

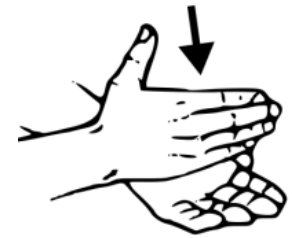
# Responding to Aggressive Behavior

## *Behavior Modification*

**Remain calm.** The calmer you are, the more quickly your child will calm down or begin to hear your words.

**Verbally empathize with how your child is feeling.** Let them know that you understand how they feel: “You want to keep playing the game, and you’re mad we have to stop. It’s okay to feel mad, it’s not ok to hit mommy. Hitting hurts.”

**Use gestures with words to communicate what your need from his or her behavior.** Use a calm, firm (not angry) voice. At the same time, use a gesture or sign language to communicate “stop” or “no”. You might say, “No hitting, hitting hurts,” as you take his or her hand and hold it by their side, firmly but not angrily.



stop

**Offer alternatives.** Give your child reasonable alternatives to his or her chosen behavior: “Instead of throwing toys in the house, let’s go outside and play catch.”

Also try suggesting other ways to your child to address pent-up emotions such as jumping up and down or cuddling with a teddy bear.

**Try a distraction.** Ignore your child’s tantrum and instead refocus your child’s attention by pointing to something outside through the window or pick up one of your child’s favorite toys and start playing with it. When tantrums are ignored, your child may stop seeking attention in that way and begin to seek it in the way you are offering.

**Help your child take a break.** Some children calm down more quickly when they can be by themselves. This is not punishment. This allows them to soothe themselves and regain control when they’re ready. When your child has calmed down, tell them that they did a good job calming themselves.

### **Questions to Ask Yourself:**

What kinds of situations seem to lead to my child acting aggressively?  
Why could this be?

Adapted from: <http://www.zerotothree.org/>

Picture from: <http://www.wpclipart.com/>

