

SUPPORTIVE MINDS

PARENT GUIDE • BODY NEEDS, COMMUNICATION & SAFETY

Biting & Kicking Behavior Blueprint™

Stop the harm. Find the need. Build a safer response.

MAKING THE IMPOSSIBLE POSSIBLE™

Guided by understanding. Driven by purpose. United by possibility.

Protect first. Teach later.

Biting and kicking are unsafe. Punishment alone does not teach the child what to do when their body needs input, space, relief, communication, or protection. Change what drives the behavior, and the behavior often changes.

“I WILL NOT LET YOU BITE OR KICK. I’M GIVING YOUR BODY SPACE.”

STOP THE HARM

Create distance, move others, remove unsafe objects, and protect vulnerable body areas without anger or unnecessary force.

FIND THE NEED

Ask what happened first, what the body needed, what communication was missing, and what changed afterward.

Important: Understanding the cause is not excusing the behavior. It is how adults choose an effective response and teach a safer one.

Step 1: identify the driver

PAIN OR BODY DISCOMFORT

Teething, dental pain, GI discomfort, headache, injury, fatigue, hunger, or illness can lower capacity.

ORAL OR MOVEMENT SENSORY NEED

Biting may provide strong jaw input; kicking may provide resistance, movement, or whole-body input.

COMMUNICATION BARRIER

The child may not yet have a reliable way to say stop, space, hurt, help, break, or finished.

OVERLOAD OR PANIC

The nervous system may use fight responses when sensory, emotional, cognitive, or social demands exceed capacity.

IMPULSE-CONTROL DIFFICULTY

The body may move before the child can pause, predict impact, or access a safer response.

LEARNED OUTCOME

Biting or kicking may have ended a task, created distance, gained attention, or changed a boundary before.

Step 2: match the response to the cause

OVERLOAD OR PANIC

Response: Reduce demands and stimulation. Use fewer words, create space, co-regulate, and protect recovery. Use the Meltdown C.O.R.E. Path™.

SENSORY OR BODY NEED

Response: Match oral input with a safe chew option, or match leg pressure and movement with safe resistance.

COMMUNICATION BARRIER

Response: Prompt and honor a simple way to communicate stop, space, pain, break, help, or finished.

LEARNED OUTCOME

Response: Keep the safe boundary consistent. Do not make biting or kicking the most effective route to an item, escape, attention, or control.

A mixed pattern is possible. If the child loses language, choices, and familiar skills, switch from teaching in the moment to safety and co-regulation.

Step 3: map the 0-60 Journey™

	Chewing, foot movement, tension, withdrawal, or a voice change
	Seeking pressure, crowding, repeated protesting, or asking to leave
	Jaw tightening, pacing, harder stomping, pushing, or rigid thinking
	Moving mouth or legs toward others, threats, swatting, or rapid escalation
	Attempting to bite or kick; familiar skills becoming difficult
	Active biting or kicking, panic, or loss of language and control

The child's 10-20 signals:

The child's 30-40 signals:

The child's 50-60 signals:

Steps 4-7: Protect-Reduce-Redirect Plan™

04 • Protect

Create distance, move others, remove unsafe objects, and protect vulnerable body areas.

Say: "I will not let you hurt."

05 • Reduce

Lower noise, demands, questions, eye-contact pressure, and extra language. Eliminate before you educate.

06 • Redirect

If the child can process, prompt the matching skill or safe sensory alternative. If capacity is gone, co-regulate and wait.

07 • Recover and repair

After recovery, check injuries, reconnect, repair what can be repaired, and practice the safer response without shame.

Avoid: Yelling, shaming, threatening, biting or kicking back, demanding an immediate apology, crowding, prolonged restraint, lecturing during dysregulation, or rewarding the behavior with the desired outcome.

Step 8: teach a safer equivalent

BITE A SAFE ITEM

Use an individualized chew tool or safe crunchy option when oral input is the need.

PUSH OR KICK SAFELY

Push a wall, kick a designated cushion, stomp, or use resistance with clear safety rules.

ASK FOR SPACE

Teach a word, gesture, or card that reliably makes others step back.

SHOW PAIN

Use “hurt,” a body map, pointing, or another communication system.

REQUEST A BREAK

Teach a brief break request and, when appropriate, a predictable return plan.

FIND AN ADULT

Practice moving away and seeking a trusted adult before the body reaches 50-60.

The replacement skill we will teach first:

Where and when we will practice it:

Prevention and safety plan

TRACK

Record triggers, body signals, biting or kicking, adult responses, and outcomes.

CHECK HEALTH

Investigate new or persistent pain, dental concerns, GI symptoms, sleep changes, or illness.

PREPARE SUPPORTS

Keep communication and sensory tools available where the behavior usually occurs.

PRACTICE & REINFORCE

Rehearse in calm moments and notice every safe attempt to use the replacement.

Common trigger, setting, or body need:

How adults will protect and create space:

Safe sensory or communication support:

Repair plan after recovery:

Safety note: If there is immediate danger, serious injury, broken skin, infection risk, head injury, or behavior you cannot safely manage, seek appropriate medical, emergency, or professional support. This educational guide does not replace individualized care.

Need an individualized plan? Schedule at calendly.com/optimizemylife/newclientintake or email mary@supportiveminds.us.

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