

Bites for No Reason

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Biting is a very common behavior among young children and a normal part of child development. Perhaps it bothers us more because it feels so animalistic and primal. But, biting is just like any other behavior that may harm or injure another child in that a child bites for a reason. Is the child trying to fulfill a need or cope with a challenge? There **IS** always a reason and there may be more than one. Here are some other “bite-size” pieces of information regarding biting:

- Biting is most likely to happen during transition times.
- Most biting happens late morning.
- If we want biting to stop, we have to do more than just interrupt the bite. We need to facilitate new learning. In other words, we need to teach the child a different way to get his or her needs met.
- A child never bites for **no** reason.
- If there is chronic biting in a group setting, there will be adult angst. Emotions run high. But, it won't help to solve the problem by blaming each other.
- During a biting outbreak, avoid large group activities.
- Coach the victims by telling them it is ok to use a big voice when someone comes at them. Model the big voice.
- Give alternatives to biting. Tell the child, “When you feel angry, you can stomp your feet” or “When you feel mad, you can put your hands on your hips”.
- Add extra sensory activities into your daily schedule during times of high-biting incidents. Sensory activities (i.e., finger painting, play dough, sand and water play) help calm children.
- Don't react with shock, surprise, or large emotion. Adults can help children the most by staying in control themselves. “But he bites for no reason!”
- It is essential when talking to parents about biting that you express personal, genuine regret and acknowledge the parents' concern. Also be sure and let families know how you are taking care of the problem.
- Increase the physical activity in your class when biting incidents happen. Even an additional 5 minutes running on the playground can help release some stressors in children.
- Be proactive by reading books about characters that deal with different feelings (encourage parents to do this too!). Puppets and songs are excellent helpers in teaching children about emotions.
- Avoid labeling a child as “the biter”. Children tend to live up to the expectations we place on them.

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