



Working with Challenging Behaviors

Get the Behaviors You Want, and Stop Those You Don't!

Course Objectives:

- Identify what is behind specific negative behaviors you experience in your early childhood environment
- Label techniques to prevent challenges from occurring

"Remember, everyone in your classroom has a story that leads to misbehavior or defiance. Nine times out of 10, the story behind the behavior won't make you angry. It will break your heart." ~ Annette Breaux ~

1 Way to work with challenging behaviors? *Prevent the challenge from occurring!

- ✓ Be an early childhood scientist and observe, what did you try? What was the result?
- ✓ Continue to evaluate, did you get the results you intended? If not, adjust.
- ✓ Make it less likely the fire will start by making the environment unfriendly to fire
- ✓ Figure out and address the "Why" behind the behavior



Identify the "Fuel"

- Hungry ●
- Tired ●
- Needs to move ●
- Uninterested ●
- Feeling sick ●
- Seeking attention ●
- Experiencing stress ●

Put out the Fire

- ★ Provide comfort
- ★ Have child sit close you
- ★ Give a job such as hold the book
- ★ Provide a snack
- ★ Incorporate physical activity
- ★ Encourage a rest break
- ★ Make the learning novel and interesting



Addressing the "Why" Behind the Behavior



Medical Issues: Check intensity, duration, frequency of issue



Seek help when challenges persist

*"Well child" checks *Nutritionist visit *School District (Early Childhood Screening)



Lack of Sleep Estimated 43% of children experience some type of sleep difficulty (86% of children with developmental delays)



Monitor cues



Help child "notch down" to resting *No media, physical activity, trips out, rushing right before



Set up the environment

*Dim lights *Play quiet music *Reduce activity *Comfortable temperature *Quiet activities



Temperament: One piece of the puzzle – Simply the way the child is wired to respond to the world.

Do you have a child who:

- *Won't join in right away? *Is sensitive to temperature, clothing, sound, light?
- *Is very active and has trouble sitting still? *Feels emotions very strongly and loudly?
- *Has a serious mood? *Is very persistent even in the face of a challenge? *Is easily distracted?



Individualize care, adjusting your expectations and helping the child succeed in your environment



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TYPICAL CHALLENGES AND THEIR LINK TO DEVELOPMENT



Typical Development

- Developmentally-appropriate behavior can lead to specific power struggles
- Consider the type of behavior or issue and the age/stage of the child
- Difficulty can begin when children enter a new developmental stage or slip back due to stress
- Learning about normal development can help you have realistic expectations of children and avoid challenges
- According to Erik Erikson's theory on development, this age group is focusing on building initiative" (3-5 years) or "industry" (5-8 years). So, they have a strong desire to take initiative and control of their environment and, by 6, start to derive pleasure from learning and achieving things. If they do not get a chance to do this, they may feel guilt or feel inferior to others.



- May experience intense embarrassment and fear
- Have a strong need to control their pace, environment, and world
- Learning what they can control and what others control
- Remember the past and are starting to anticipate the future
- Have increased imagination and "magical thinking"
- Start to understand adults do not know everything
- Experience a strong need to be "right"
- Fluctuate between feeling powerful one moment to insecure the next
- Driven to learn and search for answers
- Strong drive to be first and win
- Think in "concrete" terms

Age-Appropriate Behavior Stemming from Development



- May avoid doing something that may result in an undesired outcome
- Dawdles (especially when rushed)
- Prone to argue
- May resist a routine or your plan
- Sneak things or "tells stories"
- Challenge rules and expectations
- Boss others around and try to control play
- Ask endless questions such as "What?" and "Why?"
- May resist change and insist things remain the same
- May be boastful



What could you do to prevent these age-appropriate challenges from occurring?



Learn about development and make sure your expectations are realistic for the age and stage of the child



Avoid unnecessary restriction

- Avoid dipping into their "power bucket" when not necessary or important
- Make it fun!



Utilize the child's skills!

*"It is not what you do for your children, but what you have taught them to do for themselves that will make them successful human beings."
— Ann Landers*



Working with Challenging Behaviors Part 1



The Environment:

Feels loved - Dependable routines - Clear rules, expectations and limits - Balanced day - Empathy and understanding



Stress:



- Could do, now cannot; would do, now won't
- Stress may be subtle or apparent
- Stress impacts our brain and functioning



Consider what has been happening with family or in child's world



Trauma



- There are many "Adverse Childhood Experiences" that impact behavior
- Contemporary trauma research demonstrates that all types of trauma can undermine children's abilities to learn, create healthy attachments, form supportive relationships, and follow classroom expectations (NCTSNSC 2008).
- Roughly 26 percent of children in the United States witness or experience a trauma before the age of 4 (Briggs-Gowan et al. 2010).



Avoid "unevenness of emotional tone"



Give limited choices



Provide dependable routines

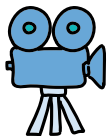
- Set a pattern to the day
- Include something the child wants and needs
- Build in times when the child can be in control of his schedule
- Make it visual



Give the child a "yellow light" by "prepping" the child for what is coming next



- Use verbal cues
- Use visual cues
 - Timer
 - Blink lights
 - Ring bell
 - Pictures
 - Visual Schedules



Video Analysis: Which techniques does the adult use to prevent challenging behaviors?



Your main takeaway so far: Label a technique you can use to prevent challenges from occurring in your setting



Working with Challenging Behaviors Part 2

Objective: Label techniques to prevent challenges from occurring and encourage cooperation

"When you want something to change, you must change something."
- L. Tobin



Prevent the challenge from occurring!

1. Figure out and address the "why" behind the behavior
2. Teach the needed skills
3. Build your relationship
4. Provide a supportive environment

"If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always got."
-Henry Ford



Lacking Skills: Self-regulation and communication skills are needed to control one's behavior



- "Executive Functioning" skills
- Communication
- The ability to reflect
- Emotional Intelligence



Take the time to teach the child the skills needed

"The kids who need the most love will ask for it in the most unloving ways"
- Russel Barkley



Doesn't Feel a Sense of Belonging



Build your relationship

- Increase connection time during daily routines
- Use books like "Have you filled your bucket today?" and activities to help build a sense of connection in the classroom such as "Helpful hands" or "Kind hearts"



Notice and specifically praise the behaviors you want

Let's Practice!

- Child is helping you clean up →
- Child is waiting quietly for snack →
- Our challenge? →



What did the child do? The result?

"If you want your children to improve, let them overhear the nice things you say about them to others."
-Hiam Ginnot



Send positive messages showing you believe the child will do it.

Tell yourself the child can do it.
Tell the child you know they can do it.
Tell other people you know your child can do it.



Help child define themselves positively "Some children 'choose' to be helpers!"

? What other strategies do you (or could you) use to build a relationship with a child with challenging behaviors?
What is your takeaway from this section?



Working with Challenging Behaviors Part 2



How we communicate

Communication is

*Visual *Tactile *Tone *Use of Time *Physical Space

"Act as if what you do makes a difference. It does."
- William James



"The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion it has taken place."
-George Bernard Shaw



Communicate clearly

- Match your verbal and nonverbal communication
- Get the child's attention before speaking
- Use statements, not questions
- Check your message - To the child, sounds like an instruction or choice?



Prompt the child what "to do"

*Match why they are doing it *Make it sound fun *Get excited about it yourself *Stay relaxed

Let's Practice!

- No yelling!
- Stop fidgeting.
- Our challenge?



Honor their wishes in fantasy

Let's Practice!

- Child won't put on their coat



Set a positive tone



Video Analysis: What does the early childhood educator do? What is the result?



Main takeaway - Label a technique you can use to prevent challenges from occurring and encourage cooperation.

