

# Preschool Stressors

(How caregivers can help...)

*The way a child responds to stressors in their life ultimately depends upon their developmental status...their age.*

## A) WHO IS A PRESCHOOL CHILD?

**Preschool age children are “egocentric”;** according to Piaget.

They can sometimes only see things from their own point of view (like in toddlerhood) and how it relates to them. Therefore, it makes total sense that they often view bad things that occur as their own fault...

*Examples of egocentric thought?*

**Preschool children are attempting to gain control – of EVERYTHING**

They are attempting to gain control of not only their environment, but they are attempting to master self-control.

*Examples of this in everyday play?*

**Preschool children are becoming more self-aware**

They are better able, than during toddlerhood, to compare themselves to others around them. They are more aware of being treated differently than others.

*Examples of this new self-awareness?*

**Preschool children are experiencing unfamiliar and sometimes scary emotions**

They are feeling more intense emotions on a daily basis. They need guidance in recognizing and naming those overwhelming emotions. Some of the emotions they are feeling are joy, anger, sadness, confusion, fear, and many more.

*Examples of emotional outbursts?*

## B) HOW THEY REACT TO STRESSORS... (most common observed in preschool settings)

**REGRESSION:**

This means they begin to show immature forms of behavior they had otherwise “outgrown”.

EXAMPLES?

**ATTENTION SEEKING:**

This means they take extreme approaches to seeking attention – positive or negative attention.

EXAMPLES?

**WITHDRAWAL FROM SOCIAL CONTACT:**

This means they begin to pull away from friends, teachers, family – become more introverted, maybe seemingly shy to most people.

EXAMPLES?

**CHANGES IN EVERYDAY PLAY:**

This means that preschool children may change their opinions/ideas of play, relationships, adult roles, etc. Challenging behaviors present themselves in many ways – mostly a negative response to life/environmental changes.

EXAMPLES?

**OTHER REACTIONS?**

C) **COMMON PRESCHOOL STRESSORS:**

**NEW BABY OR LOTS OF “BABY TALK” BEFORE HE/SHE ARRIVES:**

**COPING STRATEGIES:**

- discuss \_\_\_\_\_, led mostly by child
- answer \_\_\_\_\_ questions concerning this topic
- maintain \_\_\_\_\_ – even as detailed as mommy ALWAYS picking up
- sharing new child and preschooler’s new role with friends – have a BIG SIS/BRO party
- accept child’s \_\_\_\_\_ feelings

## **DIVORCE OR PARENT SEPARATION:**

### COPING STRATEGIES:

- have a \_\_\_\_\_ with parents and be honest!!!
- \_\_\_\_\_ a plan with teachers depending upon the attitudes of parents
- KEEP OUT of choosing sides or favoring one parent if possible!!!
- Let the child's \_\_\_\_\_ needs play a big part (ex. if he/she misses daddy, let him carry a picture in his pocket OR if he/she acts out the fighting occurring at home – let that be part of your discussion with him/her)
- Keep an \_\_\_\_\_ dialogue with the child and decide what is appropriate for parent discussions

## **ILLNESS/HOSPITALIZATION:**

### COPING STRATEGIES:

- \_\_\_\_\_ are key
- \_\_\_\_\_ is the best answer (it may hurt but it will be over quickly)
- don't \_\_\_\_\_ the feelings or anxieties (your such a strong boy – be brave)
- expect the \_\_\_\_\_ (each child's experience is different)
- all depends upon parent participation and parent's views (realistic with child or in denial)
- \_\_\_\_\_ and anxiety may be present for \_\_\_\_\_ afterwards

## **POOR-PARENTING:**

### COPING STRATEGIES:

- simple, \_\_\_\_\_ discussions (mommy hit daddy? Should we hit our friends? Sometimes we feel bad about hitting our friends don't we?)
- open forum for discussion
- \_\_\_\_\_, documentation, documentation – paper trails are especially important
- willingness to inquire – when is it neglect/abuse?
- DON'T ASK “\_\_\_\_\_” QUESTIONS!!!!!!!!!!

## **DEATH IN THE FAMILY:**

### COPING STRATEGIES:

- \_\_\_\_\_ access to answers about death – honest, easy-to-understand explanations
- opportunities for many questions and discussions if needed

- the chance to \_\_\_\_\_ the deceased appropriately (plant a tree, put up their pictures, etc)
- comfort from \_\_\_\_\_ adults – sometimes picking up the slack of grieving parents
- avoid babying or giving too much \_\_\_\_\_ attention if child doesn't seek it
- return to routines quickly and act the same