

Managing Behavior

Language, Literacy, and Social-Emotional Development

Or Promoting Positive, Regulated Behavior in Care and Education Settings

Goal: To provide workshop participants with concrete classroom- or home care-based strategies for noticing, reflecting on, and managing children's challenging behavior.

Why focus on behavior in care and education settings?

- Children who act out receive less instruction and are less well-liked by their peers.
- Social, emotional, and behavior problems and poor academic gains tend to happen together.
- Children who act out affect other children in the classroom—diverting child and teacher attention.
- Extreme behaviors are very stressful for teachers, and for children, and result in a more demanding and taxing environment for all.

How does effective management of children's behavior...

- **Build Language and Literacy Skills?**
 - Supporting children's positive behavior, and managing or minimizing their negative behavior, stems from the use of clear, consistent, emotionally warm and supportive *language* that builds emotional and behavioral control.
 - Children who are increasingly able to manage their thoughts, feelings, behavior, and social interactions are better able to *focus on the learning tasks of the educational environment*.
- **Build Social-Emotional Skills?**
 - Strategies to support children's positive behavior, and manage or minimize their negative behavior build children's ...
 - *Response inhibition, emotion vocabulary, emotion understanding and management, behavioral control, perspective taking and effective problem solving.*

What Works?

For all children:

- **Documenting** what's happening in your room.
- Giving **positive praise** and the opportunity to earn a special privilege for good behavior.
- Having a **calm-down-spot** in your space or classroom that includes supports for self-control.
- Having routines for identifying, talking about, and **managing emotions**.
- Having routines for identifying, talking about, and **managing social interactions** (resolving conflicts).

For children with extreme behavior challenges, in addition to the above:

- A **specific behavior plan** with token incentives.

Things to keep in mind...

Managing children's behavior begins with adults.

- Effective management has its roots in **our** levels of self-control when faced with challenging situations or behaviors.
- Children model the positive behaviors and self-control practices they see adults using every day.

Managing children's behavior is based on good observation and documentation.

- Before a concrete plan or strategy can be enacted, it is important to know exactly: What is the problem? How often does it happen? Where and when does it happen? Who does it happen with?
- **Identify the patterns or questions you have.**

Effective behavior and classroom/group management requires consistency and predictability.

- Be consistent and predictable in your (1) use of **language**, (2) **expectations**, and (3) use of **supports and consequences**.
- It is confusing to children when these things change; a sense of unpredictability or uncertainty can lead to worse behavior problems.

What are the steps I need to take?

Step 1: Document/Find Out

Step 2: Give Consistent Positive Praise

Step 3: Make a Plan for a Specific Strategy

Today we are going to focus on Steps 1 & 2: Documenting and Giving Positive Praise

Step 2: Giving Positive Praise ... What would this look like?

- **Draw attention to positive behavior.** Give immediate, specific feedback and verbal praise for positive behaviors.
"Marshall, I notice how you took your place in line and didn't push anyone. Thank you!"
- **Accompany praise with a tangible object** (chips, stickers, etc.) that children can put in a classroom jar or bucket. Select objects that feel or sound nice. Make sure you have a routine in place so children know exactly what to do with the object (children should not put in pocket, but instead put directly in classroom jar.)
- **When the group collects a certain number of objects, celebrate with a group reward or special privilege.**
At the end of each day, have children count the chips and see if they met their daily goal (i.e., 15 chips).
Preschool-age children cannot remember long-term goals, so set a goal that is reasonable to meet each day.
- **Rewards should be motivating** and easy to implement with the entire group during end-of-day routines: do a favorite game, song or book; earn a special privilege like emptying the water table or resetting the calendar, etc.
Ask yourself: What do the children in your setting love to do? Remind children of the goal and reward all day.

Step 1: Documenting Behavior ...

Imagine the following in your learning setting...

Abraham blurts out answers without raising his hand during whole-class instruction.

Thanh is physically aggressive toward his peers (hits, kicks, punches) during recess.

Silvia frequently leaves her seat without permission during small-group instruction.

I see Stephanie wiggling when we are doing story reading – her wiggling spreads like ripples through the children around her and suddenly 5 or 6 children have stopped paying attention. The level of noise slowly rises. The very first wiggle I see gets my heart racing every time because I know in a few moments the group will be disrupted, and I immediately feel angry.

<p>1. Outline the environment of the behavior described above.</p>	<p><i>Where does the behavior happen? When does the behavior happen? With whom does the behavior happen?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time of day. • Classroom location (for example, centers, reading area, rug). • Subject matter being taught. • Type of learning activity. • Difficulty of the task. • Presence of particular peers or adults.
<p>2. Describe any possible specific trigger or motivation for the behavior? Think about what function the behavior might serve.</p>	<p><i>Is this child trying to get my attention? Is this child unable to focus and is distractible? Is this child trying to get something s/he wants from another child? Is the group of children facing a challenge?</i></p>	<p>Could be...</p> <p>Curricular factors (tasks that are too hard, easy, boring, or unstructured for the student).</p> <p>Social factors (small or large group settings or the presence of particular individuals).</p> <p>Setting factors (for example, time of the day or week; distractions at home or in class; or the student's physical states, such as being tired, sick, or hungry).</p>
<p>3. What are the typical responses to the behavior?</p>	<p><i>What do I typically say or do? What do other children typically say or do?</i></p>	<p>Try thinking about this as an <i>if-then</i> statement: <i>If I introduce a difficult concept (e.g., in math) to the whole group, and students are invited to try it out, Silvia distracts and teases students who are participating, then I make verbal reminders, move Silvia closer to me, and finally send her out of the class (allowing her to avoid the lesson).</i></p>

Let's Try It: **Generating a Case**

Steps	Ask yourself...	Example
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<p>2. Describe any possible specific trigger or motivation for the behavior? Think about what function the behavior might serve.</p>	<p><i>Is this child trying to get my attention? Is this child unable to focus and is distractible? Is this child trying to get something s/he wants from another child? Is the group of children facing a challenge?</i></p>	
<p>3. What are the typical responses to the behavior?</p>	<p><i>What do I typically say or do? What do other children typically say or do?</i></p> <p><i>Try thinking about this as an if-then statement.</i></p>	