

What you will learn in this module:

How to interpret and guide young children's behavior

Children use behavior to let us know what they need in different situations. Reading their needs is the first step in guiding them towards age-appropriate behavior.

How to help children with disabilities acquire age-appropriate behaviors

Guiding the behavior of children with disabilities means accommodating to what they can't do, and giving them lots of opportunities to do what they do well.

How to give children positive behavior support

Teachers can set the stage for children to behave in a positive, pro-social manner.

Using words

As infants become toddlers, conduct that we label a “behavior problem” can result from a child’s difficulty in communicating. If a child doesn’t have the words, or her needs are too urgent to wait for words, she may act out her feelings. Kicking and screaming is a way to say, “I can’t take this.” If you see what triggers that reaction, you can step in before it happens and help her use words, or express her frustration in a more acceptable manner.



“Bobby’s full of warning signals,” said Ms. Polenski. “When he gets tangled up trying to ask for something, I can always tell when it’s time to step in and help him with words, because he starts flapping his hands. From there it’s only one step to tears. Children give you plenty of signals when they need help — we just need to notice them and step in to assist them.”

All children get frustrated when they can’t communicate. Children with disabilities are no different. They may have difficulty speaking clearly. Children with autism don’t understand the purpose of language for communication. They may need pictures or objects to communicate their needs. Teachers can help children with disabilities use their communication system, just like they help typical children use words.

Ryan Learns to Use His Words

As you read the story notice how Ms. Rodriguez first encourages Ryan to use his words to get his needs met, and then helps him “repair” the damage he has done.



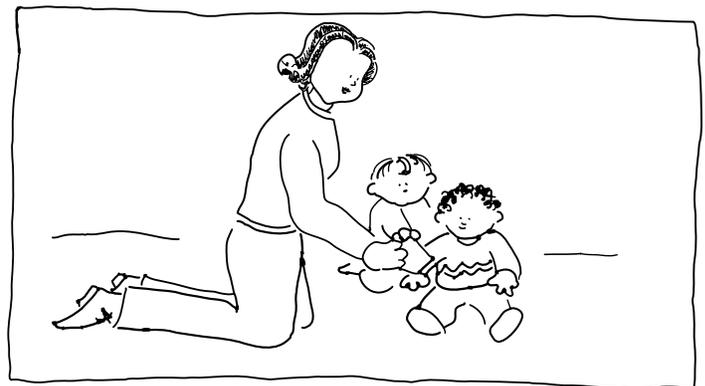
Ms. Rodriguez: “Ryan, bites hurt. Use your words to tell Jorge no.”



Ryan: “My marker, mine.”



Ms. Rodriguez: “Ryan, let’s get Jorge an ice bag to make his arm stop hurting.”



Ms. Rodriguez: “We need to remember to use our words.”