



Tips for Tots



Tip #3:

Help Children Manage Behavior Through Time-In

Strategies

Did you know?

Infant/Toddler:

Infants and toddlers express their distress through various behaviors. Often, time out is used in response to unwanted behavior by separating a child from the caregiver and the activity he/she was engaged in. However, children this age are not yet able to regulate their emotions by themselves and require the support of a caregiver to do so. Alternatively, using **time-in** avoids intensifying children's insecurity and stress due to isolation and instead provides emotional support and guidance. Caregivers help children regain emotional control through a calm caring presence, building the children's capacity to self-regulate.

Preschool:

Preschoolers with difficult behaviors need the support of a caregiver to gain emotional control. **Time-in** begins with the caregiver seeking to understand the meaning behind the behavior and viewing it as an opportunity to teach new skills while addressing the child's unmet needs. Within a positive relationship, caregivers provide clear expectations and support. This helps the child to calm down enabling the child to try strategies with the caregiver related to emotion regulation and problem solving.

Infant/Toddler:

- Anticipate the needs of infants and toddlers. Be responsive to feeding, diapering, sleep, and emotional connections. Provide calming before difficult situations or activities. Look for early signs of distress and provide diversions or extra supports, such as changing an activity or adding soft music.
- Remain with an individual child until he/she is calm and his/her connection needs are met. Comfort and support can help a child regain control. Gently rock and soothe babies, understanding that caregivers' calm is physically transferred to the child as they comfort and sing or talk softly to the infant. Caregivers talk gently to toddlers, naming the child's emotions, identifying what is upsetting the child, and helping them to understand acceptable alternatives to behavior.
- The toddler, when calm, helps to repair damage as the caregiver and child together rebuild, tape up, or clean up. Toddlers can be helped to learn empathy by teaching the child who has hurt another, that others have feelings too and supporting the child in soothing their peer with a tissue, hug, kind words, etc.

Preschool:

- Assess and address the needs of the child who exhibits challenging behavior. Does the child need a change in the classroom routine or environment, an earlier snack time, or self calming techniques? Does the child need to learn skills to express emotions acceptably, to join play or appropriate methods of resolving conflict? Is the child's need for a positive adult connection being met?
- Stay connected with the child who is struggling, Try sitting quietly with the child, use redirection such as verbal or visual cues, or help the child to identify his/her feelings and find acceptable alternatives to the challenging behavior.
- When removal from an area or an activity is necessary, it is important to maintain proximity to the child. Provide the child with a few options for a quiet space or a quiet activity that can help the child reorganize. Putting together a puzzle, helping a teacher clean a table, or washing a few toys can be the type of activities that a child may welcome and may find reduces stress.
- Give the child who needs to calm themselves the opportunity to rejoin play or activity, or to repair items or relationships, as soon as they feel they are ready.

Resources:

- <http://www.naeyc.org/files/tyc/file/Gartrell%2001.pdf>
- <http://www.zerotothree.org/child-development/social-emotional-development/teaching-your-child-discipline-and-self-control.html>
- www.aaimhi.org, Position Paper 3: Time Out (2009)

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