

Objective 1

Regulates own emotions and behaviors

In order to manage emotions and regulate his or her behavior, a child must learn to control impulses, tolerate frustration, cope with strong emotions, follow limits and expectations, and delay gratification. A crying infant calms when rocked by a loving adult. A 2-year-old sits in a quiet place hugging a stuffed bear after his mother leaves for work. A preschooler acts out a birthday party, thanking her guests for coming. A 5-year-old tells you when others are not following the rules.

To be able to regulate their emotions and behaviors, children must: 1) develop a basic understanding that actions have positive and negative consequences, 2) know what behaviors are acceptable, 3) be aware that they are capable of controlling their behavior, and 4) know that they have the power to manage their emotions (Bilmes, 2004). Children learn how to manage their emotions and regulate behavior in an environment that is warm and nurturing, and where the adults are trustworthy and responsive to each child's needs. Discussing the reasons for limits and the consequences of behavior helps children know why limits and rules are necessary. Teachers usually provide reasons for moral rules that apply in every setting, such as not hitting or taking another child's toy. They usually do not explain the social reasons for rules such as putting blocks back on the shelf neatly (Charlesworth, 2007; Smetana, 1984).

Children who regulate their emotions positively do better in school (Blair & Razza, 2007; Bronson, 2000) and have an easier time getting along with peers (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009; Ponitz, McClelland, Jewkes, Conner, Farris, & Morrison, 2008). Noncompliant, problematic behavior in preschool tends to continue in later school years (Charlesworth, 2007; Campbell, 1995; Campbell, Pierce, March, Ewing, & Szumowski, 1994). Self-regulation is ranked as the most important characteristic necessary for school readiness by kindergarten teachers, who also indicate that over half of their children lack effective self-regulatory skills (Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta, & Cox, 2000). Children who have warm, supportive, secure relationships with their teachers exhibit fewer behavioral problems than children who do not have positive relationships (Bronson, 2006; Howes & Ritchie, 1998), so teachers' role in helping children follow limits and expectations is important to children's future school success.

Objective 1 Regulates own emotions and behaviors

Various factors, such as a disability, life experiences, and family practices, influence the way children express their feelings and emotions. Some children are taught to avoid expressions of emotion, while others are encouraged to express their feelings openly (Trawick-Smith, 2006). Difficulty in learning to manage emotions may be an early warning sign of a disability or future psychological problems (Diamond, 2002; National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2004). Infants who have trouble remaining calm may need special help to develop self-regulatory skills (Cook, Klein, & Tessier, 2004). Children who cannot control their emotions at age 4 are likely not to be able to follow the teacher's directions at age 6 (Bodrova & Leong, 2005).

Differences in family beliefs and expectations affect the way children respond to classroom limits. The ways people express opinions, discuss ideas and feelings, and take turns in conversations differ from one culture to another and often from one family to another. Children from some cultural backgrounds look others straight in the eye during conversations while other children are taught to avoid eye contact (McAfee & Leong, 1994). There are also differences in the strategies families use when children do not follow the established limits (Trawick-Smith, 2006). Frequent communication between teachers and families is therefore necessary to guide children's behavior and to work toward shared goals.

Children's ability to meet their own needs appropriately is valued and typically expected by some cultures (Pierce & Schreibman, 1994). When children take care of themselves in these cultures, they build their confidence, and this influences their emotions and behaviors. Children who feel competent, or who have belief in their abilities, are better able to face life's challenges (Curry & Johnson, 1990). Children develop confidence by participating successfully in everyday activities. When children can communicate their needs, move from place to place, use tools, and participate in classroom routines, they have more opportunities to build self-confidence.

Children with physical disabilities may be viewed by their nondisabled peers as being less able to perform certain tasks or to participate fully in everyday classroom activities (Diamond & Hestenes, 1996). It is therefore important for teachers to support children with disabilities appropriately in their efforts to do things for themselves and to give them, whenever possible, the same opportunities to participate in classroom activities as their typically developing peers. Teachers may need to provide children with disabilities as well as English-language learners with pictorial examples depicting various sequences of a routine or activity. The pictures support children's abilities to complete tasks by themselves (Macrina, Hoover, & Becker, 2009; Pierce & Schreibman, 1994).