

# **Managing Feelings and Behaviour Early Years Foundation Stage Personal, Social and Emotional development**

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## **1.Introduction**

### **Managing children's feelings and behaviour creatively**

When managing young children's feelings and behaviours we need to look at creative approaches. Creative strategies can be implemented by any provider and significantly improve the day to day experiences of both children and adults. We need to understand which strategies are developmentally appropriate and prioritise the importance of supporting children to be able to self-regulate.

The Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage 2014 (section 3.52) outlines clearly the roles and responsibilities for behaviour management in early years settings. Development Matters in the EYFS supports practitioners in implementing the statutory requirements of the EYFS. It is based on broad, chronologically referenced age bands for assessing and monitoring children's learning and development across curricular areas and includes Personal, Social and Emotional Development. It can be used to give an overall best fit of children's progress within Personal, Social and Emotional Development.

## **2.Behavioural milestones**

Behavioural expectations of children should not be higher than what is developmentally appropriate for their stage of development and should be consistent with their level of understanding. A one year old is unlikely to understand discipline whereas a three year old is much more likely to have a better understanding of their behaviour and the consequences of inappropriate behaviour.

"Behavioural milestones" are important as they support us to determine how a child's behaviour and understanding is developing. Remember that each individual child develops in their own way and at their own rate.

### **0-12 months (approx.):**

- No understanding for consciously intentional behaviour (when a baby finds a marker, they may begin to draw on their face, the walls, the floor. The baby doesn't understand that this is unacceptable behaviour, they are just exploring.).
- No understanding of conscious reactions during interactions (when interacting with a baby you may notice them grabbing toys from you or other babies. This is because the baby is unable to understand the concept of sharing at this stage).
- Beginning to develop trust (first step towards positive self esteem).

### **12 - 36 months (approx.):**

- Still does not consciously plan actions or have control.
- Does not have the capacity to understand, remember or obey rules.
- Sharing is developmentally incompatible at this stage.
- Begins to explore cause and effect relationships (when you are hungry, you eat).
- Begins to become interested in other children.
- Beginning to develop independence.
- Starts to test boundaries and able to do things considered “naughty” or “destructive”.

### **36 - 60 months (approx.):**

- Consciously aware of their own interests and intentions.
- Becomes easily frustrated when things don't turn out as expected.
- Begins to manipulate ideas in their minds.
- Begins to understand consequences of their behaviour.
- Able to make appropriate decisions before acting.
- Can talk through things in a simple manner.
- Establishes friendships and learns how to be a friend.
- Becomes independent and finds own limits.

- Wanting to please adults (feels guilty for disappointing others).
- Will follow rules to please adults.
- Able to follow simple rules.
- Becomes very competitive.
- Beginning to comprehend the relationship between actions and consequences.

### Being Three and Four

Within any group of three and four year olds, there will be a wide variety of ability, achievement and personality.

What are the characteristics that most three to four year olds share?

Typical Characteristics	
Emotional	Intellectual
<p><b>They:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• test boundaries</li> <li>• show changes of mood i.e. times of quiet and calm and other times of noisy, assertive, boisterous behaviour</li> <li>• need immediate and individual attention</li> <li>• can feel insecure in new surroundings.</li> </ul>	<p><b>They:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• repeatedly ask questions</li> <li>• repeat activities until they have been mastered</li> <li>• have varying degrees of concentration</li> <li>• want to be involved in active learning situations</li> </ul>
Physical	Social
<p><b>They:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have excess energy that occurs in bursts</li> <li>• have trouble sitting still</li> <li>• have some difficulties dressing and in fine motor co-ordination.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Sometimes, they:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• play alongside others</li> <li>• are unable to share</li> <li>• are unconcerned about others</li> <li>• require a high degree of adult support.</li> </ul>

### 3. Promoting positive behaviour

Creating a framework for good behaviour involves all aspects of the life of a setting including:

- the expectations adults have of how children should behave

- the way in which strong positive relationships are valued and promoted
- how language is used
- the organisation and routines of the setting
- the emphasis which is placed on building a mutually respectful relationship with parents.

### **Give positive feedback**

Positive feedback is the best and most effective way to promote positive behaviour and discourage inappropriate behaviour. This encourages the development of self-confidence and self-esteem. Children need to know they are getting it right through adults using:

- Positive and warm body language
- Tone of voice
- Physical touch
- Praise and compliments
- Encouragement
- Attention
- Treats, rewards and privileges
- Specific instruction e.g. 'well done for picking up the lego'.

When children are praised and rewarded for positive behaviour they are more likely to repeat the appropriate behaviour again and eventually it will become habitual.

### **Use positive language**

Say what you want, not what you don't want.

The easiest way to remember this technique is to stay positive. Tell a child what you want him/her to do, instead of what not to do. Here are a few examples:

**Don't say:** "Don't throw the truck." **Instead:** "The truck is for driving. You may throw this soft ball."

**Don't say:** "Don't climb with a toy in your hand." **Instead:** "I'll hold your toy while you climb."

**Don't say:** "Don't chew books." **Instead:** "We look at books. Take the book out of your mouth."

**Don't say:** "Don't shut the door." **Instead:** "Leave the door open."

**Don't say:** "Don't eat the crayon." **Instead:** "Crayons are for drawing."

**Set clear boundaries which are fairly and consistently applied by all. Be consistent and fair.**

It is very important that in managing children's behaviour we all give a consistent message about what is, and what is not, acceptable. We need to have in place a strategy we all understand and agree to – a strategy where everyone – children, practitioners and parents – plays by the rules.

Setting boundaries makes it clear that limitations do exist and teaches children that there are consequences of inappropriate behaviour. Having boundaries allows children to understand that adults will act in their authority, whether parents or practitioners, and helps to develop a sense of justice and fairness. Knowing that there are boundaries provides children with a safe and secure environment, thereby promoting good mental health. Verbal expressions of anger, disappointment, concern or sadness are best communicated by the prefix 'I feel...', rather than 'You are...'

It is important that sanctions match the 'offence' and are used consistently by, and between, different adults. The child needs to know what the possible consequences might be of stepping over the line into inappropriate behaviour. Make sure all staff use the same sanctions for the same offence!

All children will step over the boundaries of good behaviour from time to time and adults need to think ahead and plan how to respond in the best possible way. The aim must always be to return children to the appropriate behaviour as quickly, and with as little fuss, as possible. However, sometimes it will take time and there will be fuss!

As adults we have to make it quite clear to children that we care enough about them to act and do something to stop their inappropriate behaviour. This makes them feel safe and secure within set boundaries.



## **Build respectful relationships**

Positive behaviour is built primarily on good relationships and communication. Children have an inborn desire to please the people they love and care for and seek approval from them. If the relationships are wobbly or the communication is poor, either within the home or the early years setting, then the child is likely to use negative or challenging behaviour in an attempt to have their needs met.

## **Pre-plan**

Practitioners will be most successful at promoting positive behaviour when they are able to anticipate and pre-plan what the behavioural issues might be in a certain situation and avert them. For example, if something different is happening in the setting on a particular day explain to the children exactly what is going to be different and what will happen. Children often misbehave when their routine is altered and they feel insecure, even if the routine is being altered because of something exciting or novel.

## **Prioritise what is important**

Choose your 'battles' – some behaviours just fade away if they are ignored. If children are constantly being told, 'no, no, no', then the atmosphere in the setting becomes very negative. As a staff team decide which boundaries or rules are important and 'non-negotiable' and in other instances consider negotiation and compromise.



## **Meeting emotional needs**

Human relationships are built on meeting the emotional needs that we all have for attention, acceptance, approval, comfort, security, encouragement, support, respect and

affection. When our primary needs are met we feel happy and secure. When they are not met we can feel anxious, insecure and unhappy.

Often people choose to 'act out' through poor behaviour in order to demonstrate to others that their needs are not being met. This inappropriate behaviour is a message: 'I have a need and no one is meeting it.' It is important that practitioners discuss effective ways to meet some of these needs in children – if a child is misbehaving, it is worth reflecting on what the child needs before putting other strategies into place eg if a child has trouble sitting during a circle time activity, why might that be? It could be because that child is too young, is bored, needs the toilet, is hungry or thirsty. There are many reasons that need to be considered. A small group activity for your staff team (appendix 4) may help you to recognise and unpick a range of emotions and how to develop children's vocabulary around feelings.

### **Ensure there is structure and routine**

Routines and structures underpin a framework for good behaviour by allowing behaviours to become habits or just 'what we do', thereby reinforcing rules and creating an opportunity to practise responsibilities and exercise rights. Young children find routines safe and reassuring and are more likely to behave appropriately within structures they feel comfortable with. However, routines also need to be flexible to allow for individual children's needs.

### **Have clear expectations**

Rules that are just and fair are an important part of the daily life and routines of any community. They set the parameters which will ensure respect for the rights, duties and responsibilities of others as well as for oneself. The purpose of rules is to:

- clarify expectations and create limitations and boundaries
- teach appropriate behaviour
- provide security and safety
- protect rights and encourage responsibilities
- underpin morality/law/social order and make the link with 'real life' outside the setting. Consider how you promote 'British' values in your setting.

When thinking about the rules or expectations a setting should have, it is important to consider:

- moral issues of right and wrong
- health and safety
- how we treat ourselves, others and property
- practical everyday life

- setting/family specific aspects.

### **Rules – Play safe, Play fair and Play hard**

Most settings have some kind of “Golden Rules” or “Dos and don’ts” established and displayed. Often these rules are too complicated and repetitious. Although it is important for children to suggest and be part of establishing these “rules”, the practitioner must “sift” them down to the three: safe, fair and hard. Some settings are using these already. Some have replaced play hard with “have fun learning” if they feel uncomfortable about using the phrase: “play hard”. The children and staff “sign up” to these three rules (hand prints is a good way) and they are displayed creatively, prominently and permanently – and referred to regularly.

### **Model behaviour**

Some theorists would argue that all behaviour is learned and we certainly need to consider what children are learning from us as adults. When parents and practitioners model appropriate behaviour, children will pick this up and copy it. For example do you say please and thank you to your colleagues in the way that you’d like children to? Do you sometimes shout across the room to a colleague even when children are discouraged from doing this?

### **Teach behaviour skills**

All early years settings are teaching and learning environments and part of the role of the setting is to teach behaviour in the same way as any other aspects of learning and development. Aspects to consider here include:

- What do children need to learn?
- How will we teach it?
- How will we check learning has taken place?
- How will we reinforce and build on past learning?
- How will we record that children have learned certain social skills?

### **Keep calm**

When children’s behaviour is challenging it can ‘push our buttons’ and make us feel angry and resentful. Some children seem to ‘wind us up’ more than others. When we feel our professionalism and ability to cope and manage are compromised it can make us feel de-skilled. Similarly, parents can feel ashamed and anxious when they cannot easily manage their children’s behaviour. We all need support and a sounding board to talk our feelings through. Sometimes our behaviour towards a particular child can become a problem and it is important that we focus our concerns on the behaviour, not on the child himself.



## **Communicate – talk and listen**

We are often under the impression that what we say in the form of words is the most important facet in communication. However, words are only a very small part of the communication process. Far more important is the tone of voice in which we speak and the body language we use. How much children hear, or feel that they are being listened to, is more dependent on our body language messages than the words we say or the speaking space we give to them. Be aware of the impression you are giving to children through your actions and expressions.

## **Negotiate and compromise**

From about the age of three, children become much more able to negotiate and compromise and will be less likely to resort to tantrums or stubborn refusal if they are given some chance to gain 'power' through negotiation. Through this process, the adult is also helping the child build valuable skills of 'either/or' thinking.

## **Further Ways of Supporting Children to Problem Solve and Promote Positive Behaviour**

Make time for fun, laughter, jokes and special time.



'Tune-in' to what children's schemas might be and use this knowledge to inform planning. (Nutbrown, 2007)

Have a celebration tree – record individual children's achievements on paper 'leaves' and hang on to the tree.

Use children's names and simple language to appreciate behaviour you like. 'I like how you put all those blocks away Sasha!'

Role-model strategies and provide guidelines for students, parents and volunteers about how to support positive behaviour, and make sure they use children's correct names.

Report achievements and positive behaviour to parents within earshot of their child. This will also help to build positive relations with parents.

Say, 'Yes, we can get the trains out, once we've finished tidying up these blocks', instead of 'No, we must tidy-up first!'

Consider the effects of too much stimulation, colour and sound in the environment, and aim to keep the setting as calm as possible, with soothing colours, and natural resources.

Smile at children, and tell them how much you like them, and enjoy spending time with them.

Give specific praise for behaviour and effort, rather than for what a child looks like or is wearing e.g. 'That was kind to share your book with Chloe' rather than 'What a lovely dress'

All behaviour needs to be taken in context. Although there are some general rules and guidelines, it is important that each child's individual situation is considered, and any plan to deal appropriately with behaviour must begin with observation, and some detective work. Taking time to get to know a child, for example, what's happening at home, their interests and passions, as well as spending time with them will help.



#### **4. Some Key strategies that support all children to learn how to manage their own behaviour**

Adults can use a range of strategies to promote positive behaviour and manage inappropriate or challenging behaviour in young children.

##### **Fighting and conflict**



Learning how to deal with conflict is a necessary skill for children to acquire. Children are also learning to 'self-regulate' – becoming able to tolerate a feeling of distress. This involves a child in either waiting until the need is met (for example, feeling hungry, but being able to wait for lunch in five minutes), or in being creative and beginning to problem solve. Providing a structured, predictable environment, with warnings for changes in routine, and then appreciating children when they manage to 'self-regulate', will all help: 'Well done for waiting your turn so patiently.'

As long as children are not hurting each other, it can be useful to wait before stepping in – to see if they come up with their own solutions, however small. Praise them if they manage this, and talk about it later in a small group, so other children have the opportunity to learn. The most common reason for conflict between children is over toys or resources.

A structured approach to conflict resolution can support children to develop their own problem-solving skills, in turn, leading them to become independent problem solvers.

#### **5. The Six Steps of Conflict resolution – a problem solving approach**

##### **1. Approach Calmly**

- Breathe. Place yourself between the children on their physical level.
- Use a calm voice and gentle touch. If an object is involved in the conflict say something like "I'm going to hold this while we talk about the problem."

##### **2. Acknowledge feelings**

- Give recognition to the feelings children are expressing by using simple descriptive words. For example "You look upset"

### 3. Gather Information

- Ask the children open ended questions that will help you find out what exactly the problem is. Questions like “What’s happening?” or “What’s the problem?” or “What’s going on?” are useful at this stage. Repeat children’s words back to them to help them clarify their thoughts.

### 4. Restate the Problem

- Say exactly what the problem is. Use words like “so the problem is....” Use the needs and details the children have described.

### 5. Ask for ideas for Solutions and choose one together.

- Say something like “What do you think we can do to solve this problem?” Listen and let the children come up with their own ideas. Respect and explore all of the ideas even if some of them seem unrealistic. If children say they can “share” explore this idea further so that everyone is clear how the sharing will happen.

### 6. Be prepared to give follow-up support

- When children have reached a solution check that they are both OK with it. Summarise what is going to happen by saying something like “so you’re going to .....and you’re going to.....” Then acknowledge the children have solved their problem by saying words to the effect of “You did it! You solved the problem!” This helps to build children’s confidence in their capabilities as problem solvers.



## Using Conflict Resolution Strategies

### Stop! - Say and sign the word

Don’t get into an argument, speak with a quieter voice and stay calm. Try to stay relaxed and be aware of your body language. Give parallel eye contact at the child’s level, be direct and be clear – ‘I said “stop” and I meant it.’

'No' is a word that should be used when there is an emergency "No! Don't run across the road!" for example. When 'No' is used as part of everyday boundary setting with children, it loses its effect. Children start to ignore it. So when an emergency happens, they ignore the most important word, (or do the opposite because they're challenging that boundary). 'Stop' lends it self to explaining 'why' the child should stop the behaviour.

### **Choices**

Give a clear choice, 'You can choose, either tidy up now or when everyone else has heard the story – which would you like to do?'

### **Four-part challenge**

1. Describe the offending behaviour: 'When you do...'
2. State your feelings: 'I feel...'
3. State the effect: 'When you do that it...'
4. Ask for input: 'What can we do about it? 'How can you help...?'

### **Distraction**

Many young children can be diverted from poor or inappropriate behaviour by giving them focused attention or simply turning their attention to something else.

You will find yourself using non-judgemental commentary, along the lines of: 'You really wanted the toy, and when you grabbed it, Izzie hit you, and now you are so cross you want to hit her back! I can't let you hit Izzie, but I can help you talk to her about what you'd like.'

As children learn to tolerate some frustration and anxiety, they will be less reactionary, and impulsive. Be ready to step in and model for children how to wait for a turn: 'Let's wait here by the table, until they're finished, then we can have a go.' The key is to be a child's ally in these situations, rather than the rule maker who says: 'Stand there and wait your turn!'

Where conflict is more serious, for example, children are being verbally abusive or racial comments are being made, help them see things from a different perspective through the use of a story. This will also give them some 'emotional distance', making it safer for them to begin to consider their actions.

### **Recognise children's physicality**

Is there lots of throwing, hitting or kicking? Provide ways for them to express this through games and activities such as throwing wet sponges against the wall, hitting balls or targets, building with blocks, banging with saucepans and wooden spoons, squirting runny paint on to large pieces of paper, kicking balls. Sing songs or play movement games to practise stopping, starting and waiting, encourage children to work in pairs, on their own or as part of a group.

## **6. Quiet time – as opposed to ‘Time Out’**

**Quiet time should not be confused with naughty spot or naughty step!** Quiet time may be a helpful strategy which can be used to modify persistent, unwanted, challenging behaviours within the home or setting. It is based on the premise that all children seek approval and have a need for attention from the adults around them. If children are threatened with losing this approval and attention, albeit only temporarily, it can support them to modify their inappropriate behaviour.

Quiet time involves removing the child from whatever they are doing and insisting he/she sits alongside you in a safe place for a short period of time. A child can be taken to quiet time without the whole group knowing and it is most effective when you simply and calmly walk up to a child and ask them to come and be quiet.

Quiet time is not about making a child feel bad but an opportunity to be taken away from the situation as a consequence of unwanted behaviour. This approach is more likely to end the unwanted behaviour rather than temporarily distract a child from it. Make your children aware of ‘Quiet time’. Pick a good time to introduce it.

### **Rules of quiet time for children aged 3 years plus**

You will have quiet time if ..... (make children clear of why)

You will be given only one warning

Quiet time means you will have to sit / stand alongside adult (can be indoors or outdoors)

Quiet time is for 1 minute for every year of a child’s life – a sand timer is useful here

You are not to talk to anyone when you are in quiet time

Toddlers – Very young children can sometimes benefit from having a quiet time away from stressful and upsetting situations but they are not developmentally able to understand rules.

Implement quiet time if a child is not responding to usual strategies such as ‘Conflict resolution’, ‘Stop’, ‘Choices’ etc.

The adult in these circumstances should ignore the child during quiet time and offer no eye-contact or conversation. This is an opportunity for the child to calm down – to possibly think and reflect on his/her behaviour but you should not say this

The length of time out should ideally match the age of the child, for example, for a three-year-old child use three minutes.



Quiet time needs to be used consistently for unwanted behaviour and as part of a behaviour management plan involving parents/carers. You may find you are using it several times a day at first, but this will become less frequent as a child adjusts to this approach.

If a child tries to leave quiet time, or gets upset, take their hand and put him/her back into quiet time, for the first time you can say, you will need to sit in quiet time, but any time after that, don't speak to him/her, just take him/her back.

When quiet time is over you can tell the child that quiet time is over and add 'thank you for sitting so nicely'. Then direct the child to what you want them to do, which may be to do what you asked them to do before quiet time.

If this child then behaves appropriately in the next few minutes offer clear affirmation and praise.

Apply the approach fairly and consistently

If the approach is not modifying the child's behaviour and other positive approaches likewise, you should with parental permission consider referring the child to the Area SENCO team for inclusion support **N.B. It is important that 'quiet time' is used appropriately and sparingly as a last resort to support a child to have time to calm down sitting alongside an adult,**

## **7.Boys: Getting it Right from the Start**

### **How to channel boys' natural exuberance and enthusiasm**

The physical learning environment indoors and outdoors needs to be planned and organized to support boys' learning. We need to create an enabling environment, which celebrates the characteristics of boys and celebrates their natural enthusiasm and energy. This would also take account of many girls who also need more active, physical learning.



## **Barriers to boys' learning that can affect behaviour**

As a setting discuss barriers to learning that specifically affect boys which can include:

- Gender-biased resources
- Gender biased adult talk – do you talk to boys and girls differently?
- Lack of parental understanding of issues relating to boys' underachievement
- Lack of positive role models
- Low self-esteem
- Issues around emotional intelligence
- Adult expectation – do you hear yourselves saying “ah well, boys will be boys?”
- Boys' later development of fine and gross motor skills
- Adults' lack of awareness of issues related to gender and achievement

## **Some Challenging Behaviours**

### **1. Biting**

Biting is a common behaviour in young children between the ages of 14 months to two and a half years of age. Most biting occurs in toddlers, who have no or limited language, but usually stops as language and social skills develop.

Children may also bite because they are hungry, teething, angry or bored. They may not have enough space, be overcrowded or not enough access to enough favourite toys / experiences. Biting may be initiated by transitions, such as a new baby in the family or giving up a dummy, by worry or stress, or because they are in an appropriate environment or expectations are too high.





Useful questions to ask: When and where did it happen? Who with? What happened before? What happened afterwards? Why do you think it happened? What is behind the behaviour – how do you think the child feels?

We may feel awkward or defensive, in response to questions from parents of 'bitten' children, for example, do we tell them who the 'biter' is? We may also be unsure of how to support the parent/s of the child who is biting.

If a child bites:

- Comfort and take care of child who has been bitten, in a 'low-key' calm way. (The biter may not realise how much it hurts). Tell the bitten child: 'That must be sore, let's get a cold cloth.'
- To the biter, say in a firm, but gentle voice 'It's not OK to bite, biting hurts. If you want to bite, you can bite a cracker or a toy, but I can't let you bite Tom.'
- Encourage the biter to 'make amends' in some way; help get a cold cloth, a tissue or teddy for comfort.
- Do not insist on 'sorry', unless the biter genuinely wants to do so.
- Support the bitten child to say 'No, don't do that' and to ask for a hug/soft touch.

### **Strategies to use**

- Make a point of giving positive attention and affection to the 'biter' throughout the day.
- Provide snacks and drinks regularly.
- Make sure there is more than one of a favourite toy.
- Arrange furniture and resources to make space and room for play.
- Be on hand often to help children set simple limits – say 'mine', or 'no, my toy', and model for them how to negotiate and take turns.
- Be aware of changes taking place at home, and help children to deal with these by talking, 'You miss your dad while he's away.' 'It can be a bit scary when you move to a new house.'
- Discourage 'play biting' at home, but do share concerns and strategies with parents. Behaviour will change if everyone works together.
- Never bite a child back.
- Teach children how to gain positive attention.
- Develop a 'biting policy', and a leaflet with guidelines to support parents and practitioners.

- Reassure parents that biting is a common occurrence, and a phase that their child will move through. (Do not say, 'This is one of the worse cases I've seen' – even if it is!)

### **Creative ideas to try**

- Provide crunchy snacks – apples, carrot sticks, cucumber, toast, rice and corn crackers.
- Introduce a puppet or persona doll story about biting, along with the idea of a 'biting' basket containing objects that are safe to bite or mouth – jam jar lids, flannel, new plastic dog toy, rubber door stop, tough beanbag.
- Provide a treasure basket for seated babies (six to 10 months) and heuristic play resources for one- to two-year-olds.
- Provide teething rings of all shapes and sizes.
- Plan simple rhyme and singing sessions for short amounts of time with small groups of children.
- Provide interesting natural play materials to pinch, poke and squeeze – playdough and clay.
- Model how to say sorry appropriately with other practitioners/children.
- Take photos of children being caring, gentle or respectful of each other, and make a display, perhaps linking to the themes of the EYFS
- If biting persists, ask the child's parents to visit a dentist, HV or GP.

### **2.Struggling to share and take turns**



Young children are not always ready to share, though if we re-phrase this as 'turn-taking', and are inventive with games to facilitate this, some sharing is possible. First, we must allow children time to develop and experience the concept of 'ownership'. So, having a peg or box / drawer where children can place special toys from home is ideal. Once a child learns that sharing does not necessarily mean they have to give their one precious toy away, sharing becomes more of a possibility.

Help children develop confidence in turn-taking with simple games and songs like 'Two little dickie birds', but have six birds in a bag. Sing the song and share the game with six children. Other songs include 'Five little monkeys jumping on the bed'.

Ask children to hand round plates of fruit, where there is plenty for everyone to have three to four pieces. Model politely saying please and thank you as you do this.

Positively reinforce any spontaneous turn taking, but rather than saying, 'Good boy or good girl', say 'I like how you're taking turns, well done!'

Help children to join in and develop friendship skills, 'Could you give this book to Jo as I know he wanted to read it when we were finished?' or, 'I think they need some more blocks for the train they're building... here are some.'

### **Strategies and ideas**

- Provide pots of bubbles to blow in the wind.
- Have colourful ribbons to dance and sing with.
- Include simple board games that are fun to share with one other.
- Try using parachute games.
- A well-resourced role-play shop, with plentiful supplies of boxes, tins, paper bags, tills, pens and paper will provide lots of opportunities for sharing and turn taking.
- Help children to negotiate how turn taking can work:
- 'Nikhil loves the trains, can he have Gordon for one minute, as long as he gives it back? I can put the egg timer on for you.'
- 'Let's write a list of names of who wants to have a go. How long shall we each have – two, three or four minutes?'
- Tell a simple story about two children or puppets fighting over a toy, and invite children to help 'sort it out', and come up with ideas to solve the dispute.

### 3. Tantrums

A child's screams and hitting can be alarming, but tantrums can be common in many young children under the age of five. Remind yourself this is normal development and stay calm! Tantrums are a bit like a rain barrel with too much rain. In the same way, emotions can be too much for a child to hold, and they overflow.

Tantrums can happen when a child, used to a relaxed approach at home, joins a setting with clear limits and well-defined boundaries. Children are learning to deal with their emotions, and need our help to do so. Ideas to try:

- Consider the 'useful questions to ask' – When and where did it happen? Who with? What happened beforehand? What happened afterwards? Why do you think it happened? What is 'behind' the behaviour – how do you think the child feels?
- Try distracting a child if you know a tantrum is brewing.
- Utilise the outdoor area fully.
- Remind yourself that limits are important, it's OK to stick to them.
- Children find it hard to wait too long, so make sure routines run smoothly.
- Could they be hungry, tired, or becoming ill?
- Offer cuddles, a cosy story time or gentle songs to ward off a tantrum

If a tantrum occurs:

- It may help to avoid eye contact.
- Make sure child is safe and keep other children 'out of the line of fire'.
- Reassure visitors and other children that this is normal and the child needs to express some strong feelings.
- Do not try to reason with or have a conversation with a child in the throes of a tantrum.
- You may, depending on the child, be able to hold him, rock him or reassure him to help him calm down.

*With thanks for information from some excellent resources*

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