Guidance of
YOUNG CHILDREN

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with 63 illustrations

. . . to my parents, Helen and Pat Colonna,
for their guidance

. . . to Gail Peterson and Paul Muhs, for their
friendship during the NDSU days

. . . to my husband, Bill, for his encouragement

. . . to all the children with whom I've been fortunate
enough to make contact. They have taught me much.

Preface

Guidance of Young Children is intended primarily for students and teachers of child development and early childhood education who will be or who are already guiding young children in a variety of settings. The text may also be used by adults who teach about or who guide children in settings beyond the early childhood classroom, such as parents, extension specialists, parent educators, and adults who work with children in church and recreation groups.

The process of child guidance has two major goals—an immediate, short-term goal and a long-term goal. All adults who interact with children are concerned about the short-term goal of figuring out how to control children's behavior on a daily basis. Because children are not born with self-control, adults have to stop children from hurting themselves, from damaging property, and from disturbing others. Guiding children involves confrontation with real problems and situations that demand attention. I am gratified by the willingness of students, parents, and teachers to search for nonhurtful ways of controlling children's behavior.

Guiding young children also involves overriding, long-term goals. One of the basic assumptions of this text is that adults want to help children ultimately learn to control *themselves*, to become people who like and value themselves, who are humane, caring individuals, who are competent and independent, who stand up for their rights and negotiate conflicts without hurting others, and who are cooperative and helpful.

This text is based on the conviction that adults have a choice about how they interact with children. Both direct and indirect guidance techniques used by an adult determine to a large extent whether the long- and short-term goals of guidance are achieved. One's choice of actual guidance techniques depends on a number of factors:

A knowledge of and belief in guidance in a systems framework

A knowledge of types of discipline and the general effect of each type on the long- and short-term goals of guidance

A willingness to objectively examine various theoretical approaches to child guidance

This text is divided into three parts. Part One describes components of the guidance system: the child, the adults (teachers and parents), and the physical environment. The major theme here is that achieving the goals of guidance is affected by each component or part of the system and not just by the teacher. The role of each component of the system is discussed in a separate chapter.

Part Two deals with topics in child guidance. The central theme in Part Two is that the style of discipline experienced by a child will affect his or her daily behavior as well as the development of self-control, competence, and other aspects of the long-term goal of guidance. One chapter is devoted to the concept of discipline and the effect of various types of discipline on teaching children acceptable, nonhurtful, assertive behaviors and on the development of self-control. The remaining chapters in Part Two explore the development of certain components of a child's personality, such as aggression, prosocial behaviors, and self-esteem, and offer research-based, practical suggestions to teachers on how to either foster or inhibit these aspects of personality.

Part Three deals with three different theoretical approaches to child guidance. It is important that teachers and parents realize that a number of different researchers and theorists have constructed theories about guiding young children and that each theory is based on certain beliefs about how children grow and develop. Theories have been extremely useful because child guidance principles have been derived from them. Each theory has its own followers who advocate specific child guidance programs based on that theory. Acceptance or rejection of any theory should be based on one's own belief in the nature of human development and an analysis of each theory.

Every adult develops his or her own unique style of interacting with and guiding children. I hope that this book serves as a framework in the formation of the guidance "style" of persons who accept the responsibility and pleasure of guiding young children.

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Marian Marion

Contents

THE GUIDANCE SYSTEM

The guidance system exists to support the socialization and to nurture the full growth and development of children. Achieving this goal depends on how smoothly the parts of the system mesh, or work together. The guidance system for young children includes the child, the child's parents, the child's teacher, and the physical environment of the classroom. A child's behavior is determined by constant interactions among these system parts. Each of the components affects and is affected by the other parts.

Many people believe that guiding children is a unidirectional process, that is, they think that guidance rests solely with adults; but according to Mead (1976), socialization is not unidirectional. Young children, themselves, are integral parts of and heavily influence the guidance process. A preschool child's ability to be guided by an adult is tied to his or her level of development in language, perception, memory, and thinking ability. While a young child has made significant strides in these abilities, he or she is still severely limited, and these limitations have an impact on the effectiveness of any adult guidance technique.

A teacher's role in the guidance system is an important one. Teachers who guide children effectively know and use the cognitive abilities and limitations of young children as the basis for developing guidance techniques. While a teacher is not totally responsible for a given child's behavior, he or she is responsible for creating a classroom atmosphere that supports and nurtures positive prosocial behavior. Teachers who provide a supportive classroom climate or an open guidance system know the importance of growth-producing limits on a child's behavior. Teachers in a supportive guidance system also know how to communicate with children in an open, clear, honest way.

Parents are also part of the guidance system. Child development literature cited throughout this text documents the impact of parents on their children. Each 3- to 6-year-old child in a classroom has had several years of contact and thousands of interactions with a parent. Parents vary in their knowledge of how children develop, their values

regarding appropriate behavior, and their knowledge of and ability to use techniques to elicit desired behavior. The variability of child behavior in any classroom is in large part a result of variations in child-rearing practices experienced by the children. Teachers who acknowledge parents as a vital part of the guidance system work with parents in guiding children.

The fourth aspect of the early childhood guidance system is the physical, or built, environment of the classroom. The built environment is the setting in which adults and children interact. A well-designed physical environment indirectly supports the development of positive behavior. If designed poorly, the physical environment can actually foster disruptive behavior in children.

Part one of the text examines the role of each of these parts of the guidance system. Chapter 1 focuses on the child in the system—the impact of a child's developmental level on the success or failure of a guidance technique. Chapter 2 is concerned with the adults—parents and teacher—in the system. It describes how adults can create an emotional climate that supports the development of positive behavior. Chapter 3 explores the classroom characteristics that set the stage for positive behavior.

1 The child in the guidance system
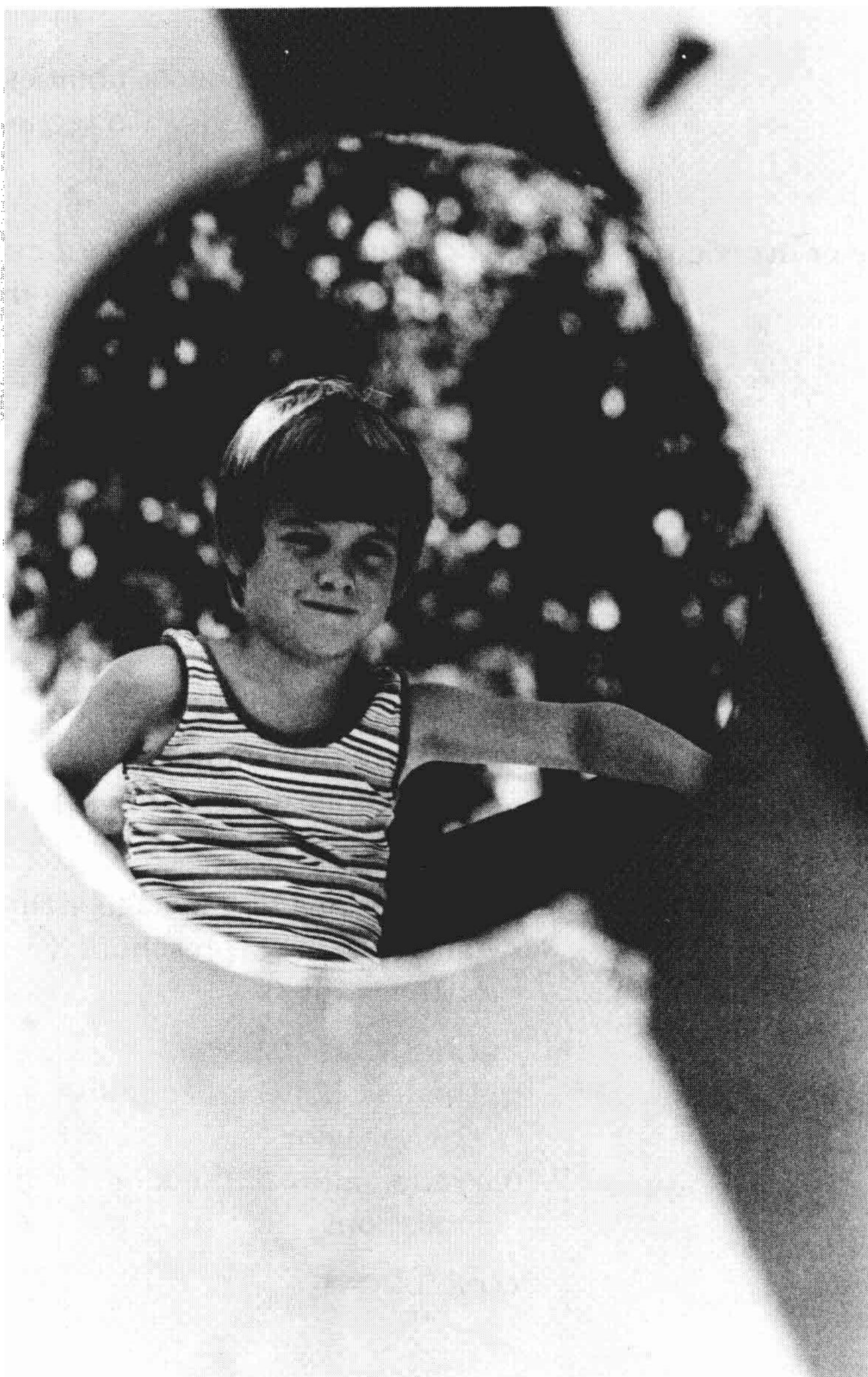
In this chapter you will learn about . . .

- Development of self-control during early childhood
- Effects of the young child's developmental level on self-control
- The young child's abilities and limitations in memory, perception, language, and thinking ability
- Effects of the child's abilities and limitations on adult guidance techniques

Chapter overview

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CONCLUSIONS

John and Alice, both 4½ years old, are working with pegboards. They take their pegs from one basket in the middle of the table. Alice suddenly pulls the basket over to her and refuses to let John have any more pegs. When John reaches for the pegs Alice screams, "They're mine!" John responds by hitting Alice.

This is a typical event in homes and other early childhood settings. All adults eventually have to deal with problems arising when children do not share. Adults react in different ways to this and other normal developmental problems. One teacher might throw up his or her hands in disgust and contemplate leaving the field of teaching. "After all," this teacher thinks, "I thought children were always sweet and cute and fun to be around. I'm not sticking around to watch them squabble over toys." To the children this teacher might say, "You have to share," "It's not nice to grab toys," or "Alice, you give back those pegs."

Another teacher, a bit more realistic, reacts differently. Realizing that this is an episode of typical behavior of preschool children, Mr. Moore, a hypothetical teacher, tries to deal with it so that the feelings of both children are acknowledged and each is given a more positive, alternative behavior. "Alice, the pegs were for both of you. John needs some too. John, you seemed so angry when Alice took your pegs that you hit her. When you hit Alice you hurt her. Next time, use words to tell Alice what you want." Mr. Moore also gets another basket, so that each child has one, and divides the pegs.

How adults react to this or any other developmental problem is based on their beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge about children. Admonishing John and Alice for feeling angry denies anger as a legitimate feeling, implies a belief that children should already know how to share, and also implies an attitude that they are just being perverse and selfish when they argue. The second teacher believed that some 4½-year-old children cannot be expected to know how to share but that adults can choose techniques to guide the children toward increased cooperation and self-control.

Some teachers guide children effectively because they know what children are like. They genuinely like children and marvel at the child's joyful, fresh approach to life. At the same time, though, they are realistic about young children. They know that children do not automatically know how to share; that children occasionally get angry, jealous, and depressed; and that some children tease, whine, and nag. This realistic attitude is not pessimistic. It is balanced by an optimism also based on knowledge about a child's ability to grow and change as he or she gets older and has growth-producing experiences with adults.

The basis of any valid guidance technique is an adult's knowledge of child development. The teacher knows that a child's capabilities and limitations determine the nature of the child's relationship with others. The child's level of development also

sets limits on the ability to understand and comply with adult guidance as well as on the ability to attain self-control. Knowledge of a child's developmental level, then, forms the groundwork for all guidance techniques.

This chapter emphasizes the effect of a preschool child's level of cognitive development on his or her emerging self-control. A young child's abilities and limitations in language, logical thinking, perception, and memory have an impact on that child's relationship with others and on the degree to which a teacher's guidance techniques are successful.

SELF-CONTROL IN THE PRESCHOOL CHILD
Self-control emerges during the preschool years

One of the most notable changes marking the early childhood period is the emergence of the capacity for voluntary self-control (Flavell, 1977). A child progresses through the preschool years, acquiring some sort of general ability to regulate internally and to guide his or her own behavior. The locus of control shifts from control outside of the self, or external control, to control within the self, or internal control.

Because self-control becomes evident for the first time during early childhood, teachers often expect a child to show total control. This is a mistake because the self-control of young children is just emerging, just beginning. No skill, whether it is talking, roller skating, cooking, or woodworking, emerges at a sophisticated, polished level. The same is true for self-control. Just as successful woodworking requires practice of skills and of use of tools and materials, successful self-control requires practice. Even though John or Alice in the introductory example occasionally astonish their teacher with remarkable self-control, the teacher is not surprised when Alice takes all the pegs or John gets the urge to punch Alice. This emerging ability for self-regulation is evident at times but is completely lacking at other times. The role of teachers and parents, then, is to help preschool children recognize and strengthen their emerging capacity for self-regulation.

Definition of self-control

John or Alice would show self-control if they could exhibit any of the following specific behaviors (Rohwer, 1970; Flavell, 1977):

1. *Initiate a plan and then carry it out over a period of time.* For example, while working with playdough, John announced that he would make Christmas tree ornaments. He patiently kneaded the dough, rolled it out flat, and cut his own designs. He then accompanied Mr. Moore to the kitchen to bake the ornaments, and later that afternoon he decorated them.

2. *Intentionally not do something that is tempting but forbidden or inappro-*

Courtesy Child-Family Center, University of New Hampshire.

priate to the situation. While in the park, Alice was attracted by the brilliant arrangement of red, yellow, and pink tulips. She stared at them and was tempted to pick a few but showed self-control when she resisted.

John, too, shows much more self-control at 4½ years of age than he did a year ago. Last year in church he really enjoyed listening to the singing and decided to sing too. As the congregation finished a hymn, John sang his favorite "Sesame Street" tune. His Dad told him that the minister needed to talk and he would have to stop singing. Outside, his father told him that "Rubber Duckie" was a good song but that people do not sing "Sesame Street" songs in church. This year, John knows several new "Sesame Street" songs but is able to control himself and refrain from singing them in church.

3. *Wait and suspend action.* Internal control is shown when children resist their first impulse—when they step back, examine the situation, and then act. At the pegboard table things go smoothly until Brady joins the group and takes pegs from John's basket. John seems surprised, but this time does not hit the other child. He takes his teacher's advice and uses words to say what he feels, "Brady, they are *my* pegs. You can get your own pegs from the big basket."

4. *Postpone and delay gratification.* In this case children show enough control

to put off until later something they would like to have or experience right now. Alice and three other children are making cupcakes. Each child adds an ingredient, stirs the mixture, and then fills his or her own paper baking cup. Alice tastes the mix with her finger, decides that it tastes good and is about to gulp a few spoonfuls when she hears the teacher say that she will have a very small cupcake if she eats the mixture before it is baked. The finished cakes are to be topped with fresh peaches and Alice thinks that will taste good too. She delays immediate gratification by choosing to wait for the finished product.

How self-control evolves

As children get older they become better able to communicate. Their more sophisticated communication skills enable them to understand another person's instructions or behavioral demonstrations (modeling) (Flavell, 1977). This susceptibility to control by others is the precursor of voluntary self-control. Because a child is able to understand and be controlled by others, he or she learns what control is. This knowledge is internalized and is eventually manifested as internal control (such as *not* picking tulips or waiting for a baked cupcake). Self-control evolves slowly. At first other people control a child; the control is external. Gradually this external verbal and nonverbal control becomes internalized, and the young child begins to have self-control.

Other people control a child's behavior verbally. Words are used by the adult to tell the child what is expected. Mr. Moore used verbal control when he outlined a few basic rules for a field trip. He used words to tell John and Alice how they could control themselves during the pegboard incident. To Alice, he verbalized the need to let her cupcake mix bake before eating it. In the spring he talked with the children about leaving the buds on flowering plants. When two children worked at the sandpit, he told them that the sand was to stay in the enclosure. (See Chapter 2 for a direct method of verbal guidance by setting limits effectively.)

Other people control a child's behavior nonverbally. Using words is not the only method of controlling behavior. Teachers often use gestures to let the child know what is expected. At storytime, Mr. Moore used a soft clapping rhythm as a signal to gain the attention of the children. On a field trip he held up one hand as a signal to the entire group to stop at an intersection.

Teachers also use nonverbal control when they manipulate the environment. (See Chapter 3 for a discussion of the effect of the physical environment on a child's behavior.) The physical setup of the classroom can either contribute to or impede the development of self-control. For example, Mr. Moore discovered that having a puzzle rack in the table-toy area was an effective way to remind the children to put the puzzles away neatly and without nagging from the teacher. He also discovered that he had a "zoom area" in the room, a stretch of space that invited running and

zooming. Simply by rearranging the block area he broke up the space and controlled the running.

The child controls his or her own behavior by verbalizing instructions or plans aloud or privately. After a few weeks in school and hearing Mr. Moore talk about the daily schedule, Alice was playing in the block corner. She said aloud, "It is clean-up time, time to park my truck. Then I wash my hands, and then I have snack." Mr. Moore has also been encouraging the children to wait for the basket of snacks to be passed around the table by saying, "John takes the basket and passes it to Alice. Alice takes the basket and passes it to Tim," and so on until everyone has been served. One day, Alice picked up Mr. Moore's phrase and made it into a song to the tune of "Ten Little Helpers." She patiently waited for her turn and resisted grabbing the basket from Tim. This is the growth of self-control. Mischel, Ebbesen, and Zeiss (1972) found that some of the 4½-year-old children in their study controlled themselves while waiting by talking themselves through the wait or simply by singing to pass the time.

The child controls himself or herself nonverbally. Mischel, Ebbesen, and Zeiss (1972) also found that self-control can be induced nonverbally. In their study some children endured the waiting by hiding their head in their arms or sleeping. On the first day at school, Mr. Moore used words to remind Alice to wait for the basket. Later that week, during lunch, he noticed that she put one of her hands on top of the other and asked her what she was doing. "I'm holding down this hand so I can't grab the basket," she replied.

Implications of emerging self-control

The slow but radical changes evident in both John and Alice during the early childhood years help them understand others more easily. Therefore, they are more easily guided. John, Alice, and others their age, because of an increasingly sophisticated linguistic system, have a means of self-control—language—available now that was absent during infancy. Because they can refrain from performing some impulsive acts they can be expected to display less and less thoughtless behavior. Their play episodes are not punctuated as frequently by arguments based on lack of self-control. They can play and carry through activities for themselves. In short, the shift from external to internal control, that is to self-control, benefits both the children and the adults who work with them.

Age is one factor contributing to increased self-control, but simply getting older does not guarantee the growth of internal regulation of behavior. Other factors play a part. The emergence of self-control is tied to the child's language ability and ability to think logically, to perceive, and to remember. The limits of these abilities determine the child's capacity for self-control. How adults react to the child's abilities and limitations determines, to a large degree, the child's level of self-control. To develop self-control, then, a child must have certain basic abilities as well as experiences with adults who know how to guide effectively.