



Region A Partnership for Children
Promoting Social and Emotional Competence

What to do When...

Helping a Child with Common Routines at Home or in the Caregiving Setting

(“What to do When...” provides short term advice for teachers and parents when they are confronted by common challenging situations. Refer to the Additional Resources to learn more about preventing and managing children’s challenging behavior.)

Refer to: *The Family Routine Guide for Young Children with Challenging Behavior*, By Rochelle Lentini and Lise Fox

(Available online in the “Parent Training Module 6” of **Positive Solutions for Families** at http://www.vanderbilt.edu/csefel/parent/mod6/family_routine_guide.pdf)

The *Family Routine Guide* was developed to assist parents and caregivers in developing a plan to support young children who express challenging behavior. The Guide includes strategies for the common routines and activities that occur during the family’s week, including:

- Getting Dressed/Undressed
- Brushing Teeth/Hair
- Meals/Snacks
- Play Outside
- Play
- Clean-up
- Riding in the Car
- Shopping
- Restaurants
- Going to the Doctor
- Taking Medicine
- Taking a Bath
- Bathroom (Potty/Wash Hands)
- Bedtime/Sleeping/Napping
- When Parents Can’t Play (Chores, On Phone, etc.)
- Transitions: Going From One Place/Activity to Another



Here is an example of challenging behavior while getting dressed or undressed, why the behavior might be occurring, and suggestions for how to prevent and replace the behavior:

Getting Dressed /Undressed

1. Why might my child be doing this?

Your child does not want to stop the “activity” that he/she is doing to get dressed/undressed.

2. What can I do to prevent the problem behavior?

Signal your child ahead of time -- Use a “warning” to let your child know that it will soon be time to “stop” and to get dressed/undressed. Depending on your child’s ability, you may use a timer or a verbal signal by saying “in five more minutes” and then return to let your child know when it’s “one more minute”.

- Help him/her understand you know how he/she feels -- Validate your child’s feelings and then point out what fun thing is coming up after getting dressed/undressed.
- Give clear expectations -- Use a “first-then” statement (e.g., “First get dressed, then play.”) to help your child clearly understand expectations and help your child through the routines and remember to encourage through praise.
- Get a book about dressing -- Go to your local library or book store, get a book about dressing, read it with your child, and then suggest to your child that he/she can make his/her own “getting dressed/undressed book” using real photos. Take photographs, develop pictures, and staple several pieces of paper together to make a book for your child by gluing in the photographs and by writing the steps of dressing. Read your homemade book on a regular basis, and allow him/her to read it to you. (Suggested story books: Dress Maisy by Lucy Cousins; Ready, Set, Go! Practice Getting Dressed by Quinlan B. Lee; I Can Get Dressed! (Blue’s Clues Series) by Lauryn Silverhardt; All By Myself by Mercer Mayer; Froggy Gets Dressed by Jonathan London.)
- Encourage success -- Praise your child and let him/her know that stopping is difficult and you will make sure that the activity can be done at a later time/date (follow through on your promise).
- Reduce distractions -- If your child wants to watch TV or his sister(s)/brother(s) play while dressing/undressing, turn off the TV or shut the door until the routine is completed.

3. What can I do if the problem behavior occurs?

Ignore inappropriate behavior, and point to the timer or clock and say, “All done _____. Now we need to get dressed/undressed to (next activity).”

Follow through by helping your child get dressed/undressed. Don’t scold or talk to your child when helping him/her. Just be matter-of-fact and say, “I will help you do it.”

Validate feelings and say, “I know it’s hard to stop ____; you can do ___ again later. First get dressed/undressed, then (fun activity).”

Praise any and all small attempts to stop activity and get dressed.

4. What new skills should I teach?

Teach your child how to follow first-then statement: first get dressed/undressed, then (fun activity).

Teach your child when he/she can have the “favorite activity” again.

Additional Resources available online at www.vanderbilt.edu/csefel

What Works Briefs: Summaries of Effective Practices for Supporting Children's Social-Emotional Development and Preventing Challenging Behaviors. The Briefs describe practical strategies, provide references to more information about the practice, and include a one-page handout that highlights the major points of the Brief.

Brief 9

What are Children Trying to Tell Us?: Assessing the Function of Their Behavior by L. Fox, M. Duda
[HTML](#) | [PDF](#) Handout: [HTML](#) | [PDF](#)

Brief 18

Logical Consequences by L. Fox and S. Langhans
[HTML](#) | [PDF](#) Handout: [HTML](#) | [PDF](#)

Brief 4

Helping Children Make Transitions between Activities by M. M. Ostrosky, E. Y. Jung, M. L. Hemmeter
[HTML](#) | [PDF](#) Handout: [HTML](#) | [PDF](#) Additional Sources: [HTML](#)

What Works Training Kits: Based on the What Works Briefs topics, short training packages are available that include PowerPoint slides with accompanying note pages, activities, and handouts, which provide a trainer with the materials needed to conduct a short staff development program on a focused topic.

Training Kit 9

What are Children Trying to Tell Us?: Assessing the Function of Their Behavior by L. Fox, M. Duda
[PDF](#) | Handout: [PPT](#) | Presenter: [PPT](#)

Local Resources to contact online:

Region A Partnership for Children at www.regionakids.org, for a list of resources to promote social emotional competence and prevent challenging behavior in your county and in Region A.

