



From the CA Teaching Pyramid



But What Do I Do When He Hits?

Even after attending a year-long training on promoting social-emotional development and addressing challenging behavior, this is the most common question. Unfortunately, there is nothing you can do in that moment that will change that behavior in the long run. It is important that you spend time promoting and teaching appropriate social and emotional skills as this is what will change behavior. However, there are some things you can do in the moment that will support children's understanding of what to do.

When a challenging behavior happens, here are some steps to take:

First: Take deep, slow breaths.

- When we as adults feel stressed or upset or worried, we project those feelings to the children.
- Children are very sensitive to our emotions and non-verbal cues.
- Taking slow, deep breaths helps us get calmer and lets us project that calm to the child or children.

Second: Move calmly and quietly toward the children.

- Do this while breathing in and out and make eye contact with any children looking for you.
- You may say "I'm coming. I see that something is happening." if you feel that you can do that calmly.

Third: Keep children safe.

- This might mean asking some children to step back, particularly those that are not directly involved.
 - This is a technique that should be taught to children and practiced during other small group times.
 - Say "When one of us is having a hard time or is upset, we might need some space. I will help by saying 'Step back. Give her some space please.' And everyone can take a step or two back. Let's practice, shall we?"
- **If safe for you, block any further hitting, pushing, biting or hair pulling with your hand** and say something brief and simple to the child like, "I won't let you hurt him. I see that you are upset, and I am here to keep you both safe."

Fourth: Encourage the child or children to breathe deeply with you.

- Again, this should have been taught to the children ahead of time.
 - In through the nose and out through pursed lips is the most effective type of breathing for calming our brain and body.
 - Some people teach "smell the flower, blow out the candle"

Fifth: Reflect the situation evenly and non-judgmentally

- Try and simply narrate what you see. "It looks like you both want the toy. You are both holding on to it."
- Acknowledge any feelings you may see or, for verbal children, check to see if they can say how they feel.
- When calm, you can apply any problem-solving strategies you typically use.

Finally: Reflect on the incident afterwards (if the child seems interested) to help her absorb, process and learn from the incident. You may learn some things too!

Some ideas from www.janetlansbury.com