

Is This Positive Guidance?

Scenario 1

Roberto loves to climb. His teacher has added an indoor climbing structure with a thick pad underneath. Roberto is stirring a pot by banging a spoon near a play stove. “You’re stirring the pot with a banging spoon. I can hear the sounds they’re making,” his teacher says. Roberto smiles. He bangs a few more times, then jumps over to the wooden stove and begins to climb on top of the stove. “Roberto, it’s not safe to climb on the stove. You could get hurt,” his teacher says as she gently helps him to put his feet back on the floor. When she lets go, Roberto immediately starts climbing again. “It looks like you really want to climb now. Let’s go over to our new gym so you can climb where it is safe.” She gently turns Roberto’s body so he can see the climber and points to it as she speaks. He smiles and eagerly jumps over to the climbing gym. His teacher follows close behind.

Scenario 2

It’s time to go outside. All of the children are ready except Dylan, who has just run into the Dramatic Play area and is hiding behind the sofa. The teacher goes in and says, “Dylan, it’s time to go outside. Everyone is ready to go.” Dylan shouts, “Not me!” The teacher moves towards him and he scoots out and wiggles under a table. The teacher says, “I wish that I could let you stay in but there is no one to stay with you.” Dylan crawls out and runs back behind the couch. “Don’t wanna go,” he says. “Dylan, I know you don’t want to go outside. I can’t stay with you because I have other children to care for.” Dylan runs out and the teacher quickly catches him. “I don’t like to chase you. I wish I didn’t have to, but we are going outside now.” She walks him back to where the others are waiting and says, “Would you rather hold my hand and hop like a bunny or hold my hand and stomp like an elephant to get outside?”

Scenario 3

Averie cries loudly as she lies on her cot. The teacher approaches her and rubs her back. “What’s wrong?” she asks, with another back pat. “Sorry, but you’re going to have to cry it out until you fall asleep. You have to learn to sleep on your own, Averie. Good night, honey,” she says as she strokes the child on the head and walks away.

Scenario 4

Franny runs to the art table and grabs a handful of beads that another child is using. “Franny, that’s not nice,” her teacher says. Franny grabs more of the beads. “I told you to stop it. Please put those beads back now,” her teacher says. When Franny does not return the beads, her teacher says, “Well, since you can’t play nicely, I suppose I’ll have to choose someone else to be our lunch helper today.” Franny begins to shout in protest. “Franny, if you would like to talk to me, you need to use your big-girl voice, please,” her teacher says sweetly.

Is This Positive Guidance?, continued

Scenario 5

Max loves to play at the water table. He often pours water on the floor and on other children. Today when Max goes to the water table, his teacher moves near and watches. Max begins filling a bowl with water. “You’re pouring water from the cup to the bowl,” says his teacher. Max nods, fills the bowl, and then dumps the water out near the edge of the table so some spills onto the floor. His teacher says, “Max, when there is water on the floor, I am afraid someone will slip and fall. Water stays in the water table. Please get a towel to clean up the water.” Max cleans up the water. When Max returns to the table, his teacher says, “Water stays in the water table. The choice is to keep the water in the table or play somewhere else. You may decide.” She stays, talking to him and the other child at the water table about measuring and pouring. In a few minutes, Max’s teacher sees him holding a cup of water outside of the water table. “Water stays in the table, please, Max.” He looks up and dumps the water in the table. Then he gets another cup and dumps out more water onto the floor. “I see you decided to pour water on the floor. Let’s clean up the water, and then we can play somewhere else,” says the teacher, handing Max a towel. After they clean up, she takes his hand and they walk away together.

Scenario 6

Rebecca is making banana bread with her class today. The teacher has asked two children to help mash the bananas. Rebecca is sitting at the table next to those children, watching them mash. She reaches her hand into one of the bowls and squeezes a piece of banana through her fingers. “That feels squishy,” she says. “Rebecca! Stop that,” says the teacher. “Your germs are getting in our food. Go wash your hands and find somewhere to play.” Rebecca frowns deeply but does not move. “Now, Rebecca, or you won’t get to have any of our bread when it’s done,” her teacher says.