

STRATEGIES

TO SUPPORT SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL AND SELF-REGULATION SKILLS

Children express their needs through behaviors. When you understand the cause of the behavior, you can better support the child's self-regulation skills. The following document provides strategies to try in response to typical behaviors, and provides a place for reflection or additional strategies. While the behaviors are categorized by age levels, it's possible they may apply across more than one.

INFANT BEHAVIORAL CUES

IF AN INFANT IS:	TRY:	YOUR STRATEGIES:
Crying transitioning from home to classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Invite parents to bring items from home so that the child can feel some familiarity• Place laminated pictures of their families on the floor so that they can see them during tummy time and crawling• Hold the child close, rock him/her, identify their feelings with words, give them time to respond, and continue with back and forth exchanges• Bring the child's hands close to his/her face and tuck his/her legs close to body	
Overwhelmed by sensory input	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Decrease the source of the overstimulation, such as volume of voices or music, strong smells, bright lights, strong flavors, labels in clothing• Turn the infant to face-out to reduce face-to-face interaction and stimulation	
Squirming	<p><i>This could be a sign of needing compressions on different parts of their body.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Squeeze the child's extremities gently, including joints like elbows and knees while narrating or singing your actions• Provide opportunities for movement such as tummy time, or crawling	
Arching his/her back	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Try and burp the child• Place the child back down out of your arms• Change the activity and narrate your actions	
Crying without console	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review routine needs first• Check for fever or atypical events• Communicate with the family	

TODDLER BEHAVIORAL CUES:

IF A TODDLER IS:	TRY:	YOUR STRATEGIES:
Withdrawn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approach the child subtly, and talk with a soft and calm voice • Check on his/her feelings by asking 'Are you feeling well?' • Invite him/her to do an activity by saying 'Would you like me to sit with you?', 'How about if we read a book together?' • Include the child in interactions with other children. • Provide independent time if needed, during transitions - especially hellos/goodbyes 	
Taking toys from another child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redirect the child to other activities in a positive manner: 'Let's play with the cars and the ramps. I know you love to set up the ramps' • Include several identical toys for children to play with, when applicable 	
Biting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask the family to bring items that the child can carry with them and bite if needed • Talk about how much biting hurts, how friends hurt when they are bitten, and use this moment for social emotional teaching by recognizing signs in their body when they are getting angry and things they could do such as breathing, getting the teacher, grabbing their favorite toy in the classroom, or even the blanket from home for that purpose instead • Teach all children in the classroom the phrase 'Stop, don't bite me, it hurts' in sign language. • Use puppets to represent interactions you see in the classroom, such as biting, and have the puppets verbalize feelings and other ways to react. 	
Throwing toys across classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate appropriate throwing activities, indoors, such as bean bag tossing • Allow opportunities for throwing outdoors, such as ball tossing 	
Pushing peers away, and clinging to teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set individualized time for each toddler to engage in child-directed play with the teacher 	
Having tantrums	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep the child and those around safe • Try to proactively anticipate reasons toddlers will throw a tantrum and plan activities to stop them before happening, redirect using positive language: 'I see that Mary has the doll you want, how about we play with this one instead, look, we can rock her' • Read stories with your children about feelings, where feelings live in our body, and choices of what to do when they recognize those feelings. 	

TODDLER BEHAVIORAL CUES:

IF A TODDLER IS:	TRY:	YOUR STRATEGIES:
Having tantrums	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During a tantrum, check on the child first, verbalize their frustration, 'Wow, I see you are really angry, how can I help you? If you saw what happened prior to it, say it too, 'I saw that you wanted the red wagon and Johnny got it first, I know, it is really hard to wait for our turn'. Use as much language as permitted by the situation. Continue deescalation as the child ends the tantrum by breathing with the child, putting your hand in his/her chest, with a little pressure, and using a calm voice 	

PRESCHOOL / PRE-K BEHAVIORAL CUES:

IF A PRESCHOOLER IS:	TRY:	YOUR STRATEGIES:
Screaming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reflect on the feelings you think the child is feeling, both positive and negative emotions Communicate that you understand and accept the child Pair words with feelings and normalize experiencing emotions even if they are mad, sad or frustrated 	
Throwing an activity that is challenging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that you are challenging the child at the appropriate level Sit with the child and give assistance when needed to help the child accomplish the activity Ask the child if he/she would like a friend to help, and pair them with a peer who is good at that task/activity Encourage the child to continue to try, if not today, may be tomorrow, and use open-ended questions to help scaffold 	
Pushing others	<p>Rachel Wagner, MSW, shares with us the FLIP It mnemonic, which stands for F feelings, L limits, I inquiries, and P prompts. For example: "Kimani, I notice that you are pushing your friends and your voice is starting to get loud. It looks like you are getting frustrated. We keep each other safe in this classroom, so, what can I do to help you with your frustration? You could try to scribble it out, or maybe we could go for a walk and talk."</p> <p>Sometimes children push because the proprioceptive sense is asking for that muscular input, come up with a game when the children can push the wall, with their arms, with their backs, with their legs, with their shoulders, with their bottoms, with their feet, with their cheeks.</p> <p>Children can also push peers outdoors in the tricycles.</p>	

PRESCHOOL / PRE-K BEHAVIORAL CUES:

IF A PRESCHOOLER IS:	TRY:	YOUR STRATEGIES:
Leaving the room	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set clear behavioral expectations with the children • Create a classroom visual with the expectations, set in positive phrases and accompanied with pictures of all children practicing that rule • Keep the doors safely locked and practice ratio counts frequently • Talk to children about the importance of staying in the classroom until it is time to leave and assign a line leader, and a caboose 	
Isolating from peers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model using language to enter a group, such as “Can I play with you?” • Pair the child with another child who shares similar interests for a fun activity • Invite the child to lead an activity that he/she likes • Join the child’s table at lunch and help facilitate conversations using open ended questions like, “What did you do after school yesterday?” 	