Stanislaus County Office of Education

Child/Family Services

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Resource & Referral Handout

# GUIDANCE TOWARD SELF-DISCIPLINE

## BASIS FOR ACCEPTANCE OF ADULT GUIDANCE

Let the child know that you, too, are guided by the best interest of all "so that we can all be happy."

Build a friendly and understanding relationship with the child. Accept him as he is, mean feelings and all, so that he may accept you and your guidance.

Remember that a child is a human being, not a puppet to be operated by pulling strings.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR GUIDING YOUNG CHILDREN

Be sure that the child understands. Go to him. Have the child's attention when you speak. Use understandable words. Simplify sentences. Give one direction at a time. Show him as well as tell him. Kneel, if necessary, to meet his physical level. Use a normal tone of voice.

Be reasonable and timely from the child's point of view. Give advance warning. Don't expect him to stop instantly; let him finish his activity if at all practicable. Small children become confused when hurried. Forcing a child to perform too quickly or to turn abruptly from one activity to another often causes frustration, irritation and conflict.

Be matter-of-fact. Take compliance for granted. "We all do this." Let the child say, "I don't want to." Often he will comply almost immediately if the adult doesn't argue the point.

Limit directions to essentials. Release the child from constant heckling. Over direction breeds rebellion. Withdraw supervision progressively as the individual child is able to assume responsibility for himself. Expect reasonable errors in judgment when the child experiments in a new area of responsibility.

Suggest what to do. Avoid negatives. Allow children to work out their own problems whenever possible.

Be quiet in manner and tone. A child's noncompliance isn't an affront to your dignity as an adult.

Allow the child to learn by experience. Help him only when it is necessary to avoid failure and discouragement. Encourage him to find out for himself.

Praise the type of behavior you wish continued. Praising a child's desirable behavior emphasizes it and the undesirable drops out of sight. Don't discuss a child in his presence unless what you say is supportive and encouraging to him.

Be consistent. Praise or disapproval should be consistently given for a definite type of behavior. Children best learn limits when they are quietly and consistently enforced.

Do not hold a child to a uniform standard of performance. Vary the amount of help given according to the situation and the child's physical and emotional condition.

Suggest the next specific act when a child dawdles. "Where is your towel?" when a child continues hand washing too long, or just offer him a towel. "What did you do with your napkin?" when he gets stuck in finishing the juice routine. Such comments recall him to his task but leave the initiative with him.

Rejoice with the child when he achieves something important to him, no matter how small. Tell him what you like about what he does. The more problems a child has, the more he needs favorable recognition.

Give the child a choice of action when feasible. Asking "Where would you like to park your tricycle, by the door or in the garage?" gives the child a personal interest in the situation and develops his initiative and independence.

Offer the child a choice only when you can accept his negative reply.

Avoid conflict and forcing an issue as much as possible. Understanding the child's point of view will help the adult to see ways of presenting the situation so that the child will want to do what is desired of him. The child's needs form patterns of happy cooperation rather than forced compliance.

Respect the child as an individual. Be as courteous and diplomatic as you would be with an adult.

When disturbing outbursts occur, always remove the child from the situation. It is difficult to calm a child in a group. This only upsets the child more, and may upset the group as well.

Always avoid "belittling" a child, no matter what his behavior has been. Correcting a child within the hearing of a group will only cause embarrassment and resentment on the part of the child.

When dealing with a behavior problem, always be certain that the way in which you handle the situation says, "I don't approve of what you did, but I still like you."

WHEN THE ADULT SHOULD INTERVENE

Help the child only when he needs help. Encourage him to find out for himself. Questions or suggestions as to alternatives may help him realize other possibilities when he is close to frustration. Let him forge ahead on his own as much as is practicable. Realize that a child is not capable of a fully consistent standard of high performance. Variations in physical and emotional condition affect his day-to-day performance.

Gradually withdraw your physical and verbal help as the child progresses toward independence. Children may depend to much on commands. Indirect suggestions, such as "Is your tomato juice gone?" (when you know it isn't), "you're almost through, aren't you?" and "you've been washing very nicely," recall a child to the task at hand but make him take the initiative in going on with it.

When the children are in a social conflict situation, let them work it through if they can. Know your individual children so that you will realize when adult support should be given and how much is needed. Step into a social conflict situation only when necessary to prevent injury or to suggest a socially approved solution of a difficulty. Children need to learn self-reliance as well as cooperation. If left to themselves, they will often end conflicts and solve difficulties in satisfactory ways of their own. This is valuable learning which may be prevented when the adult interferes to hastily.

SPECIFIC GUIDANCE SUGGESTIONS FOR THE AGGRESSIVE CHILD

A. Accept the Aggressive Child As Is

1. Realize aggressive behavior normal under certain circumstances.
2. Understand child's problems as the basis for helping him find acceptable means of expression.
3. Acknowledge reality of child's feelings: "I know you want to hurt Jimmy, but I can't let you hurt people. We'll find something that you can pound." And lead him to one of his real interests to work of steam.

    a. Allow him to air resentments without censure.
    b. Don't insist that he say he loves Jimmy, or that he is sorry if he doesn't.

4. Help the child realize the damage done other children by observation and verbalization, never by hurting the aggressor.
5. Assume responsibility for control of aggression to protect the other children from being excessively hurt when they cannot handle the situation.

a. Decrease adult control progressively as aggressive child develops control and as other children learn to handle the situation.
b. Tell the other child, "you don't have to let him hurt you... what can you do about it?"
c. Reinforce property rights of others so that the aggressive child does not dispossess others by reasons of his aggression.
d. Remove aggressive child to play by himself in your company only when redirection is ineffective in the group situation.
(1) Take him away firmly but gently.
(2) Say and feel that his is because he is not playing happily with others, not as punishment.

B. Develop the Creativity of the Aggressive Child

1. Work through things that the child loves.

a. Be alert to his interest and provide means for him to develop them.

2. Help the child accept social techniques: "you can ask for the trike." and help the possessor know that he is privileged to refuse if he wishes and that you will reinforce his decision if necessary. To the aggressor you can say, "hitting hurts her", and you can say, "this is mine" to the possessor.
3. Give the child a feeling of closeness and appreciation whenever he does something satisfying to him and acceptable socially.
4. Rejoice with the child in his creative achievements.
5. Use your imagination and resourcefulness to substitute constructive for destructive activity.
6. Remember that this child's power can help his fellows, and that you can help him to use it constructively.

SPECIFIC GUIDANCE SUGGESTIONS FOR THE SHY CHILD

A. Introduction to Group Experience

1. Gradual induction with mother present for as long as the child needs her.
2. Special protection from hurting which will be withdrawn progressively as the child feels more adequate and gains experience in how he can protect himself.
3. Child will tend to accept adults as adequate to the extent that he observes the adult is friendly, trustworthy, and understanding as evidenced in relations with the other children.
4. Avoid forcing routines. It is preferable at first for the child not to toilet, wash hands, drink juice, or listen to the story if it is too difficult for him to do so without strain.
5. Permit the shy child to bring a "security" toy from home for his personal use. If he lays it down, place it out of the reach of other children, explaining if necessary that "this is Mary's own dolly from home... she needs it."

B. Participation in Activities

1. Let him he be a watcher for as long as he wants. He needs the confidence of seeing what other small people do before he can venture forth with confidence.
2. Be alert to budding interests.

a. Make materials available that the child watches with interest and place such materials a little removed from the other children.
b. Allow the child to begin activity on his own initiative. The most casual "for you" with a smile is probably as much verbalization as he can accept.

3. Avoid focusing interest on the shy child since it usually causes him to withdraw.
4. Give the quietest sort of friendly recognition to his achievements. Avoid over-emphasis or making him the center of a group.

5. Give him opportunity to use equipment when he is ready.

   a. Perhaps he can come a little early to try himself without competition.
   b. If his mother brings him in sometime when other children are not present, he may find by experience (which is the best way) that he can use equipment that appeared fearsome when other children used it.

6. Provide enough help to protect the child from feeling a complete failure. Questions directing the child to a new view of his problem are better than telling him directly what to do. Suggestions also may be made of alternate courses of action for the child to try.

C. <u>Social Participation</u>

1. Respect the child's own growth rate. Be alert to overtures toward play with other children and provide a minimum of support. Do not try to hurry cooperative play.
2. When the shy child approaches another be aware to suggest play cue (only if needed) so that he will be acceptable to other children. Let him do as much by himself as he can. Do not decide for him that he should enter a play situation and pressure him into it. He will progress much faster in his own time.
3. Protect the shy or young child from domination by other children. "Mary would like to do hat for herself, I'm sure"; or provide similar material for the more confident child to work with "so that you can make yours, and Mary can make hers"; or you can say, "we'll just watch and see how Mary is going to work that."

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