



Learning to Grow

MAKING A DIFFERENCE TOGETHER

CENTER ON THE FAMILY ♥ UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII

Using Redirection Techniques with Your Young Child

Children's natural way of learning is through exploring. They are "hands-on" learners whose development is enhanced when they are following their own interests and having fun. They are learning how things work and how to react in different situations.

As children learn, they need guidance (specific instructions followed by reminders) and feedback on their behavior from parents and care providers who care for them. Redirection is a technique you can use to help provide positive guidance to your child but be sure to also help your child learn to problem solve and self-regulate on his own.



This newsletter will present some common behaviors you may see in your infant, toddler, and preschooler, ways to support and address their behavior, including ways to redirect your child's attention in various situations.

Here are some redirection strategies that may be helpful for you to try:

- ♥ Distract your child's attention to something else to help prevent having to engage in a power struggle with him.
- ♥ Provide your child with an acceptable alternative to help him find a positive solution without negatively correcting him.
- ♥ Change the environment that your child is in to help defuse the misbehavior that he is engaged in.

In This Newsletter:

To support you in fostering your child's healthy development and school readiness, this newsletter includes:

- ♥ **Age-specific information** and suggestions about activities to do with your infant, toddler, or preschooler,
- ♥ **Featured activities** for each age group,
- ♥ **How This Helps:** a summary of your child's development as a result of doing these activities together,
- ♥ **Community Resources:** for more information, and
- ♥ **Suggested Books:** a list of books to read with your child.

Infants

Here are examples of some common behaviors of infants:

- ♥ They are curious and will watch and listen to you and what's around them.
- ♥ They cry when under stress, expressing a need, or trying to communicate.
- ♥ They learn and explore by touching things and putting them in their mouth.

Caring for your infant involves understanding him so you can attend to his needs. When your child is crying, pick him up, sing to him, or talk to him in a calm voice, using his name. Know that he touches and tastes everything around him;



therefore, create a safe space with appropriate toys and objects that are okay for him to explore safely with.

There may be times when your child will find objects that are not okay for him to explore with. When this occurs, redirect him to play with something else as an alternative to saying no. This will let your baby know what is okay for him to play with. Keep in mind that redirecting may need to be done many times until your baby understands what things and/or activities are okay and what are off-limits.

Here's some ways that you can help your baby:

- ♥ **Provide appropriate activities that interest your child.** If your baby is interested in pushing the buttons on the TV (which you may not want him to do), find an alternative age appropriate toy that has buttons for him to push instead.
- ♥ **Provide assistance.** If your baby seems disinterested in his toy, redirect him to another toy or activity that may get his attention and curiosity going.

Activity for Infants: *Things to Taste*

Materials:

Muffin tin

Items that have different textures and smells that are safe for babies to eat.

What to Do:

1. Prepare a muffin tin with different items in each section. For example, a spoonful of pureed vegetables, a piece of popsicle, or a slice of banana. Lay a lid over each section.
2. Sit at the table with your child with the covered muffin pan.
3. Encourage him to lift the lids and try the contents. Let him choose what he wants and let him taste as long as he wants. He may not eat the item, but may instead use his hands and mouth to explore.
4. Observe and describe his experience. For example, "Isn't the popsicle cold?" or "You really like the sweet banana."



(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps his development and school readiness.)

Toddlers

Here are examples of some common behaviors of toddlers:

- ♥ They can follow two or three-step directions.
- ♥ They may cry, hit, or bite to get their way, express emotions, or to communicate with others.
- ♥ They frequently use the word “mine” and are not yet able to share well.

Language is still relatively new for toddlers, and when they’re overwhelmed with strong emotions, such as frustration, they may lack the ability to use their words, and instead respond by using their bodies. Knowing this, you can try to understand the meaning behind the behavior. By



addressing what he wants or needs, you can help your child learn to communicate.

If you see your child engaging in a behavior that is inappropriate, you can explain that the behavior is not acceptable and to direct him to a more appropriate behavior.

Here’s some ways that you can help your toddler:

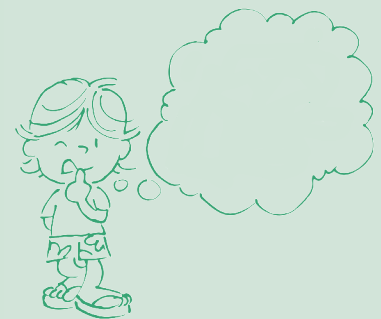
- ♥ **Use verbal redirection.** Share your expectations with your child in a way that he can understand and at the same time direct your child’s attention and behavior to what you believe is a more acceptable alternative. For example, you can say, “Chairs are for sitting not for standing. Let’s sit on this soft chair instead
- ♥ **Make alternative activities fun for your child.** Your child may respond to an activity if it is interesting to him. For example, if he is acting up at the grocery store, ask him to help pick out oranges or rearrange the items in your grocery cart or if he is running around the house, challenge him to walk on his tiptoes.

Activity for Toddlers: *Expressing Needs*

Materials: None

What to Do:

1. Give your child words to describe his needs. Help your child talk about what he sees and experiences. For example, “Would you like me to get you a spoon for your cereal.” “Let’s take a bath before your bedtime; can you help find your towel?” “It’s raining outside; let’s get your jacket.”
2. Guess what his needs are by observing his gestures and body language. When he looks at or points to an object, try to put his action into words to show him you are trying to understand. For example, “Do you need help with the doll?”
3. When he uses simple words such as cold or hungry, repeat his request using a full sentence and respond to him quickly to let him know you understand. For example, you may answer by saying, “Yes, it’s cold. Do you want your jacket?”



(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps his development and school readiness.)

Preschoolers

Here are examples of some common behaviors of preschoolers:

- ♥ They interpret meaning of things based on listening and/or observing.
- ♥ They ask questions to learn how and why things happen.
- ♥ They are independent, and respond well when given choices and time to practice these skills.

You may notice that your preschooler is increasingly more intentional in seeking new knowledge and experiences. He wants to know why he can't touch that object or why he should share the toy with his sister. As a parent or care provider, you can anticipate these typical behaviors from your child and know that the redirection techniques that you used with him earlier, when he was an infant or toddler, may no longer work in the same way now that he's older. You may find yourself having to explain more about why he can or cannot do certain things.

Here's some ways that you can help your preschooler:

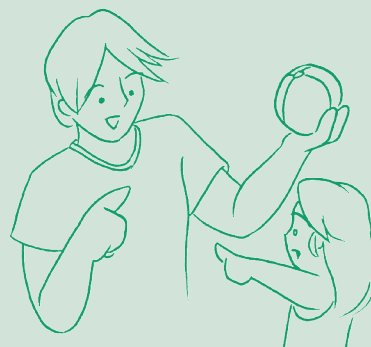
- ♥ **Create simple and easy to understand rules.** Discuss rules with your child and write them down. Consider your child's suggestions for rules and repeat the rules often. When your child breaks a rule direct him back to the rules that were written and discussed earlier.
- ♥ **Teach how to resolve conflict and solve problems.** Help your child recognize and name feelings, identify problems, and come up with ideas to help solve the problem. For example, if he throws food onto the floor, talk about what happened and come up with acceptable alternatives for him to choose from to clean it up.
- ♥ **Changing the environment.** If your child is having a hard time taking a nap in a room filled with noise or tempted toys to play with, place him in another area where it's quiet and has less distractions so he could take his nap with ease.

Activities for Preschoolers: *Beginning to Share*

Materials: None

What to Do:

1. Model sharing by being physically near when your child plays. Offer him a seat next to you as you share items with him that the two of you can play together with in the sand, or allow him to just hide a block in your pocket.
2. Encourage him to share his toys with you by asking questions about them and touching them. If he offers it to you, thank him and hold the toy briefly before returning it to him.
3. Help him practice sharing with others by giving him two of something. Tell him one is for him and the other is for a friend or family member. For example, "This graham cracker is yours and this one is for Tutu. Can you give it to her?"
4. Make each sharing experience a positive one by focusing on the generosity he shows and describing why it was good to share. For example, "Thank you for sharing the graham crackers with Tutu. She was hungry, just like you."



(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps his development and school readiness.)

How This Helps

The activities suggested in this newsletter help promote many different aspects of development:

Physical Development

- ♥ Use and strengthen small muscles such as facial muscles, fingers, hands, and toes.
- ♥ Learn to use his body purposefully.

Social and Emotional Development

- ♥ Learn to interact with others.
- ♥ Feel important and good about himself.

Language and Literacy Development

- ♥ Increase his observation, listening, and understanding skills, and attention span.
- ♥ Learn to ask and answer questions.

Cognitive Development

- ♥ Develop his creativity and imagination.
- ♥ Develop his curiosity about how things work.



Kids in the Kitchen

Cooking teaches valuable lessons. As you do this recipe with your child, show him how to safely handle the items and allow him to do as much as he is capable of. Ask questions throughout the process to encourage his thinking skills. Make sure to wash your hands and your child's hands before preparing any food.

Crunchy Oat Bar

Adapted from: <http://food.unl.edu>

Ingredients:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 6 T margarine | 3 cups uncooked oatmeal |
| $\frac{3}{4}$ cup brown sugar, packed | $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt |
| 2 T molasses | 1 teaspoon cinnamon |

Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Talk to your child about what the ingredients look like and have him predict what the ingredients will make.
3. Cream margarine and sugar together.
4. Have your child add molasses.
5. In another bowl have him mix together the oats, salt, and cinnamon.
6. Then, slowly add and mix the dry ingredients into the creamed mixture.
7. Together, spread the mixture evenly in a greased 9" x 13" pan, flattening it if needed.
8. Bake for 17 minutes. While warm, cut into 24 pieces. Break apart when cooled.



Community Resources

Hawaii Children's Trust Fund

<http://www.hawaiichildrenstrustfund.org/>
HCTF promotes public awareness and advocacy on addressing the needs of families. Click on the Resources for Parents and Caregivers tab on the home page for information on strengthening your family.

UH Center on the Family

Family Resource Kit Articles

<http://learningtogrowhawaii.org/resources/>
Child development articles in a searchable database. Articles include Guiding Your Infant, Toddler, and Preschooler.



Suggested Books

Recommended by Hawaii State Public Library www.librarieshawaii.org.

Infants and Toddlers

Time for Bed by Mem Fox

In this gentle bedtime story, a variety of animal parents nudge their little ones to sleep, from a mouse to a sheep to the final image of a mother and child.

You Are Special, Little One by Nancy Tafuri

With beautiful watercolor illustrations, this book shows baby animals from around the world asking their parents how they are special, and each is reassured and praised.

Preschoolers

The Grouchy Ladybug by Eric Carle

A grouchy ladybug is looking for a fight and challenges every creature she meets.

Wild About Books by Judy Sierra

When she accidentally drives her bookmobile to the zoo, a librarian introduces the animals to the joy of reading.



Learning to Grow is a project of the Center on the Family at the University of Hawai‘i, College of Tropical Agriculture & Human Resources, with funding from the Hawai‘i Department of Human Services. www.learningtogrowhawaii.org