



A Practical Guide to Promoting Child Learning

INVITE + ENGAGE + TEACH

When a child won't engage

Sometimes a child will not or cannot join in an activity. This can be frustrating and can make the caregiver feel like the strategies do not work. When a child is having a hard time in an activity, caregivers can try these strategies to step back and figure out what to do next.

1. Listen:

Whether using words or not, the child is communicating. Rather than seeing this communication as a tantrum or ignoring, think about what the child is saying. The activity may be challenging or the child may be confused, need a break, or something else may be off in the activity. When the child knows the caregiver understands, it is easier to calm down.

2. Try again later:

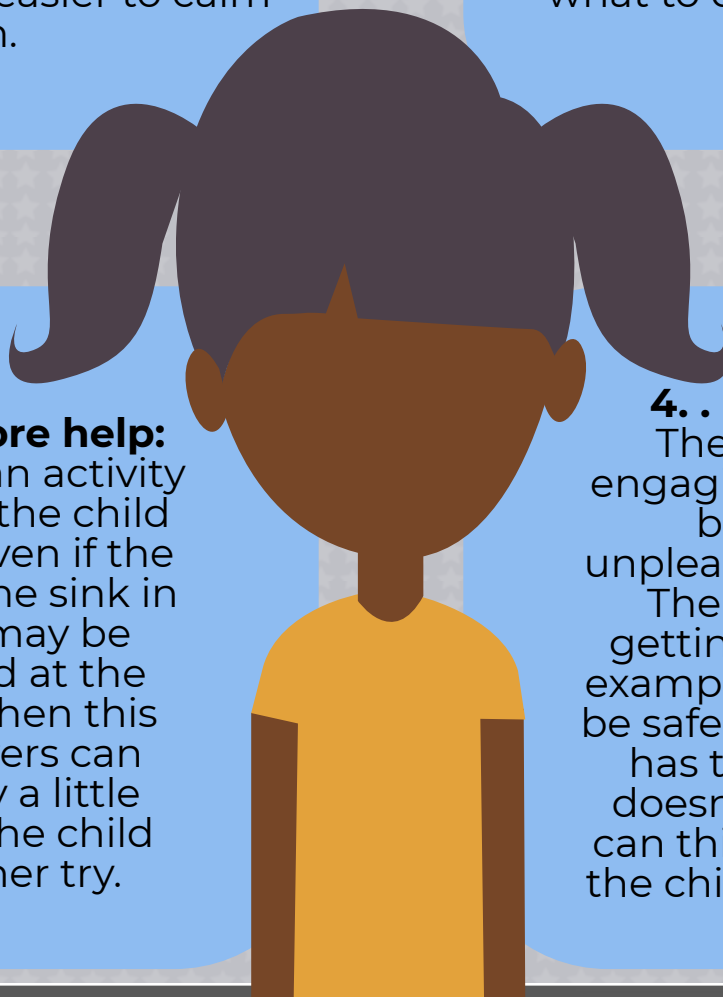
Sometimes the child just isn't ready right now. The child may be hungry, tired, or even confused because an adult is in the child's space. The caregiver shouldn't assume that a strategy will never work because it didn't work this time. Instead, think about when to try again and what to do a little differently next time.

3. Give a little more help:

Sometimes when an activity is a little too hard, the child may stop trying. Even if the child can walk to the sink in the morning, it may be harder when tired at the end of the day. When this happens, caregivers can make the activity a little easier and see if the child will give it another try.

4. Explain the plan:

The child may not be engaging in some activities because they are unpleasant for some reason. The child may not like getting in the car seat, for example, but has to use it to be safe in the car. If the child has to do something he doesn't like, the caregiver can think about how to use the child's interests to make it more fun.



Family, Infant & Preschool Program
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