

... "bite size" news from your HSB Regional Behavior Specialists



# OH, Behave!

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## Why It's Important To Give Children Choices Throughout The Day

### Tip of the Month:

Offering a young child **two** choices at a time is most effective. Overloading a child with too many options to choose from is overwhelming and can inhibit a decision from being made.

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Join our new online community by clicking [here!](#) By joining Social-Emotional Connections, you will have the opportunity to network, post questions, and share resources with other early childhood professionals in NC!

Open our latest public resource, a growing library shelf of virtual binders that include archived issues of the HSB newsletter, *Oh Behave!*, a collection of Disaster Response Resources, and a binder of scripted stories for classroom use! Click [here.](#)

All day long children are being told what to do. At home, they are told what to eat, wear and when to sleep. Even at school, they are on a daily schedule. Although, we know schedules are important, allowing children to make some choices throughout the day will help prevent power struggles. Power struggles happen when teachers work to gain control to keep children safe and children work to gain power in the ability to do something they favor. When building choice-making opportunities into the school day, consider the following:

### Balance of teacher-directed and child-directed

- Teacher-directed choices are needed to teach routine and expectations. It's when the teacher decides what happens next. For ex-

ample, "First we are doing art then we will have music and movement."

- Child-directed choices are needed to teach personal preferences. It's where the teacher asks the child what they want to do. For example, "Would you like to use paint or crayons to create a picture?"

### Honoring individuality of the child

- Children may have a hard time making choices if they do not make them regularly. Having a relationship with each child will help you be supportive through this learning process because you will know what they like and dislike.
- Offering the best choices is based on each individual child. Understand

what works for one child may not work for another.

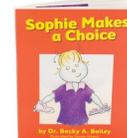
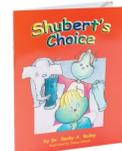
### Offering choices throughout the day

- Choices can be offered throughout the day and can be something as simple as allowing children to choose which center they play in, which buddy they sit next to during snack, or which line-up activity they do as they transition to outside. Look at your schedule and see where you are offering child-directed choice making chances. If none, start with circle time, lunch, and centers.

If you would like to know more on how to offer choices throughout the day, contact your local HSB Specialist for classroom support and/or professional development training.

## Conscious Discipline and Making Choices

Did you know Conscious Discipline has resources that will help you teach children about choice making? If you are not already signed up, you can do so for free at <https://consciousdiscipline.com/>. Be sure and check out the free resources tab and look under "Shubert's Extension Activities" where you can download a variety of information. These resources are available to both free members as well as premium members and helps with assertiveness, conflict resolution, self-regulation, active calming, self-control, emotional intelligence, social-emotional learning, and school family.





In each issue you will find a new card to help you build your very own "Calming Choices" Card Set for your classroom.

When I am upset, I can...

## HELP A FRIEND



For durability and repetitive use, print on cardstock paper and laminate.

## Limited Choices



Choices provide small steps in shared power.

- 1) It is time to leave. Would you like to hop like a bunny or clomp like an elephant to the car?
- 2) If your child doesn't want to leave, kindly and firmly say: "Staying is not a choice," and repeat the two choices.
- 3) It can be empowering to add, "You decide," after giving two choices.

Quotes from the Positive Discipline books © Jane Nelsen and Lynn Lott

**Question:** We have a new three-year-old teacher at our school that I have witnessed doing some strange things while the children are at rest time. She will take the pictures they made during the morning art activity and "fix" them. She will draw or decorate a snowman, for example, and direct the children to copy it by using the same shapes, colors, etc. If the snowman the children create doesn't look perfect (in her eyes) then she will redo it before it is sent home for the parents to see it. Each snowman ends up looking exactly like the one she designed and often times the children do not even recognize it as their own artwork. I am concerned that she is not understanding the importance of the process and is only worried about the product the parents receive. I have tried to gently speak with her about it, but she laughs it off. How can I help her see how this is harming the children?

**Answer:** Great question! We can definitely understand how this is troubling to see happening. We also want to try to give this teacher the benefit of the doubt that she is not aware of what her misguided actions might be doing to the children in her class. Perhaps you could invite her into your classroom during a time when children are doing open-ended art to prompt a helpful conversation regarding the benefits of allowing children to naturally express themselves without a finished product in mind. Open-ended art provides a tool for self-regulation. Allowing a child to freely express their emotions and feelings through the process of creative art leads to relaxation and euphoria. The teacher's role should be to provide a variety of materials that are easily accessible with an open invitation to all the children in the class to create images as they see fit. When creativity is not encouraged, it becomes less inviting to children who might not want to use black cut-out circles for the buttons on a snowman or a blue scarf to put around the neck of a snowman. Teachers should encourage choice making in the classroom which will prevent power struggles and frustration. If children are never allowed to have any control or input in their day, it can rouse anger. Allowing young children to practice making choices also helps them build self-esteem and develop problem-solving skills. These are social-emotional skills they will use all their life.

All teachers need to focus on the process of art rather than the finished product. Altering a child's creation can be detrimental to their own self-worth (thinking what they originally created was not good enough) and takes away the value in the experience that art provides. When focused on the end result, children feel pressured to get their creation just right and are taught there is only one way to do a project. The truth is, beauty is in the eye of the beholder and everyone sees things differently!

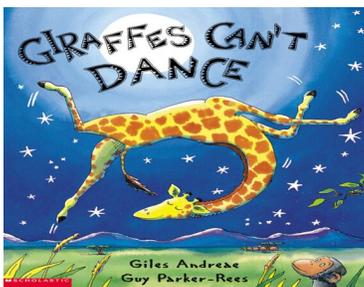
Do you have a question you would like to see answered in our column?

Feel free to email it to [AskTheBehaviorSpecialist@gmail.com](mailto:AskTheBehaviorSpecialist@gmail.com).

We will keep your identity private. Your question is probably one someone else needs answering, so ask away! Your time is appreciated!



## Social/Emotional Book Nook



All it takes is the kindness of one unlikely friend to help Gerald the giraffe learn to embrace what makes him different and unique. Those skinny legs and that long neck used to embarrass Gerald, now he wows at the annual Jungle Dance because "no one can dance like Gerald the giraffe."

This book is ideal for children ages 3-6 years. It is packed full of emotional literacy opportunities to teach about individuality and kindness, confidence building, and self-esteem.

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