



Even if attention seeking is not part of the initiating problem, it is very likely to be part of the reaction which makes the problem continue.

Therefore, it is extremely important that the child experiences positive adult attention for behaviour that you want to encourage e.g. sharing or hugging.

If the difficult behaviour is frequent you may have to "invent" a situation for praising the child. Look for any opportunity to make a fuss of the child for doing something that involves a

positive interaction with other children.

Such positive responses from adults are an essential part of moving a child in the right direction.

Clear consistent boundaries around the problem are only half the answer. Lavish praise for "good" behaviour is the other half: it provides clear guidance on what it is that you want from the child.

Together they will provide a structured response that will help the child understand what you want them to do and not do.

Make sure that your responses are clear and consistent. Everyone who is involved in the child's care must be informed what you are trying to do, and encouraged to respond in exactly the same way.

Working Together

For workers, a partnership with parents and carers, sharing information about the causes of biting, and particular incidents which have happened, and plans for controlling the situation, is vital. This will help in identifying difficulties outside the setting which might be causing biting, and will also help keep things in perspective.

Next steps

Difficult behaviour like biting is often temporary. Work in the setting, or with the Early Years Inclusion Team, will help. If the problem persists, or is more serious, services such as speech and language therapy, or the Child Psychology Service will be able to work with children and their parents to pinpoint the difficulty, clarify the child's needs and find a solution.

For further help contact:

The Early Years Inclusion Team

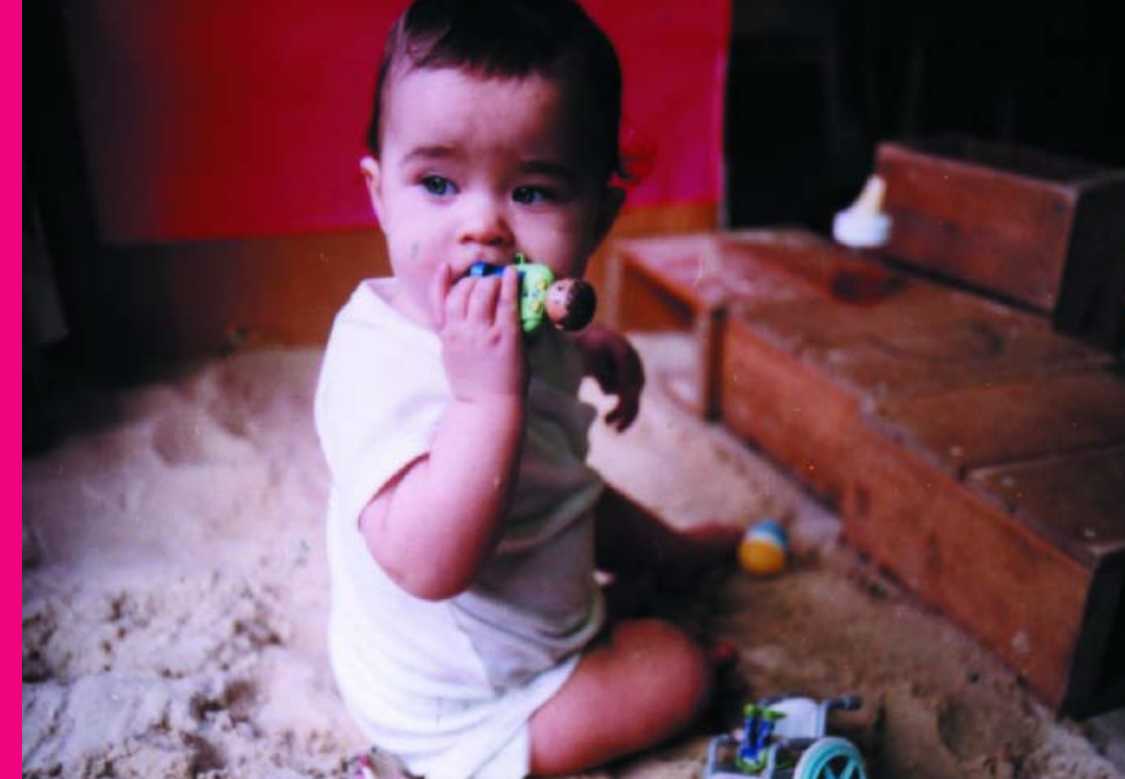
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Primary Care Child Psychology Service

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This leaflet is also available in the following languages:

Somali, Arabic, Spanish, Turkish, Albanian, Portugese, Farsi, Bengali



Supporting Children with Behavioural Difficulties

Biting

Supporting Children With Behavioural Difficulties: Biting

Biting is very common among young children. Despite this, it can be one of the most difficult issues in the setting to deal with.

It is often painful and frightening for the child who is bitten, and frightening for the child who bites, because of the upset and anger it can cause and the feeling of loss of control. Other children may also be upset or disturbed, or start to imitate.

It is difficult for parents and carers as well. If your child has been bitten you will be outraged and angry, if your child is doing the biting you may be embarrassed and frustrated. Workers, parents and carers need to know why some children bite, and what they can do about it. This leaflet is designed to help.



Why do some children bite?

Children bite for different reasons and under different circumstances. The first step in learning to control it is to look at why it may be happening.

Natural exploration:- teething

Biting is a way that all young children explore the world. As parents and carers know, everything goes into the mouth! Sometimes this will involve biting. When children are teething they will often bite as a way of relieving the discomfort caused by sore and tender gums.

Frustration

Biting is often a way of expressing frustration. This can result from situations the child cannot handle. They get angry because they cannot say what they want, or ask for help. If another child takes the toy they want they may respond with a bite. Smaller children may feel powerless around bigger ones. They may be hungry, or tired, or there may be underlying difficulties around delay in language development or overactivity. Biting is also a quick and easy way to get attention.

Stress

Many situations can cause stress in young children from lack of interesting things to do, to life events like starting in a new nursery or moving home. Children may be anxious or depressed. This might be because of unhappiness at home, divorce, illness or death, or a new baby in the home. Biting is a way to express feelings and relieve tension.

Excitement

Biting sometimes occurs because a child has become excited in their play but lacks self control developmentally

What we can we do about biting?

It is important to be clear what the problem is. One technique is the "who, what, when, where, and how" method. When did the biting occur? Who was involved? Where did it happen? What happened before or after? How was the situation handled?

Another is the ABC approach, standing for:

Antecedent:

What was the trigger for the biting?

Behaviour:

What actually happened

Consequence:

What was the result of the behaviour?



These approaches are about being alert to what is happening and what children are doing, so that biting can be prevented where possible. If you know when biting is likely to occur, you can do something about it.

This might mean modifying routines, like group play times, or changing layouts. Separating older and younger children may be helpful. Watch for situations where two children might want the same toy and step in first to distract them.

Example activity for group play times:

1. An activity that can help is a short game of giving instructions. Let children have control of two puppets, giving them simple instructions like going fast or slow.

The puppets should then act out "difficult" behaviour that you are working on with the children. Get the children to control the puppets to stop the behaviour.

Example activity for group play times:

2. Have discussion about rules and how they are needed for us to enjoy games. Give examples of activities where children need to control their bodies e.g. moving slowly when carrying a drink or moving fast when playing a game of "chase". Stress the importance of children listening to adults, and making what their bodies are doing change, in line with adult instructions. In such discussions you are helping children to think about matching words and actions, an important "thinking" process if children are to develop their capacities to control their actions. Give other examples of



where what happens is controlled by another influence e.g. cars stopping at a pedestrian crossing.

Consistent Responses:

If a child does bite, say firmly but briefly: "No! we don't bite, biting hurts" and remove them immediately from the situation. For the child who has been bitten, follow normal first aid procedures if necessary. But don't lecture the biter. Ensure the other children immediately get your attention and that the biter is not getting attention from other children. It's important not to reward disruptive behaviour with a lot of attention. This will only reinforce the behaviour.

Never bite back! This frightens the child and teaches them that biting is okay.

Where biting remains persistent, incidents will need to be recorded, so that more structured intervention can be planned. This will also help professionals make more detailed assessments if necessary.

Praise good behaviour

Never underestimate the significance of praising "good" behaviour.