

gentle physical contact. They receive comfort from the sound of a soft voice even though they do not understand the words that are spoken. Until infants reach the age at which they experience stranger anxiety, they readily respond to any firm, gentle handling and quiet, calm speech. Loud, harsh sounds and sudden movements are frightening.

Early Childhood

Children younger than 5 years old are **egocentric**. They see things only in relation to themselves and from their point of view. Therefore focus communication on them. Tell them what they can do or how they will feel. Experiences of others are of no interest to them. It is futile to use another child's experience in an attempt to gain the cooperation of small children. Allow them to touch and examine articles they will come in contact with. A stethoscope bell will feel cold; palpating a neck might tickle. Although they have not yet acquired sufficient language skills to express their feelings and wants, toddlers can effectively use their hands to communicate ideas without words. They push an unwanted object away, pull another person to show them something, point, and cover the mouth that is saying something they do not wish to hear.

Everything is direct and concrete to small children. They are unable to work with abstractions and interpret words literally. Analogies escape them because they are unable to separate reality from fantasy. For example, they attach literal meaning to such common phrases as “two-faced,” “sticky fingers,” and “coughing your head off.” Children who are told they will get “a little stick in the arm” may not be able to envision an injection (Fig. 4-3). Therefore, use simple, direct language rather than phrases that might be misinterpreted by a small child.