



# Calming Terrific Toddlers: Evidence-based Strategies that Reduce Aggression and Promote Self-Regulation



**Course Objective:** Label effective, evidence-based adult responses to toddler aggression that will promote a toddler's self-regulation skills and emotional intelligence.



"Anybody can become angry - that is easy, but to be angry with the right person and to the right degree, and at the right time, and for the right purpose, and in the right way - that is not within everybody's power and is not easy." -Aristotle

## Triggers



**A toddler may exhibit aggressive acts because they: (Check all that apply)**

- Want a toy someone else has
- Feel overwhelmed
- Do not have enough space
- Need to express strong feelings
- Lack communication skills
- Feel pain or discomfort
- Are experiencing a rise in stress hormone
- They have a lack of self-regulation skills
- Feel an aggressive impulse
- Have a master plan to frustrate caregivers

### Three Major Triggers



#### Typical toddler development

- Mostly focused on own needs
- Driven to do and own
- Cannot perspective-take
- Learning to separate thoughts, feelings, and actions



#### Elevated Stress Hormones

- Stress changes behavior
- Aggression is much more likely when stress hormones are elevated



#### Lack skills: When experiencing strong feelings, toddlers cannot

- ~~Use their words~~
- ~~Perspective-take~~
- ~~Anticipate the results~~
- ~~Control their impulses~~
- Express emotions "appropriately"
- Keep themselves safe
- "Share"

**Aggression is NOT:** A well thought out plan designed to "get" you or manipulate others



**Aggression is common.**



**Aggression needs to stop.**

## Points of Adult Action



**Avoid unhelpful strategies:** ~~\*Labeling~~ ~~\*Biting back~~ ~~\*Getting angry, yelling, or shaming~~ ~~\*Giving too much attention to biter~~  
~~\*Forcing a children to apologize or insisting they play together~~



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# Calming the Storm: Addressing Toddler Aggression and Reducing Future Aggressive Acts

## HELP! Model

**H**ave a plan   **E**liminate distractions   **L**abel feelings   **P**rompt



- ✓ **Have a plan**
  - **Avoid the "Power" Approach**
    - ~~Threatening stance~~
    - ~~Making eye contact~~
    - ~~Loud "Public" voice~~
    - ~~Many words~~
  - **Respond calmly with "Influence"**
    - Non-threatening
    - Avoid eye contact
    - Quiet "Private" voice
    - Few words



- ✓ **Eliminate Distractions** \*Move down to the child's level and set things aside
- ✓ **Label Feelings** \*Tune in, identify the emotion, and help the children communicate
- ✓ **Prompt**

"Sounds like, 'Turn please'"      "Sounds like, 'Help'"  
 "Sounds like 'I'm mad!'"      "Sounds like, 'That's mine.'"  
 "Sounds like 'No!'"      "Sounds like, 'Can I have some?'"



### ★ Top Tip: Match the Prompt to the "Why"!

Why did the child bite?	What could the child do instead?
Tired	Help get rest or a break
Hungry	Provide Food
Sore mouth	Help get pain relief or a teether
Angry	Help express feelings
Overwhelmed	Provide something novel and interesting
Exploring	Give other things to explore
Super Excited	Clap hands or "squeeze the oranges"

  

Why did the child hit?	What could the child do instead?
Super Excited	
Wants a Toy	
Frustrated	
Angry	
Overwhelmed	
Other?	

## Video Analysis

Which strategies do you see? What is not helpful about what this adult is doing?



**Objective Review: What is one effective, evidence-based adult response to toddler aggression that will promote a toddler's self-regulation skills?**

