…"bite size" news from your HSB Regional Behavior Specialists

SUMMER

OH, Behave!

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Bite Size Bits About Biting



Tip of the Month:

If a child is getting bitten repeatedly in your classroom, teach him or her to hold up their hand and say, "NO!" firmly. Rehearse this with the child until they can say it with power!

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Check out Tucker's NC Nest on Pinterest!

Follow OhBehaveTips on twitter!

Join our new online community by clicking here! By joining Social - Emotional Connections, you will have the opportunity to network, post questions, and share resources with other early childhood professionals in NC!

Open our latest public resource, a growing library shelf of virtual binders that include archived issues of the HSB newsletter, *OH, Behave!*, a collection of Disaster Response Resources, and a binder of scripted stories for classroom use! Click here.

When biting happens in the classroom, it is most always met with alarm. What is it about biting that renders shock, surprise, and large emotions from teachers and parents? Any time a child is hurt we are troubled; but, when a child is injured from a biting incident it feels like we left the child in a den of lions and are seeing the results! Maybe because a bite often leaves a tell-tale sign on a child's skin or maybe because it seems so animalistic. Regardless of the reason, we wish it would never happen. Since it is a developmental behavior among young children who don't yet have the language skills necessary to communicate their needs, it is likely to occur in group settings at some point. Keep in mind that a young child explores their world with every part of their body until they learn it is not socially acceptable to put their mouth on other people. The good news is there are things we can do to minimize biting. Here are some tips to prevent biting incidents in the early childhood classroom:

- Make sure there is lots of "personal space" between children. Toddlers naturally gravitate towards one another so stay aware. Use visuals to demonstrate an adequate amount of space by using a hula hoop or your arm to illustrate an arms-length distance.
- Everything is more manageable in smaller amounts. Break larger groups of children into smaller numbers when doing activities. For example, do an art project with one or two children during free play. Invite children to join you at a table one at a time. A teacher can spend individual time with a child while the others are playing in centers.
- If you notice the same child getting bit over and over again, coach the child into standing up for himself. Tell the child it is ok to use a big voice and put their hand up as if to say, "STOP!" Model this and rehearse it with a child until they feel comfortable.
- Keep waiting at a minimum to reduce frustration.
- Maintain a predictable schedule of routines as closely as possible which will reduce stress.
- Increase the physical activity in your classroom when biting incidents occur. Even an additional five minutes running on the playground can help to reduce tension.
- Prepare children in advance for upcoming changes in the regular schedule.
- Offer plenty of sensory experiences such as sand/water play, finger painting, play dough, etc. Such activities help calm children.
- Model giving appropriate, gentle touches. Use puppets and stuffed animals and let children practice how to handle softly and carefully.
- Give positive attention and praise for kind acts you see happening between children.
- Be proactive by reading books about characters that deal with different feelings and emotions (encourage parents to do this too!)
- Teach all children how to use their words to express how they are feeling.
- Provide alternatives to biting. Tell children what they CAN do when they are mad. For example, "When you feel angry, you can stomp your feet or put your hands on your hips". This should be taught when children are in a calm state and not in the heat of the moment.

Keep in mind most biting occurrences happen during late morning hours and most often during transition times. Typically, biting usually resolves itself in one to two weeks.



Ask The Behavior Specialist!

Question: I have recently been moved from being a teacher in a four-year-old class to the lead teacher in the toddler class. I love this age group and I believe I have found my dream position as a teacher. However, several children have started biting other children and I do not know how to best handle these situations. Although I love what I do, this has stressed me out so much with everyone being upset to the point I dread going to work each day and I have thought about quitting my job! The children are getting bit despite my doing my best and parents are blaming me. My director is mad and parents are complaining. What am I doing wrong?

Answer: First, breathe! Give yourself some grace. This is your first experience with teaching this age group, so you are still learning. It is not unusual for toddlers to bite. At this age, language is in its' very beginning stages and young children sometimes use biting as a way to communicate. As children grow older and learn more words to better express themselves, biting behavior ceases. It is essential that all adults keep calm and understand this is a normal developmental phase. Be sure and let all the families of the children in your class know you are taking biting seriously and express sincere concern that children are getting bit. Also, let them know what you are doing to minimize a biting occurrence. When a bite happens, tend to the child that was bitten first. Wash the area where the child was bitten with soap and water and assess whether the skin was broken or not. IF the child that was hurt is willing, have the child that did the biting to watch you as you comfort and soothe the child that was injured. Tell the child you are sorry he or she was hurt. As you show true empathy, you are modeling for both children. When talking with the child that bit, be sure and tell him, "I know you wanted the toy, but biting hurts and is not allowed". Be sure and let children know what they can do when they get upset. Then, rehearse and remind them of these ways. When you know children are relying on biting as a way to get their needs met, separate children that tend to get bitten from those that bite. Also, remember, it does not do any good to reveal to parents which child bit their child. Keep a cool head and remember to breathe! You've got this!

Our **Pyramid Fidelity Tip Section** is designed for those of you having the Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT) or the Teaching Pyramid Infant-Toddler Observation Scale (TPITOS) completed in your classroom. This section will help you connect the main topic of each issue with indictors on these scales. These assessments support Pyramid Model practices which promote and support children's social-emotional development.

With the TPOT, Item 4: Teacher Communicates and Provides Feedback About Developmentally Appropriate Behavioral Expectations (CBE).

With the TPITOS, Item 10: Teaching Children to Express Emotions (TPS).

Keep in mind that biting is a common developmental behavior in young children who do not yet have the language skills to communicate their frustration and anger. However, as children grow older, they outgrow the need to bite and can learn to express their emotions in different ways.

Do you have a question you would like to see answered in our column? Feel free to email it to AskTheBehaviorSpecialist@gmail.com. We will keep your identity private. Your question is probably one someone else needs answering, so ask away! Your time is appreciated!



In each issue you will find a new card to help you build your very own "Calming Choices" Card Set for your classroom.

When I am upset, I can…

PAINT A SMILEY FACE ON MY HAND

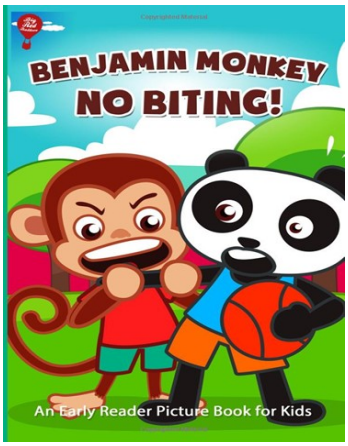


For durability and repetitive use, print on cardstock paper and laminate.

Do you have a Solution Kit in your classroom? Check it out here! Ask your local Behavior Specialist how this kit helps with teaching problem-solving!



Social/Emotional Book Nook



Benjamin is a little monkey with a habit of biting. He hasn't learned to use words to deal with his emotions. But Benjamin quickly finds out that biting comes with some real consequences. And Benjamin must learn to use words to express how he feels before he loses all his friends.

This book is recommended primarily for children 4 to 6 years of age because of the length. However, young children love the colorful pictures and the fun monkey character. Consider reading a few pages at a time and breaking up the story for children younger than the recommended age. The message of this story can be beneficial for toddlers who are most likely to engage in biting behavior to attempt to get their needs met.

For more information about the Healthy Social Behaviors Project, contact your regional Behavior Specialist or:

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