



How to Help Your Child Recognize and Understand Jealousy

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"It's not fair!" Jealousy is a normal emotion experienced by adults and children. Young children often do not have the skills or language to deal with this complex feeling. Many children deal with jealousy by acting out with challenging behavior such as tantrums, crying or hitting. Because your child may act out with anger, it can be difficult for you to respond to the true feeling of jealousy. When you teach your child to identify and respond to the true feelings of jealousy, you are doing more than making him feel better. You are also helping him learn to manage painful feelings and get along with others today and in the future. If your child knows that his feelings are normal and he is unique and valued for who he is, regardless of his toys or abilities, jealous feelings are less likely to escalate into destructive behaviors.



Backpack Connection Series

About this Series

The Backpack Connection Series was created by TACSEI to provide a way for teachers and parents/caregivers to work together to help young children develop social emotional skills and reduce challenging behavior. Teachers may choose to send a handout home in each child's backpack when a new strategy or skill is introduced to the class. Each Backpack Connection handout provides information that helps parents stay informed about what their child is learning at school and specific ideas on how to use the strategy or skill at home.

The Pyramid Model



The Pyramid Model is a framework that provides programs with guidance on how to promote social emotional competence in all children and design effective interventions that support young children who might have persistent challenging behavior. It also provides practices to ensure that children with social emotional delays receive intentional teaching. Programs that implement the Pyramid Model are eager to work together with families to meet every child's individualized learning and support needs. To learn more about the Pyramid Model, please visit ChallengingBehavior.org.

More Information

More information and resources on this and other topics are available on our website, ChallengingBehavior.org.



Try This at Home

- Notice and label your child's feelings of jealousy. "I can see it makes you sad and jealous when I feed the baby. When the timer is up, you can choose an activity for just you and me! I love spending time with you."
- Be sure to spend dedicated, quality time with your child. Every child needs someone who is crazy about him! Fifteen minutes of one-on-one time without the TV, computer or phone will help you to build a positive relationship, support his social and emotional development, and help him feel loved, competent and confident. Quality time can be reading a book, giving hugs and/or high fives, singing a song or letting your child be your special helper.
- Remember a time when you felt jealous and share it with your child. Discuss with him how you dealt with your feelings of jealousy.
- Acknowledge differences in people. Teach him that everyone is unique and has different strengths and struggles. For example, you could say, "Your daddy is really good at playing baseball. I really like to play but it is hard for me." Or, "I see that some of those kids love playing with puzzles--others would rather play with the trains."
- Focus on your child's strengths. Tell your child the special things about him. "I love how you smile at the people in the store. It makes them happy." Or, "It makes me happy to watch you build with blocks. You create amazing towers and tunnels."

- Read books about jealousy and other emotions. Talk with your child about what the character is feeling and experiencing and discuss with your child ideas for strategies that the character might try. For more information about emotional vocabulary, visit challengingbehavior.org and type in the search box in the upper right-hand corner "How to Help Your Child Understand and Label Emotions."



Practice at School

At school, teachers talk about and celebrate all kinds of differences. When children learn that our differences make us unique, they are less likely to feel jealous or compare themselves to other children and are more likely to feel proud of who they are. Teachers help children learn about diversity by reading stories, looking at pictures, or playing with toys that represent people from other countries or people with different abilities, beliefs or lifestyles.



The Bottom Line

When your child can understand and label his different feelings (sad, angry, jealous) it helps him to cope with emotion, understand others, and reduce challenging behavior. It is natural for him to feel jealous from time to time. Children can become jealous of a parent's attention (e.g., new baby at home) or another child's toys or abilities. Teaching your child to cope with jealous feelings will provide your child with a lifelong skill.



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