**Why do we redirect?**

Sometimes, we need to reframe a child’s attitude or a negative behavior by switching gears. This is especially true of very young children, who aren’t able to sit through a ten minute conversation about why their behavior is wrong or what motivated it. Redirecting them to a different, positive behavior or modeling positive behavior is often the most effective method in dealing with problems that arise at the infant, toddler and young preschool age. You will still use the technique of “noticing” the behavior with Conscious Discipline. Once children are old enough to converse about behavior expectations, redirection is still powerful because it can facilitate a cool down period. Then there can be a more in-depth conversation about the behavior.

**EXAMPLE:** A two year old child is throwing a tantrum over putting on their shoes to go outside.

**ONE SOLUTION:** The caregiver can notice the behavior. ““I asked you to put your shoes on and you got very mad! You threw the truck and cried. You were frustrated because you didn’t want to stop playing.”” Then, the caregiver can suggest a distraction with a related activity. “Joey, can you help me count all of the shoes in the bucket?” Perhaps the child won’t engage at first, but the teacher can count on their own at first until the child joins in or becomes interested in the process. At the end of the counting, the teacher can remind the child once more about what happened (C.D. “Noticing”) and reintroduce the direction why it needs to be followed. “Now that you’re calm, I want to tell you why we need to put shoes on your feet and follow the group. I need to see you to keep you safe, so you need to be with the group. Outside, the ground is cold and there are things that might poke your toes. Let’s put your shoes on now. Which shoe are we going to put on first?”
It might not work the first time, but caregivers need to be diligent and calm in using redirection skills combined with the key components of Conscious Discipline: notice the behavior and help the child replay it, keep your composure, and don’t give your power away. Help your student to feel safe and peaceful, so that they can think about the situation using the more highly developed regions of their brain (their frontal lobe)—teach them to “respond” rather than “react”.

Let’s review the steps:

1. Get down to the child’s level-kneel, sit, etc. Notice the behavior using C.D. language. “You did ___, because you felt ______.”
2. Redirect to another activity—Let’s do this instead.
3. Give the child a direct instruction and review the positive behavior replacement with them. “You may not ______. When you feel ____, you can try ____ instead.”

Behaviors to redirect:

• **Biting a friend:** Make sure to pay lots of attention the biting victim FIRST before you deal with the biter. Notice the behavior at the child’s level. Give a very direct command that is easy to understand. “You bit Sarah. She is hurt. You may bite the teether. No biting friends.” Offer the child something that is o.k. to bite (i.e., teether, paci, food, etc.) If you think you understand the motivation for the behavior, you can include this in the noticing stage. “You bit Sarah. You were mad because she took your truck. She is hurt.”

• **Hitting/kicking a friend:** Replace a high energy behavior with something of equal value that is more appropriate. “You kicked Sam. You had a lot of energy in your body. Your foot hurt Sam’s body. You may kick this ball. No kicking friends” or “You kicked Sam because he took your place in line. You were frustrated about that and he wouldn’t move. If you feel frustrated, you can kick this ball right now. No kicking friends.”
• **Give a child a task or distraction:** Maybe you have a child who is dumping baskets of toys as the rest of the class is preparing to go outside. Try distracting a child with a very direct task. “You dumped the puzzles on the floor because you wanted to see what would happen. Will you take this baby to Miss _____ so she can put it on the shelf?” or “Take this book and put it on the table”. The more interesting or unusual you make the task, the more likely the child will be to respond. “Can you go and look out the window right now to see if there are any animals outside? I will put this basket on the shelf and then bring your shoes to you.” Be creative and individualize what sort of distractions you create for children. Once they are calmed down and have been cooperative, take the time to discuss their behavior with them. “It helps me when you clean up the toys. I like to go outside after the room is clean” or “It is good we put your shoes on to go outside. Now your feet are safe and they won’t get wet.”

• **Ask a question:** Catch a tantrum-ing or upset child off guard by asking them a compelling question. “You screamed because you felt so angry that it wasn’t your turn. You were upset because you wanted to take another turn. (Give the child a moment to hear your words). Do you know what I had for breakfast this morning?” Sometimes an interesting inquiry is just what a child needs before they are ready to engage in any sort of rationale or reasoning for their behavior. Sometimes when you are at a child’s level it can be even more calming or interesting to them if you whisper or speak a question quietly in their ear. Remember: when emotions are high, according to our Conscious Discipline module and modern research, children are operating from a more primal region of the brain and are unable to use higher order thought. They need to feel safe and calm before they are able to begin a dialogue about how to change their behavior or why it isn’t working.

• **Redirect to a different area:** When a child is behaving aggressively, get down to their level, notice the behavior, and then move them to a different location of the classroom with something engaging. “You are throwing the dishes in the kitchen at the wall. You have a lot of energy in your body and you seem angry. We’re going to the climber now, and you can climb and slide.” After moving them to an different area or activity, you can model appropriate behavior for them or talk to them about their choices in simple language. “You are climbing and sliding because you have a lot of energy! When your body is full of energy, you can use it for exercise. You may not throw dishes or hurt friends. You may climb on the steps and slide on the loft.”