

Guiding children's behaviour



Fact Sheet

What does it mean to guide children's behaviour?

The aim of behaviour guidance is to help young children develop the capacity to regulate their own behaviour and learn what are acceptable behaviours. Behaviour guidance is a positive and effective way that educators can help children gain understanding and learn about looking after themselves and the world around them.

Children learn and develop through their interactions and experiences with others, through observation and through the specific guidance they receive from caring adults around them. Helping children learn what acceptable behaviour is, and how to self-regulate their feelings is essential to a child's social and emotional development.

Early childhood educators and carers play a key role in supporting children through this learning process.

Why is it important?

A child's social and emotional development during their early years lays the foundation for positive mental health and wellbeing throughout their lives. Developing the skills to self-regulate their feelings and behaviours will influence a child's ability to deal with stress, problem-solve and overcome challenges.

Children respond positively to consistent and caring guidance. When educators implement practices which positively guide children's behaviours, they are not only reducing challenging behaviours, but encouraging children to develop a strong sense of self and gain confidence in their abilities.

What can educators and carers do?

Educators should focus their guidance and expectations of a child's behaviour based on the individual child's age and developmental stage.

Everyday interactions, communication and structured playtime provide opportunities for educators and carers to guide children's behaviour.

Some key strategies for educators and carers include:

- Giving children choices and opportunities to make decisions about their own experiences;
- Modelling positive behaviour;
- Reinforcing good behaviours as you observe them;
- Explaining often, so children realise the effect their actions have on others and themselves;
- Provide clear, consistent and fair expectations and set appropriate limits;
- Breaking down tasks and complex skills into small, manageable components
- Identify each child's strengths and where they may need further support;
- Support your team members and seek help from management as you need it; and
- Involve families to ensure consistency in guiding behaviours at home and at care.

Further Information

Stonehouse, A. (2008). Guiding children's behaviours in a positive way. NCAC Family Day Care http://ncac.acecqa.gov.au/family-resources/factsheets/guiding_childrens_behaviour.pdf

Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. (2010). Strategies to guide children's behaviour. www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/earlychildhood/licensed/pn10strategiesbehaviour.pdf

