

## **Protocol for Handling a Child Who Behaves Aggressively**

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The protocol listed below is to be followed when one child becomes physically or emotionally aggressive with another child or a team member. More specifically anytime a child deliberately tries to hurt another child, including but not limited to pushing, punching, kicking, biting, spitting, bullying, using foul language, intimidation, etc.

### **Important Notes:**

- Although a protocol is important, these matters very often differ from case to case. Contact MGE Support with details so we can provide more specific advice.
- Generally, this protocol applies to children 3 and older. A child under 3 is typically not acting to intentionally hurt another individual; they may not be emotionally mature enough to understand their actions. There may be exceptions.
- Although “rough housing” is not permitted at My Gym, it is typically not considered an aggressive act.
- If one child is aggressive toward another, and the child on the receiving end retaliates physically as well, then this protocol would apply to that child too. It applies anytime a child is aggressive toward another. Of course, there may be exceptions, and this is a “case by case” topic.
- This protocol supersedes the 5-Step Discipline Protocol and may be implemented upon the first incident.
- Try to remain as neutral as possible.
- It is common/recommended for the owner or director to get involved in these matters as well as conversations with the parent/s.

### **Steps to Take After an Incident of Aggression:**

Note: If the owner or director is not present, they should be informed of the incident at the first opportunity

1. First, make certain that the child against whom the act was committed is not severely injured.
  - a. One teacher should stay with that child (and parent if present) until it is certain the child is OK. It may also be necessary to remain with the parent so they are calm.
  - b. If any first aid is needed, it should be performed by the teacher who is most qualified (or parent). Depending on the severity of the injury, it may be necessary to call 911. This is very rare.
  - c. If the parent of assaulted child is present: Inform this parent that the My Gym protocol will be followed in dealing with the matter at hand.
  - d. If the parent of the assaulted child is not present:
    - i. Decide if the assault is severe enough to call the parent to come back to the gym immediately.
    - ii. If the child is physically injured, cannot be calmed emotionally, or just wants their parent, then the parent should be contacted.
    - iii. If, after your assessment, you find that the child is not physically hurt and wants to return to class, you can allow the child to return to the program. Complete an Incident Report to review with the parent (which is OK to give them).

2. Remove the child who caused the issue from the gym floor (i.e., walk them to the lobby).
  - a. Be gentle and caring. In no way should you ever show any aggression to any child.
  - b. Explain that this behavior is not OK at My Gym and that, because of XX behavior, they cannot go back into the gym. Explain that this is not OK at My Gym.
  - c. If the parent of the child who caused the issue is not present:
    - i. One teacher will need to call the parent while the other teacher runs explore time.
    - ii. Briefly explain the incident and that, according to My Gym policy, the child is not permitted to reenter the play area today.
    - iii. Kindly request that the parent return to the gym immediately to pick up their child because, in accordance with My Gym protocol, they may not reenter the gym that day. They may return another day.
    - iv. Once the parent is present, follow the steps below for when the parent is present.
  - d. If the parent of the child who caused the incident is present:
    - i. One teacher must speak with the parent of the aggressive child while the other teacher runs explore time.
    - ii. This conversation should be conducted in private, either off to the side, in the office, etc.
    - iii. Briefly explain the incident and that, according to the My Gym policy, the child is not permitted to reenter the play area that day.
    - iv. Inform the parent that, if the situation occurs again, we may ask that the child take some time away from the gym. A freeze or refund will be in order.
    - v. This conversation must be carried out in a non-judgmental manner. We want the parent to know that we understand that some children go through stages of aggressiveness. It is purely for the safety of the children in the gym that we must follow our protocol.
3. Continue class curriculum and adjust for the time missed.
4. After class, an incident report should be completed by the teacher who witnessed the event. If no teacher actually observed the act, the one who was closest to it when it occurred would complete the report.
5. A follow-up call to the family of the child who was assaulted should be made that same evening. You may also call the other family as well, if you feel it is appropriate or necessary. We are supporting both families through this incident.
6. Inform your entire team of the situation.
  - a. This is done because many times a child who behaves aggressively may do so again. Since children come to various classes (because of make-ups and unlimited classes), the entire team must be aware of the incident so they can be extra vigilant for the safety of the children.
  - b. It is important to stick to the facts. Do not gossip or exaggerate.
  - c. The child who was aggressive should not be treated any differently or made to feel bad.

**Handling Repeated Aggression:**

1. This is a very nuanced matter, and owners/directors may consult with MGE Support to assist.
2. Aggressive behavior should never be ignored. It must be addressed immediately upon each occurrence. Each time, the parent should be informed that there is a 3-incident policy at My Gym and that the child may not return if he/she reaches this point.
3. Generally, if a child is aggressive in the manner described in this protocol 3 times within a short window of time, the owner/director may choose to speak to the parent and have the child “take a break from the gym” for a minimum of 3 months. After the conversation with the parent, the child is unenrolled, and a refund is issued.
4. The conversation with the parent must be handled in a caring and supportive manner with the hope of the child’s returning to the gym in the future.
  - a. *Example: Hi Mary... As we’ve spoken about previously, unfortunately, Joey has continued to XXX (behavior), and I am very sorry, but according to our policy, we are going to have to ask that you take a break from My Gym for at least 3 months. We have spoken to Joey and explained this behavior is not OK and that, since it has continued, we feel this is the best option to ensure the safety of all children in the gym. I am very sorry it has come to this... and, of course, we will provide you a refund for any unused classes.*

These matters are not typically cut and dry. Please contact MGE Support with any details; we can provide more specific advice.