

FAMILY RESOURCE

C O N N E C T I O N

A publication created by and for New Horizon Child Care • www.newhorizonchildcare.com • Phone: 763-557-1111

Working Together on Tough Issues

Biting can be an uncomfortable issue for parents and caregivers. Parents of a child who is bitten are often angry, and parents of the biter may feel embarrassed or frustrated. Caregivers may feel upset they were not able to prevent the bite, even though a bite may occur in just a split second. Sharing information about the causes of biting and positive guidance techniques can help parents and caregivers work together successfully.

Considering that biting is a normal developmental stage for some children, it is our company's philosophy not to reveal the identity of the child who bites. This is also in keeping with our philosophy of self-esteem and balancing our commitment to all our children.

Chomp! Chomp!

Biting can be quite common among young children. It happens for different reasons with different children and under different circumstances. The first step in learning to control it is to look at why it may be happening.

Why Do Children Bite?

EXPLORATION. Infants and toddlers learn through their senses, by touching, smelling, hearing, and tasting. If you give an infant a toy, one of the first places it goes to is the mouth. Tasting or "mouthing" objects is something that all children do. Children at this age do not always understand the difference between gnawing on a toy and biting someone.

TEETHING. Children begin teething around the ages of 4 to 7 months. Swelling gums can be tender and can cause a great deal of discomfort. Infants often find relief from teething discomfort by chewing on something. Occasionally, the object they chomp on happens to be a real person. Children this age do not truly understand the difference between chewing on a person or a toy.

CAUSE AND EFFECT. Around the age of 12 months, infants become interested in finding out what happens when they do something. When they bang a spoon on the table, they discover that it makes a loud sound. When they drop a toy from their highchair, they discover that it falls. They may also discover that when they bite someone they get a loud scream of protest!

ATTENTION. Older toddlers may bite to get attention. Children enjoy attention and some may bite to make others notice them. Being ignored is not fun. Biting is a quick way to become the center of attention--even if it is negative attention.

IMITATION. Older toddlers love to imitate others. Watching others and trying to do what they do is a great way to learn. Sometimes children see others bite and decide to try it out themselves. When an adult bites a child back in punishment, it generally does not stop the biting but teaches the child that biting is okay.

Mission

To open "New Horizons" of self-esteem and potential for the little people entrusted to our care, their families, and our employees by providing and continuously improving the best child development on the planet!



INDEPENDENCE. Toddlers are trying so hard to be independent. “Mine” and “Me do it” are favorite words.

Learning to do things independently, making choices, and needing control over a situation are part of growing up. Biting is a powerful way to control others. If you want a toy or want a playmate to leave you alone or move out of your way, it is a quick way to get what you want.

FRUSTRATION. Young children experience a great deal of frustration. Growing up can be a real struggle. Drinking from a cup is great; yet nursing and sucking from a bottle is also wonderful.

Sometimes it would be nice to remain a baby. Toddlers do not have good control over their bodies yet. A loving pat sometimes turns into a push. Toddlers are still acquiring language and sometimes cannot speak well. They have trouble asking for things or requesting help. They have not learned yet how to play with others. At times, when they cannot find words to express their feelings, they resort to hitting, pushing, or biting.

STRESS. A child’s world can be stressful, too. Potty training, learning to share, and acquiring language skills can be stressful challenges for a little one. Children also experience stressful events like death, divorce, or a move to a new home. Biting is one way to express feelings and relieve tension.

What Caregivers and Families Can Do

ANALYZE THE SITUATION.

Use the who, what, when, where, and how method to pinpoint the problem. When did the biting occur? Where did it happen? What happened before or after? How was the situation handled?

STRIVE FOR PREVENTION.

If it is determined that the biting occurs as the result of exploration or teething, our caregivers may provide the child with a cloth or teething ring to gnaw on.

If a child seems to bite when tired or hungry, we may look at the daily routine and offer an additional morning snack or ensure that the child is getting a restful naptime.

If the biting occurs when two children are fighting over a toy, we may want to make sure there is a duplicate toy. Sharing is challenging for a young child. Toddlers do not have the skills to negotiate or understand another child’s perspective.

If attention seems to be the main reason for biting, try to spend more time with the child when he or she is doing more positive things. Snuggling up and reading a book together or rolling a ball back and forth is so much more productive and developmentally appropriate than being scolded or lectured.

If the child is experiencing a stressful life situation, try to make everyday life as supportive and normal as possible. Predictable meals, naptimes, and routines can help. Often, experiences like rolling, squishing, and pounding play dough or splashing in the sensory table are great ways to relieve tension. In painful situations like divorce or a death, it takes time and patience for healing to occur.

TEACH NEW BEHAVIORS.

When a child bites, show the biter with your voice and facial expression that biting is unacceptable. Speak firmly and look directly into the child’s eyes. For example you might say, “No. It’s not okay to bite. It hurts.” If the child is able to talk, you might say, “You can tell your friend with your words that you need him to move instead of biting him.”

You may also want the child to help comfort the victim. Making the biter part of this process is a good way to teach nurturing behavior and empathy.

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