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Education

Preventing or Reducing a Child's Aggressive Behavior

A child who often hits, slaps, and bites other children or destroys their toys is not going through a stage. He is exhibiting an aggressive behavior that is upsetting to parents and other children. Aggressive behavior includes:

- breaking things on purpose
- pushing, kicking, biting, or hitting other children
- name calling, swearing, or threatening playmates.

The following suggestions will help you prevent or reduce aggressive behavior in your child.

1. Do not roughhouse with an aggressive child. To do so only serves to encourage aggressive behavior.
2. Begin by helping an aggressive child to behave well in situations where he normally does not act aggressively. Later, you can work more directly on the aggressive behavior itself.
3. Steer clear of all forms of physical punishment. Spanking and hitting can teach a child to spank and hit others.
4. Refrain from all forms of verbal abuse.
5. Make sure that each day you give your child at least 50 brief physical touches.

A child's aggressive behavior is much easier to prevent than it is to eliminate. Keep your child away from people who act aggressive. Do not let your child watch violent TV shows or movies. The less aggressive behavior your child sees, the less likely he is to act aggressively toward others.

If your child has seriously hurt another child, or continues to be aggressive after you try these suggestions, see your health care provider or a mental health professional. Aggressive behaviors may be a sign of serious emotional or behavioral problems.