

Aggressive Play

Anger is a healthy emotion. It helps us to stand up for ourselves. Aggression is hurtful and can be dangerous. Aggressive play can occur when your child is angry or frustrated. It is an attempt by the child to gain control over another. Gaining control through fear or pain is not acceptable.

Aggressive play can easily frighten other children. Children need to learn how to negotiate to get what they need or want. It is important for your child to learn that aggressive play is not permitted. This includes verbal attacks such as name calling.

Though aggressive play is not to be allowed, be sure that you let your child know you understand his/her feelings. Talk about those feelings and offer your child choices for handling those feelings such as using words to say, "Stop! That hurts me."

Aggressive play must not be allowed to continue. Signs that play is aggressive are when children stop laughing, faces and voices show fear, anger or upset, talk changes from pretend into real menace. Consequences may be needed to help your child learn this rule. However, hitting a child for aggressive play teaches the child that hitting is okay when you're angry as long as you are bigger.

Help your child avoid playmates and situations that often lead to major problems. Praise your child for friendly behavior: for being nice to people; sharing things; and helping others. Young children react quickly and strongly to their powerful feelings. Be alert to signs that play is turning aggressive.

Pointers for Parents:

- ✓ Enforce a firm rule - NO HITTING. Hitting hurts and we do not hurt people.
- ✓ If it looks like your child might hurt someone, stop the play. Offer ideas of other things to do. You may need to watch the play closely for a while.
- ✓ Make it clear that aggressive play is not okay. Set consequences if it continues and carry them out if it does.
- ✓ Time-out is a chance to get in control.