



# Children's Mental Health Matters!

## Facts for Educators Strategies to Deal with Aggressive Children

### Definition

Every teacher has at least one child who is aggressive. Sometimes, the aggression takes the form of instigating fights. Sometimes the child simply provokes others to fight or antagonizes and threatens other children. These aggressive children, often referred to as "bullies," usually have few true friends, poor social skills, and little self confidence.

### What causes children to be aggressive?

The aggressor will rarely have self-confidence and gains it through aggressive behavior. Aggressors are attention seekers and they enjoy the attention they gain from being aggressive. Power brings attention and the aggressor has learned this. Due to the child's weaker self-image and the fact that he or she doesn't fit in, they try aggressive behavior and soon become leaders, even though they usually know that they are behaving inappropriately.

### What Do We Do About It?

- ✎ Never ignore inappropriate aggressions and do not get drawn into a power struggle with the aggressor.
- ✎ Be firm but gentle in your approach. Remember, the aggressor can handle the tough side of you but he/she will succumb to gentleness and it's really what he wants - the right kind of attention.
- ✎ Deal one to one with the aggressor and devise a plan for him/her to take control of his/her behavior. See behavior contracts in below resources included.
- ✎ Successful teachers know that when they establish a one to one relationship with the aggressor, success soon follows. Remember, the aggressor can usually tell if you genuinely like him/her. Be genuine, this child merely needs attention.
- ✎ Provide opportunities for this child to act appropriately and get some badly needed attention. Give him/her responsibilities and provide praise.
- ✎ Catch the aggressor behaving well and provide immediate, positive feedback. In time, you will see that the aggressive behaviors will start to diminish.
- ✎ Provide him/her with activities that bring forth leadership in a positive way. Always let him/her

know that you care, trust and respect him. Remind him/her that it's the inappropriate behaviors that you don't like.

- ✎ Provide as many methods as you can for this child to take ownership for his/her inappropriate behavior. Probe him/her with how an issue should have been handled and how will it be handled next time.

Never forget that ALL children need to know you care about them and that they can contribute in a positive way. It took the child a long time to become a master of aggressive behavior. Be consistent, patient and understand that change will take time.

*(Copied from: <http://specialed.about.com/cs/behaviordisorders/a/aggression.htm>)*

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### Resources/Links

Behavior Contracts - <http://specialed.about.com/cs/behaviordisorders/a/behaviorcontrac.htm>

Magellan Health Services, Aggression and Cooperation: Helping Young Children Develop Constructive Strategies <http://www.magellanassist.com/mem/library/default.asp?url=%2E%5Cwpo%5Cwpo%5F00000100%5Cwpo%5F00000101%2Ehtml&title=Aggression+and+Cooperation%3A+Helping+Young+Children+Develop+Constructive+Strategies>

American Academy of Adolescent and Child Psychiatry, Understanding Violent Behavior in Children: [http://www.aacap.org/cs/root/facts\\_for\\_families/understanding\\_violent\\_behavior\\_in\\_children\\_and\\_adolescents](http://www.aacap.org/cs/root/facts_for_families/understanding_violent_behavior_in_children_and_adolescents)

Aggressive Behavior  
Provides definitions, prevention strategies, and parent concerns: <http://www.healthofchildren.com/A/Aggressive-Behavior.html>

**Adapted from Resources found on:  
[www.schoolmentalhealth.org](http://www.schoolmentalhealth.org) March 2009**