

CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR

Momo hits his friend in kindergarten

Authors: Eva Brlek and Julija Kukec

Illustrations: Sven Nemet



**CALMING AND SELF-REGULATION TECHNIQUES
FOR CHILDREN + TIPS FOR ADULTS**



Dr. Eva Brlek, Prof. of Rehab. & Psychotherapist

Eva Brlek is a professional in educational rehabilitation and psychotherapist. Following her dreams, she opened a private practice, Kabinet Nueva, where she can enable the maximum stimulation and realization of the potential, abilities, and possibilities of both children and adults. With an interdisciplinary approach and innovative therapeutic methods, she provides diagnostic, counseling, and therapy services in educational rehabilitation, psychology, and psychotherapy. Eva is mostly fulfilled in her role of a mother to a wonderful boy, with whom she grows and develops to her fullest possible extent.



Julija Kukec, mag. psych.

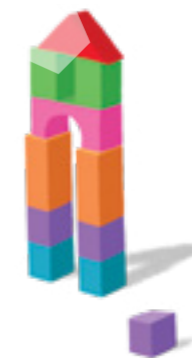
Julija Kukec has a master's degree in psychology, she is a practitioner of reality therapy and an ECHA specialist for education of the gifted. She is a professional assistant in a kindergarten, working with children to monitor their development and identify difficulties and potential giftedness. She also provides educational programs through lectures and workshops, diagnosis, and support for children and parents in the form of counseling. She is the mother of two children, who are her biggest and most important inspiration in every area of her work. In her free time, Julija enjoys spending time outdoors with her husband and children.

Eva Brlek and Julija Kukec

Momo hits his friend in kindergarten

Guilt and shame as a background
of challenging behaviors

Illustrations: Sven Nemet



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Adults often encounter with child's behaviors they don't know how to deal with, react to, solve, and what to do. That is why experts often describe them as **challenging behaviors**.

These are unacceptable behaviors because their intensity, frequency, or duration can endanger the physical safety of the child or others and interfere or pose a risk to the child's optimal learning or inclusion in social interactions with peers and adults.

One such challenging behavior is shown in the following story. We will see how challenging behavior can be driven by **feelings of guilt and shame**.



Panda Momo got very angry, hit his friend in kindergarten and knocked over his blocks. By doing so, he violated the safety of others, potentially his own safety, their friendship, and deprived himself of fun with his peers and learning through play.

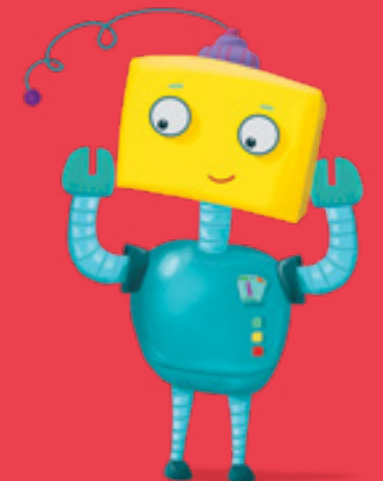
But Momo, just like all children who show similar challenging behaviors, chooses such behaviors because they haven't learned better and more efficient ways of **dealing with frustration**. We cannot simply label such children as naughty or poorly raised. At the core of every challenging behaviour are a child's unsatisfied needs, a bad self-image, and low self-confidence. Sometimes, behavior can be a reaction to traumatic experiences. Behind every child's behavior, there is a specific reason that adults often do not recognize when looking from their perspective.

For a child to learn how to choose better and more efficient behaviors, it is necessary to adopt the ability to self-regulate. Self-regulation is an adaptation process, and it includes a child's ability to face challenges and stresses.

Self-regulation includes: managing emotional reactions, thinking about what triggered the emotions, choosing an appropriate reaction, and the child's ability to satisfy their own individual desires and needs.

When we help a child to learn self-regulation, we are building better and less stressful relationships with them, and we will also help them have more positive relationships with peers. That means more self-esteem, self-confidence, empathy, better socio-emotional competencies, and better overall mental health.

Find out how Momo succeeded to self-regulate in the story that follows.



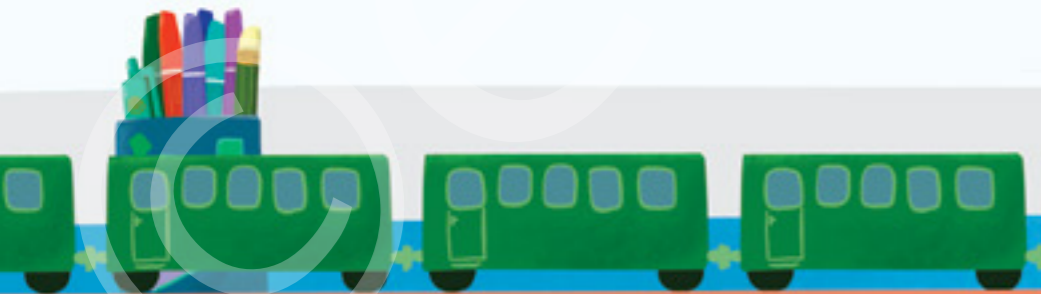
It was a beautiful sunny morning. Momo stretched out on his bed, yawned a few times and then shouted: – Mum, am I going to kindergarten today?

– Of course you're going. Today is Monday, your favourite day of the week.

Momo jumped out of his bed and said with excitement: – I can't wait to see all my friends! Today we will play football and build tall brick towers. We'll probably also have car races.

Mum was smiling.

– Come on then, hurry up. Let's get going as soon as possible.



When he arrived at the kindergarten, Momo first saw his teacher. He smiled at her and said, "Good morning". Then he ran towards his friends and hugged Marc, Tony and then Rita and Lana. They were already playing with wooden blocks.

– Can I play with you too? – Momo asked right away.

– You can, but don't knock down our tower again - Tony replied.

– Of course I won't, I know how to play nicely – Momo said seriously because he was a little worried when he heard those words from Tony.

– You don't know how to play nicely, and you keep knocking down towers. Yesterday you knocked down two of mine. I built a huge colourful skyscraper. It was so big it almost reached the sky. And then you started to roll around all over the floor, and you knocked them down. Don't you remember? – Tony stood up and tried to remind Momo what had bothered him.





At that moment, Momo felt the heat rushing through his body. It rose from his tummy to his heart and hit him straight in the head. He felt his face turn red and he became furious. Then he kicked Tony and started shouting: – I didn't knock down your tower yesterday! It wasn't t my fault! Your tower fell on its own or someone else knocked it over! It wasn't my fault!

And then he kicked Tony once again.

Tony started crying and ran to the teacher. He was very upset, and explained to her through his sobs how Momo was rude to him and how he had kicked him twice.

The Teacher went up to Momo and tried to calm him down with words. But he kept shouting. She tried to calm him down with a hug, but Momo wasn't in a mood for a hug and while struggling, he also kicked the teacher and then threw himself on the floor.

