

WHY IS MY CHILD AGGRESSIVE?

NEWCOMER
PARENT
RESOURCE
SERIES

Getting what we want and need is part of survival, but young children often can't or don't know how to express their needs and desires in calm ways or using words. As they grow, children learn to control their emotions and interact with others in positive ways. Until that happens, however, young children may be aggressive as they attempt to express themselves.

Babies may hit, kick, bite or grab. Toddlers (1-3 year olds) may intentionally hit, kick, bite, grab, scream, pull hair, pinch, push or head butt. Preschoolers (3-6 year olds) may do any of these things and may also punch, spit and shout. They may also threaten, bully or attack others. Children who have experienced forced migration may be even more likely to act aggressively.

Why Are Some Young Children Aggressive?

There are many reasons why children act aggressively.

- Children think that being aggressive will help them get what they want or need quickly.
- Children feel powerful when they are aggressive. They like seeing the reaction they caused.
- They are just learning self-control. They aren't able to wait or to understand reason, and they don't know how else to handle their emotions or to get what they need.
- They have strong feelings that they are unable to control or to tell you about (angry, frustrated, anxious).
- They need attention.
- They are acting out the same behaviour that their older brother or sister used.
- Toddlers sometimes like the texture of the skin they bite and the hair they pull.



Aggression in Children Who Have Experienced Forced Migration

Some children who have been through forced migration may have been traumatized by their experiences. You and your child may have seen extreme aggression, violence or harm to those you love. You may have faced dangerous situations that have affected your child, even though you did your best to protect them. Experiences like these can lead to:

- acting out traumatic, violent events with others or with dolls;
- fighting to survive (believing their life is in danger);
- a strong fear of losing their parent upon separation, then hitting the parent when they return;
- hitting, biting, kicking or punching a caregiver during separation from their parent;
- shutting down (playing "dead") until someone is close and then attacking;
- overeating, hoarding, hitting or pushing others to get at food;
- self-injury.

Visit cmascanada.ca/cnc/parents for more multilingual parent information



SUPPORTING CHILD CARE IN THE SETTLEMENT COMMUNITY / SOUTIEN DE LA GARDE DES ENFANTS DANS LA COMMUNAUTÉ DE RÈGLEMENT

Funded by: Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada / Financé par : Immigration, Réfugiés et Citoyenneté Canada