The Early Edition

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Help Children Solve Conflicts in the

A child's social world expands during the pre-school years to include more and more children their own age. The social give and take of the peer group will allow ample opportunities for children to learn to deal with conflict, to communicate their ideas and desires, and to negotiate and collaborate within a group. When conflicts occur, teachers and caregivers can help children find acceptable ways to express their feelings, become aware of others' feelings, and develop ways to solve conflicts that will be satisfying to everyone. Following these simple steps can help children learn to "use their words" to express their feeling, desires and ideas.

1. Identify the problem

- Determine whose problem it is.
- Help children express their feelings and desires to each other.
- Question them about their feelings and opinions. "What is it you don't like?" "What could you say to her?"

See Conflicts Page 4

Communicating With Children

As children grow, communicating with them and teaching them how to communicate well with others becomes more difficult. How we talk with children depends on the situation and what we are trying to accomplish with them, and on their age, gender and temperament.

Communication with children involves

- Exchanging information
- Teaching children how to express feelings in socially acceptable ways

See Communicating Page 5

Special points of interest:

- ☺ Parkway School District Preschool Program Highlight
- ☺ Social Emotional Development Book list
- ☺ Calendar of Events
- ☺ Ruth Flynn, Director of Early Childhood Education Retires

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Parkway School District Pre-School Program

Children in Parkway School District have benefited from two preschool grants that help fund three different preschool sites in Parkway School District. The most recent grant has benefited children in the north attendance area of Parkway School District. The area had more than sixty children on a wait list for preschool and few private centers located in the area. Additionally, the northern attendance area has the largest number of ESL families. Parkway School District continues to become more ethnically diverse. In the year 2000, 6% of the people in the District were Asian and 1.6% were Hispanic. Two elementary schools in the north attendance area report that 8-10% of their children are receiving English as a second language services. At one school, an additional 16% of the children speak another language at home.

Parkway preschool classrooms are lively, engaging places for young children to thrive and grow and learn. Parents are regular visitors and enjoy daily communication with the preschool teacher. A visit to the preschool may involve an opportunity to tell stories around a pretend campfire, construct a city with blocks and other classroom materials, construct costumes in a sewing center, learn to play a game with peers or study bugs.

In addition to a rich curriculum, the primary key to a healthy preschool experience lies in the relationship between the teacher, child and parent. A healthy relationship results in a positive start for both parent and child. Parkway teachers make a home visit to every child before the start of school to begin to establish a relationship with each family. Daily written and personal communication strengthens the relationships throughout the year.

The grant has enabled us to recruit and hire degreed, certified teachers who possess the emotional and personal characteristics of quality early childhood professionals.

The following are a few stories about children who attend preschool at our grant site at the Instructional Services Center in the northern attendance area. They show the impact the Missouri Preschool Grant has had on individual children.

Arbaaz is a three-year-old child who began preschool this year. His family is originally from India and little English is spoken in the home. When school began this year, Arbaaz exhibited many social difficulties. He would not enter the classroom and did not speak to anyone. His mother had to pry him off her legs to leave him at school. Parents reported

Parkway cont.

Parents reported that he does not eat a variety of foods at home, only milk and crackers. Arbaaz would not interact with teachers or children. He refused to complete any tasks if requests were made of him. He often had a frown on his face and did not smile or laugh at any time. He did not join the large group for any activities, but instead spent most of the day in the block area by himself. He exhibited sensitivity to loud noises, particularly during music and movement.

After five months in preschool, Arbaaz has shown great growth in his ability to participate in preschool. He has no difficulty separating from his mother at arrival time. He eats a variety of foods at snack time at school. He watches the other children during music and laughs at them. He smiles at the teachers and is speaking English in phrases. He comes to the circle and sits with the group, even though he is not yet participating in the activities. An occupational therapist will observe Arbaaz to determine if further evaluation is needed in the sensory area. A developmental screening is also to be completed this year.

Mario is a three-year-old who attends preschool three half days per week. At the beginning of the year, Mario mumbled and did not move his lips when talking. His family, friends, and teachers had difficulty understanding his speech. Developmental screening was completed and a referral made for further diagnostic testing in the areas of speech and language. Currently in the classroom, Mario is speaking in phrases with greater intelligibility. The evaluation is not yet complete, but Mario's parents feel that preschool has made a huge difference in his ability to communicate.

A report recently released by the National Institute for Early Education Research at Rutgers University in New Jersey reported that a longitudinal study found that for every $1 spent on high-quality preschool, society receives a $4 return. What a sound investment Missouri is making in our youngest children! Parkway School District feels very fortunate to have been a recipient of Missouri Preschool Grants. Our children are having a "good beginning" which will contribute to a good school career and "good outcome."

Missouri Pre-K Standards for Social and Emotional

The Social and Emotion Standards are complete. Hopefully you have received the standards packet with the Standards Booklet, Teacher Guide and Parent Guide. If you are in need of more packets please go to the DESE web page to download.

Knowledge of Self (Content Component)

Exhibits self-awareness (Process Standard)

- Shows respect for self
- Develops personal preferences

See Standards Page 7

Conflict cont.

- Help children listen to each other. Restate or rephrase many of their comments.

"Sarah is saying..." "Do you think that's what's happening?"

- Accept and talk about negative feelings. "Sam feels very angry now because..."
- Appeal to empathy. Don't be punitive or raise guilt. "Can you listen to Sarah's words?" "Look at her face. Do you think she is sad?"

2. Explore possible solutions.

- Give children the opportunity to suggest solutions. Restate problem if needed. "What can we do about this?" "How can we decide who will...?"
- Propose solutions when children do not have ideas. "I wonder if there is a way two people can…?"
- Teach impartial procedures, such as rhyming games, using a timer, or flipping a coin, for deciding who will get a turn or privilege.

3. Evaluate the possibilities

- Give children the opportunity to reject proposed solutions. "Do you think that would work?" "Is that something you want to try?" "Does that sound like a good idea to you, Sarah?"

4. Choose a solution.

- Uphold the value of mutual agreement.
- The important thing is that the solution is acceptable to all children involved and that they are the final decision makers, not the adults. "Sarah doesn't think that's a good idea." "Is there another way that you both think might work?" "Are you all finished talking now?"

5. Make a commitment

- Give children the opportunity to explain what they plan to do. "I'm going to play with blocks and Sarah can have the truck until the timer rings."

6. Plan for evaluation

- Check with the children to see if the solution to the conflict worked.

These guided negotiation talks may require quite some time in the beginning. Teachers need to be prepared to give this extra time, rather than quickly deciding the solution themselves. With time, however, assistance will be needed less and less as children increase their confidence, initiative, and skill in solving their own conflicts.

Communicating cont.

- Helping children learn to cooperate
- Reinforcing their efforts, helping them feel good about themselves
- Helping them become independent
- Building a good teacher-child relationship

Principles of good communication

- Whatever we say preserves everyone's self-respect. "Here's some tape to mend that book," rather than "You are so careless, tearing another book."
- Statements of understanding come before statements of advice or instruction. "I know you are tired, but you still need to pick up the blocks before nap time."
- All feelings are acceptable. Some words and actions used to discharge feelings are acceptable and some are not.
- Focus on the behavior, not the child. "Hitting hurts, I don't like for you to hit!" rather than, "You are a bad child!"
- Effective communication identifies the feelings and states how they may or may not be expressed.

Ways to talk about problems

Sam and Jason, two 4 year olds, are painting. Jason reaches for the red paint and spills it on Sam's picture. Sam rips Jason's picture. Jason hits Sam and yells, "I hate you!" Sometime our first inclination is to lecture Jason about not hitting. This will likely just produce resentful compliance, so you can do the following:

- **Listen**—Just listening, sometimes making a sympathetic sound to let a child know he has your attention, can foster closeness while helping the child develop independent problem-solving skills. Jason says, "Sam shouldn't have torn my picture." The teacher says, "Hmm." Jason says, "I guess I could've told Sam that I didn't mean to spill the paint. But ripping my paper made me mad!" This level of understanding won't happen quickly, but with repeated encouragement, children can learn better responses. When just listening doesn't solve the problem, you can speak briefly and:
- **Reflect** the child's feelings back to him. "You were very angry when Sam tore your picture!"
- **Describe the problem.** "Sam tore your picture because he was angry about the spilled paint on his picture, and you hit Sam because you were angry about that. It was O.K. to feel angry, but the problem was two angry children who tore and hit. It is not O.K. to do that when you are angry."
- **Give information.** "Hitting hurts people."
- **State the rules.** 'The rule is no hitting people."
- **Describe values.** "Hurting people is wrong."
- **Describe feelings using**. "I" messages. "I am upset when I see children hurting each other."
- **Teach acceptable ways to express feelings.** "You may hit the bean bag, but not Sam. You need to use your words. Tell Sam you didn't mean to spill the paint, tell him what you really mean. You are angry that he tore your picture. You don't really hate him."

See Communicating Page 6

Characteristics of Social-Emotional Development

Age 3-4

Look for children in your care to

- Want to make other people happy.
- Love to laugh.
- Enjoy helping with everyday tasks.
- Make decisions.
- Know when other people are sad and want to help them.
- Take turns or share sometimes.

Ways you can help

- Model caring acts of kindness. Recognize children's efforts for sharing and turn taking.
- Play silly games. Add laughter to your day.

See Characteristics page 8

Communicating cont.

- **Offer a choice.** "You can use your words when you are angry, or if there is more hitting, you can't work with Sam today."
- **Take action that enforces limits and follow through on consequences.** "You hit Sam again, so I see you've chosen not to play with him today." It is important for the child to see that what happens is due to **HIS** actions,
- **Reinforce acceptable behavior or words.** "I see you remembered to use your words when you didn't like Sam taking your truck!"
- **Teach problem-solving techniques.** At a later calm time, talk about the problem with Jason, "I think when you are angry it is hard for you to remember to use your words. Let's think of what you can do to help yourself remember." Brainstorm some solutions together (count to 10, take a deep breath, hit a cushion to have time to remember to use words). Encourage Jason to try these the next time he plays with Sam. Later you can talk about how the solutions worked or if he needs to think of other ways to help him remember.

Children need lots of time and practice to learn these skills. It also takes lots of patience for teachers and caregivers to use them. You may not always be able to practice these techniques, but children still benefit from consistency. When teachers use these skills repeatedly, children learn to understand their feelings, express themselves in acceptable actions and words, make good choices for themselves and begin to solve some of their own problems. This helps children grow socially and emotionally and to feel good about themselves and about their relationships with others.

Parents as Teachers National Center, Inc. (2000). *Supporting Care Providers Through Personal Visits.* Parent as Teachers National Center, Inc.

Standards cont.

- Knows personal information

Develops self-control (Process Standard)

- Follows simple rules
- Accepts transitions and follows daily routines
- Expresses feelings through appropriate gestures, actions and language
- Adapts to different environments

Develops personal responsibility (Process Standard)

- Cares for personal and group possessions
- Begins to accept the consequences of own actions

Knowledge of Others (Content Component)

Builds relationships of mutual trust and respect with others (Process Standard)

- Respects the rights of others
- Respects adult leadership
- Seeks comfort and security from significant adults
- Develops friendships
- Uses courteous words and actions
- Respects similarities and differences among people

Works cooperatively with children and adults (Process Standard)

- Participates successfully as a member of a group
- Shares experiences and ideas with others
- Begins to examine a situation from another person's perspective
- Resolves conflicts with others

Understanding Challenging Behaviors

All care settings have conflict at some point. Children have disagreements. Children aren't born with the social skills needed to get by in life. These are skills they learn. Caring adults help children understand the differences between right and wrong, what is acceptable behavior and what is not. Still, some children have a more difficult time controlling their emotions and behaviors than others do. It is important for care providers to be aware of factors that may contribute to this difficulty.

Risk factors—biological, environmental

Causes of challenging behaviors are complex. Research shows there are certain factors that can increase children's risks for developing challenging behaviors. These factors fall into two broad categories, biological and environmental.

Biological factors

- Prenatal exposure to drugs, alcohol, lead, smoke, or stress can be detrimental to brain development.
- Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and Attention-Deficit with Hyperactivity Disorder are neurological syndromes whose major symptoms include inattention, impulsiveness and hyperactivity.
- Children have different temperaments. Research by Thomas

See Behaviors page 10

Characteristics cont.

- Involve the children in setting the table or doing simple chores in the care setting.
- Give simple choices when possible. Let the children decide what books to read or what juice to drink.
- Model caring acts of kindness. Talk about feelings.
- Play games that encourage turn taking such as rolling a ball back and forth. Recognize children's efforts for sharing and turn taking.

Age 4-5

Look for children in your care to

- Share more often.
- Enjoy pretend play with other children.
- Make up jokes and riddles.
- Use "bad" words.
- Be bossy and show off.
- Follow rules and be upset when other people don't.

Ways you can help

- Practice taking turns and sharing.
- Acknowledge children's efforts for taking turns and sharing.
- Have a box of dress up clothes for the children to play with.
- Laugh throughout the day. Make up funny words.
- Be careful what you say. Talk about appropriate words.
- Talk about being kind.
- Play simple card games and board games.

Age 5-6

Look for children in your care to

- Need a few rules to feel safe.
- Have a good friend or two.
- Want things to be fair.
- Want to win games.
- Learn to say please and thank you.

Ways you can help

- Have a few simple rules. Set clear boundaries and limits.
- Have other children play in your home or yard.
- Set and follow the rules. Be consistent with the children.
- Play simple board games and cards. Encourage teamwork and non-competitive games.
- Model appropriate use of please and thank you.

Areas of the brain areas that enable greater self-regulation, taking the perspective of others, and self-help skills become increasingly organized during the preschool years (ages 3-6). The prefrontal cortex, the area of the brain responsible for attention and behavior control, is myelinating, thus enabling the child to focus for longer periods of time. Children will gradually have the capacity to develop self-control for their own behavior. Self-suffiency structures the child's brain in the social-emotional areas for self-esteem. Children should be encouraged to learn self-help skills.

Children's early development depends on the health and well being of their care providers and parents. Care providers and parents, as designers of children's worlds, play the most important role in helping young children's brains make connections. Children's experiences of love, trust, and encouragement during the first years become a permanent part of the brain's structure and function.

Parents as Teachers National Center, Inc. (2000). *Supporting Care Providers Through Personal Visits*.

Parent as Teachers National Center, Inc. St. Louis.

Social and Emotional Development Books for Children

Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No good, Very Bad Day by J. Viorst & R. Cruz (feelings)

Bedtime for Frances by R. Hoban & G. Williams (fears)

The Biggest Boy by K. Henkes & N. Tafurui (growing)

I'm Like You, You're Like Me by C. Gainer (diversity/friendship)

Owen by K. Henkes (transitional object)

Leo the Late Bloomer by R. Krauss & J. Aruego (growing)

Shy Charles by R. Wells (feelings)

Swimmy by L. Lionni (self-esteem)

What Makes Me Happy? by C. Anholt & L. Anholt (feelings)

When I Was Little by J. Curtiss & L. Cornell (growing)

Where The Wild Things Are by M. Sendak (feelings)

Yo! Yes? by C. Raschka (friendship)

Sheila Rae, the Brave by K. Henkes (feelings)

I Love You Very: A Child's Book of Love by F & L Weedn (feelings)

When You're Happy: And You Know It by E. Crary (feelings)

When You're Silly: And You Know It by E. Crary (feelings)

Owl Babies by M. Waddell & P. Benson (separation anxiety)

Tell Me Something Happy Before I Go To Sleep by J. Dunbar & D. Gliori (sibling love/bedtime)

Peter's Chair by E.J. Keats (new baby)

When You're Shy: And You Know It by E. Crary (shyness)

I Love You Just The Way You Are by V. Miller- (security)

Alicia Has A Bad Day by L. Jahn-Claugh (feelings)

Susan Laughs by J. Willis & T. Ross (feelings/special needs child)

Abuela's Weave by O.S. Castaneda (relationships)

The Big Brag by Dr. Seuss (bragging)

The Boy Under The Bed by P. McClear & N. Dollack (fears)

Boomer's Big Day by C.W. McGeorge & M. Whyte (moving)

Good-bye House by F. Asch (moving)

Crispin the Terrible by B. Morris & D. Ziborova (behavior)

Adoption Is For Always by L. Givard (adoption)

The Day We Met You by P. Koehlr (adoption)

Over The Moon: An Adoption Tale by K. Katz (adoption)

I'm A Big Sister by Jocose & M. Chambliss (new baby)

I'm A Big Brother by Jocose & M. Chambliss (new baby)

Julius, the Baby of the World by K. Henkes (new baby)

A Baby for Grace by I. Whybrow (new baby)

The Baby Sister by T. dePaola (new baby)

Boomer's Big Surprise by C. McGeorge & M. Whyte (new baby)

The New Baby by F. Rogers & J. Judkis (new baby)

Wemberly Worried by K. Henkes (worry)

I Will Never Not Ever Eat A Tomato by L. Child (preferences)

Koko Bear's Big Earache: Preparing Your Child for Ear Tube Surgery by V. Lansky (surgery)

Chris Gets Ear Tubes by B. Pace & K. Hutton (surgery)

Blueberry Eyes by M.D. Beatty & Pichel (Eyeglasses/surgery)

See Books page 10

Books Cont.

Going To The Hospital by F. Rogers & J. Jenkes (hospital stay)

Just Going To The Dentist by M. Mayer (dentist visit)

Kathy's Hats: A Story of Hope by T. Kridher (child wit cancer)

Promises by E. Winthrop & B. Lewin (ill parent)

Paper Chain by C. Blake (ill parent)

Annie Loses Her Leg, but Finds Her Way by S.J. Philipson & R. Takatch (severe illness & recovery)

It's Not Your Fault, Koko Bear by V. Lansky & J. Prince (divorce)

Dinosaurs Divorce: A Guide for Changing Families by L. Krasny Brown & M. Tolon Brown (divorce)

Let's Talk About It: Divorce by F. Rogers & J. Judkis (divorce)

I'll Always Love You by H. Wilhelm (death)

When A Pet Dies by F. Rogers & J. Judkis (death)

Bager's Parting Gifts by S. Varley (death)

The Tenth Good Thing About Barney by J. Viorst & E. Blegved (death)

Everett Anderson's Goodbye by L. Clifton & A. Grifalconi (death of a parent)

Behaviors cont.

and Chess identifies three types of temperament styles: easy, difficult and slow to warm up. Roughly 20 of children have difficult or spirited temperaments. This temperament style, may in fact, be what parents or care providers consider challenging.

Environmental factors

- Repeated exposure to violence in the home, neighborhood, or from television.
- Poverty and the social conditions surrounding poverty such as insufficient nutrition, chronic stress, or disadvantaged environment.
- Parenting style or low quality child care where there is harsh, inconsistent discipline, lack of structure, uninvolved adults, and unsupervised groups that are too large may cause children to respond with defiant, aggressive, impulsive behaviors.

Resilience

Some children, despite having multiple risk factors serious threats to their development, seem to cope and have good developmental and behavioral outcomes. Research is investigating why this is. A longitudinal study, done by Emmy Wemer, outlines three protective factors that resilient children exhibited. These factors appear to cushion the impact of stressful events. They are temperament, a support system within the family, and a support system externally, within the community. Resilient children also have at least one caring adult in their life that fosters positive social and emotional development.

Caring adults help children understand the differences between right and wrong, what is acceptable behavior and what is not.

See Behaviors page 11

Behaviors cont.

Research shows resilient children have a positive self-esteem, positive social skills, a sense of competence, problem-solving abilities, are involved in enrichment activities such as hobbies or sports, and have a sense of responsibility.

These resilient children have certain character traits that may endear them to adults. They tend to be sociable, have a low activity level, and have no feeding or sleeping difficulties. These traits are characteristic of an easy temperament.

Early experiences matter

Neuroscience research shows that early experiences influence the connections within the brain. Every experience, positive and negative, has an effect. When children repeat activities, connections in the brain are reinforced. These connections or networks become the permanent wiring of the brain that allows them to think, learn and behave. Although there is clear evidence that people continue to develop throughout their lives, what happens early in brain development clearly matters in the life of children. Neuroscientific research on early brain development says children who are growing up in chaotic, stressful, abusive and neglectful environments warrant concern. These factors can play a part in children's growth, development, and behavior.

Understanding development

Many times children's challenging behaviors are a direct result of their stage of development. Toddlers become aggressive and hit or bite when their toy is taken away. Temper tantrums are characteristic of two year olds. Children's growing social and emotional capabilities limit their abilities to behave in "socially acceptable" ways. Children develop control of their emotions and feelings by interacting with caring, loving adults. They learn the appropriate social skills needed throughout life by having them modeled for them. Many challenging behaviors resolve as children grow and develop. By having a strong knowledge of child development, care providers know which behaviors in children are developmental and which are more cause for concern.

Challenging behaviors can sometimes be thought of as children's solutions to their problems. When dealing with challenging behaviors, care providers should observe children and try to discover what happens before the behavior occurs. They can watch for signs of anxiousness, frustration or agitation in children. Care providers should review their care setting.

Children develop control of their emotions and feelings by interacting with caring, loving adults.

See Behaviors page 12

Behaviors cont.

Children may not be listening because it is too noisy. Care providers should talk with parents. Teamwork and consistency are extremely important when dealing with challenging behaviors.

Tips and techniques

Children with challenging behaviors may need help controlling their emotions and developing self-control. Setting goals, guiding and modeling will help children learn appropriate social skills.

Positive reinforcement. It is important to find activities and skills that children do well, enjoy, and receive positive recognition for. Care providers can see if children are acting out because they are looking for attention. If so, positive attention for the things can be given. When ever possible, care providers should ignore the minor challenging behaviors as much as possible.

Transitions. Some children have a very difficult time moving from one activity to another. They may resist the change by acting out. Care providers should observe how the children in their care react to the transitions in every day life. The different temperament styles of children may affect how quickly and easily children move from one task to another. If children are having difficulties with transitions, care providers may need to provide plenty of warning that an activity or event will be changing.

Consequences. There are always consequences to any behavior. When children misbehave, they should know they have made a choice and accept consequences of their behavior. Limits need to be reasonable and consistent. If children are fighting over a toy, care providers should allow time for them to problem solve and come up with a consequence of their actions. This takes time by loving, care adults. Practice in solving conflicts is what develops positive connections in the brain for future problem solving.

Non-negotiable issues.

When safety is a concern, problem solving and consequences are not appropriate. Care providers cannot let children hurt themselves, their friends, or items in the care setting. If safety is an issue, care providers should attend to the immediate behavior, talk with the children about their behavior and why their safety is at risk.

Time out. When a child loses control completely "time away", "cool down", or "a break" is necessary. A time limit is not necessary. The goal of "time out" is not to embarrass or punish. The goal is to give children a chance to regain control of their emotions. Care providers can help children recognize when their behaviors are out of control and help them decide when they are ready to function again. The ultimate goal is to help children recognize their emotions and become responsible for them.

See Behavior page 14

September 2003

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
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October 2003

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November 2003

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Schedule of Events

☺ **14-16 - Federal Programs Conference**

☺ **17—PAT Regional Meeting in Kansas City**

☺ **22—PAT Regional Meeting in Columbia**

☺ **26—PAT Regional Meeting in Springfield**

☺ **29—PAT Regional Meeting in St. Louis**

☺ **30—PAT Regional Meeting in Cape Girardeau**

Schedule of Events

2—Observational Assessment Training St. Louis

7—Observational Assessment Training St. Joesph

8—Observational Assessment Training Kansas City

11 - Crucial Early Years Conference

14—Observational Assessment Training Springfield

16—Observational Assessment Training Columbia

22—Observational Assessment Training Cape Girardeau

28—Observational Assessment Training St. Louis

Schedule of Events

☺

Behaviors cont.

Intervention. Some of children's challenging behaviors require a team approach be dealt with effectively. Parents must become partners in the problem solving and the solution. In certain instances, some children may need professional intervention. Care providers are not qualified to diagnose behaviors they see in the children. If a behavior is so challenging, care providers need to discuss options with parents.

Edited for Publication

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Learning Honesty

Children work very hard to learn the differences between fact and fiction, yours and mine, fair and unfair. Developmentally, they are very self-centered. They are just beginning to learn to see things from another person's point of view. It is helpful if you see behaviors such as lying, stealing, and cheating as mistakes made along the bumpy road of social learning.

Lying, stealing, and cheating are behaviors that set off alarm bells for care providers and parents. As adults work to guide children through moral development, they may overreact to these behaviors. Often, this overreaction is due to a fear of escalating dishonesty as children move toward adolescence.

While keeping in mind that these behaviors are normal, care providers need to understand the reasons children exhibit them and techniques for beginning to teach more mature behaviors.

To many young children, the only reason for telling the truth is that adults might get mad if they don't. That's why the most common responses to dishonesty—scolding and punishing—are of limited value. They teach children that you disapprove of dishonesty, but not **why** it is important to be honest.

See Learning page15

Learning cont.

As with other developmental issues, pre-kindergarten care providers need to understand what is typical development. Many sources note that the occurrence of lying, stealing, and cheating rise dramatically around age 4. An active imagination, lack of perspective taking, and longing for adult approval, directly impact this change. In fact, Stanley Greenspan's research indicates that apart from understanding that hurting people is wrong, a preschool age child still hasn't developed a clear moral sense. For most children, an internal set of values is not established until age 10 or older.

Lying

Dr. T. Berry Brazelton says, "All 4-year-olds lie. An active imagination is a sign of emotional health—even if it leads to untruths. And it will." Preschool children are struggling to differentiate between fact and fiction in the world around them and within themselves. It is important to appreciate the creative stories of children while, at the same time, helping them learn the difference between fact and fiction. Care providers can talk about stories they read together, discussing whether they are true or not. Children's exaggerations can be recognized as "stories they wish could happen".

Preschoolers may lie for another set of reasons. They are still quite egocentric, have strong curiosity drives, and have not developed much skill in controlling their desires. They also may have a difficult time admitting wrongdoing because they want adult approval so much. Therefore, in their minds, lying is not bad if it gets them what they want or prevents them from being punished or meeting with disapproval. Be aware that we often set children up for lying by asking questions like, "Did you do this?"

Teaching honesty

- Try to learn the reasons for dishonest behavior. Questions such as, "Why did you...?" & "Why?" are hard for children to answer.
- Don't ask them if they did something wrong when you know he did. Asking gives them more chances to lie.
- Explain that you need to trust them, just like they need to trust you.
- Make sure other adults in your care setting keep promises, tell the truth, and play fair.
- Children will be confused if it is OK to lie about their age to get into a movie cheaper, but not about eating the last cookie.
- Remember children can't always behave perfectly. They may lie to avoid disappointing you.
- Read related stories to emphasize and discuss the importance of honesty. One example is *The Little Boy Who Cried Wolf*, often found in collections of Aesop's Fables.

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Learning cont.

Stealing

Stealing is also strongly tied to egocentrism and impulse control. In a care setting, children may "load his pockets" with anything from toys to food. Care providers must actively but gently teach them about property rights and the perspective of others. For example, care providers could say, "If you take the cars home, we won't have any to play with here." Another reason for stealing can be children's increasing desire to identify with parents, care providers, and peers. They sometimes think that they can be more like an admired person if they have that person's "tools."

Much of children's moral development is learned through observation of and interaction with the people most important to them.

In these cases, it is important for care providers to talk with children about acceptable ways they can imitate those they admire.

Dealing with Stealing

- Help children return the object to the owner. Talk to them about other ways to make amends.
- Teach children to how to ask for what they want. Explain the concepts of borrowing and lending. Help them understand about property rights.

- If you label children as thieves, liars, or cheaters, they may believe your description and try to live up to the name.
- Give children ownership. In a care setting where everything is shared, some children are just trying to figure out what's theirs. They can't share until they have experienced "mine".
- Share books on related topics like *This is the Bear and the Bad Little Girl* by Sarah Hayes.

Cheating

As children develop, they become increasingly aware of winning and losing as they play more games with peers. Preschoolers need to learn how to win and lose gracefully. Small children don't like to be wrong or to lose, so they tend to start cheating in "losing" situations. They have a hard time telling the difference between what is true and what they want to be true. For example, children may actually believe they just won a game, when you know they did not. Care providers can help by balancing the amount of competitive and non-competitive games children play and allowing them to invent or experiment with the rules.

Much of children's moral development is learned through observation of and interaction with the people most important to them. It is critical that care providers model expected behavior and actively guide children through experiences that may otherwise lead them to lie, cheat, or steal.

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Learning cont.

Discouraging cheating

- Look for ways to keep games non-competitive. For example, play Musical Chairs with enough chairs for everyone.
- Explain to children that others won't want to play with them when they cheat (natural consequence).
- You can demonstrate this by refusing to continue playing when they cheat (logical consequence).
- Teach and model the meaning of fairness. "What is fair for you, is fair for everyone else."

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Ruth Flynn, Early Childhood Education Director, Retires

(Mary) Ruth Flynn started with the Department in December 1988, as a Supervisor in Early Childhood. She was promoted to Director of Early Childhood, effective August 13, 1990. Her fifteen (15) years of service has all been in the same section, same division.

Ruth has been a major influence in the field of early childhood education. Ruth has consistently and persistently helped early childhood and elementary teachers, administrators, parent educators, families, and young children during her career.

Ruth has played a significant role in the growth of the Parents as Teachers program by increasing services with additional funding. In 2000, Ruth organized the Missouri PAT Advisory Committee to provide information and advice to DESE on how to continue to provide high-quality services to children and families through the PAT program.

Ruth helped found Project Construct, the Department's visionary project to improve early childhood education, and continues to serve as a Project Construct facilitator and staunch advocate. Under Ruth's direction conferences for educators in the field of early childhood have grown. The Conference on the Young Years has attained annual attendance exceeding 2,000 participants and has added the Pre-conference on Constructivist Education. A new conference, the Primary Conference, was started in 1996 for educators of grades K-4.

She assisted to create the Missouri Preschool Program (MPP) with the passage of HB1519 in 1998. The MPP funds which are designed to provide high quality early childhood education programs for children ages three and four. Currently, there are 239 programs serving 4,935 children ages three and four. Beginning in 2000 through 2003, Ruth brought together several groups of individuals who represent the many facets of the early childhood community to develop The Missouri Pre-K Standards in Literacy, Mathematics, Science, Physical Development, Social and Emotional Development, Science and Physical Development Health and Safety. Ruth is known throughout the state for providing guidance and support personally and professionally to all working in the area of early childhood education. Ruth and her husband, Cecil L. Flynn have there home in Wellington, MO. They have 6 children and 6 grandchildren.

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Early Edition

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