

Chapter 14

Reading Advantage



After reading the chapter, outline the key points and compare your outline to the text. This will help you retain what you have read and identify what needs to be read again.

Guidance Challenges

Lesson 14.1: Understanding Behavior Challenges

Lesson 14.2: Strategies for Handling Specific Behavior Challenges



Case Study

What Happened?

Valentine's Day was three weeks away, and it was always Ms. Wang's favorite holiday. So, she began introducing the holiday early. Today she had three different related activities for the children to choose from. They could prepare cards for a favorite person, decorate Valentine cookies, or decorate empty shoe boxes to be used as mailboxes.

Because the children were so engaged, Ms. Wang changed the schedule by eliminating outdoor play. The children continued working, and some went to a second Valentine related activity. But those children wanting to make Valentine mailboxes had to wait since that table only had two chairs. Then suddenly the noise level elevated and some children began running in the classroom.

Johnny, using a closed clinched fist, hit Hiram in the face. He was angry, as he wanted Hiram to finish his mailbox so he could take his chair. Hiram was crying, which immediately got Ms. Wang's attention. She rushed across the room with a stern look on her face. Then Ms. Wang picked up Johnny's hand and walked him to a chair in the back of the classroom. The chair had the words "Time-Out" stenciled on it. After this, she picked up a timer and set it for 15 minutes. Ms. Wang told Johnny that when the timer went off, he could get up, but he could not make a Valentine mailbox.

Give It Some Thought

1. Why do you think the children became overstimulated? If you were the teacher, what would you have done differently?
2. What is the purpose of classroom routines?
3. When does anger occur in children like Johnny? Did the teacher handle the incident appropriately? If not, what should she have done?
4. Do you think it is appropriate to punish the child by making him sit in a time-out chair for 15 minutes? Why or why not?
5. How far in advance is it appropriate to begin preparing for holidays with preschoolers?

Lesson 14.1

Understanding Behavior Challenges

Essential Question



What do you need to understand about children's behavior challenges to best help them cope?

Learning Outcomes

After studying this lesson, you will be able to

- 14.1-1 identify** situations and feelings that cause tension and challenging behaviors in children.
- 14.1-2 analyze** the impact of stress on children's behavior, including teacher and family stressors, effects of stress, and signs of stress.
- 14.1-3 summarize** ways to communicate with families about stress.
- 14.1-4 identify** ways to help children cope with stress.

Key Terms

overstimulated	resilient
frustration	regression
onlookers	context
stress	

All behavior is goal-directed and purposeful. Four-year-old Emma is an example. She is tattling on the other children. After arriving at the center, she told the teacher that Toby had pushed her the day before. During snack time, she announced loudly that Luis did not take the muffin he touched. Later, during cleanup time, she told the teacher that Jafar did not put away his puzzle.

Hoa does not like to take a nap during naptime. He begins crying every day after lunch as naptime approaches. Yolanda, who is usually very cooperative, has been less so in the weeks following the birth of her new brother. Rather than taking turns, she has become bossy on the playground. The teacher has also seen her hitting other children.

During your teaching career, you will likely have several children in your classes who will model behavior like that of Emma, Hoa, and Yolanda. Many times, behavior problems will be disruptive to the class. The behavior may be harmful or it might infringe on the rights of others. Mishandling of classroom pets, equipment, and materials may also occur.

14.1-1 Tension and Challenging Behaviors

Children engage in challenging behaviors for a variety of reasons. *Tension* is often the cause of disruptive behavior. Overstimulation, changes in routine, long transitions, too many children in a group, insufficient space, and loud noise are just a few causes of tension in children. Because children do not know how to handle tension, they often react with disruptive behavior such as pushing and disturbing other children, running, and using loud voices (**Figure 14.1**). This behavior may be appropriate at home. They lack the skills in masking their feelings and expressing them in words.

Helping children deal positively with tension-causing events is a key role of the teacher. You will need to understand situations and feelings that cause tension in children. Recognizing behavior patterns that result from tension is also



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Figure 14.1 Some children cry and withdraw from the group when they feel tension. **What is your role as a teacher in such situations?**

important. Then you will need to help children deal with this tension. With this information, you will be able to effectively guide and help children grow and develop executive function skills.

Causes of Behavior Challenges

There are many causes of inappropriate behavior in children. These include certain stressors and frustrations that children do not know how to handle. In addition, there are physical problems that can cause tension in children. Children who have delayed executive-function skills can display challenging classroom behaviors. Awareness of situations and emotions that produce tension is important. This knowledge will allow you to avoid these causes, or reduce their effects.

Carefully observe the children. This is the best approach for preventing behavior problems. You will see the very earliest signs, which vary from child to child. Children fidget, cry, bite fingernails, clench their teeth, or even whine. When this happens, respond so their behavior does not escalate.

Overstimulation

Children can become overexcited, or **overstimulated**, by many things. For instance, simply playing with other children can

Workplace Connections



Activity Survey

Conduct a survey of the early learning programs in your area to discover how they handle the period between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day. Ask if special activities, guests, or entertainments are planned that differ from the regular schedule.

1. Do children display more energetic or atypical behavior during these time periods, even if holiday events are not part of the program?
2. Do parochial and secular programs differ in their programs' focus during this holiday period?

overstimulate some children (**Figure 14.2**). Usually, the larger the group of children, the greater the likelihood that overstimulation will occur. You may want to limit the number of children that are in a certain classroom area at any time. This will help prevent the chaos that occurs when a large group of children play together. For example, post a sign in the block-building area limiting the space to four children at any given time. Print the word and numeral. If you have dual-language learners in your classroom, print both in all languages. For younger children who do not read, make a simple



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Figure 14.2 As the other children look on, the center director is carefully supervising the overstimulated child. **How can you help reduce the likelihood of children becoming overstimulated?**

sign showing four stick people. It will serve the same purpose. Post similar signs in other classroom areas.

Some children become overstimulated when there are program changes. Holidays, such as Halloween and Valentine's Day, can be overstimulating times for children. Avoid introducing holiday decorations and activities too early. When this happens, the children may get keyed up long before the event occurs. Likewise, some children become overstimulated if transitions between activities take too long.

Overstimulation can also result from having too many planned activities. When this happens, some children have a hard time making choices. Instead of staying with one activity, they run back and forth between several. Their activity and excitement, in turn, can affect others.

If a child is overstimulated, they need to calm down. Help them find a space where they can be alone and become calm. Then spend time with them until you feel they are no longer overstimulated.

Breaks in Routines

Routines are important to children. They create order and stability. Routines let children know what to expect and when. If a center or teacher does not follow routines, children become confused and behavior problems can arise. For instance, Jimmy takes a nap at 12:30 p.m. every day. If there are interruptions to the schedule, he may become overtired. This may result in disruptive behavior. If a child's family follows a different routine at home from that of the center, this can affect the child's behavior. Family members may experience behavior problems at home, because the child does not know what to expect next. In addition, you may see more behavior problems after weekends and holidays when the child readjusts after being away from the center for a few days. Talking with the family members about these problems may help them adjust their schedule to match the child's routine more closely at the center.

All children need consistent daily schedules. Active activities need to follow quiet activities (**Figure 14.3**). If children sit still too long, they



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Figure 14.3 After a quiet activity, such as story time, children need periods of active free play.

may lose interest in the activity and become disruptive. Likewise, if children remain active too long, they may become overstimulated and disruptive. When changes in routine are necessary, such as a planned field trip, prepare the children ahead of time. Talk to them about what will happen. Also, explain to the children what your expectations are before, during, and after the trip.

Noise

Noise affects children differently than adults. Children are less likely to ignore irrelevant sounds. Noise-induced hearing loss in young children can harm their language acquisition, speech, and social interactions. It also affects their cognitive and social-emotional development. In particular, children with very sensitive ears are upset by noise. For example, these children will cover their ears or cry when a smoke alarm goes off. Likewise, if an ambulance drives by with its siren wailing, some children will cringe. While some children may try only to escape the noise, others may react to the stress by pushing or hitting others.

To avoid the problems caused by noise, control the volume of video, audio, and computer sounds. Be selective in choosing rattles, squeaky,

and musical toys whose sounds are too loud. Noise can cause hearing loss. Also, pay attention to the volume of your own voice. In frustration, you may raise your voice or yell. Unfortunately, this causes a chain reaction. As the volume of your voice increases, the children's voices also become louder. This, in turn, will affect children who are sensitive to noise. The result will be chaos.

Waiting Time

Waiting time is difficult for young children. They are developing the ability to self-regulate, but often lack the ability to manage their impulses. Often, they begin leaving the group or behave poorly when they must wait for long stretches of time. By nature, they are usually in motion. Therefore, if children are waiting too long for a story, they may start pushing or hitting. This behavior is not the children's fault; however, it may gain the teacher's disapproval.

Be creative when lining up to go outside or to the lunchroom. Ask the children who are wearing a certain color to go first. You could also ask children who are wearing a certain type of shoes or those who have a particular color of hair or eyes to go first. This requires the children to listen and is a distraction from disruptive behavior.

Manage your time wisely. Cut down on waiting time by being prepared. If you are going to read a book for a large group, choose it in advance. Place it where it will be convenient. Likewise, prepare materials for all group activities in advance. If the children are actively involved in self-selected activities, it will reduce waiting time and resulting behavior problems.

Frustration

Children sometimes feel they are not in control. They feel defeat or discouragement by a problem that is too big for them. These feelings are called **frustration**. Most children go through peaks of frustration between the ages of one and three. Frustration causes tension in children (Figure 14.4). To control frustration, carefully plan each day's activities. The activities you choose should be developmentally appropriate. They

Workplace Connections



Activity Timing to Avoid Behavior Challenges

Conduct an experiment in an early childhood, childcare, or Head Start program to determine the optimum time that four-year-old children should spend on specific activities to avoid behavior challenges. An example may be to spend 20, 15, and 10 minutes respectively on different days on gross-motor, fine-motor, and circle-time activities.

1. How long should free play or discovery time activities be conducted?
2. What suggestions could you make for future scheduling?

should reflect the strengths, interests, abilities, and experiences of the children in the center.

Some children arrive at the center full of energy. These children need to be active. Provide wheeled toys, block-building materials, and woodworking activities for them. Other children prefer quiet activities, such as books, puzzles, stringing beads, or play dough. By observing the children in your program, you can provide the proper activities, materials, supplies, and equipment.



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Figure 14.4 Being in control is important for young children. When they are not in control, they may become frustrated. **As a teacher, what actions can you take to help reduce frustration in children?**

Forcing children into activities they are not prepared to join or interested in can result in frustration. A better approach is to allow the children to choose.

Conflicts often arise over toys, which creates frustration. Therefore, make sure that several kinds of interesting toys are always available to children. Whenever possible, you should purchase several toys of the same kind. To prevent conflict, always buy more than one telephone, wagon, scooter, or car.

Select materials and equipment to match children's developmental level. This allows the children to feel successful and develop an "I can do it" attitude. Working with mixed-aged groups presents unique problems. Include open-ended materials such as blocks, Legos, play dough, and sand. Children of all ages will play with these, but in different ways (Figure 14.5). Provide puzzles, small manipulatives, and books for a range of abilities.

Acknowledge the child's feelings and try to help them find a solution. When necessary, redirect children to materials that match their abilities. Repeated failures will cause frustration, which may lead to angry tantrums. An angry child may pinch, hit, push, kick, bite, or destroy property.

As an adult, you may become frustrated. When this happens, try to relax. Carefully watch your words and actions. If the children sense you are upset, they, in turn, may become more upset. They need to feel that you are calm and in control.

Physical Problems

Poor health or other physical problems can cause tension and behavioral problems in children. One teacher, Mr. Lee, had such a problem in his center. During Liam's first day at the center, Mr. Lee and several other teachers



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Figure 14.5 Paints are sensory materials that appeal to children of many ages. *Why do you think that painting and other activities help children deal with frustration?*

observed Liam. He ignored all directions and suggestions from Mr. Lee. Liam also appeared to have a high anxiety level.

Liam's behavior became a source of frustration for Mr. Lee. More than once, he wondered whether Liam should even be in the center. He feared that other children would copy Liam's behavior. Mr. Lee was also concerned about his ability to handle Liam's behavior. This concern continued for several weeks.

Mr. Lee finally decided to ask the center director to observe Liam's behavior. After observing Liam, the director determined a possible cause for Liam's problem. First, the director noted that Liam did not respond to many of the verbal requests made by Mr. Lee or other children. The director also noted that while interacting with others, Liam closely watched their faces when they spoke. The director suspected that Liam had hearing loss. For added information, the director then picked up two wooden blocks, stood behind Liam, and clapped them together as hard as she could. While several other children either jumped or turned to see what was happening, Liam did not respond.

Before sharing these observations with Liam's father, Mr. Lee repeated the clapping incident. Liam failed to respond. In addition, other staff members tried speaking to him when they were out of his field of vision. Again, each time he did not respond. At this point, the center director shared these observations with Liam's father. She encouraged Liam's father to have his hearing tested.

Luckily, for Liam, his father, the staff, and other children in the center, a hearing specialist was able to identify the cause of Liam's behavioral challenges. After having a hearing test, Liam received a hearing aid. His behavior improved dramatically. At the same time, his speech also improved.

Children may be overly active or tense due to other health problems (**Figure 14.6**). A child who is in constant pain due to a lack of dental or medical care may act inappropriately.

Medications can affect some children's behavior. Observe for symptoms such as dilated pupils, drowsiness, slurred speech, poor



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Figure 14.6 Pain from this child's head injury may cause him to be tense and uncooperative. **What are other physical problems that may cause tension in children?**

coordination, and general irritability. In many states, parents are required to report to the staff when their children are on medication.

Prolonged or recurring illness or hospitalization can cause frequent absences from the center. When this occurs, some children are not able to maintain their friendships. Coming back to the center is difficult for them. This may cause some children to become **onlookers**. This means they watch others, but tend not to get involved. Other children may become aggressive. By acting out, they hope to gain the other children's attention. Onlookers and aggressive children need your help. Observe them carefully. Focus on their needs.

An onlooker needs to get involved. Encourage this child by suggesting activities to try. If the child does not respond, gently take the child by the hand, and walk them to an appealing activity. You may have to sit down and play with the child for a while; otherwise, involve other children in the activity.

Aggressive children need a calming influence. Direct these children to activities in which they can release energy. For instance, direct the aggressive child to woodworking, sculpting, or water play activities.

Poor or inadequate nutrition can also affect behavior. Millions of children rely on early childhood centers for regular meals. The lunch the center provides may be their healthiest meal of the day. Studies show that between one-fourth and one-third of preschool children do not receive the caloric intake recommended for them. Children who do not have the proper caloric intake or nutrients may be inattentive and sluggish. This may also affect their motor skills.

14.1-2 Stress and Behavior Challenges

Stress is the body's reaction to physical or emotional danger signals. It is a part of life. A stress reaction often takes the form of tension. Mild or occasional stress is not a problem. Constant stress, prolonged stress, or the piling up of many stressors, however, can threaten a child's ability to cope. Chronic stress has biological consequences. It creates the dysregulation of the immune system. This undermines healthy development by increasing the child's vulnerability to infections and chronic illnesses. It can affect the way a child thinks, feels, and acts, and it can be present in any setting where a child needs to adapt and change.

The early childhood years lay the foundations for life. Early in life, children watch how their parents, peers, siblings, grandparents, and teachers cope with stress. Children learn their responses to stress from these adults. As a result, children vary widely in how they handle stress. Children who learn negative-coping skills may become more prone to stress. They may become illness-prone, withdrawn, anxious, aggressive, or angry. In contrast, some children learn positive-coping strategies, which become lifelong resources. These children are **resilient**—they bounce back quickly from stress.

Both negative and positive events can cause stress. One negative event that can cause stress in children is a change in family structure due to divorce. Even the most amicable divorce is a major stressor for young children because it disrupts family stability. Other negative stressors include abuse, neglect, rejection, separation, fights, and food insecurity. Death or illness of a family member and living in an unsafe home or neighborhood are also negative stressors. Positive events that can cause stress may include a new activity, parties, vacations, overnight visits with friends or relatives, the birth of a sibling, or a new pet.

Starting preschool, childcare, or Head Start, or changing to a new early childhood program

Safety First



Policy on Aggressive Behavior

Aggressive, disturbing behavior in children happens in early childhood settings. Even with the most careful planning, children sometimes act out. As an extension of the written discipline policy, a facility should include procedures to follow when an act of aggression occurs. The policy procedures may include training staff in the following strategies:

- redirecting children to more acceptable behavior;
- caring for children who experience the aggressive acts from other children;
- avoiding guidance techniques that reward children who act aggressively;
- ensuring the safety of other children;
- redirecting children to a "safe place" if they are unable to control actions;
- communicating regularly with parents to discuss guidance at home and center;
- providing children who act out a quiet place;
- notifying parents of all children involved, especially if another child or staff member was hurt or bitten;
- completing a behavior incident report if the act caused an injury requiring first aid or other medical attention;
- reviewing staff-to-child ratios to determine if enough staff was present to prevent the act; and
- examining the room arrangement and activity plans to avoid potential sources of conflict.

can be stressful for some children. In many early learning centers, children also move among different classrooms as they get older. Adjusting to new teachers, playmates, and surroundings can take time. Learning a new routine can also cause tension. This stress should subside as the child adjusts to the new center or classroom. Helping children feel safe and welcome is the most helpful way to ease this discomfort.

In poor-quality programs, however, the stress continues. Programs with low adult-child ratios and large group sizes cannot adequately meet children's needs. Adults in these programs often lack the necessary time to nurture each child's development. These programs often lack enough toys, materials, and equipment for the number of children enrolled. The facilities may be inadequate in other ways, too.

Teacher Stressors

Like children and their families, teachers also experience stress. This is particularly true when the ratio of children to adults is high. Teachers may experience burnout, emotional exhaustion, depression, and physical illnesses. Studies show these factors can affect teacher-child interactions, which can increase behavioral challenges. Most teachers claim behavioral issues in the classroom affect their job satisfaction.

Family Stressors

As the primary social unit, the family can serve as a buffer from stress. It can also be a source of many stressors in a child's life. The influences of family can be positive or negative, depending on the family dynamics. Family harmony is important for the health of all the members. Stress within the family disrupts this harmony and affects all family members, including young children. Stress can also strain family relationships, which children can sense.

Family crises cause major stress within a family. See **Figure 14.7** for a list of family stressors. What other factors can you identify? In any of these situations, disruptions in daily family life will occur, at least for a time. Resulting changes in routine can upset infants as well as older children. These children lose a sense

Possible Family Stressors

Birth or adoption of a sibling; blended families

Marriage, separation, divorce, or remarriage of parents or guardians

Custody, visitation, or child support issues

Stay-at-home parent or guardian entering the workforce

Family member moving into or out of the home

Chronic illness or injury of family member

Serious illness of self or family member

Death of a friend, family member, or pet

Moving to a new home and/or city

Military deployment of a parent

Friend or extended family member(s) moving away

Parent or guardian loss of employment

Financial or legal problems in the family

Substance abuse or addiction of a family member

Exposure to violence (unsafe neighborhood)

Relationship problems

Incarceration of a family member

Becoming homeless

Arguing, fighting, or violence among family members

Abuse or neglect of self or family member

Emotional problems—depression, low self-esteem, anxiety, anger, or guilt

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Figure 14.7 Family stressors will cause disruptions in daily family life. **Why do you think handling family stressors is difficult for young children?**

of predictability and security when they do not know what to expect next. This can cause children to become irritable, have problems eating

and sleeping, and become clingy or demanding. These are normal responses to stress.

In some families, the stressor is a temporary condition. For example, the loss of a parent's job may be short-lived as the parent seeks a new job. With other stressors, family life may change permanently, such as with a death or divorce. Extra support from teachers, friends, extended family, and the community may be necessary to cope with a permanent stressor.

Constant activity from morning to night causes another, less intense type of stress. In a family with this schedule, as parents and older siblings rush to meet their obligations they may overlook a young child's needs. Both children and adults need time to unwind and be together as a family. Family time and relaxation help people ward off the harmful effects of stress.

Handling family stressors of any type is difficult for young children. The intensity of a child's reaction will depend on how threatening the stressor is to them. Children feel worse if they believe they are the cause of a divorce, separation, death, or other family crisis. Feeling their behavior caused the problem leads children to feel guilty. Explaining that is the problem is not a child's fault can be helpful.

Effects of Stress

Prolonged stress in early childhood can undermine healthy brain development. Children depend on their environment for experiences that will promote optimal brain development and resiliency. Stimulation from caregivers and teachers also influences the wiring of the brain. That is why consistent, predictable, warm, loving, and responsive care is necessary.

Good beginnings can last a lifetime. Healthy relationships promote brain growth and healthy social attachment. A strong, secure attachment to a nurturing caregiver or teacher appears to provide a protective biological structure. It buffers children from the effects of stress. Studies show that children with strong, secure attachments have fewer behavioral problems when confronted with stress throughout life.

Signs of Stress

Stressful situations vary in duration and severity. These situations raise the body's anxiety levels. Stress can lead to biological, emotional, behavioral, and mental consequences. Severe stress negatively affects children's ability to control and focus their own thinking. Early childhood teachers have the responsibility of making stress manageable for children.

The disruption of family stability is often visible in the children's behavior. A frequent sign of stress is regression. **Regression** is showing behaviors that were typical at earlier stages of development. Toileting accidents and thumb-sucking are examples. A child who has used the toilet successfully for some time may begin to have accidents. They also may begin wetting during naptime. Additionally, a child who had given up thumb-sucking might revert to self-soothing with this habit.

In addition to regression, many other behavior changes can indicate stress in children. Awareness of the common signs of stress listed in **Figure 14.8** is also helpful. Sometimes, however, these behaviors can be unrelated to stress. Knowing the typical behavior of each child in your class will help you note these behavior changes.

14.1-3 Communicating with Families About Stress

A partnership with families is important to support children's development. Two-way communication between teachers and families is vital. Teachers should realize the important role families play in children's lives and vice versa. Before addressing challenging behaviors, the teacher must establish a trusting relationship with parents or guardians.

Create a positive environment for engagement. Build on the family's strengths. Let the parents or guardians know they are "welcome" and take time to get to know them. Greet them at the door with a smile and warm

Possible Signs of Stress in Young Children

Physical Signs		Emotional Signs	
• Accident proneness	• Hair twirling	• Anger	• Irritability
• Bed-wetting	• Headaches	• Anxiety	• Poor judgement
• Biting	• Hitting	• Baby talk	• Nightmares
• Clinging to parent/ guardian or teacher	• Kicking	• Crying spells	• Pounding heart
• Eating too much or too little	• Indigestion	• Detachment	• Screaming
• Fingernail biting	• Nose picking	• Excessive aggressiveness or laziness	• Stuttering
• Frequent colds and infections	• Prone to illness	• Inability to focus	• Tatting
• Grinding teeth	• Respiratory tract illness	• Inconsolable	• Temper tantrum
	• Stomachache	• Insomnia	• Whining
	• Thumb-sucking		

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Figure 14.8 Knowing typical behaviors of each child in your care can help you identify when behaviors are a sign of stress.

welcome. Likewise, at the end of the day, do the same and share something special their child did that day. If you listen to what they have to say, family members will respond more positively to a conversation and provide you with more information. Parents or guardians feel validated when you communicate effectively. To communicate with parents:

- choose words the parents or guardians will understand;
- speak softly and slowly;
- be attentive by looking the parents or guardians in the eye and giving them your full attention;
- invite the parents or guardians to share their perception of the child's behavior;
- listen carefully; and
- thank the parents or guardians for the information and encourage them to keep you informed of any behavioral changes.

You will need to learn the **context** in which each child develops. This includes the family's culture, language, structure, customs, beliefs, environment, and preferences for their child. Before enrolling the child, meet with the parents

or guardians. Discuss your expectations and ask them to share theirs. After this initial meeting, continue working on building a relationship. Be available. Take advantage of daily arrival and departure time. Welcome them by smiling and addressing them by name. Send notes home to the family. Share advances in the child's development and interests.

Families have a responsibility to support children through times of stress and crisis. Children depend on and turn to family members (especially parents or guardians) to protect them from the effects of stress. Parents or guardians can often provide the comfort children need to overcome stress. By their example, they teach children how to cope with stress and handle problems.

As a teacher, you can help children handle stress when you are aware of family situations that could affect the child's behavior. Ask parents or guardians to keep you informed of any major family events, such as births and deaths. Events that change the structure of the family are also important, such as marriage, separation, divorce, or a death in the family. Children need the loving support of family and teachers through these times of adjustment.

If a child's behavior changes suddenly, share with the family any signs of stress you observe. Ask what they think might be causing the stress. Work with family members to plan ways to help the child and address the troubling behavior. As with other guidance issues, children benefit the most when there is a consistency of guidance between parents or guardians and teachers.

Recognize, however, that crises in the family will affect parents, too. During a divorce, for example, children are not the only ones hurting. Parents or guardians suffer the loss as well. While your focus is on helping the children, you want to approach this task in the most sensitive and relevant way. Listen to the parents or guardians and offer kind words to let them know you understand that they must be hurting. If family members seem open to suggestions, you may be able to refer them to community resources that can help.

14.1-4 Helping Children Cope

Stress affects children as much or more than it affects adults. Unlike adults, however, children lack the skills to understand and handle the pressures. As a teacher, you can help children develop positive responses to stress.

When you note changes in children's behavior, observe them more carefully. Calmly accept the children's behavior, if possible. (Of course, hurtful, or unsafe behavior is an exception to this. You must be gentle but firm to stop these behaviors.) Criticizing children for their response to stress only leads them to feel more stress. For example, scolding children for thumb-sucking in response to stress may make them feel badly about themselves. Talk to the children about their feelings. Reassure the children that you care about them. Offer comfort, warmth, and encouragement.

Human love is the best therapy. Your relationship with children is powerful. Provide a supportive, affectionate, and consistent environment. Be a role model. Smile, hug, and

Health Highlights



Helping Children Cope with Trauma

When traumatic events threaten their safety, young children may feel the effects strongly. Physical, psychological, and sexual abuse may be intentional. Natural disasters, wars, or accidents can also cause stress.

Along with parents or guardians, teachers and care providers are among the most important adults in helping children recover from natural disasters and other traumatic events. Empathetic teachers and care providers are crucial in providing a safe, stable environment. A sense of safety and belonging contributes to the ability of children to cope with trauma.

According to the US Department of Education, teachers and care providers can help children cope with trauma in the following ways:

- make the child feel welcomed and supported;
- show you care by reassuring children that they will be okay;
- show empathy for what children are going through and take time to listen to them;
- help children feel welcome if they have been displaced from their homes; and
- provide a variety of ways for children to express their reactions to disasters and tell their stories of survival. Using the creative arts often helps students express emotions.

For more information about ways to help children cope with trauma, visit the website for *The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN)*. Other organizations that include helpful resources are the *National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)* and the *National Association of School Psychologists*.

touch. Children exhibit less stress when teachers are attentive (**Figure 14.9**). Observe carefully and really listen to the children. Talk with them



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Figure 14.9 Children are better able to handle stress when their teachers care about them enough to listen attentively. **What actions can you take to show children that you care?**

about their feelings. Help them recognize, label, and clarify their feelings. Teach children coping behaviors. Use effective praise and acknowledge the children's actions, feelings, and progress. Correct any misconceptions children have about themselves or their feelings to help children see themselves as positive, worthwhile people.

It is important to praise children for their efforts rather than their outcomes. If you do, they are more likely to stick with a task. This will help them understand that everyone makes mistakes. Furthermore, they will maintain a steady sense of self-esteem.

Lesson 14.1 Review

- Which of the following is *not* a reason why children react disruptively then they experience tension? (14.1.1)
 - Children do not know how to handle tension.
 - There are too few children in a group.
 - They lack skills in masking their feelings.
 - They lack skills in expressing their feelings with words.
- Each of the following is an event that causes tension in children *except* _____. (14.1.1)
 - overstimulation
 - changes in routines
 - using quiet voices
 - long transitions
- What is stress? (14.1.2)
 - Dysregulation of the immune system
 - The body's reaction to physical or emotional danger signals
 - Vulnerability to infections and chronic illnesses
 - Negative coping skills
- Prolonged effects of stress _____. (14.1.2)
 - promote brain growth
 - promote healthy social attachment
 - undermine healthy brain development
 - buffer children from the effects of stress
- Which of the following is *not* an effective way to discuss stress with families? (14.1.3)
 - Choose words the parents or guardians will understand.
 - Speak softly and slowly.
 - Listen carefully.
 - Confront them about their lack of proper guidance skills.
- Each of the following is a step you can take to help a child deal with stress *except* _____. (14.1.4)
 - praise children for the outcomes of a task rather than their efforts
 - provide a supportive, affectionate, and consistent environment
 - use effective praise and acknowledge children's actions, feelings, and progress
 - praise children for their efforts with a task rather than their outcomes

Lesson 14.2

Strategies for Handling Specific Behavior Challenges

Essential Question



What actions can you take to effectively guide children who have challenging behaviors?

Learning Outcomes

After studying this lesson, you will be able to

14.2-1 describe specific behavior challenges and strategies for handling challenges in the early childhood classroom, including negativism, stealing, temper tantrums and anger, biting, tattling, body exploration, thumb-sucking, and fear and anxiety.

Key Terms

negativism

mirror language

Teachers of young children will face specific behavior challenges. They must provide a warm supportive environment and be intentional role models. Teachers should provide children with developmentally appropriate feedback on their behavior and with reminders that relate to classroom rules for safety and respect. In a caring way, teachers must help children to identify their strong emotions and an awareness of other's perspectives. This takes time and practice. During the process, children need to develop self-reflection skills. Often the teacher will use questions related to their behavior beginning with the words *how*, *what* or *why* as successful teaching strategies. The ultimate goal is for the children to learn to control and regulate their own behavior.

14.1-1 Specific Behavior Challenges

Young children often behave in a socially unacceptable way when they are tense. Negativism, defiance, theft, anger, biting, lying, name-calling, exploration of the body, thumb-sucking, and fear are all possible reactions to tension. These reactions remind us that children are people, too. You must deal with and guide their behavior, just as you would an adult.

Negativism

Negativism among preschool children is typical, particularly between two and three years of age (**Figure 14.10**). Children of this age may oppose every request you make—a typical characteristic of negativism. At this age, they



Seahorse Photo in BKK/Shutterstock.com

Figure 14.10 Young children may resist your requests to end their free play. **Why is it not uncommon for children to oppose teacher requests?**

want to become more independent. A “no” in many cases is a child’s attempt at independence. For instance, you may say, “Pick up the block.” The child might look at you and say “No.”

Accept a young child’s negative behavior; however, keep in mind all health and safety regulations. For example, children must wash their hands before eating. If a child refuses to do this, take the child by the hand and walk the child to the sink. Tell the child “You need to wash your hands.” Let the child know, through your voice and body language, that you expect cooperation.

A negative child cannot be hurried. If hurried, opposition will be stronger. Given time, most children outgrow this stage of development.

Workplace Connections

Handling Negative Behavior

Imagine that a child in your care refuses to pick up blocks or put away toys. Consider whether you would allow the blocks or toys to remain out on the floor or table, or encourage other children to clean up for this child.

1. What are some possible solutions for handling this negative behavior?
2. Would there be any consequences for the child’s negative behavior?

Stealing

Preschool children do not understand the difference between *mine* and *yours*. When children under three years of age take something, they are not stealing. At this age, children do not understand the concept of stealing. Before considering the needs of others, preschoolers attempt to meet their own needs. The desire for something appealing may combine with a young child’s natural impulsiveness. As a result, they may take items that do not belong to them.

Small objects, such as toy cars and puzzle pieces, may vanish from the classroom. When you notice these items missing, warn the other teachers. Ask them to observe the children closely.

Strategies for Handling Stealing

Help children learn to respect the possessions of others. If you see a child take something, do not ask why they stole it. Likewise, do not lecture about stealing. Instead, make the child return it. Otherwise, the child may keep taking things from others. Remember that preschoolers do not understand ownership.

A helpful way to teach children about ownership is to respect their property rights. For example, before trying Jodi’s new puzzle, encourage children to ask her permission to use it. If you see another child looking at Jodi’s toy, say, “Why don’t you ask Jodi if you can use it?”

Strategies for Minimizing Stealing

You should also try to minimize opportunities for stealing. When children bring toys or other items from home, problems can occur. If the center policy allows children to bring toys to the center, there need to be clear rules. It is best for children to leave their toys in their cubbies and only take them out for naptime or show-and-tell. To avoid potential problems, many centers have a policy stating that children should not bring toys from home.

Temper Tantrums and Anger

A child’s temper tantrums can have a variety of triggers. Tantrums may occur when the child is tired, hungry, overstimulated, ill, or when the child wants something. The greatest number of tantrums typically occurs at about 18 months of age. After this age, there is a sharp decline. Age also affects how a child will project anger. Young children often use their whole bodies to express anger. By age two, children may hold their breath for as long as they can. Screaming, kicking, hitting, pounding, and hitting their head against a wall are other ways children may express anger. By the age of three, verbal conflict is more common among children, while four-year-olds often engage in name-calling.

Identify the Source of Anger

Anger usually draws attention to something that annoys the young child. For instance,

children may become angry when other children push or hit, someone takes something that belongs to them, they feel rejected, or they experience teasing and other verbal conflict. When anger occurs, you need to help the child learn to deal with it. Identifying the cause can help you use strategies to guide children effectively.

Strategies for Dealing with Anger

When children display anger, begin by discouraging behavior that hurts. Teachers and care providers should not allow children to hit each other, although children may still try. When they do, safety should always be the first concern. Stop them immediately. Say, “I am sorry, but Antonio does not like that.” At the same time, you might have to hold the child’s hand or arm. The child may try to hit you. Stop that action also. For older preschoolers, you may also use comments. For example, you may say, “You are usually kind. We cannot treat our friends this way.” When young children are upset, they need help calming down.

Ignoring outbursts is also a successful technique when dealing with an angry child. Of course, ignore these behaviors only if there is no threat to the health and safety of other children. If children can get attention or gain control through outbursts, they will keep using this behavior. For example, if Marina cries and yells for another cookie and then receives one, she will cry and yell again. In contrast, if she does not receive the cookie, she will learn that her outburst is unacceptable.

The children need to express their feelings and assert their rights in socially acceptable ways. You can redirect anger. Tell the child it is okay to feel this way and encourage the use of words. Use **mirror language**, which helps children feel accepted and understood. Whenever possible, use the child’s own words. If the child has not spoken, reflect on their emotions. For example, you could say, “Frankie, you are feeling really angry right now.”

Children can release anger through activities such as finger painting, modeling with clay, punching a punching bag, hammering, and playing at the sensory table (**Figure 14.11**). All these activities involve use of children’s hands,



Julie Senkevich/Shutterstock.com

Figure 14.11 Children can release energy through physical activity. **What physical activities might you provide for children to help them positively cope with anger?**

arms, and legs. They will redirect their anger and energy into physical movements. Remember to have enough supplies and equipment for these activities. Use a minimum of rules.

Surprisingly, noise can also help relieve aggression. Yelling, beating drums, dancing to loud music, crying, and making animal noises can all help children relieve stress and anger. Remember, however, that noise can be catching. If several children make too much noise, the rest of the group may also become noisy.

Whenever possible, catch children before they react angrily. For instance, if you see that Camilla is going to kick over Mateo’s blocks, stop her. Then say, “Camilla would you like it if Mateo knocked over your blocks?” A question like this will force Camilla to think about what she was going to do.

Biting

Biting is quite common in young children. Babies and toddlers may bite when they are teething. Young children often bite when they are feeling frustrated or angry. This behavior is not unusual with two-year-olds. For many children, biting is only a temporary problem. Biting usually peaks just before children can use words. Children may bite because they cannot express themselves using words. For them, biting is a form of body language. Typically, property is the main source of conflicts that result in biting.

Early Childhood Insight A B C

Helping Children Manage Anger

Helping children learn to manage anger is a challenge in the early childhood setting. Children are learning about their world and have limited language skills. Once you identify why children are angry, you can take steps to help them manage their anger. Early childhood teachers and care providers should:

- provide a stable, secure environment;
- tell them it is okay to feel angry;
- help children label and understand their angry feelings;
- explain emotions and encourage children to talk about anger-inducing situations;
- use stories to help children learn to understand and self-manage their anger; and
- avoid labeling or blaming a child.

Biting can be a reason for a class meeting. For instance, Molly Crown called a class meeting in her classroom at group time. She said, “We have a problem in our classroom. We cannot bite our friends. Biting hurts. When you think someone is going to bite, hold up your hands and say *stop*.”

Molly’s meeting was successful. Whenever a child held up their hands and said “stop,” the impulse of the child to bite was broken. It also signaled to the teacher that there was a potential problem.

Strategies for Handling Biting

Early childhood teachers and caregivers are responsible for the safety of all children. Because biting is a typical behavior often seen in children under three years of age, you need to help the children who bite and protect other children from getting bitten. Start by keeping playtime simple for children who are likely to bite. Limit the number of playmates they may have at any time. Large groups often create stressful situations; biters become anxious and then bite. If there is a second adult, separate the larger group into two smaller ones.

You need to respond quickly to prevent children from hurting each other. Remove the biter to make the child who is the target of the biting feel safe. Place the biter in a quiet place for a couple of minutes. Isolation of a biter sometimes helps to curb this habit. When the child bites another, say, “No biting. Biting hurts. Paula does not like that.” Then say, “I can’t let you bite Paula or anyone else so you must sit over here.” Make the child sit for a few minutes, but no longer. Then, remind the child that biting is not allowed and allow the child to return to the play area.

Do not forget the child who was the target of the biting. This child also needs to feel secure. To provide security, observe constantly. Never allow a child to bite back. Always reinforce the biting rule. Biting back does not prevent biting—it only creates behavior that is more aggressive by modeling the behavior you want to extinguish.

Continued observation of a child who does the biting is important. Observe them to find out what triggers the behavior. It might be when the room is noisy. Sometimes it occurs when another child takes a toy from them.

Tattling Versus Telling

Tattling seems to occur in many classrooms and is a typical behavior for many young children. Frequently, the child who tattles is insecure and tattles to get your attention. As a teacher, you may find tattling irritating, but you need to listen to the children. You want the children to be aware that classroom limits are important. Tell the children that they do not need to let you know each time another child misbehaves.

In contrast, *telling* is informing the teacher of dangerous situations. For example, a child may tell the teacher that another child has fallen off the bicycle, has a nosebleed, or is crying. Likewise, a child could tell the teacher that another child is struggling with zipping their coat and needs help.

Strategies for Handling Tattling

To prevent tattling, try to build children’s self-esteem. This, in turn, will make them feel more

secure. For a child who is insecure, stay close while supervising. Knowing that a caring adult is nearby is helpful.

Try to have a daily one-to-one time for listening and talking with each child. This may be during free play or small-group time. During this time, provide the child feedback by recognizing their positive qualities. To illustrate, you may say, “Sharice, I like the way you help Marco” or “Eileen, Journey enjoys having you help with the puzzle.” Positive reinforcement will help prevent the children’s need to tattle.

Ignore tattling behavior, if possible. If Jared tattles to you that Abbas has taken his scissors, comment by saying, “You need to tell Abbas to return your scissors.” This encourages Jared to speak to the child who has misbehaved. Likewise, if Christopher tattles that Haven has taken his bicycle, encourage problem-solving. Say, “Haven has taken your bike. What should you do?” (Figure 14.12). If Blair always talks about other children, set a limit by saying, “I enjoy talking with you, but we shouldn’t talk about others.”

Exploring the Body

Children begin to explore their bodies early in life. It is common for one-year-olds to explore their genitals during diaper changing. As children begin to gain control of their body functions, interest in the genital area grows. By age three, children are aware of sex differences. By age four, children who must use the restroom may hold the genital area. When this occurs, remind the children to use the restroom. By five years of age, children may begin to manipulate their genitals. Some children may rub their genitals to reduce irritation caused by tight clothing.

Strategies for Handling Body Exploration

Exploration of the body is normal behavior in development; however, it is not socially acceptable to engage in such behavior in public. Therefore, it is important to guide children away from public display of body exploration.



ampaki/Stock via Getty Images Plus

Figure 14.12 To help prevent tattling, encourage children to problem solve with each other.

During naptime, you might see children touching themselves. When this occurs, never shame or threaten the child. Whenever possible, remember to use a positive approach when guiding young children. You can do this by firmly telling a child privately that this behavior is impolite in public.

Thumb-Sucking

Like adults, children feel certain tensions. To relieve the tension, some children may suck their thumbs. There usually are patterns. Children may suck their thumbs when they are tired, bored, anxious, angry, or sad. Babies are born with a need to suck for self-soothing. Studies show that almost half of all infants suck their fingers or thumbs. By 18 months, thumb-sucking usually reaches its peak. Then the behavior becomes less frequent, especially during the day. By four or five years of age, peer pressure at school may stop the habit. Children of this age will sometimes engage in thumb-sucking if they are tired, so they may continue sucking their thumbs before going to bed. Moreover, children may revert to thumb-sucking if they feel anxious or stressed.

Many parents or guardians are concerned about thumb-sucking. Encourage them to accept this behavior as a normal stage of growth for preschool children. Most children outgrow thumb-sucking. The American Dental Association (ADA) claims most children will stop thumb-sucking between the ages of two and four. They recommend avoiding putting pressure on the child since it can have the opposite effect. Long-term thumb-sucking is problematic, especially beyond the age of six. It can change the size and shape of a child's palate. This disrupts the growth of their mouth and alignment of permanent teeth.

Strategies for Handling Thumb-Sucking

Supplying a pacifier is a way to satisfy an infant's urge to suck. One advantage of a pacifier is that it does not place pressure on the roof of the mouth or the jaw. When they are ready, most children give up their pacifiers. In fact, some children may have an intense sucking need for only the first few months of life. When children

stop using their pacifiers, parents or guardians and caregivers can take them away permanently. If a child reverts to sucking fingers or thumbs, however, return the pacifier.

If you notice thumb-sucking, do not pull the thumb out of the child's mouth. This guidance may not be successful. In some cases, it might cause anxiety that increases the child's thumb-sucking. During the first three years, the harder you try to stop thumb-sucking, the stronger it becomes. Instead, accept and ignore the behavior. In this way, children will usually stop thumb-sucking between four and five years of age.

Attending an early learning program may help curb thumb-sucking for some children. At the center, the child will find many new interests and friends. As a result, you may not notice thumb-sucking. Many times, children will only suck their thumbs when they lie down for naps or are tired.

Fear and Anxiety

All children experience fear and anxiety. It is a normal part of growing up. Infants have stranger anxiety. They will recognize a familiar face, but are fearful of a new face. Toddlers have separation anxiety. When a parent or guardian leaves them at the center, they will cling and cry. By three years of age, most children have many kinds of fear. Some fears will be real while others will be imaginary. As children grow, they keep their real fears but outgrow their imaginary fears.

Common childhood fears include falling from high places, putting faces in water, loud thunder, heights, the dark, people in uniforms, fire engines, ambulances, dogs and big animals, and getting shots. Fear of the unknown is also common in young children. You may see this fear on the first day of school. Children may cry, cling, and refuse to leave their parents or guardians. As the teacher, be prepared for this fear. Inform family members in advance that this is a common fear.

Strategies for Handling Fear

Understanding children's fear is important in guiding young children (**Figure 14.13**). Fear of the dark is quite common among young children.



andresr/E+ via Getty Images

Figure 14.13 Teachers need to be prepared for fears on field trips that may be caused by unfamiliar sights or sounds. **What preparations could you make?**

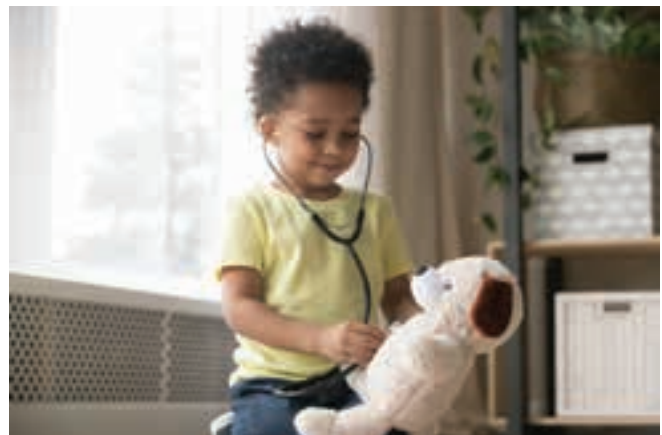
You may notice this fear at naptime or when showing a video. Understand that this behavior is due to unfamiliar surroundings. These children cannot sleep or concentrate on videos. Instead, they may focus on scary images formed by the shadows in the darkened room. Help these children by keeping a small night-light turned on during these times. Then the room will not be very dark. Also, allow children to keep a familiar stuffed toy or blanket near them for comfort.

Accept children's fears. For young children, even the silliest fear is real. When a fire engine passes the playground and a child cries, give the child immediate attention. The child needs to feel safe. You may wish to hold the child's hand, kneel and put your arm around the child's shoulders, or hold the child on your lap. When you do this, you are meeting the child's immediate need of protection. After the crisis passes, talk to the child about the fear.

Children may need to act out situations to conquer their fears (**Figure 14.14**). For instance, Devan's grandmother died in the hospital. When Devan came back to the center, he asked two other children to play hospital with him. Devan played the role of a doctor while one

friend played the nurse. This was Devan's way of handling the fear he felt when his grandmother died at the hospital.

Talking with children can also help them control fear. For example, Mark visited his cousin Dakota. After returning to school, Mark told his teachers that the house had ghosts. As a result, Mark said that he was never returning. Mark's teacher was observant, and talked to Mark about



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Figure 14.14 Playing hospital helps many children deal with their fears of hospitals and doctors.

his visit with Dakota. The teacher explained that sleeping in strange places is often frightening because it is new.

Sidney was afraid of the new bunny. Fortunately, the teacher was understanding. He helped Sidney face her fear by introducing the bunny in gradual steps. First, the teacher asked Sidney to place a carrot in the cage. Then he encouraged Sidney to watch the bunny eat. The next day the teacher encouraged Sidney to touch the bunny's fur. Sidney continued this for about one week. Her teacher did not rush Sidney. Finally, the teacher asked Sidney if she wanted to hold the bunny. Sidney said *yes*. Sidney's teacher carefully and slowly took the rabbit from the cage and placed it on Sidney's lap.

When children feel unsafe or strange, they may reject a person or situation. For example, a child

may greet a new aide with "Go away, I hate you." If this happens, do not scold the child. Telling the child that they like the aide will not help either. Instead, accept the child's feelings. You may say, "Miss Brown is our new teacher. When you get to know her, you will learn to like her."

Children will sometimes hit others when they are afraid. For instance, a resource person visited a group of four-year-olds. This person brought a large snake to show the children. When Ariel saw the snake, she began to act aggressively. She hit Charlie and Morgan. The teacher then stepped in and explained to Ariel that her friends might be frightened, too. She then explained to Ariel that this type of snake was not dangerous. There was no need to fear it and hitting is never an acceptable behavior.

Lesson 14.2 Review

- What will happen if you hurry a negative child? (14.2.1)
 - The child will comply with your request.
 - The child's opposition will be stronger.
 - The child will become more independent.
 - The child will cooperate with all directions.
- Each of the following is a strategy for handling stealing and helping children to respect the possessions of others *except* _____. (14.2.1)
 - make children return stolen objects instead of lecturing
 - minimize opportunities for stealing
 - teach children about ownership by respecting their property rights
 - if you see a child take something, ask them why they stole it
- Which of the following is *not* an effective strategy for dealing with children's tantrums and anger? (14.2.1)
 - Tell children it is not okay to feel angry.
 - Discourage a behavior that hurts others.
 - Ignore outbursts when there is no threat to health and safety of others.
 - Help children label and understand their angry feelings.
- Steps teachers can take to help children manage their behavior include each of the following *except* _____. (14.2.1)
 - providing a stable, secure environment
 - explaining emotions and encouraging children to talk about anger-inducing situations
 - using stories to help children learn to understand and self-manage their anger
 - telling children that it is not okay to feel angry
- Each of the following is an effective strategy for handling biting *except* _____. (14.2.1)
 - keeping playtime simple
 - expanding the number of playmates
 - dividing children into smaller play groups
 - isolating children who bite from others for a few minutes

Chapter 14 Review and Assessment

Summary

Lesson 14.1

- 14.1-1** As a teacher of young children, at times you will be challenged while guiding the children. Your goal is to guide children so they learn appropriate social-emotional skills.
- 14.1-1** Common causes of tension challenges include overstimulation, changes in routine, too many children in a group, crowded surroundings, and loud noise.
- 14.1-1** Frustration and physical problems can also cause guidance challenges.
- 14.1-2** Knowing how stress affects young children is essential.
- 14.1-2** Stress can have many causes, including changes or problems within the family.
- 14.1-2** Young children do not know how to handle stress well. As a result, they most often express stress through their behavior, which is a form of communication.
- 14.1-3** If adults see a child shows signs of stress or anxiety, they can offer the help the child needs. Although family events can be a source of stress, families can also serve as a buffer for children during times of stress.
- 14.1-3** Teachers can also experience stress, which can impact the quality of your interactions with young children.
- 14.1-3** Your role as a teacher will be to help children and families deal positively with tension-causing events. Knowing more about common family stressors and signs of stress will help.
- 14.1-4** You can help by modeling coping skills and providing an extra measure of comfort and reassurance for the child.

Lesson 14.2

- 14.2.1** You will face other challenging behaviors in the classroom, including negativism, stealing, anger, biting, exploring the body, tattling, thumb-sucking, and fear.
- 14.2.1** Handling each of these challenging behaviors requires guidance skills and techniques that are unique to each situation.
- 14.2.1** As a teacher, you will need to create ways to guide children as they learn skills for appropriate behavior.

Vocabulary Activity

Individually or with a partner, create a T-chart on a sheet of paper and list each of the terms in the left column. In the right column, list an *antonym* (a word of opposite meaning) for each term in the left column.

Critical Thinking

1. **Create.** Prepare a checklist of ways to avoid overstimulation of children.
2. **Cause-and-Effect.** Create teacher strategies for reducing waiting time during transitions.
3. **Analyze.** Search online for guidance tips and resources related to the guidance challenges described in this chapter. Analyze the tips and resources for their potential effectiveness. Choose two tips and explain how you might implement them in an early childhood classroom.
4. **Draw Conclusions.** Visit an early childhood center. Observe the children behavior for any signs of stress. Describe the signs you see. Draw conclusions about the teacher's response to the children's stress. Discuss your findings when you return to class.

5. **Evaluate.** Locate children's books that deal with typical situations that may cause a child stress. After reading a story to the children, ask the children how they would feel in a similar situation. Did the children respond as you thought? Why or why not? How was the story helpful for the children? Some suggested books are: *Theo's Mood*; *Finding Kindness*; *A Boy and a Bear*; *When I Feel Angry*; *The Very Angry Day That Amy Didn't Have*; *The Berenstain Bears and Mama's New Job*; *Good Night Gorilla*; and *I Like Myself* among others.

Core Skills

1. **Speaking.** Interview four parents or guardians to learn what problems they have guiding their children. How do they cope with their guidance challenges?
2. **Writing.** Research common fears among children and compose a report that summarizes your findings. Post your findings to the class website for peer and teacher review.
3. **Writing.** Pair up with another student to write a possible dialogue between a teacher and a parent or guardian to show how you would handle communicating with parents about a child's stressful behavior. Your instructor will assign specific scenarios, such as aggressive behavior related to a divorce; regressive behavior related to a new baby; or anxiety and fearfulness related to a family member's serious illness and hospitalization. Role-play the dialogue for the rest of the class.
4. **Speaking.** Interview the health instructor to discover how the subject of students' health challenges is treated. What strategies or precautions are taught to students to help them avoid health risks? How is the subject of blood-borne pathogens approached?
5. **Research and Writing.** Conduct online research for information on the effects of family stress on preschoolers. Research answers to the following questions: What stressful life events in a family most affect children? How do children typically manage these events? What are the effects of family stress on a child's behavior and on academic performance? How can a preschool teacher use this information to help a child deal with stress? Write a summary of your findings.
6. **Listening.** Interview an early learning teacher about their experience dealing with one of the specific problem behaviors covered in this chapter. Ask the teacher to describe the behavior and to explain how they recognized it. How did the teacher handle the problem? What strategies did they use? Looking back, would the teacher have handled anything about the situation differently? After the interview, compare notes with a classmate. Discuss the two experiences you heard about.
7. **CTE Career Readiness Practice.** Imagine that you work in an early childhood center. Emery, one of the children, arrives at class sullen and withdrawn. Emery refuses to hang up his coat and join other children in a parachute activity, and will not come to the circle for story time. Emery responds with "no" to any suggestions made by the teachers and will not even participate in snack time. List the steps you would take in analyzing Emery's behavior and determining a solution to the problem.

Portfolio Project

Write a brief article for a guidance advice column in the parent newsletter. Choose a topic such as handling fears, biting, or tattling. Use your digital device and a language-translation app to convert the file to another language. File a copy of your printed articles in your portfolio.