

Wellness Articles

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Helping your child deal with aggression

Everyone gets angry sometimes, even small children. But some children and teens have so much trouble controlling their anger that they shove, hit, or make fun of other people. This causes them trouble at home and at school. They often have a hard time making friends. And their aggression makes parenting them a challenge.

Aggression is any behaviour that hurts other people. It can be physical—hitting or pushing—or verbal, such as name-calling.

How can you prevent aggression in your child?

Set rules and consequences

- Make house rules for your family. Let your child know the consequences (such as loss of certain privileges) for not following the rules.
- If you say you will take away a privilege, do it. It can be hard to follow through when your child says he or she is sorry. But your child needs to know you mean what you say.
- Create a chart with rules and chores for younger children. Your child can earn stars or other stickers for completed chores or good behaviour. These stars can be turned in for privileges, such as more play time or a game night with the family.

Create empathy

- Ask your child how he or she would feel if someone pushed him or her on the playground.

- Read stories to young children about a child coping with a problem in a positive way.
- When reading with your child or watching a TV show, ask what was good about a character's behaviour, and what was not good. What could the character have done differently to make a better choice?

Model good behaviour

- Teach toddlers not to hit or bite others. Gently pull your child away and say "no" firmly.
- Use your own behaviour to show your child how to act. Try not to yell when correcting your child's behaviour.
- Catch your child being good. Praise your child when he or she handles conflict in a positive way or shows empathy for others.
- Involve your child in a sport. Or help your child find a hobby or social activity to share with other kids.
- Encourage your child's friendships with nonaggressive peers. Even one friend who is a positive role model can help a child feel accepted and make good choices.

Source: Myhealth.alberta.ca