**Biting: Understanding why?**



Understanding why a child bites is key to addressing the problem.

Not all children bite, most biting will occur between the ages of two and three. Biting is usually a phase which will pass, not usual beyond the age of four. Not all children bite out of anger or to hurt another child; most children will not understand how much pain they are causing.

Biting is most often a way of communicating – once you understand what children are communicating you can make a choice in how you should respond.

Some children can bite as a way of showing love. Toddlers can have really intense feelings but don’t know how to express them. Biting can be a way of expressing their feelings.

**Expressing emotion**

Toddlers are learning how their body works – they put things in their mouths to explore. It can be impulsive. Often, a baby will bite on someone when they’re teething. Sometimes toddlers bite when they’re over-excited.

**Experimenting**

**Defending**

Some children know biting is a way of getting other children – or their parents – to do what they want.

They don’t always do this consciously. It may happen when a group of children are jostling to be leader.

Young children learn to bite as a defence, especially if they can’t talk. Sometimes a child will bite others when they feel anxious or threatened. Sometimes changes or upsets at home can bring on this type of biting. These children are trying to establish a safety zone. When they bite, their victim moves away – it’s a great defence.

 **Controlling:**

**Controlling**

Observe carefully. Notice triggers and identify anxieties

Notice what the child is communicating through their behaviour



**AN APPROACH TO BITING**

Share the book

“Teeth are not for Biting”

Provide alternative items to chew/ bite e.g. raw veg and chewelry

Supervise children more closely at key times

Use a consistent, short but firm response

“Stop, biting hurts”

Give most attention to the injured child

Support understanding of social rules during play