Constructive Guidance and Discipline

Birth to Age Eight

Pearson

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SEVENTH EDITION

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DEDICATION

For the cause of
worldwide peace and harmony.
May it begin in
the hearts of children
and spread.
And may teachers
be sowers of the seeds
of peace and harmony.

About the Authors

Marjorie Fields Marjorie has recently retired after teaching in the field of early childhood education for more than 30 years. She first taught kindergarten, then first grade, and then began teaching teachers. Thanks to her own children, she also had experience in cooperative preschools and various types of childcare.

Marjorie has a Doctorate in Early Childhood Education with Research in Parent Involvement. She has been active in early childhood professional organizations at the national and local levels; she recently served as president of the National Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators (NAECTE) and has also served as vice president of that association. Dr. Fields has also served on the national governing board for the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). She has published extensively in the field of emergent literacy, including the textbook *Let's Begin Reading Right* (Merrill/Prentice Hall), as well as in the field of child guidance.

This book is the result of more than 30 years of reading and thinking in conjunction with developing and teaching early childhood discipline courses. Dr. Fields credits her two sons with initially helping her learn what is most important about child guidance and discipline. She now continues to learn from her grandchildren, their parents, and their teachers.

Patty Meritt Patty currently serves as Professor of Early Childhood Education for the University of Alaska in Fairbanks, where she has been nominated multiple times as teacher of the year. She has taught child guidance in several formats, including workshops, as a full course on the Web, as an intensive, compressed course, as well as in face-to-face instruction. Although Ms. Meritt came on as an author for the sixth edition, she used the book for several earlier editions and says the book is the backbone of every guidance course she teaches. In addition to teaching at the university, Patty began her career as a college student in a parent co-op and went on to work as a classroom teacher, before opening a private preschool. Later she took a position directing nonprofit childcare and built the corporation into a multisite, multimillion-dollar business serving thousands of families, which required regularly using many of the skills discussed in this book. Patty has an A.A. in Nursery School, a B.A. in Child Development and a Masters in Teaching. Her research has been primarily in the field of gender differences in early childhood. As a parent and now as a grandparent, she delights in continually learning, sharing, and improving her respectful responses to all children.

Deborah M. Fields Deborah (Debby) is a licensed mental health counselor and the Director of Social Services for Agape Adoptions, an international adoption agency. She assesses and helps to prepare families who wish to adopt children internationally from a wide variety of countries. Debby also provides post-adoption support services, assisting parents with the process of adjustment, attachment, and developing sensitive discipline practices. She is trained as a Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI) Practitioner, and enjoys seeing the powerful effect that loving, sensitive caregivers can have on children's healing and emotional development. Debby has a master's degree in marriage, family, and child counseling. In addition to her training in attachment issues, she has focused on developing culturally sensitive practices in her work with children and families. She has also worked with teen parents and in an elementary school counseling center.

Preface

Constructive Guidance and Discipline: Birth to Age Eight provides early childhood professionals (and parents) with the best of approaches to help young children become happy, responsible, and productive people. We present guidance and discipline concepts within a framework of child development, developmentally appropriate practices, and constructivist education. Thus, only discipline approaches that are consistent with all three aspects of this framework are recommended here. We take a stand about what is best for young children, rather than merely presenting an impartial overview of various approaches. We are convinced that adults cannot effectively assist children's moral development through the coercive approaches of punishment or behavior modification.

Although recent editions of the text address the entire scope of early childhood, ages 0–8, we emphasize guidance for children ages 3–8. Appropriate guidance and discipline must be tied to developmental levels, and we want to acknowledge that infant and toddler development is uniquely different from that of children in the preoperational years of 3–8. Many of the principles for older children apply to younger children, but some approaches presented in this text require more emotional, social, and cognitive maturation than that attained by toddlers.

NEW TO THIS EDITION

Improvements to the Book's Pedagogy

- To help students better understand the text content, we have provided an organizational graphic image of 3 blocks. These blocks are used to illustrate how each of the three parts of the book and each of the chapters relate to one another.

- Chapters open with a brief scenario illustrating the type of challenges addressed in that chapter and the scenario is referred to throughout the chapter.
- Learning Outcomes are aligned with section headings and with a bulleted summary at the end of each chapter.
- End-of-chapter questions and activities are categorized into subsets for ease in making assignments.

New Content Keeps Pace with New Research and Current Practices

- New information reflects the fast-growing research base on brain development, emphasizing the effects of poverty, trauma, and stress on brain development and child behavior (see Ch. 2–6, 10, and 14).
- New discussions of the role of technology as it influences child behavior reflect the fast-paced growth in the area of technology. The joint position statement on technology in early childhood programs from NAEYC and the Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning provides a base for these discussions (see Ch. 6).

- Behavior problems associated with ever-increasing emphasis on test scores are addressed directly, including a letter from an award-winning teacher with advice about how to meet children's needs in a school setting that is not developmentally appropriate (see Ch. 5).

This edition continues and strengthens the approach of previous editions. Making the message of the book clear and understandable has always been a priority. Periodic invitations to Reflection are designed to help students think more deeply about the implications of what they are reading. Tables and figures help students synthesize key points in the text.

Since behavior modification is so pervasive in our society, the recommendations in this book require most readers to alter their thinking radically. Assisting students in a major paradigm shift requires that principles be carefully documented and clearly explained. As in previous editions, we emphasize the examples of classroom practice that students find helpful for understanding the concepts.

As before, we have worked at balancing the preschool and primary-grade-level examples, while also including those with infants and toddlers.

MAJOR THEORETICAL INFLUENCES

The information and ideas presented in this text come from a number of respected sources. We see four theorists as having major influences on child guidance concepts in this century: Alfred Adler, Carl Rogers, B. F. Skinner, and Jean Piaget. Rudolf Dreikurs's recommendations of logical and natural consequences extended Adler's concepts; Thomas Gordon popularized Rogers's ideas through his Parent Effectiveness Training work; Skinner's work founded the widespread behavior modification techniques; and Piagetian scholars such as Constance Kamii and Rheta DeVries have spread the word about Piaget's views on the development of morality. Although we reject Skinner's approach for the reasons explained in Chapter 9, we believe that the other three theorists have compatible views. Adler, Rogers, and Piaget all perceive the child as actively seeking understanding. This perspective contrasts the Skinnerian view, which sees education as something that happens to a child from outside sources. Adler and Rogers, as well as Piaget, respect the child's personal rate and style of developing social understanding. All three perceive the proper adult role as facilitating rather than controlling the child's gradual development into a successful member of society. Piaget's theoretical framework is much broader than that of Rogers or Adler, including comprehensive moral as well as intellectual development. Thus, Adlerian and Rogerian concepts can be included as part of a Piagetian perspective, although the reverse is not true.

The research and writing of Jean Piaget and constructivist scholars regarding intellectual and moral autonomy are central to the message in this book. We also adapt Thomas Gordon's recommendations for effective communication and interpret Rudolf Dreikurs's concept of logical and natural consequences into our discussion of a constructivist approach to discipline. In addition, we draw on Erik Erikson's emotional development studies, refer to guidelines from the National Association for the Education of Young Children, and often quote Rheta DeVries and Constance Kamii. Many other sources used in this book are listed in the references.

We look at guidance and discipline as teaching activities; therefore, the principles of effective early childhood education apply as much to guidance and discipline as to academics. In addition, we discuss the ways in which effective early childhood education practices prevent or alleviate many common discipline problems.

Like any other aspect of teaching, guidance must acknowledge diversity among children. In our recommendations, we consider individual differences due to innate temperament or individual physical and intellectual capabilities. We also discuss the implications of culture, gender, class, and family problems.

We recognize that teachers must often deal with kids in crisis, creating major new challenges in guidance and discipline. Chapters 2 and 3 in Part A are devoted to providing background information for teachers whose classrooms include kids with special needs or learning difficulties as well as those who have experienced difficult life situations that may make them more vulnerable to social or emotional difficulties. Then in Part C, Chapters 13 and 14, we revisit that background information and look more closely at how to support those children most in need of help.

ORGANIZATION OF THE TEXT

Chapters 1–3 constitute the foundations section, Part A. Chapter 1 defines *discipline* as teaching autonomy and self-discipline while promoting self-esteem. Concepts introduced in Chapter 1 are more fully addressed throughout the book. Chapters 2 and 3 consider stages in children's physical, emotional, intellectual, and social development as they relate to discipline problems and solutions. We build on this information throughout the rest of the book. We consider a clear definition of discipline and its goals, plus knowledge of child development, to be the basic understandings for a discussion of discipline.

Part B, Chapters 4–10, presents various approaches to discipline in descending order, from most positive to negative. This sequence can also be considered as an ascending order, from least intrusive to most intrusive. Chapter 4 discusses how to prevent behavior problems by creating an emotional and physical environment most supportive of children's healthy development. Chapter 5 explains the role of developmentally appropriate programs in preventing discipline problems. Chapters 6 and 7 emphasize both the prevention of problems and intervention when problems do occur. Chapter 6 explains how the examples shown by adults influence child behavior, and shows how to help children use those examples during conflict situations. Chapter 7 presents effective ways to communicate with children, both to prevent conflict and to address problems that arise and how to negotiate solutions to existing problems. Chapter 8 explains how early childhood professionals can help children change unproductive behaviors by using related consequences to show children why certain behaviors are unacceptable. Chapter 9 analyzes behavior modification approaches, and explains why rewards and even praise are counterproductive to the goals of self-discipline. The dangers of punishment are presented in Chapter 10.

Chapters 11–15 constitute Part C, which builds on Parts A and B. Child development knowledge from Part A is used to determine the cause of behavior problems. Then knowledge about guidance approaches from Part B is used to select an appropriate response. Part C analyzes typical causes of discipline problems and relates them to the approaches relevant to each. These chapters emphasize the necessity of dealing with the cause of problems rather than just the symptoms. Chapter 11 discusses the relationship between maturational level and acceptable behavior, and Chapter 12 looks at how unmet needs cause problem behavior. Chapters 13 and 14 explore serious problems with causes outside of the classroom and offer helpful suggestions for the teacher or caregiver. Chapter 15 presents an overview of possible causes of discipline problems and identifies which causes pertain to a particular situation, and also provides a guide for matching the causes with the discipline approaches that are most likely to be effective for each.

PROVIDING EXAMPLES

Because we want to balance theoretical explanations with real-life examples, we use typical scenarios to illustrate ways to facilitate self-discipline and moral autonomy through positive approaches to discipline. This method is congruent with our message that teachers must

not respond just to the behavior, but must consider the many factors that might relate to the cause of the behavior. These "stories" have proved extremely useful to college students trying to visualize the practical applications of text material, but who struggle with abstract concepts.

Meet the cast of characters: The staff at the Midway Children's Center: The director, Susan; preschool teachers—Dennis, Gabrielle, Sheri, and Nancy; and infant/toddler teachers Keisha and Gabriella all provide examples of discipline with very young children. Kindergarten teacher Mrs. Sanchez, first-grade teacher Mrs. Jensen, second-grade teacher Mr. Davis and his student teacher Beth, and third-grade teacher Mrs. Garcia demonstrate the same concepts with primary-grade children. You also briefly encounter after-school-care teacher Ann and Alaska village teacher Mrs. Akaran. Mrs. Sanchez, Mrs. Jensen, and Mr. Davis represent all the caring and effective public school teachers we have known.

Because contrasting desirable with undesirable practices often helps us define the desirable, we have also provided examples of common practices that we do not recommend. For this purpose, we created two fictitious characters, preschool teacher Joanne and first-grade teacher Miss Wheeler, and described them in some real-life situations. Miss Wheeler is presented as teaching at the same elementary school as Mrs. Jensen. Joanne teaches at the same children's center as Dennis, but she is in charge during the afternoon and Dennis is the lead teacher during the morning preschool session. Having Dennis and Joanne share the same students and support staff provides examples of how different approaches affect the same children. All teachers are fictional, but the good and bad situations described are real. We use first names for the childcare staff and last names for public school staff, not to imply more respect for the latter, but only as a reflection of common practice.

Examples from readers' own experience are the most instructive. We believe that spending significant time with children, preferably enough to establish authentic relationships with them, is necessary for internalizing theories about guidance and discipline. We also believe that personal observation and experience are crucial to learning, whether in preschool or adulthood.

We use the term *teacher* throughout the book to refer to caregivers as well as other teachers. Any adults who guide children through their day are teaching them. We firmly believe that adults working with children in childcare must be as knowledgeable about child development as any other teachers. Because children are so profoundly influenced by the adults in their lives, it is essential that all teachers have a solid understanding of how to influence children in positive directions.

EXPANDED INSTRUCTOR'S MANUAL, POWERPOINT® SLIDES, AND TEST BANK

An expanded *Instructor's Manual* for this edition is located on the Pearson web site (www.pearsonhighered.com/educator). Some of the instructor resources are from other college faculty who use this book to teach about guidance and discipline. This site also includes updated PowerPoint® slides emphasizing the most important concepts in each chapter, and a revised test bank. The test bank has been expanded to include a variety of question types and problem-solving situations. These are not test items requiring mere rote memory; they simulate actual classroom situations where problem solving is required for effective discipline. Even the multiple-choice questions require higher-level thinking. This approach to testing is congruent with a constructivist approach to education, allowing the college teacher to model the principles recommended.

Acknowledgments

Continued thanks to Constance Kamii for her patience and guidance in my quest to better understand constructivism and moral autonomy. Thanks also to all the teachers whose classrooms I have visited and who have provided models of respectful and constructive discipline. These include Jennifer Thompson who wrote the letter to teachers in Chapter 5, Kathy Hanna, Chris Thomas, and Linda Torgerson, as well as my sister Deborah Grams. I have learned the most from children themselves, however. All the children in all the classrooms where I have spent time over the past several decades have helped me understand child development and guidance. Raising my own two sons also taught me a lot, and I must thank them for being the subjects of my longitudinal research. Now I have five grandchildren who are teaching me even more about child development.

I have greatly appreciated Patty Meritt's ideas and contributions to the sixth and seventh editions and have enjoyed working with her. It continues to be a joy to work with my daughter-in-law, Debby Fields, on this book. Our mutual interest in her children—my grandchildren—provides a personal perspective to our research. I am deeply indebted to those who allowed me to take children's photographs and who assisted with parental permission forms. Traci Sauvage and Danielle Delinno at St Annes's School in Seattle were especially helpful with photographs for this edition. As always, I appreciate the guidance of our editor, Julie Peters, and I am grateful for the hard work of Jon Theiss, the developmental editor; and Michelle Gardner, the project manager. Finally—as always—many, many thanks to my dear husband Don for his patience and support.

Marjorie Fields

It has been an honor and pleasure to work with both Debby and Marjorie. Sincere thanks to Pearson for asking me to be a reviewer and, as a result, deepest thanks to Marjorie for bringing me on as a coauthor. Marjorie's mentoring and insights into the world of early childhood go back long before this project; her patient guidance of me throughout my academic career as well as the writing of this textbook will never be forgotten. I am grateful to the Bunnell House Early Childhood Lab School for their continual support, including photo opportunities, and to Kelly Peissner, the EC administrative assistant. I appreciate my teachers, especially Bernice Clayton, who introduced me to the world of early childhood, and all the colleagues through the years who helped make my contributions possible. Loving thanks also to my husband Bob and our children and grandchildren, my inspiration.

Patty Meritt

I thank Marjorie Fields for her guidance, support, and confidence in me. She is truly a wonderful and caring teacher. I am so grateful for the opportunity to continue to learn from her and from the research and literature reviewed for this book. I also thank my husband, Mike, for his support and for being my partner in parenting. I continue to learn so much from my own two children, Sarah and Caroline, who remain my inspiration.

Deborah M. Fields

Thank you to the following reviewers: Julia T. Atiles, University of Missouri-Kansas City; Karon Futch, Georgia Northwestern Technical College; Stephen Garretson, University of North Texas; Virginia Johnson, Biola University; Belinda McGee, Tulsa Community College; and Lisa Renaud, Arizona Western College.

Brief Contents

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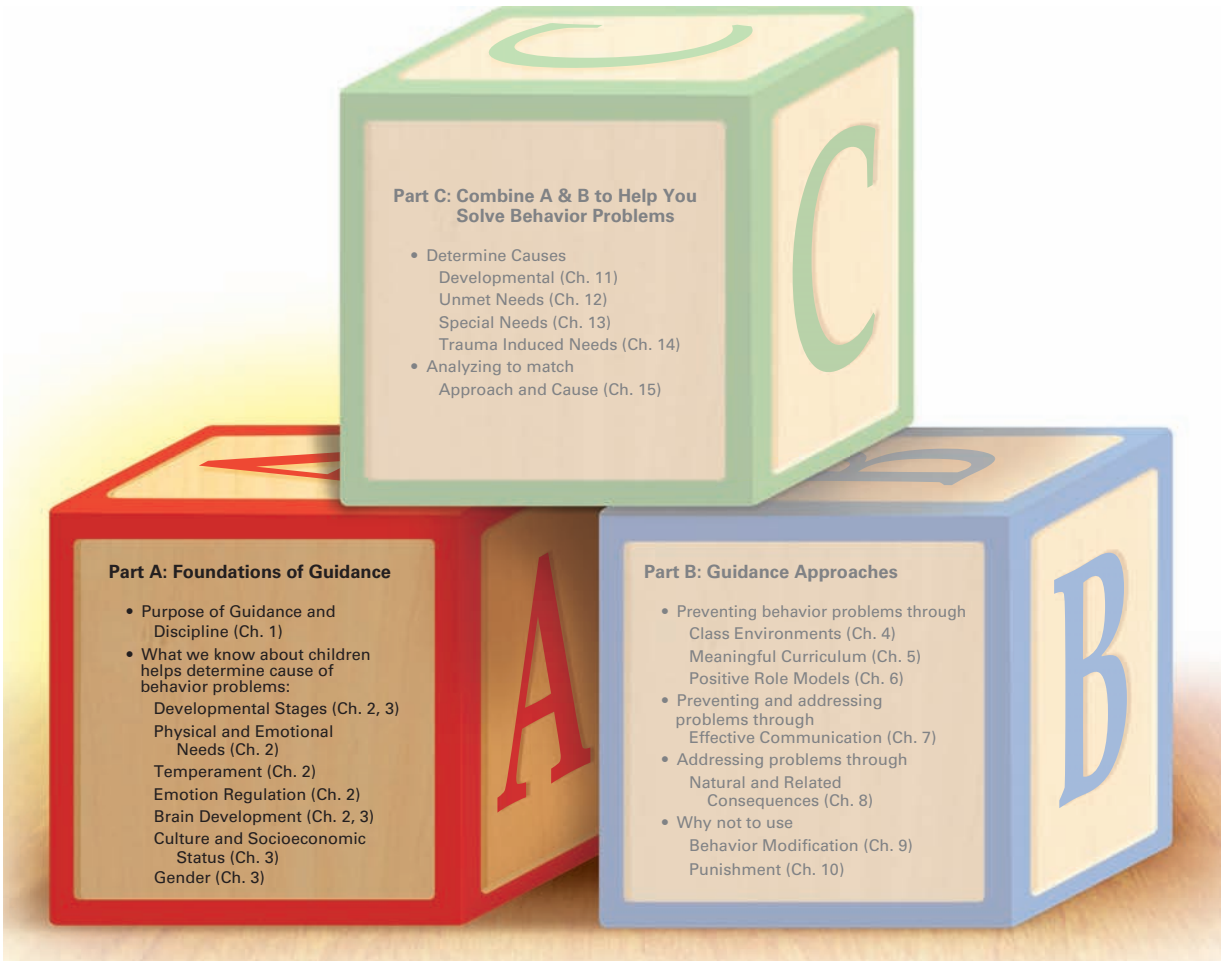
PART A

Discipline Foundations

The first three chapters of this book provide the basic information necessary to study the topic of discipline. In Chapter 1, we describe discipline as discussed in this text, comparing the concept of Constructivist discipline with Behaviorist and Maturationist discipline.

Chapters 2 and 3 focus on child development issues that directly affect discipline in preschools and primary grades. Understanding how children grow, learn, and think helps adults live more harmoniously with children. This understanding not only creates more tolerance for normal childish behaviors, but also reduces inappropriate adult expectations. We believe that effective discipline approaches must be based on knowledge of children's physical, emotional, intellectual, and social development, as well as on the individual characteristics of each child.



Chapter 1
Thinking About Guidance and Discipline

Source: Marjorie V. Fields

Discipline is a major concern of most teachers. No matter what you are trying to teach, you need to have the attention and cooperation of your students. Not an easy task, especially if you are trying to make children sit still, be quiet, and pay attention to something they are not interested in. We hope this book will give you insights about how to make your work with children more pleasant, rewarding, and productive.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

With understanding of this chapter, you should be able to

- Differentiate between long-term guidance/discipline goals and short-term goals
- Compare and contrast Behaviorist, Constructivist, and Maturationist guidance/discipline models
- Summarize the main features of Constructivist guidance/discipline
- Analyze the cause of a behavior problem after careful observation

NAEYC Standards Addressed in This Chapter

Standard 3: Observing, documenting, and assessing to support young children and families

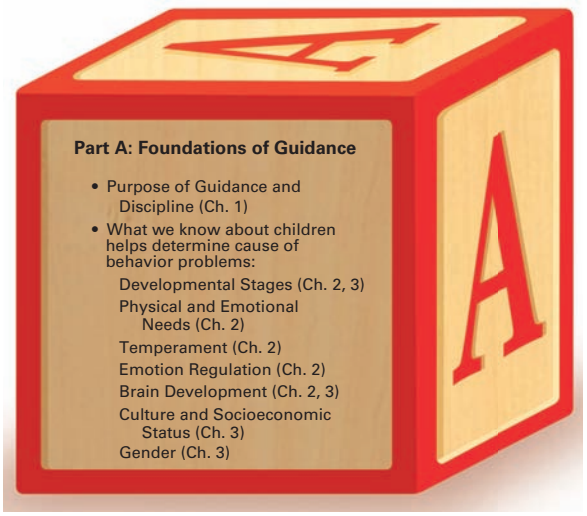
Standard 4a: Understanding positive relationships and supportive interactions as the foundation of work with young children

Standard 4c: Using a broad repertoire of developmentally appropriate teaching/learning approaches

Standard 6b: Knowing about and upholding ethical standards and other early childhood professional guidelines

Suppose you walk into a classroom where several children are isolated in time-out, the teacher is threatening others with punishment, and the atmosphere in the room is tense and uncomfortable. What has gone wrong here? How can this situation be turned around? This chapter begins the process of helping you find answers to those questions.

Some books tell you they have the perfect formula to solve all your discipline problems; this one doesn't. This book says there is no one approach to discipline that works for all problems, let alone for all children. Child guidance and discipline are incredibly complex, confusing, and frustrating. The many books and programs that offer simple solutions to discipline problems ignore the reality of individual differences, emotion-laden situations, and overburdened caregivers. In this book, we do not offer any simple solutions, but instead acknowledge that effective child discipline is multifaceted, requiring a sophisticated set of understandings and skills. Fixing the unhappy classroom described at the beginning of the chapter will not be a quick fix. We try to provide the basics understandings and skills for this and other discipline-related issues, but, ultimately, what you get out of reading this book is determined by what you put into it.



The three chapters in Part A of this book provide the foundation information for thinking about guidance and discipline (see the three-blocks structure in Part A introduction). This first chapter is intended to help you understand everything else in this book and give you our definitions for the terminology used throughout subsequent chapters. Ideally, as you read this chapter, you will have many questions and will use this book to help you find answers.

DEFINING DISCIPLINE

Notice that the title of this book includes both **guidance** and **discipline**. The term *guidance* is usually associated with helping kids deal with problems (as in *guidance counselor*), and the term *discipline* is too often associated with punishing children for doing things adults don't like. As you read, you will see that the term *discipline* is used differentlyin this book, and that it includes what people generally think of as *guidance*, but it does not include punishment.

What do you think discipline is? Have you always thought of it as punishing a child for doing something wrong? Many people think that discipline is a smack on a child's bottom. You may have heard a (sick) joke that refers to a paddle as the "board of education." This book defines *discipline* differently: *helping children learn personal responsibility for their behavior and the ability to judge between right and wrong for themselves*. The emphasis is on teaching as we help kids learn responsible behaviors, rather than merely stopping unproductive actions. Instead of abandoning the term, we want to help people understand what the word *discipline* is supposed to mean. Did you know that the word *discipline* comes from the word *disciple*, which means "to lead and teach"? Teaching and leading are what adults should be doing when they discipline a child. With this view of discipline, undesirable behavior is an opportunity for instruction (Elkind, 2001). Do you think the teacher in the example at the beginning of this chapter understands that view of discipline?

Instead of just enforcing rules about what not to do, we want to help children learn to make wise choices about what they should do. Note that *learning to make wise choices for themselves* is very different from just doing whatever they want. We are not advocating a lack of behavior controls or permissive approaches. Instead, we are advocating approaches that help children understand why certain behaviors are better than others, and that help children choose to act in a desirable manner, whether or not an adult is there to "catch" them at it.

This text is about how to support children in becoming responsible, kind, and productive citizens; it is not about forcing or otherwise coercing children to behave in certain ways. We explain why we are convinced that external controls, such as reward and punishment, counteract the behavior and attitudes our society so desperately needs. We don't just tell you not to reward or punish children; we also explain better ways of reaching behavior goals.

A key element in the process is determining the cause of undesirable behaviors and working to eliminate that cause. Our approach to discipline is like diagnostic teaching: individualized to the needs and abilities of each child. This type of guidance and discipline requires extensive knowledge of child development as well as of various guidance approaches. This book attempts to assist readers in obtaining the necessary knowledge in both areas; it then presents ways of using them together for child guidance.

Because we view discipline as teaching, not merely controlling, we recommend that school discipline be planned at least as carefully as other aspects of the curriculum. Schools long ago gave up punishing students for not knowing how to read or do a math problem. Instead of punishing children for missing skills and understandings, teachers now teach what is missing. This is the same process we advocate for helping children with missing social skills and for teaching them understandings related to behavior.

High Stakes

Can we afford to spend school time teaching social skills and caring attitudes? Evidence shows that we can't afford not to (Charney, 2002; Garrett, 2006). Although federal mandates have focused schools on academic testing, experienced teachers know that other areas of the curriculum won't get covered if discipline is not taught appropriately (Willis, Dinehart, & Bliss, 2014). However, more important, observers of human nature and human development researchers (Damon, Lerner, & Eisenberg, 2006; Hanish et al., 2007) know that it doesn't really matter what else people learn if they don't learn to become caring, principled, and responsible; their lives will be lived in shambles. "Individuals do not develop into educated competent members of society by learning academic skills, absent of social skills" (Garrett, 2006, p. 154). In addition, it is becoming increasingly clear that schools must teach caring, communication, negotiation, and other violence-prevention lessons in an effort to make schools and neighborhoods safe.

Teachers report that classroom discipline is their biggest challenge (Willis et al., 2014). This challenge appears to be growing greater each year as increasingly more children arrive at school with unmet needs and insufficient social skills. Teachers struggle to create caring classroom communities with children who lack impulse control and have little ability to manage their frustration and anger (Brady, Forton, Porter, & Wood, 2010).

Teachers of young children must spend time on discipline not only in self-defense, but also because they have the children at the most opportune time. Brain research shows that the early years offer a critical window of opportunity for learning complex functions related to behavior, such as logical thinking and emotion regulation (Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2010). During the years from age 3 to age 10, the brain has more synapses creating connections to brain cells than at any other time. Brain imaging shows conclusively what early childhood teachers have said all along: The early years are the critical years for learning.

THE GOALS OF DISCIPLINE

Discipline approaches must be determined by our goals. Start by asking yourself, "What is the purpose of discipline?" It may be tempting to look at discipline merely as a means to keep control so you can teach other things, but children and society need so much more.

Long-Term Goals

Whenever you teach something, you need to start by clarifying your long-term educational goals. Teaching discipline or anything else without long-term goals is like trying to plan a trip route without knowing where you are headed. In order to examine long-term goals, you may find it useful to ask yourself what kind of people you value. Notice that the word is *people*, not *children*. Is there a difference? If you are thinking about children, you might be attracted to the goal *obedient*; however, you are not likely to choose that label for an adult characteristic. Keep in mind that early discipline influences character for a lifetime; therefore, it is essential to think about what kind of people function best in society rather than merely considering what kind of children are easiest to manage. What traits will make the best contribution to a democratic society?

Reflection

How does it change your thinking about discipline when you talk about goals for a person instead of goals for a child?

Self-Concept and Self-Esteem

Many people list *positive* ***self-concept*** as a goal, but this seems to confuse the difference between self-concept and **self-esteem**. *Self-concept* is an understanding of who we are and what we can do; *self-esteem* is how we feel about that. A realistic self-concept is essential to mental health (Landy, 2009) and can provide the basis for developing good self-esteem.

There is general agreement that we want kids to grow up feeling good about themselves. Although almost everyone voices this goal, many—like the teacher in the example at the beginning of this chapter—still use discipline methods that damage self-esteem. Children often aren't really listened to, and are routinely treated with much less respect than adults are; they are lectured, ignored, bullied, and bribed in ways no adult would ever put up with (McEvoy, 2014). Later chapters discuss how punishment and other coercive tactics—even praise and other rewards—can damage a person's self-esteem.

Self-Discipline and Self-Regulation

Nearly everyone also agrees that **self-discipline** and **self-regulation** are goals for children. Most approaches to discipline describe themselves as promoting self-discipline (Brooks & Goldstein, 2007; Nelson, 2006), though the related term "self-regulation" is less known (Willis et al., 2014). Disagreements center on what leads to these goals. Some people believe that rewards for acceptable behavior and punishments for unacceptable behavior lead to

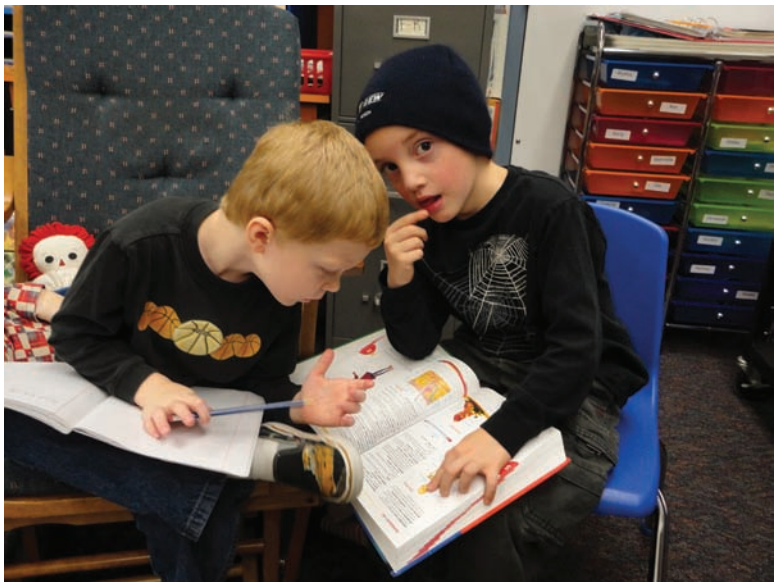
self-discipline. Such viewpoints do not recognize that being manipulated by reward and punishment is vastly different from learning about what is right and how to make wise and caring decisions (Kohn, 2005, 2011; Turiel, 2006). In contrast, this book is based on the view that children can't learn to regulate their own behavior as long as others are regulating it for them.

Moral Autonomy

A more sophisticated and little-known version of self-discipline is called ***moral autonomy***, a concept presented in Jean Piaget's classic book, *The Moral Judgment of the Child* (1932/1965), and elaborated for modern audiences by Piagetian scholars Rheta DeVries (e.g., DeVries & Zan, 2012) and Constance Kamii (e.g., Kamii & Ewing, 1996). According to these sources, *autonomy* means being governed and guided by your own beliefs and understandings. It is much more than merely "internalizing" a set of conduct rules and making yourself follow them. For instance, the morally autonomous person is kind to others out of personal feelings of respect for other human beings. The opposite is ***heteronomy***, which means being governed or ruled by someone else. Heteronomous people are kind to others only if they think their behavior will be rewarded, or if they are afraid of being caught and punished for not being kind.

Some people misinterpret this concept and get worried when they hear about autonomy, thinking that being governed by yourself means doing whatever you want. However, Kamii (1982) points out that Piaget's theory of autonomy doesn't just mean the *right* to make decisions for yourself, but also the ability to make decisions for oneself about right and wrong, without consideration of reward or punishment. Kamii makes the point that a key component of moral autonomy involves taking all relevant factors into account. If you think about the meaning of that statement, you see that a merely self-serving decision would be excluded, because it wouldn't take into consideration the "relevant factors" of other people's needs. It is important to note that *being governed internally* also means that children are not so susceptible to peer pressure; therefore, morally autonomous persons do not join in inappropriate group activities in order to be accepted by their peers.

Thus, it is a person without moral autonomy who is likely to act irresponsibly when there are no external controls (Turiel, 2006). In fact, that description fits some young college



Source: Marjorie V Fields

Moral autonomy *means having the ability to make decisions about right and wrong, regardless of any rewards or punishments, yet taking into consideration the rights and needs of all involved.*

students away from home for the first time. College dormitory life testifies to the fact that some well-meaning families and teachers deny young people an adequate opportunity to develop inner controls. Inexperienced at self-regulating their work, play, and sleep, some first-year college students find themselves unable to achieve a workable balance. Some, whose behavior has been controlled through rewards and punishment, find themselves unable to make wise decisions when confronted with drugs and alcohol and away from adult control.

Autonomy does not mean lack of control; rather, it refers to the source of control. Autonomous people carry those controls within themselves. They are never without them, even when alone. Heteronomous persons, by contrast, experience control only when someone else is present. They depend on an external judge to reward or punish their behavior. When you help kids develop moral autonomy, you affect how they behave, even when misbehavior isn't likely to be caught (Weinstock, Assor, & Broide, 2009). Autonomous people don't need policing to keep them on the right path.

Long-Term versus Quick-Fix Solutions

Are teachers responsible for keeping children safe and orderly and also for helping them develop positive self-esteem, self-discipline, and moral autonomy? That's a tall order! Don't forget that teachers have to teach, too. Can they really be blamed if they have a hard time thinking about long-range discipline goals and try to control only for the moment? After all, teachers usually have a student for just one year.

Families, however, are generally aware that they will be dealing with this child through the teen years and beyond. One mother reports that she was powerfully motivated to help her son Michael learn self-discipline when she thought about his getting a driver's license in 10 years. While Michael was little, she could protect him from harm by watching over him herself, but she doubted that she could ride along to make sure he was driving safely when he was 16. She knew that inner controls would stay with Michael long after she couldn't. Therefore, she focused on discipline approaches that fostered inner control rather than obedience. Nevertheless, parents are sometimes tired and stressed enough to ignore future outcomes and just try to force their kids to behave for the moment.

Teachers may be under the added pressure to present a "well-disciplined" class, in the old sense of appearing quiet and controlled. This can make a difference at evaluation time with principals or directors who don't understand how young children learn best. As a result, discipline methods aimed at quick, short-term results remain popular even though they may damage children's self-esteem and autonomy. Some of these quick-fix methods are discussed later in the text, when we discuss Behaviorism.

Fortunately, many teachers care too much about children to give in. They resist quick-fix approaches and work on positive alternatives. They know that helping children live together peacefully now and preparing them for the future are compatible goals. Skillful teachers, unlike the teacher in the example at the start of this chapter, know how to work toward long-term discipline goals while maintaining a peaceful and productive learning environment. They know they don't have to make a choice between protecting children's self-esteem and keeping order. With the guidance of these knowledgeable and dedicated teachers, children can learn from experience to make wise decisions. In the process, they can also develop the positive self-esteem and moral autonomy necessary for becoming competent, caring, loving, and lovable people (Noddings, 2005).

DISCIPLINE MODELS COMPARED AND CONTRASTED

Common styles of discipline vary from the extreme power-on approach, in which the adult makes all the rules and punishes any deviation, to the hands-off approach, in which the child makes all the decisions. Too many people think they must choose one or the other of those models. One teacher says she plays the "heavy" until she can't stand herself; then she switches to the opposite until she can't stand the kids. Too few adults (teachers as well as parents) are even aware of any other options. We do not recommend trying to combine these two extremes in an attempt at a middle ground; there are alternatives that balance the power of adult and child. You don't have to choose between either the adult or the child having all the power (Tzuo, 2007). A shared-power model best meets the needs of all. The needs and views of both the adult and the child can be accommodated when discipline is viewed as teaching.

Typically when comparing discipline styles, we read about Baumrind (1967, 1989) who identified and labeled three parenting styles: **authoritative**, **authoritarian**, and **permissive**. Respectively, these reflect a firm but warm approach to childrearing, a harshly firm approach, and a warm approach lacking in guidance. However, because we view discipline as *teaching*, we believe it makes sense to base guidance and discipline on learning theory rather than parenting styles. Therefore, we compare the guidance approaches according to which learning theory they most closely fit: **Behaviorist**, **Maturationist**, or **Constructivist**.

Whether you know it by that name or not, most of you are familiar with Behaviorism: the system of praise, rewards, and punishment so widely used in our schools. Rarely seen in schools, the Maturationist approach merely supports and does not intervene in children's development and learning. We reject both of those in favor of Constructivism. Constructivist learning theory is not a "middle ground" between Behaviorism and Maturationism; rather, it is a whole different view of learning and of guidance and discipline. It is not a "nicer" way to get obedience; instead, it strives for much *more* than obedience. Constructivism helps children learn from their experiences and from thinking about those experiences (DeVries & Zan, 2012; Kamii & Ewing, 1996; Piaget, 1965). Through this process, the learner is assisted in gaining increasingly sophisticated levels of understanding. Thus, children gradually develop the ability to take many relevant factors into consideration when deciding what action is best for all concerned. The word *gradually* is important because it indicates the developmental basis for Constructivist teaching. Constructivists recognize that teaching young children involves accepting immature thinking and requires working in conjunction with maturation to help children move to greater understanding.

Discipline Goals Compared

Each discipline style is based on the same motive: love or concern for the child. However, each has very different goals (Figure 1–1). Compliance is the target goal in Behaviorist models (Canter, 2010; Dobson, 2011). A Maturationist model overemphasizes individual freedom (Baumrind, 1967, 1989), although it can also be a result of neglect. The Constructivist model

Theory	Process	Goal
Behaviorist	Molds behavior via rewards and punishment	Obedience
Constructivist	Helps children learn from experience and reasoning	Moral autonomy
Maturationist	Believes time is the best teacher	Individual development

FIGURE 1–1 *Goals of Three Theories of Discipline*

works toward moral autonomy: self-determined and responsible behavior, showing concern for the good of others and for oneself as well (Kamii, 1984; Kohn, 2005). Rewards and punishment of Behaviorism are not compatible with these goals. The Constructivist approach acknowledges the complexity of the ever-changing world; therefore, it teaches children to think for themselves about desirable or undesirable actions rather than telling them predetermined answers to current dilemmas. Power-on approaches to discipline don't give children information that they can use to construct ideas of right and wrong (Smetana, 2006).

Differences in Discipline Forms

Not surprisingly, each model uses very different forms of discipline. Punishment and reward are used heavily in the Behaviorist models (Canter, 2010). Lack of discipline is the distinguishing feature of the Maturationist model. In contrast to these two extremes, but definitely not a blend of them, the Constructivist model offers a multifaceted set of discipline options, explained in this book.

These Constructivist options focus on teaching and, like all good teaching, begin with good human relationships. Adults who are responsive, warm, and comforting are essential to children's healthy development (Gurian, 2011; Noddings, 2005). Good relationships between teachers and children do not mean the teacher tries to be a "pal." The Constructivist teacher is still the adult in charge, responsible for setting necessary limits and keeping children safe. However, this is done in a caring and respectful way. Mutually caring and respectful relationships with adults and peers encourage kids to think about the effects of their behavior on other people. Teaching children to think critically is an essential aspect of Constructivist teaching about discipline, and about other topics as well. Piagetian scholar David Elkind (2001, p. 7) therefore used the term *instructive discipline for the Constructivist model*. Constructivist discipline strategies are aimed at helping children construct socially productive behavior rules and values for themselves. The approach is aimed at helping children become better able to reason, and thus become more reasonable human beings.

Differences in Results

What are the results of the different discipline models? We can never be certain about research findings concerning human beings because we cannot ethically control the variables in a person's life. Each person is a unique blend of genetics, family dynamics, societal influences, and individual experiences. However, certain trends occur frequently enough to suggest a relationship. Behaviorist models are associated with anger and depression, as well as low self-esteem and the inability to make self-directed choices (e.g., Knafo & Plomin, 2006; Landy, 2009; Thompson & Newton, 2010). Kohn (2011) explains that controlling kids through rewards or praise keeps them from learning to regulate themselves. Children raised in an overly permissive manner usually demonstrate low self-esteem and difficulty getting along with others. The Constructivist, or shared-power, model results in high self-esteem, good social skills, general competence, and self-discipline (DeVries, 1999; Kohn, 2005, 2011; Tzuo, 2007).

Constructivist discipline approaches help most children quickly learn to negotiate solutions to problems, to resolve their own conflicts, and to self-direct their learning activity (DeVries & Zan,

2012; Kohn, 2005, 2011). Teaching for moral autonomy has lasting results, including a morality of cooperation that results in a balanced understanding of justice (Lapsley, 2006).

Family Concern: Shouldn't They Learn to Obey?

Many people think in black-or-white terms; they think that you either force kids to obey or they are disobedient and run wild. Some cultures emphasize obedience at home, enforced with punishment. Therefore, you may get worried questions about this guidance approach from your students' families. As in any situation, it is unwise to give advice unless it is asked for; but if it is, here are some suggestions you might offer to families.

You need to help families understand that working for obedience is settling for much less than moral autonomy. Explain what you have learned about long-term versus short-term goals. Point out that obedience without understanding requires external enforcement of some sort, a reward or punishment (DeVries & Zan, 2012; Kohn, 2005, 2011; Montessori, 1912/1964). Teachers can introduce families to the research, provided in future chapters, that describes the negative effects of reward and punishment. A lending library of relevant books, such as Kohn's *Unconditional Parenting: Moving from Rewards and Punishment to Love and Reason* (2005), would be helpful. Be sure to warn families about one of the most common and most devastating reward/punishment approaches: making love and approval conditional on obedience. However, remember to listen to what families want for their children and to be respectful of differing views.

TEACHING FOR MORAL AUTONOMY: THE CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACH

Certain basic ideas are central to a Constructivist approach to discipline:

1. A relationship of mutual respect between adult and child is the foundation for development of moral autonomy (Kamii, 1982). ***Mutual respect*** means that it is just as important for you to treat the child with respect as it is for the child to treat you with respect.
2. Constructivist teachers always strive to help children understand why a behavior is desirable or undesirable.
3. Providing **developmentally appropriate** choices for kids and supporting them in solving their own problems is a way of showing respect for children and also a way of teaching thinking and assisting understanding.
4. When undesirable behavior occurs, your discipline efforts must address the cause of the behavior for effective teaching to take place.

Now let's examine these concepts in more detail.

Mutual Respect

Constructive discipline involves respect and affection for the child. The quality of the relationship between child and adult is crucial to the success of any discipline approach (Kragh-Muller & Gloeckler, 2010). Unless a child knows you care about him or her, and unless that child is

concerned about maintaining a relationship with you, there is really no reason for the child to pay attention to what you ask. Do you think the teacher in the example at the beginning of this chapter shows respect for her students? Having a relationship with a child requires investing time in getting to know children as individuals and attempting to understand them. If you are going to be effective during a behavior crisis, you need to build a relationship first by spending time on pleasant interaction. Spending time with a kid and listening to that child not only helps an adult understand the child, but also demonstrates respect. Too often adults expect kids to listen to them but don't reciprocate. Respecting children and their viewpoints helps them to respect our viewpoints (Kamii, 1984). According to DeVries and Zan (1994), "Children do not develop respect for others unless they are respected" (p. 76).

Reflection

In what ways do you—or those you observe—show respect for young children?

In what ways do you—or others you observe—show lack of respect for young children?

Children in our culture are given less respect than adults in general. For instance, adults consider it their right to interrupt a conversation between children; yet children are frequently scolded for interrupting adults. Also, have you noticed that a child standing in line at a store is often ignored in favor of an adult who was behind the child in line? The younger the children, the less respect they get. Adults pick up toddlers and plunk them where they want them. Babies are grabbed out of their mothers' arms to be cuddled by well-meaning admirers, whether the baby likes it or not.

Showing respect to small children is important to Keisha, who teaches infants and toddlers. When she helps little ones with their diapering needs, she uses the time together to visit and bond with the children. She also gives them some involvement and choice in the process by letting toddlers choose to climb the steps up to the changing table and to be in charge of the fresh diaper until it is needed. Even babies may like to hold and inspect the fresh diaper. And even the youngest baby will respond better to a caregiver who is friendly and attentive during the diapering process.

Keisha also shows respect for the children in her care by explaining to them what is happening and why she needs them to do something—whether they are old enough to really understand or not. And she never just picks up a baby; she always holds out her arms and invites the child to come to her.

Mutual respect between teacher and child is an essential ingredient of effective discipline.

Source: Marjorie V Fields

Mutual respect is an essential ingredient of effective discipline, both as the foundation and as part of the process. Any discipline response can turn into punishment if accompanied by put-downs, which, of course, are inherently disrespectful (McEvoy, 2014). For instance, to call a child "sloppy" for spilling something, or "mean" for knocking down some blocks, would destroy the educational value of your discipline teaching. The child would focus on self-defense rather than on the problem behavior. It is also important to be aware of how your attitude is projected. Anger or disgust in your expression or tone of voice can override even the most carefully chosen words. Listen to yourself as you talk to the children in your care: Are your words something they would want to listen to? Or are you teaching children to tune you out by relaying a steady stream of commands and criticism?

Helping Children Understand

Like other people, children are more inclined to do as they are asked if they understand the reason behind the request. Often it seems obvious to an adult why a certain behavior is appropriate or inappropriate, but young children have little experience in the world and don't automatically know all that seems obvious to you. Therefore, you need to help kids learn the reasons behind rules and requests. Like anything you teach, this type of understanding needs to be taught in a developmentally appropriate way and will vary, depending on the child's maturation, temperament, language skills, and prior experiences.

Sometimes words are helpful teaching tools, but usually young children need experiences to help them understand the explanations. You can teach without punishing by asking Aaron, for example, to mop up the puddle he made when he splashed water on the floor during exuberant water play. Similarly, you can help Ahmed learn a better way of showing he wants to play than by knocking over other children's buildings. The teacher's role in developing moral autonomy is to help children figure out why their behavior is causing a problem and provide them with the opportunity to help resolve the problem.

> Mrs. Jensen discovered one day that she had not helped Jazzy to understand why she was asked to leave group time. Jazzy came up to Mrs. Jensen after the group meeting and said, "I'm sorry. I won't do it again." Mrs. Jensen asked her, "Won't do what again?" She was astounded at the child's honest reply, "I don't know." Too often, kids learn to mouth meaningless words of apology or appreciation with no idea about what they mean or why they would be appropriate.

Perhaps the most crucial understanding for young children is that other people have needs and wishes different from their own. Dennis's approach to the following doll-bed dilemma was aimed at helping Sara and Sophie each begin to think about a viewpoint other than her own. Learning to consider the viewpoints of others in making decisions is part of learning moral autonomy. According to Piaget, we also teach moral autonomy and the necessary understanding of others' views when we help children realize the effects of

their behavior rather than merely punishing it. Following is an example of this principle in action:

When preschoolers Sarah and Sophie were tugging on the same doll bed, each screaming, "I had it first!" Dennis, their teacher, resisted coming over and immediately taking the toy away, although it might have been simple to say, "If you can't play nicely, I'll have to put this away." Nor did he start the usual inquisition trying to determine which child had it first so that he could make the fairest decision. Those approaches are common when the teacher's goal is simply to solve the problem for now and when the discipline approach is Authoritarian.

Because Dennis's goals are long term, he wanted to help the children learn to think about their behavior and to develop skills for solving their own conflicts. His discipline approach is Constructivist. Therefore, he facilitated decision making on the part of the children instead of making the decisions himself. He helped the girls clarify the problem by stating what it appeared to be: "You both want a bed for your dolls." He further identified the dilemma: "There's only one of these beds and two sleepy babies." Then Dennis asked them what they thought they could do to solve their problem. In this way, he helped the girls learn to think about fairness for both sides.

Problem solving takes practice, just as other complex skills do. It is also dependent on levels of maturity. Young children have limited reasoning ability, but they become more capable when encouraged to discuss their different views. The teacher works with children at their levels of maturation, demonstrating ways of expressing their feelings and suggesting possible approaches to solutions. The teacher may ask questions, such as, "Where else could a baby doll sleep in this house?" This method still leaves the children in charge of a search for alternatives. Even if they aren't immediately successful, Dennis doesn't take over. However, if the children's frustration and anger appear to be getting beyond their ability to control, he might resort to taking the doll bed and putting it out of reach until they cool down. He then would assure the girls that they could have it as soon as they come up with a solution.

The challenge to teach for understanding is even greater with infants and toddlers than with preschoolers. Sometimes you just have to distract the child from the problem and move on. Yet the toddler years are a crucial time for development of conscience (Kochanska, Koenig, Barry, Kim, & Yoon, 2010). Many people don't realize how much language children can understand before they can talk, so they don't try to explain. It is important to remember that you build understanding by explaining—just as you help children learn to talk by communicating with them.

Guiding Choices

Constructive discipline encourages children to make as many of their own decisions and choices as possible. This helps children learn from their mistakes as well as their successes. In other words, your job is to help children learn how to make wise choices, not to make all the choices for them. In the process of learning to regulate their own behavior, children make both good and bad choices for themselves. It is hard, but necessary, to let kids make some poor choices as well as good ones. No matter what their age, people tend to learn best the lessons learned through their own experience—especially from analyzing their mistakes.

Source: Marjorie V. Fields

Help children analyze their mistakes so they learn to manage their own behavior.

Think about your own mistakes: Probably someone older and wiser warned you, but you had to find out for yourself, didn't you?

Of course, adults must monitor the choices; not all choices are safe or appropriate. For instance, children don't have the choice of putting their fingers in an electrical socket to experience a shock. However, they do have the choice of not eating their snack and getting a little hungry, or the choice of not cooperating in play and subsequently being rejected by peers. Teachers whose goal is helping children learn to think for themselves don't help by thinking and acting for their students. They do not instantly step in and solve conflicts for kids. Instead, conflicts and problems are seen as potential learning situations and opportunities to offer meaningful teaching (Elkind, 2001). The children work at problem solving. The teacher's job is to facilitate the process as needed.

TREATING THE CAUSE RATHER THAN THE SYMPTOM

No amount of respect, teaching, or choice will make discipline effective *unless your approach deals with the reasons why the behavior occurred* (Minahan & Rappaport, 2013). If you only stop the behavior without treating the cause, the behavior problem will probably continue to be repeated (Kaiser & Rasminsky, 2012). Discipline is like weeding a garden: If you don't get the roots out with the weeds, the weeds will be back in a few days (Rowe, 2015). Effective approaches to discipline work to get at the root of the problem. Yet, very few discipline/guidance approaches involve considering the cause of a behavior problem before deciding on an intervention. A main focus of this text is matching guidance and discipline approaches to the causes of behavior problems.

It isn't easy to figure out why children do the things they do. You certainly can't determine the cause simply by seeing the behavior. For instance, there could be several reasons why Aaron might have spilled water during water play:

- Perhaps he was just having such a good time that he didn't think about where the water was going.
- Maybe he is a budding scientist who wants to see what happens when the water escapes the water table.
- It is also possible that he spilled because of immature coordination, which made it hard for him to pour the water where he intended.
- Then again, maybe he knew what he was doing and did it on purpose. He might have spilled to get attention or to alleviate boredom.

A useful way to think about the cause of undesirable behavior is to think about what the child needs in order to act in more appropriate ways (Nemeth & Brillante, 2011). You may find it useful to think about the causes of behavior problems using an observation form similar to the one shown in Figure 1–2. Each different cause of behavior problems points to the need for a different solution; there may be interactive causes and solutions, so don't limit yourself to one answer. Yet, there are many teachers and caregivers who have one solution for any and all infractions of the rules.

Think about how the commonly used time-out bench would affect Aaron in the case of each suggested cause for the spilled water:

- How would the time-out bench affect his feelings about preschool fun if the spill was caused by his eagerness to explore or his scientific curiosity?
- How would time-out affect his feelings about himself if the spill was caused by poor coordination?
- If attention-getting or boredom was the cause, would time-out keep Aaron from spilling water again?

As you read further in this book, you will find suggestions of appropriate responses to each of these and other causes of undesirable behavior.

Observing to Discover the Cause

The best way to determine the cause of a child's behavior is to observe the child carefully and record your observations (Jablon, Dombro, & Dichtelmiller, 2007). You need to know a lot about a child to plan effective discipline. You need to note whether this is usual or unusual behavior, and also under what circumstances it occurs. Are certain activities likely to trigger it? Is there a pattern of when, where, or with whom behavior problems are most likely? What do you know about the child's home routine, health, or family situation that might provide some clues? Communicating with families and keeping careful records of child behavior are both indispensable parts of determining the cause of problems. You assess the child's social learning needs through this process of finding causes for behavior problems. This assessment is an essential guide for effective teaching.

Never overlook the possibility that something *you* did or didn't do may have caused a discipline problem. In this book we describe how discipline problems can be caused by (1) teacher expectations that don't match child development, temperament, or culture; (2) inappropriate school environments; and (3) undesirable adult examples and communication. We also explain later in the text how coercive and punitive discipline approaches backfire and create worse behavior problems.

Reflection

Can you think of a time when poor adult planning caused a child to behave badly?

Can you think of a time when you saw a child scolded for not being maturationally able to do what an adult wanted?

DISCOVERING CAUSES OF BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS

Ask yourself the following types of questions as a guide toward discovering the causes of a behavior problem: (There may be several "right" answers.)

Is the environment meeting this child's needs?
- Enough movement?
- Enough privacy?
- Enough space?
- Sufficient materials?

Is the program meeting this child's needs?
- Appropriate challenge?
- Personal interest?
- Meaningful?

Are behavioral expectations appropriate for this child?
- Developmentally?
- Culturally?
- Temperamentally?

Does the child have unmet physical needs?
- Hungry?
- Tired?

Does the child have unmet emotional needs?
- Friendship?
- Trust?
- Self-esteem?
- Personal power?
- Attention?

Is this child missing some social skill?
- Perspective-taking?
- Entering play?

Does this child need help with communication skills?
- "I messages"?
- Negotiation?

Is the behavior a result of inappropriate role models?
- Media?
- Admired adults?
- Admired peers?

Does this child understand why a behavior is important?
- No experience with outcomes?

Has this child learned negative ways of getting needs met?
- Received attention for inappropriate behavior?

FIGURE 1–2 *Discovering Causes of Behavior Problems*

Targeting the cause of a behavior problem is a difficult task, compounded by the fact that there are usually multiple and interactive causes. As you continue to read this text, you will be guided to match probable causes of behavior with appropriate approaches to discipline. Selecting the right approach requires that you understand many different approaches, as well as understand children and the many different reasons for their actions. This text presents a set of guidance/discipline strategies, each related to a specific cause. These are explained throughout the text as we explore various causes of behavior problems.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has attempted to stimulate your thinking about your values as they relate to guidance and discipline. Our comparison of discipline approaches resulted in the recommendation of Constructivist discipline, rather than a Behaviorist or a Maturationist approach. We began an introduction to ways of implementing Constructivist approaches to discipline, with more complete explanations to come in the following chapters.

If you are now saying to yourself, "But don't kids need limits?" then go back and reread the chapter. If these are new ideas for you, it will take careful reading and thought to understand that there are valuable alternatives to forcing obedience. The choice isn't just between power-tripping children or letting them run wild.

This chapter offers an overview of ideas presented in the rest of the book. If you can't visualize how all this works yet, don't worry; that's what the rest of the chapters are for. We hope that you will supplement what you read here with further reading from the recommended reading list at the end of the chapter. We also hope that you will spend significant time with young children, proving guidance and discipline concepts to yourself through your own observation and experience.

As you begin to implement the ideas presented here, you should be prepared for less-than-instant success. Understanding complex ideas involves hard work accompanied by trial and error. Changing established ways of interacting with children is also very difficult, requiring time and commitment. At first, as you are practicing new ways, you may even find that your discipline efforts seem less effective than before. As they are learning new approaches, some people report feeling "paralyzed" by indecisiveness about what to do. Just as we urge you to be accepting of children's gradual learning processes, we urge you to accept your own gradual progress. In addition, when—inevitably—you forget your new plans and don't live up to your expectations, just try again. That's what we do.

If you haven't read the preface to this book, we suggest you do so; it provides further explanation about the theory base and intent of the book. The preface also gives an overview of the three-part organization of the text: discipline foundations (Part A), discipline approaches (Part B), and matching discipline causes to discipline approaches (Part C). Be sure to read the introductions to each section of the text and think about the meaning of the three-blocks structure; this will help you understand what you are reading about. We hope you will also read and think about the dedication at the front of the book.

SUMMARY

- Long-term guidance approaches focus on lifetime benefits and the child's healthy development as a caring, responsible human being. Short-term guidance approaches focus on gaining compliant behavior in the present without regard for long-term consequences.
- Behaviorism is a system of praise, rewards, and punishment widely used in U.S. schools to gain compliance. The Maturationist approach merely supports and does not intervene in children's development and learning. Constructivism strives for much *more* than obedience. Constructivism helps children learn from their experiences and from thinking about those experiences so they can make wise decisions about their own behavior.

- Constructivist guidance/discipline is not a "middle ground" between Behaviorism and Maturationism; rather, it is a whole different view of learning and of guidance and discipline. Through this process, the learner is assisted in gaining increasingly sophisticated levels of understanding. Thus, children gradually develop the ability to take many relevant factors into consideration when deciding what action is best for all concerned.
- Solving a behavior problem requires determining the causes and working to remove them. Determining the causes involves analyzing the learning environment, the teaching program, and expectations for children. It also involves investigating whether a problem is a result of a child's unmet physical, social, or emotional needs or whether the child might have missing skills or missing understanding. Inappropriate role models and reinforcement of undesirable behaviors are other possible causes to consider.

FOR DISCUSSION OR REFLECTION

1. Create a list of desirable goals for discipline. Compare your list with those of others. Select the three characteristics you would most want to encourage through child guidance. Explain your choices and compare them with a friend's.
2. Think about your own family's approach to childrearing. What characteristics do you think they most valued? How did those values influence your own childhood? Do your choices match those of your family, or are they different?
3. How would you rate yourself on a continuum from heteronomy to autonomy? How does this rating reflect the discipline approaches of your family and teachers? If you are heteronomous, can you help children become autonomous?
4. After reading this chapter, what advice would you give to the teacher of the unhappy classroom described at the start of the chapter?

CHALLENGE

5. Markos is using the preschool playhouse broom. Riley wants it and grabs it away. Markos hits Riley, and the battle is on.
   a. Describe a response that solves the problem but does not teach autonomy or self-discipline.
   b. Describe a response that solves the problem and does teach autonomy and self-discipline.

RECOMMENDED READINGS

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Chapter 2
Physical and Emotional Development Affect Child Behavior

Source: Marjorie V. Fields

Each stage of child development brings its own set of needs, abilities, and perspectives. Your knowledge of children's physical, emotional, intellectual, and social development will help you guard against adult-caused behavior problems. In this chapter, we examine the stages of young children's physical and emotional development and consider how children's developmental needs and abilities affect their behavior. As we repeat often in this book, effective discipline addresses the causes of behavior problems. This principle was introduced in the previous chapter; now this chapter and the next examine child development issues to help you determine causes of undesirable behaviors. These three chapters in Part A of your text constitute the foundation for the remainder of the text.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

With understanding of this chapter, you should be able to

- Discuss why and how children's physical maturity and developmental needs affect their behavior
- Explain how temperament and emotional development affect behavior
- Recognize the role of attachment and how you can improve children's behavior by meeting their basic emotional needs
- Apply your knowledge to help children develop emotion regulation skills and emotional competence

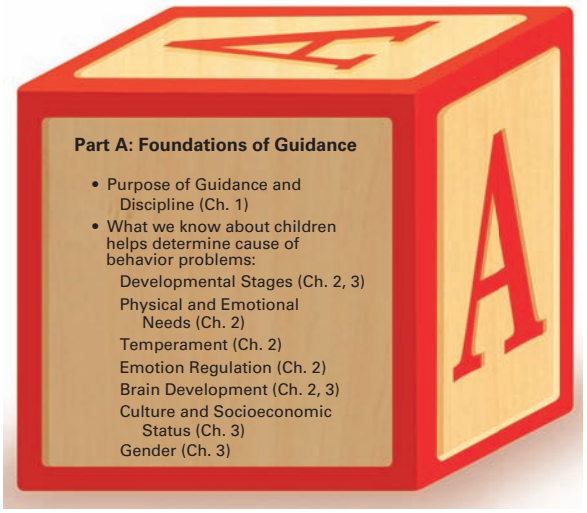
NAEYC Standards Addressed in This Chapter

Standard 1a: Knowing and understanding young children's characteristics and needs, from birth through age 8.

Standard 1b: Knowing and understanding the multiple influences on early development and learning.

Standard 4a: Understanding positive relationships and supportive interactions as the foundation of work with young children.

When Gabriella told her class students it was time to move from free-choice time to their seats, Kenji refused and began throwing the blocks he was building with. What can Gabriella do to help Kenji handle his frustration in a more manageable way and build a closer and more trusting relationship with him in the process? This chapter addresses why Kenji may have a more challenging reaction to this transition than other children in the class and will suggest strategies for helping him handle his emotions in a more productive way.



When you know more about child development, you can determine if immature development may be the cause of a behavior problem. Understanding children's developmental needs and abilities is also necessary for finding effective solutions to discipline problems. You can eliminate many discipline problems by matching your expectations of children to their individual maturation levels. In other words, you cannot expect children to be successful at tasks beyond their developmental level; nor can you blame children for behavior that is a result of maturational level.

Effective child guidance and discipline require knowledge of factors that affect emotional development: **Temperament** strongly contributes to children's unique paths of emotional development and **attachment** is also a key factor in emotional development. Children have basic human needs that must be met for healthy growth and development. If these needs are not met, children have difficulty developing emotional regulation. In this chapter, we examine how temperament, developmental stage, attachment, and basic human needs affect children's emotional competence and how they are related to discipline issues. This chapter is not intended to be a comprehensive coverage of child development. Please refer to the recommended readings at the end of each chapter for more comprehensive sources.

PHYSICAL MATURITY AND DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS AFFECT BEHAVIOR

It is obvious that young children's physical needs and abilities are different from those of adults. We know that young children are often unable to handle new tasks when their needs for adequate rest and nourishment are not met. Infants and toddlers have the greatest need for frequent rest and feedings. As children mature, they are able to be content for longer periods of time between rest and nourishment. However, preschool and early school-age children still need frequent breaks for physical movement, rest, and nourishment in order to be alert, attentive, and ready to learn. You have probably seen young children repeatedly demonstrate their inability to sit still for very long. However, teachers sometimes forget this last fact and cause trouble for themselves and their students.

Need to Move Around

Devon and several of his classmates in Miss Wheeler's first-grade class routinely upset their teacher's day. They simply won't sit still and listen during group time. They are always getting up and wandering around when they are supposed to be working in their seats. Miss Wheeler constantly reminds them to sit still or to go back to their seats. She just doesn't understand that most young children have difficulty sitting still for very long.

Next door, in Mrs. Jensen's first-grade room, children are free to move around between learning centers. There is very little enforced sitting in that room, and very little need for the teacher to reprimand anyone. In addition to movement indoors, lessons often include outdoor activity. Sometimes, a parent helper and Mrs. Jensen take the class outdoors for a gardening session on the school grounds, allowing physical movement as well as some hands-on lessons about plant life.

Miss Wheeler feels like a police officer instead of a teacher, but she thinks it is the children who are at fault. Matching her expectations of the children with their level of development would make her life much easier, as well as eliminate a lot of needless tension for her students.

Children need to move, not only for their physical development, but also for their intellectual development. Important brain development is taking place when infants, toddlers, and young children engage in movement and physical play. Brain research shows that physical movement stimulates the **myelinization** process, critical to development of neural pathways in the brain. This process allows young children to gain control over their muscles and their sensory abilities; it also facilitates their **cognitive** processes (Berk & Meyers, 2015). Physical movement also increases blood flow to the brain, optimizing its performance. Following physical activity, most children show an improvement in their mental functioning, particularly in the realm of **executive function** (Tomporowski, Lambourne, & Okumura, 2011). In addition, physical games that require children to watch movements and mimic them with their own bodies help with the development of **sensory integration**, which aids in the development of reading and writing skills (Gartrell & Sonsteng, 2008).

The skills children learn through physical play are very important skills for preventing and solving discipline problems. Through play, children learn to communicate and cooperate effectively with others, as well as to manage their own behavior and emotions. Self-awareness, empathy, self-restraint, problem-solving skills, and assertiveness are just some of the skills that are learned in physical play. Children also build confidence and peer relationships through physical activity, including vigorous rough-and-tumble play (Carlson, 2011). As children negotiate rules, take turns, and lead (or follow) in a physical game, they are developing critical skills they will use throughout their lifetimes.

Research has shown that movement affects **brain chemistry** in humans of all ages and can be a very effective tool for managing emotional stress (Siegel & Bryson, 2011). An assessment of how girls and boys learn differently points out that movement may be even more important for boys and their reduction of emotional stress (Gurian, 2010). Boys typically need a longer period of time to process their emotions than girls. Girls are often able to use their verbal skills to work through an emotional experience, whereas many boys may need the experience of a

physical release to recover from uncomfortable or difficult emotional experiences. These generalities are of course not true for every boy and girl and although our individual needs for movement vary, bodies and brains of all types benefit from physical activity.

In addition, physically competent children tend to have higher self-esteem than less-competent peers (Jelalian & Steele, 2008). Success and enjoyment associated with physical activity affect how children feel about themselves and how they interact with peers. Having good agility, balance, coordination, power, and speed can promote social interaction and peer acceptance.

Reflection

How have your successes or challenges in physical activities affected your self-esteem? Do you notice a change in your ability to focus or your attitude after engaging in vigorous exercise?

As the kids around her raised their hands, Ryanne hung her head. She really hoped her teacher wouldn't call on her. She had no idea what her third-grade class was even working on at the moment. She was kicking a scrap of paper around on the floor under her desk and fidgeting impatiently in her seat. She wondered why it was taking so long for the class to be released for recess. When Ms. Garcia finally told them to push in their chairs and head outside, Ryanne was so relieved. As she crossed the playground, she saw a group of kids lining up to race each other across the blacktop. Ryanne ran to join them. She raced five times, winning each race she ran. She felt relaxed and proud as she reentered her classroom. Two friends asked her to sit by them as they walked to the rug in the front of the room. Ryanne was happy to sit quietly and listen to her teacher during literacy time, and she even raised her hand to respond when her teacher asked the class a question.

Small-Muscle Coordination Takes Time

Not only do young children have a need to exercise their large muscles regularly, but they also need practice with **fine motor skills**. Young children typically are not very adept at fine motor skills (NAEYC, 2009). Both the need for **gross motor** activity and the lack of fine motor ability create problems in classrooms where children are expected to sit at their seats and do paperwork much of the day. Such a schedule focuses on the children's areas of weakness, and therefore puts huge pressure on them.

Individual differences and gender play a role in the development of dexterity. Girls tend to be more advanced than boys in fine motor skills and in gross motor skills requiring precision, such as hopping and skipping. Boys generally excel in skills that require force and power, such as running and jumping (Berk & Meyers, 2015). For most children, it is a fact of physical development that fine motor coordination lags behind gross motor coordination. Nate, who is a fast runner and a great climber, may not be able to tie his shoes yet; and Makayla, the best in her kindergarten class at jumping rope, may struggle to write anything but her name. Placing pressure on these children to perform above their current level of development will result in frustration and feelings of failure. Negative behaviors are likely to follow. Matching your expectations to children's abilities will avert some potential discipline struggles.

Although you want to be careful not to push fine motor tasks too early, fine motor development can be encouraged appropriately. Children develop fine motor dexterity through playing and with ample opportunities for practicing fine motor skills with appropriate tools

(scissors that actually cut, for instance) and adult support. Working with modeling clay or fingerpaint, drawing/scribbling, building with blocks, doing puzzles, and playing with peg boards are other excellent ways to build fine motor skills in young children. By the time they enter the primary grades, children are usually much more capable of fine motor work than when they were preschool age, when it often generates neurological fatigue.

Need for Food and Rest

Young children also have a need for nutritious food and rest in order to work and play cooperatively at school. Many children today are **misnourished**, with a large amount of their calories coming from non-nutritive foods. Eating too many non-nutritive foods contributes to our ever-growing rate of childhood obesity, and affects children's behavior (Jelalian & Steele, 2008). Too much sugar or a lack of protein or complex carbohydrates can lead to a sugar crash. This crash may affect individual children differently. Some may become more impulsive, while others may become withdrawn or distracted. Research has shown that high-sugar diets can cause memory impairment and may affect **cognitive flexibility**, one's ability to adapt and adjust to changing situations (Magnusson et al., 2015). Allowing for snack time, with low-sugar snacks, may prevent discipline problems. When schools don't provide snacks, asking for healthy snack donations from businesses or other parents can also help build community.

Sometimes, Kayla cannot seem to focus on any of the morning classroom activities, and Dennis, her teacher, figures that she didn't eat much breakfast that day. When this happens, he allows her to have her midmorning snack a little early. Dennis is taking into consideration Kayla's individual needs as well as the group's needs. The standard practice of snack time acknowledges the fact that children in general can't eat much at one time, and can't go as long between meals as older people can.

Scheduled rest time at the preschool level also acknowledges a physical need at that age, but formal rest periods tend to disappear once children enter kindergarten or first grade.

Zoe attends the before- and after-school care program at Lincoln Elementary. She gets to school at 7:30 A.M. and doesn't go home until 5:30 P.M. Sometimes she gets crabby and picks a fight or bursts into tears for no apparent reason. Fortunately, her teacher understands that when Zoe acts that way, she needs a break, not a punishment for being difficult. Mrs. Jensen sees Zoe's need and encourages her to find a comfortable pillow and a good book in the secluded classroom book nook. After a short rest, Zoe is able to participate with the group again.

Source: Hara Cook

Opportunities for large-muscle activity, small-muscle skill practice, nutritious food, and rest time all help meet children's physical development needs and assist them in desirable behavior.

Mrs. Jensen is trying to teach Zoe and others with similar needs how to take a break when they need it, rather than push themselves beyond their limits. Her classroom offers several soft, secluded spots, and her schedule offers the flexibility to use them.

TEMPERAMENT AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AFFECT BEHAVIOR

Each child experiences the world in different ways. Children's relationships with family members and others, their **cultural context**, and their brain development are just some of the factors that affect their unique path of emotional development. Temperament, gender, and individual strengths and weaknesses also affect emotional development (Denham, 2007). In the following pages, we specifically explore some of these factors and how they may play into discipline issues in the classroom. Meeting children's basic emotional needs is essential to creating a peaceful learning environment. Meeting their emotional needs is also essential to children's overall success in school and in life.

Temperament

There are many differing perspectives on temperament, but most agree that the term refers to the aspects of an individual's emotional nature that are regarded as innate. It is generally accepted that temperament is in part determined by our genetics, but some perspectives of temperament include that it is also influenced by how we are nurtured (Buss & Plomin, 2014). Three physicians, Alexander Thomas, Stella Chess, and Herbert Birch (1968), began conducting a longitudinal study of temperament traits and types on infants and young children in the 1950s. Much of what we know about temperament today is based on their work. The nine temperament traits, as defined by their research, are:

- Activity level
- Rhythmicity (which refers to degree of regularity in eating and sleeping habits)
- Approach/withdrawal behaviors
- Adaptability
- Intensity
- Mood
- Persistence and attention span
- Distractibility
- Sensory threshold

Thomas, Chess, and Birch (1970) also identified three basic temperament types, which are determined by the combination of the above traits. They found that 40% of the children they studied fell into what they called the "easy" temperament group, 10% of the children they studied were determined to have "difficult" temperaments, and 15% were identified as having "slow to warm" temperaments. Have you seen these temperament types in the children you know? You may know children who jump right into new settings (easy/flexible), yet others watch carefully and for a significant amount of time before trying something new (slow to

warm/cautious). Some children experience very intense anger and joy (difficult/active), and others are more even-tempered (easy/flexible). It must be noted that approximately 35% of children do not fit neatly into one of these three basic types (Thomas et al., 1970). For these children, some of their individual temperament traits may be quite strong and particularly telling of their behavior in certain situations. For example, some children recover quickly after an upset, whereas others may need a long time to calm down (low or high intensity). Just like adults, some children are easily distracted, yet others cannot be deterred from their focus (high or low distractibility). It is important to assess a child's individual temperament as a source of their behavior concerns.

Temperament and temperament traits are a critical element in the development of emotion regulation (Macklem, 2010). Learning appropriate ways to express emotions and acceptable reactions to stimuli is easier for some children than it is for others, based on each child's individual temperament. A child who quickly approaches new settings and is not highly sensitive to stimuli has an easier time adjusting to a school setting. A child who has intense reactions or struggles with transitions has a harder time adjusting to any setting. It is important to remember that the way the child reacts is not his or her fault, but rather a combination of temperament and life experiences.

Temperament determines not only how the child reacts, but also how others react to the child. The challenge for the caring adult is to respond positively to the more difficult child. Some children adapt easily to change, have a pleasant mood, and their emotions are easy to read, making them a joy for caregivers and teachers. However, some children who are born with a high energy level, a short attention span, difficulty with change, or a negative outlook are often in trouble with their teachers and less accepted by their peers (Sterry et al., 2010). Although these children can be difficult, they need your help and understanding because their difficult temperaments are making life more difficult for them, too. These individual differences in temperament influence children's social interactions throughout their lifetime and can have long-term effects on their mental health.

Reflection

What do you know about your own temperament? How does your temperament affect your relationships? What could significant caregivers in your childhood have done to help you navigate the challenges of your temperament?

When Annelie cries at the drop of a hat, her friends tease her, calling her a "crybaby." Children like Annelie need significant support with social skills and **emotion regulation** to prevent them from developing low self-esteem or other emotional or behavior problems. Caregivers must focus their efforts on adapting the environment and teaching styles to accommodate the needs of the children involved. This is part of making the school fit the child, as opposed to trying to make the child fit the school. Helping children develop **emotional competence** can be done through emotion coaching, which is discussed at the end of this chapter. Emotion coaching in the classroom not only helps children develop lifelong skills, but also helps prevent discipline problems.

When teachers assess the cause of a discipline problem to determine the best action to take with a child, temperament is often a consideration.

Annelie and Jack are attempting to build a road system together, each with her and his own idea of where the road should go. When Dennis sees that Annelie's frustration level is beginning to rise, he knows from prior experience that she may need some help calming herself down. Dennis calmly approaches Annelie before she gets completely out of control and invites her to continue building her road in the sand at the sensory table. Dennis knows that the sand play and some time alone help calm Annelie. Dennis does not attempt any negotiation between Annelie and Jack when he knows that her intensity of emotion is too high for this to be effective.

Erikson's Developmental Stages

Although individual differences play a significant role, children nonetheless progress through various predictable developmental stages in their emotional development. Children build on what they learn in one stage to progress onto the next, and as they do so, they lay the foundation for their mental health throughout their lives. It is important to note, however, that one developmental stage is not completed, like a closed book, when the child moves on to another stage. All stages are continually revisited and built on as the child grows and continues developing for the rest of his or her life. Erikson's (1963) theory of personality encompasses the entire lifespan and attempts to explain patterns of behavior throughout every stage of life.

According to Erikson's widely respected theory, each of these stages has a particular focus, or **developmental task**, that influences the child's responses at this time. In his explanation of these stages, Erikson addresses the emergence of emotional development (Eisenberg, 2004). We find Erikson's explanation of emotional development especially relevant to discipline issues. Understanding child behavior in terms of the stages that Erikson describes can help us prevent discipline problems; this understanding can also be used to guide intervention when problems do occur. We discuss here only the stages relevant to early childhood, although Erikson's stage theory continues through adolescence, adulthood, and old age (Figure 2–1).

These stages correlate roughly to ages, but individual differences and diversity of experiences create variations from this norm. As mentioned, as children proceed along their developmental path, they are continually building on and continuing their growth in previous stages of emotional development. Teachers and parents also may notice a child who is in an emotionally stressful situation at home regressing to a previous developmental stage.

Trust versus Mistrust Even if you never plan to work with babies, you need to know about the *trust versus mistrust* stage of development, which Erikson relates to infancy. Erikson explains that infants' early interactions with their parents form the basis for the development of emotional regulation (Eisenberg, 2004). When babies are making their first discoveries about what kind of world they have entered, they are forming the foundation of emotional health for the rest of their lives. Many are welcomed into homes where their needs are met promptly by an attentive caregiver who alleviates their distress. These babies begin to trust early that they are important and that someone cares for them enough to meet their needs (Honig, 2015). For these babies, the world is a safe and friendly place. However, some babies aren't so lucky. Their parents may be overwhelmed with personal problems, and a baby is just one more worry, or their caregivers may be overworked and untrained. These babies may continually cry from hunger or other discomfort without any response. What a different image of themselves and their world these babies get!

Trust vs. Mistrust	Babies learn whether the world around them is safe and nurturing.
Autonomy vs. Shame	Toddlers learn to define themselves as individuals or feel shame about their independent urges.
Initiative vs. Guilt	Children learn to test their individual powers and abilities or feel guilty about making mistakes.
Industry vs. Inferiority	Children extend their ideas of themselves as successful workers or learn to feel inferior and incapable.

FIGURE 2–1 *Erikson's Stages of Child Development*

Children's early efforts to communicate their needs deserve a response. Responsive adults are setting the stage for children to build trusting and cooperative relationships throughout their lifetime (Elliott & Gonzalez-Mena, 2011). When a child's needs are unmet, the child feels insecure and does not trust in others to care for him or her. Trust develops along with attachment to a significant adult. Later in this chapter, we talk more about attachment as a basic human need and a foundation for healthy emotional development.

Children continue to actively work on developing trust during preschool and in the early school years, especially if they had a problem with it earlier. They are looking for evidence that they can count on people in their larger world. Some have had negative experiences in their past that lead them to expect continued disappointments from everyone they encounter (Dykas & Cassidy, 2011). You may see some of these children constantly checking to see if someone is still their friend. They may also frequently seek the reassurance of the teacher's attention. Others just expect rejection, as in the following example:

September 29 was the first child's birthday in her class. However, Mrs. Jensen didn't see Noah's mother put party invitations into six of the children's cubbies. As the first child discovered hers, a mad rush of others checked their cubbies hopefully. There were a few shouts of delight and many disappointed faces. "Oh dear," Mrs. Jensen thought. "I should have made it clear that party invitations should not be distributed at school unless all children are included." Mrs. Jensen noticed that Connor didn't even bother looking. He didn't expect to be invited, just as he couldn't believe that other children would let him join in their play.

Connor's life hadn't made him feel secure or wanted. He had been in four foster homes in 2 years. Mrs. Jensen wondered what his birthdays had been like. Mrs. Jensen reached for her circle-time basket and removed the story she'd planned to read, replacing it with A. A. Milne's *The World of Pooh*. She put her bookmark on page 70, "In which Eeyore has a birthday party and gets two presents." She also changed her plans for the topic of the group discussion, deciding to discuss feelings of being left out.

Mrs. Jensen begins group time by sharing a short and humorous, but sad personal story of a time she remembers feeling left out as a child. Two children share similar experiences. When Mrs. Jensen reads the part of the story where Piglet wishes Eeyore "Many happy returns of the day" and Eeyore can hardly believe that his friends remembered his birthday and even gave him presents, Connor giggles especially loudly.

After the story, the group discusses how Eeyore felt, and they come up with a list of ways to help him trust his friends next year. Mrs. Jensen then points out how she put paper candles on her calendar to mark all the children's birthdays. She ends with an explanation about most homes not being big enough to invite a whole class, so they will have birthday celebrations in the classroom for everyone. (Class parties are acceptable this year because she doesn't have any children in her class from families who don't celebrate birthdays or holidays.) She mentions the birthdays coming up during the next few months, and Connor beams as she ends with, "and December 6 we'll celebrate Connor's birthday!"

If a child's experiences repeatedly lead to a lesson in mistrust rather than trust, that child's whole life can be affected. Future friendships—and even marriages—may suffer from this lack of trust. It first appears as insecurity with friends and excessive demands on teachers. Later in life, an inability to trust coworkers and the suspicion of spouses can undermine

relationships. As relationships fail to withstand the pressure, a vicious cycle of self-fulfilling prophecy is perpetuated. We have all known children and adults who fit this pattern: They expect others to reject them, so they behave in ways that invite rejection. Your challenge is to help children have experiences that will reverse this cycle and help them begin to develop trust in caring adults.

Autonomy versus Shame Erikson's *autonomy stage* is the period when children work at defining themselves as separate from the adults they have, until now, completely depended on. The toddler years are the time for development of autonomy, as Erikson defines it. As infants, children are so dependent that they actually consider themselves a part of their parents or caregivers. But toddlers suddenly begin to see that they are separate people, with ideas and wills of their own. They need to test this new revelation to make sure it is true and to convince themselves of their independence. While this period is commonly known as the "terrible twos," this testing stage may not actually begin until age 3, but it can create serious discipline problems for the unwary adult. The formerly docile child suddenly responds with an emphatic "No!" to all suggestions and tests the limits that are set.

Georgia is so caught up in her ability to say "No!" that she sometimes says no to things she really wants. Dennis asks her to join the group at the snack table when she is in a particularly assertive mood. "No," says Georgia proudly, enjoying her moment of control. Dennis knows that Georgia is asserting her power to say "yes" or "no," but she is likely to want a snack when the other children start eating theirs. When Georgia inevitably changes her mind and does decide to join the group at the snack table, Dennis doesn't lecture her about the fact that saying "no" means she doesn't get any. Instead, he subtly looks the other way when she comes to the table for a snack, allowing her to join in without feeling embarrassed. He then cheerfully gives her the option to choose apples or raisins, encouraging her budding independence by allowing her to make decisions for herself.

Dennis allows the children in his preschool room as many opportunities as possible to make decisions and choices. These opportunities not only help children feel proud of their increasing independence, but also may help them cooperate during times when there is no choice. Children who routinely have a chance to exercise their personal power are often more able to accept times when adults must make the decisions. Nancy offered choices to Ava to encourage her cooperation at the end of her day in the early care and education center, as shown in the following example.

It seemed that Ava was asserting herself by refusing to cooperate when getting ready to go home, antagonizing her tired and hurried father. Nancy didn't give any attention to the undesirable behavior by wheedling and bribing her to get her boots and coat on, nor did she take away Ava's independence by forcing her to put them on. Instead, Nancy gave Ava some choices about how to get ready. "Do you want to put on your boots first or your coat first?" asked Nancy. "Would you like me or your daddy to help you with your zipper?" was the next question. "Can you put on your own boots, or would you like help?" was another. In no time at all, Ava was ready to go and feeling proud of herself.

Erikson's theory says that when children do not develop emotional autonomy, they develop a sense of shame instead. Shame can be caused by their experiences with adults who don't understand what is happening when children assert themselves; these adults think that their job

Opportunities for children to explore challenges and experience success contribute to healthy emotional development.

Source: Marjorie V. Fields

is to stamp out "naughtiness." Unfortunately, they may only be successful at making children believe they are being bad, when really the children are just working at being grown-up. As a result, the children develop feelings of shame about the natural urges of independence.

Initiative versus Guilt Erikson's next stage of development is *initiative versus guilt*. Most preschool and many kindergarten children are in this stage. You will see them further testing their individual power and abilities. As their physical and intellectual abilities increase rapidly, they try out new and more challenging skills. This stage is like a bridge that children may continually move back and forth across, trying out being a "big kid" and then moving back into the security of their dependency on caregivers (Koplow, 2007). Children in this stage want to feel involved and powerful as they try out new tasks. They may be competitive and want to be the best at everything they do. Or they may be intimidated and fear failure when tasks are too difficult for them. It is important to offer children opportunities to initiate play and feel successful (Elkind, 2015), as in the following examples:

Aalivah is always right there when it is time to prepare the morning snack. She takes great satisfaction in setting the table or spreading cream cheese on celery sticks. She practices fine-motor coordination, and even math skills, as she meticulously places five raisins on each celery stick. Her feelings of accomplishment and confidence are also growing.

Aalivah and her classmates are invited to assist with many necessary jobs in the morning session of preschool. They care for the class guinea pig, cleaning her cage and feeding her. They water the plants, sweep up under the sand table, and organize the dress-up clothes on