

I Want That Now!

Hitting, Biting and Their Physical Responses



SITUATION:

Bradley, age 12 months, is sitting on the floor playing with blocks. Molly, age 14 months, comes and takes the blocks from Bradley. Bradley screams and hits her. Molly starts to cry, too.

COMMON ADULT RESPONSE:

“Bradley, we don’t hit. Molly, give that back to him.”

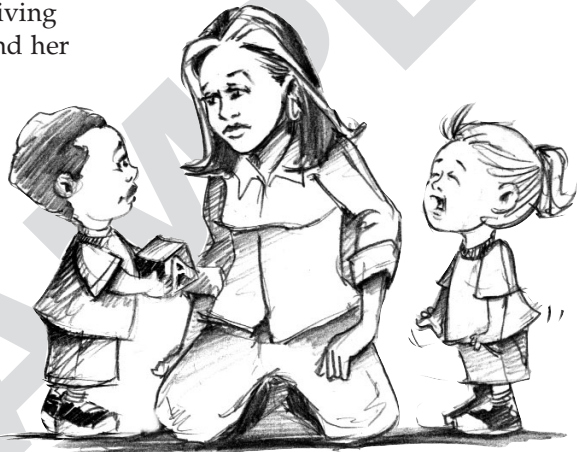
CONSCIOUS ADULT RESPONSE:

Caring and Descriptive Language:

The adult sits between the two children, physically comforting both of them. When the crying subsides, she/he might say to Bradley, **“Molly wanted the block. She took it and you hit her. Now she’s crying. Hitting hurts.”**

Turning to Molly: **“Molly, you wanted the block. When you took it, Bradley hit you. If you want the block, ask, ‘May I have it, please?’ Let’s give it back and try asking.”**

Support Molly giving the block back and her asking for it. She may just say, **“Please?”** which is appropriate.



WHY AM I DOING THIS?

- ◆ The adult has supported both children by giving them language to express their actions and feelings.
- ◆ Even though Bradley may not completely understand what you are saying, the adult builds his foundation for language by describing Bradley’s behavior and feelings. Adults should watch for these situations to prevent hitting and provide appropriate language. (By pointing out

Molly's tears to Bradley, the adult is describing a physical manifestation of the pain hitting can cause.)

- ✧ The focus in this scenario is not sharing, but using language to describe actions and acknowledge feelings.



CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK:

Child's Point of View:

For Molly: "I see you playing with the blocks. I want them."

For Bradley: "Don't take my blocks."

Why Does This Matter?

Children need to learn alternatives to hurting others to get their needs met. Modeling compassionate and caring conflict resolution lays the foundation for these children to experience how language is essential to problem solve. For example, when the blocks were taken away from Bradley, he did not have the language to express his feelings and/or needs, *e.g.*, "I'm playing with this now." By hitting, he says this non-verbally. He was hitting not to hurt her, but to express a feeling for which he lacked the correct language.

Children of this age have no awareness of how their actions impact others. For example, Molly sees the blocks “come alive” in the way Bradley is playing with them and wants to play with them. She, too, lacks the language to ask for them, so she takes

them. When Bradley hit her, she could have hit him back, but instead she internalized the hurt or surprise and cried. She did not have the language to say, “You hurt me.”



COMMON BEHAVIOR AND NORMAL DEVELOPMENT:

Physical responses are common behaviors when children do not have language to express their needs or feelings. Mobile infants are often interested in the toy being played with, even though there may be more of the same toy available in the classroom, because the toy being played with has movement and is therefore more interesting.

ATTITUDES THAT CREATE CARING COMMUNITIES:

- ◆ “It is not OK to hurt someone. We will comfort anyone who is hurt.”

SKILLS FOR CONSCIOUS EVERYDAY RESPONSES:

- ◆ Describe what children do
- ◆ Acknowledge their feelings
- ◆ Comfort them
- ◆ Show them alternative ways to meet their needs

IF YOU NEED MORE:

Other conscious ways for the adult to stay objective and rational:

If Bradley does not want to let her have the block, then say to Molly, “Bradley still wants to play with it. Let’s go find something else to play with.” Take her hand gently and walk toward the other materials. Stay with Molly until she is actively involved with other materials. By taking her hand, you are supporting her in finding something else with which to get involved.