

# WHAT CAN I DO IF MY CHILD IS AGGRESSIVE?

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Children who are aggressive are often responding to feelings of stress and anxiety in the only way they know how. Your child may need extra help to feel secure. By being loving, calm and patient, you will make a big difference.

As a parent, it can be difficult to want to be near your child when they are acting aggressively, but your time, care and attention are exactly what they need. When you give your child your full attention, it's easier to notice when they are beginning to get frustrated, angry, tired or hungry so that you can help them before they become aggressive. Most importantly, though, let your child know that, no matter what happens, you will always love them.



## How to Handle Aggression

- If your child responds aggressively to separations, understand that they may not be ready to be away from you, even for a short time.
- If they become easily frustrated, your child may need extra help with things like dressing, eating or using the toilet.
- Be prepared to give an aggressive child extra care, comfort and attention. The big feelings they are having are scary! For example, they may need you to help them check inside closets or under beds to see that there is nothing dangerous. They may need to be held more often, and they may need you to sleep beside them if they have nightmares.
- Watch your child to understand the aggression.
  - What leads up to the aggression?
  - In what ways does your child try to get what they want before they act aggressively?
  - Are there patterns to the aggression? (e.g., Does it tend to happen just before dinner or when they have missed a nap?)
- Stop the aggression calmly and immediately.
  - Control your anger first.
  - Get close to your child and bend down as you say “stop” (in your language).
  - Use your hands to block the hitting or grabbing. (Be careful not to use too much force to control your child’s aggression.)
- Try to describe their feelings. (e.g., “You were angry.” “You wanted that.”) When they feel understood, children can calm down more easily.
- Make sure they know the rules. (e.g., Hitting is not OK.)
- Help your child learn other ways to get what they want or need. (e.g., Asking, “Can I play?” instead of grabbing toys.)
- Make it clear what you will do if it happens again. (e.g., “The toy will go away if you throw it.”)
- Change the play to something calmer, requiring less self-control.

Visit [cmascanada.ca/cnc/parents](https://cmascanada.ca/cnc/parents) for more multilingual parent information



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