new situations and adult expectations. Through showing respect, the adult essentially communicates to the child that they are important, that their learning and their character are important, and that the adult will always be there for them. Being there for a child includes praising them for correct behavior, helping them learn expectations, and nipping incorrect behavior in the bud.

Positive Discipline

Technique #1

~Give them a choice



When a care giver wants a child to do something, offer the child two options, both of which are positive options. For example, if a child is running down the hallway, the care giver might say, “Joe, we aren’t allowed to run in the hallway, but you can tiptoe or walk like a robot. Which one do you want to do? Tiptoe or walk like a robot.” The care giver gave the child two valid, positive options to engage in. If the child says that he wants to run, the care giver can again tell him that there are only two options, and that if he does not choose one, the care giver will choose one for him.

When children get a chance to choose, they take ownership of the behavior that they choose and are more likely to follow through with the behavior. It goes the same for adults. If we have a say in our day, we are less likely to grumble and are more likely to do what we choose.

Example:

A child comes to circle time but doesn't want to sit down. You say, "Look Sue, there are lots of letters here on the carpet. Our rule is that everyone has to sit during circle time. Would you like to sit on letter R or Letter T? R or T? I will let you choose. It is your decision, but you have to pick one.

Positive Discipline Technique #2 ~ *Avoid Temptation*

Adults and children alike are tempted by different things and different scenarios. I may be tempted by a plate full of cookies.



A child's temptation may be a certain toy that belongs to someone else. Whatever the difficulty, it is best to manage these temptations proactively. If we want to be slim, we should avoid hanging out in the room with the cookies. In the same manner, we should be mindful when children can be tempted. If you are planning a circle time, and you know that Joe and Sue do not get along well, avoid temptations! Don't sit them next to each other. The better you know your children; the better you can reduce temptation. If you plan correctly you can build the whole day around minimizing the children's various temptations, until they gain the strength to overcome these on their own. Some adults argue that children should face the temptations directly, but common sense argues against it. When young children are distracted or tempted, they do not have the tools adults have to overcome their desires. Children, on the other hand, do not have the skills for focusing yet. Distractions and temptations can lead them far away from where you want them to be. For childcare providers and children, it is important to minimize these challenges. There will already be enough struggles without trying to create them!

Positive Discipline Technique #3 ~ **ABC**

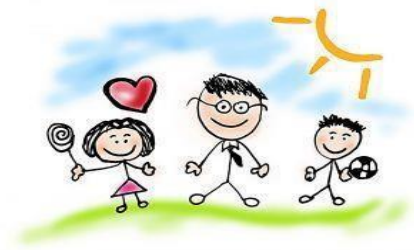
This technique is not to teach the children letters. Instead, it teaches the caregivers a technique. **Antecedent (A) (after), Behavior (B), Consequence (C)**. If a child seems to have trouble every day, if he throws a fit and can't be calmed down, the caregiver can use the "ABC technique" to determine what is triggering the behavior and help the child overcome his difficulties. The **Antecedent** can be identified as the occurrence (trigger) that leads directly to the unwanted **Behavior**. When the caregiver identifies the **Antecedent**, she can be on the lookout for its occurrence, and try to keep the child away from it, so that the fitful **Behavior** does not occur. If the caregiver cannot keep the child away from the

Antecedent she might be able to prepare the child for the occurrence so that he will not respond in the usual negative way. If the caregiver simply cannot keep the child from acting-up each time there is an occurrence, the caregiver may have to use a **Consequence**. She may want to warn the child of what the **Consequence** will be before the occurrence, so that he knows what will happen and will try to avoid it by refraining from the behavior. Notice that the **ABC** technique is a proactive way for a caregiver to deal with a difficult behavior. It respects the child by trying to figure out why he is misbehaving and gives the caregiver a tool to correct it.

Example:

You notice that any time there is art center, Jimmy invariably gets upset and cries and is hard to console and settle down. He might cry for half an hour, and it takes a lot of effort to manage him and the other children when this happens. Using ABC, you observe the art center closely when Jimmy goes there. You notice that he gets upset when anyone else touches the community paint. In this case, all it takes is to show and explain to him how everyone uses the paint, talk about how we all share, and that all the other children share with him, too. Other scenarios may be more in-depth and may require using a consequence.

Positive Discipline Technique #4 ~ Modeling



Modeling is another way to describe being a role model.

Adults are looked up to by young children more than any other age. They want to be like you, show you things, give you a hug, and tell you they love you. Everything you do has an effect on the children in your care, and they are watching you far more often than you realize.

As a role model, you are demonstrating patience, kindness, love, responsibility, organization, fairness, and a multitude of other traits in your daily care or teaching practice. What you do, children will invariably also try to do. Because of this, your dealings with other children must be respectful while being firm, must be kind while being corrective, and must be truthful while being fair. More than an individual technique, modeling is a way of being in which you consciously demonstrate the behaviors and attitudes you would like to see in the children in your charge. Do well, and they will too. They'll do as you do.

Example:

A child comes to you and hits you on the leg. Instead of yelling at him or hitting him, you get down on his level, eye-to-eye and say firmly but with kindness, "Listen, that really hurts, and we don't want anyone to get hurt here, so you must not hit me. Do you understand? When you hit

people, it hurts. I don't want to get hurt and I don't want anyone else to get hurt either. If you hit me again, there be will a consequence." In this instance, you show the children around you that you will not tolerate the hitting, but neither are you getting mad or striking back. Children can trust you to protect them, and they see you as a respectful, but in-charge adult.

Positive Discipline Technique #5 ~ **On the Child's Level**



Adults often forget to look a life through a child's eyes. How strange and imposing it must be to always be looking up at people twice your size. In order to give children, respect and comfort, we should kneel or squat down to look at them eye-to-eye when comforting or speaking with them. Of course, it is not necessary to get on the child's level every time there is an interaction, but it is important to do so when you need to speak with a child at length, when the child needs comforting, or when a child needs to take your words to heart

Example:

Samantha just messed up her painting at the art table and is crying. You come to her, kneel, put your arm around her, and look at her eye-to-eye to comfort her with encouraging words.

Positive Discipline Technique #6 ~ **Validation**



Children need to feel like they are heard and that their feelings are accepted and honored. "There is nothing to be upset about! It is just a toy. She'll be able to play with it when Jordan gets tired of it in two minutes. There is no reason to cry!" Unfortunately, for both little and big people, telling someone that their feelings are silly or unnecessary does nothing to help them work through them. Instead, it is important to validate children's feelings in such a way that they know you honor what they are going through. Often, all children need to know is that you hear them and feel for them. They may suddenly perk-up and go back to their happy selves after only a few words of validation and encouragement.

Examples:

Olivia was playing with her two best friends during outdoor play time. Her friends tell her that they don't want to play with her. You observe her leaning against the outside wall, crying her eyes out. You come over to her, get down on her level and say, "Are you feeling sad? It must feel bad when

people don't want to play with you. I'm sure there is someone who will play with you. Do you want to stay here for a while?"

Cole tries to do his art project but spills glue all over the paper. There are no more papers for him to start over. He goes into the corner of the room and sits with his arms and legs crossed. He doesn't want to participate anymore. You sit down next to him, and ask, "Are you ok?" He responds, "I can't do art 'cause I spilled the glue." You ask, "How does that make you feel?" "Mad and sad." He responds "I am so sorry you are feeling sad. It really can be upsetting when you can't do art. I know I like art and wouldn't like it if I couldn't do it. Do you want to sit here for a while and then go do blocks?"

Positive Discipline Technique #7 ~ **Demonstrate Respect**



Children respond to adults who respect and take an interest in them. When you value what children say and do, they are more likely to connect with you and listen to what you have to say. Not only does it create a pleasant and positive atmosphere in the classroom, but it models respectful relationships for the children. When a child sees the caregiver respecting the children and treating them with kindness, interest, and encouragement, they will try to imitate it with the other children being cared for. It is always amazing to hear a child imitating a kind phrase that the caregiver often says. Joey says to Charlotte, "You are really good at blocks. Awesome!" Few experiences are more heartwarming to a caregiver than to witness a child imitating your good behavior. Demonstrating respect is just one aspect of modeling correct behavior for children.

Examples:

Connor and Gabo are using the blocks to create a castle. You say, "Whoa! That is a pretty big castle, you guys. You must have been working on it for a long time!"

Bella comes into the classroom in the morning. You greet her with a smile and ask her how she is doing. You tell her how happy you are to see her and that you're excited for the day because you'll be talking about penguins during circle time, and you know she loves penguins.



Positive Discipline Technique #8 ~ **Incompatible Alternative**

Often, young children do not know why they are doing what they are doing. They are following impulses that they have not yet learned how to control. If a child like candy, and candy is placed in front of him, he may not have the tactics to distract

him from the temptation. Caregivers can keep children from unnecessarily difficult situations by using incompatible alternatives. If a child has trouble keeping his hands to himself during circle time, the caregiver can give him a stuffed animal to hold and tell him, "Hold on tight to this and keep him safe during circle time." The child, having been given a job and having his hands full, will be less likely to touch other children. Holding the stuffed animal is incompatible with the undesired behavior - touching other children. This technique can be used in various ways and in many different circumstances, anywhere and anytime the caregiver realizes a child needs to be engaging in a different behavior.

Examples:

You notice that Jack likes to go directly to the sand table and make a mess every day right when he comes in. When Jack arrives, you tell him that you have a special job for him. and you need his help. You need him to make sure that the class pet/fish/plant is healthy. If he is old enough, he can do it on his own and report to you. If he is younger, you can walk him over to the pet right after he arrives, and you've greeted him.

Susy likes to play in the puddles during outside play time. You ask her to play ball with you on the blacktop (far away from the puddles!)

Positive Discipline Technique #9 ~When/Then



Children must learn consequences and sequences. At the youngest ages children are still learning that sometimes they have to wait for what they want or have to wait until they are done with what they are supposed to do, or what the provider has asked them to do. The When/Then technique keeps children on track and helps them realize that they must often do what is expected of them before they can do what they wish.

Examples:

Charlotte runs from the block area to the circle that is forming for circle time. You say, "When you have cleaned up the blocks, then you can join us at circle time".

Colby wants to move from one center to the next because he is tired of painting. You say, "When you have finished painting, you can clean up. When you've cleaned up, then you can join me at the Bingo table.

Positive Discipline Technique #10 ~ Use a Timer



This technique is built on the principle that children will often follow a rule or request when

it comes from something that is not the adult. When the provider requests for the children to clean up in five minutes, it is much more effective to set a timer and let the ringing be the request. Children, often, will begin what you've requested of them as the timer sounds, with few reminders. This technique is also helpful when a child is upset but you need him to join the group as soon as possible. The provider can ask the child, "I see that you are upset and need to cry for a while. Do you need one minute or two to cry? I'll set the timer for one minute or two, and you can join us when it goes off."



Positive Discipline
Technique #11
~ **Blame it on the Rules/Shrug**

When using this technique, the caregiver again puts the authority on something outside themselves. Young children know about "the rules", and don't argue if they are right or wrong. Their moral thinking doesn't take them that far yet. When the provider asks something of a child, and the child ask why, the provider can simply respond that it's the rule, and shrug their shoulders. The rule doesn't have to be written down or in a policy manual but must make sense and be consistent. A provider can't change the rules willy-nilly and expect children not to notice. However, if the provider shrugs and acts as if there is nothing to be done, because that is the rule, children may simply follow the rule.

Positive Discipline
Technique #12
~ **Cueing**

Children can respond to physical cues just as well as verbal prompts. These physical cues can be taught directly to the children, or simply can be picked up by them over time as the provider uses the same cue over-and-over. One example of a cue that many teachers children know is turning off the lights. It means to be quiet. Another is putting your finger to your lips, which is also a call for quiet. Cues can be many things. They can be the beginning of a song. When "The Cleaning Song" starts playing, the children are to begin cleaning. When "Hello, Goodbye" starts playing, there is only a little time left before the children go home. When "Going on a Bear Hunt" starts, there is only five minutes left until the beginning of circle time. Hand

gestures can also be good cues. These cues help children prepare for changes in their day

Positive Discipline Technique #13 ~ **Switch Gears**



Not everything we do as providers is successful. Even when we plan something that we think will lead to the most unbelievable learning experience, things can still go awry. There are so many wild and unknown factors when working with young children that you simply can't plan for all of them. If a plan is not going well, providers need to feel comfortable switching gears and changing their plans to fit the moment. If the children are restless and can't concentrate, if they are drowsy and can't get into a more energetic activity, if they are not willing to hold hands, or if for any other reason a plan is not going well, the provider needs to realize that moving on is an option. Maybe she can come back to the amazing plan later in the day or on another day.

Positive Discipline Technique #14 ~ **Teach Directly**

Young children often surprise us by what they know. Unfortunately, this can sometimes lead us to think that they know all the unwritten rules and social cues. When a child behaves badly, we must step back and ask ourselves if he really understands what he has done or why it is not a good behavior. In many instances we have to take the time to directly explain to the child what is wrong with a behavior and that he mustn't do it again. Only with the understanding of why something is bad behavior will children learn to hold themselves back from engaging in that behavior in the future.

Positive Discipline Technique #15 ~ **Pre-Thank you**



Many of these techniques are intuitive. The Pre-Thank You is used by millions of people without knowing they are using it.

The technique is used when you thank a child for doing something before, they have done it. It works because the child feels the appreciation for the deed, and then wants to make sure they do it.

Example:

Kira is playing with the Legos. You say, "Thank you for picking up the Legos and joining us at this table to practice our counting."

Angelo has been climbing on the fence outside, which is against the rules. As the children line up to go outside, you say, "Thank you everyone for staying away from the fence. Our rules say we are not supposed to climb on it, so thank you for not climbing on the fence".

Positive Discipline Technique #16 ~ **Whisper for Attention**



This technique is counterintuitive. When a class gets loud and we need the children's attention, our first thought is to speak very loudly to overcome the noise so that everyone can hear us. This technique asks providers to do the opposite. If it's too loud and you want everyone to listen to you, whisper your instructions instead of yelling. Keep whispering the instructions until the children realizes they are missing what you have to say and quiet down. They will quiet down to hear what you have to say. This works in circle or center time and tends to get the children to speak softer as well. The provider is modeling a quiet inside voice and also asking the children to listen closely and stop talking so that they can hear.

Changing behavior requires taking the time to listen, understand and follow through. Children want to behave, but they need guidance and instructions. Patience is a virtue. Being kind, but firm will help children learn and succeed. Not all children learn on the same timeline. Keep in mind everyone is an individual, and some techniques work better for each child.

USDA Nondiscrimination Statement

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, Its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English. To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, (AD-3027) found online at: http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights 1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.



When you have completed this course,
click [HERE](#) to take the test,
or you can type this address into your browser:
<https://forms.gle/ADCYGa4MQHcNQEN7A>

Be sure to read and answer each field carefully to ensure
that you receive an accurate certificate.

Thank you for choosing us for
your training needs:

Wildwood CACFP
...for those who care for children
12200 E. Briarwood Ave. Suite 175
Centennial, CO 80112

Visit us online for more
great tips and information:

www.wildwoodonline.org
www.facebook.com/WildwoodCACFP