

Positive Behavior Strategies:

Physical Aggression

Physical Aggression is using one's body to harm oneself, others or the environment. When a child becomes aggressive you want to control the environment not the child. Teaching children how to use appropriate ways to express frustration will help avoid aggressive outbursts.

The best approach to dealing with aggressive behavior is to avoid it altogether. Provide direct and explicit instruction on how to appropriately handle frustration and difficult situations.

- **Model** appropriate behavior, and explain why you are making those choices
- Incorporate **social stories** that depict appropriate problem solving skills
- **Use appropriate videos and tv shows** that are non-aggressive and model appropriate skills
- **Monitor** children during play or free time; intervene if children are unable to resolve issues and offer suggestions
- **Practice skills**, such as during role-playing games
- **Catch them being good** - Point out when children use appropriate behaviors and provide praise and positive reinforcement.

When you begin to see signs of aggression, it is best to try the following **strategies to de-escalate** the situation:

- **Take a break** – have the child try a new activity, give him a job, or move to a new area
- **Humor** – get the child to laugh, point out something funny
- **Ask** if they need help
- Request an **incompatible behavior** to try (eg. if hitting, ask them to clap)
- **Validate their emotion** (you look angry)
- **Provide them with words** (if a child took their toy, tell them to say “that’s mine)
- **Avoid demands** until you are sure the child has calmed down

Once a child has become aggressive there is **no exact timeline**, de-escalation could take for minutes or hours

- **Be Safe** – Ensure the safety of the child and anyone near the aggressive child
- **Have a plan** to move other children to another area/room
- Make sure there is a **quiet area with no possible projectiles** for the aggressive child
- While the child is being aggressive, limit the following:
 - **Language** (once the child is being aggressive, language is not processed effectively)
 - **Eye contact** (but stay near enough to ensure the child’s safety)
 - **Physical contact**

