Positive Solutions for Families

Session 3
Why Do Children Do What They Do?

Originally developed by the Center on the Social-Emotional Foundations for Early Learning. Adapted for use in California by WestEd for the California Collaborative on the Social-Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CA CSEFEL) March 2013

Shared Expectations
- We are Friendly and Kind
- We are Respectful
- We are Safe and Healthy

What’s Happening Today?
- Share your Things to Try at Home activities
  -- Playing with your child (following his/her lead)
  -- Behaviors to see less of and more of
- Determining the meaning of behavior
- Making our expectations clear
- Developing household rules
- Review Things to Try at Home activities

Let’s Celebrate!
- Please turn to Activity 10 in your workbook
- Parent Encouragement and Positive Comments
- Write an encouraging note or positive comment to yourself about something that you did with your child this last week that you feel really happy or proud about!
Behavior Communicates…

- What the infant, toddler, or young child is experiencing
- What it is like to be in that child’s body
- What it is like to be in that child’s world

**Behavior = Communication!**

**Behavior has Meaning!!**

Understanding Behavior

- Often we understand what a child is communicating through his/her behavior
- Sometimes it is difficult to be sure
- Looking at four things can help us understand
  1. What happened before the behavior?
  2. What is the **FORM** (type) of the behavior?
  3. What happened after the behavior?
  4. What is the possible **FUNCTION** of the behavior?

What is This Behavior Communicating?

Understanding Behavior

- Children engage in challenging behavior because it “works” for them.
- Challenging behavior meets the function for the child
  - Obtaining access to something or someone (i.e., gain/request/initiate) or
  - Avoiding something or someone (i.e., escape/avoid) or
  - Expressing emotion
- The function is the purpose/the meaning behind the behavior. What the thought bubble above your child’s head would say.

Challenging Behavior Works

Understanding Behavior

www.CAinclusion.org/teachingpyramid
Documenting Behavior

- Writing down what you see can help you understand the reason behind the behavior.
- There is a form in your workbook that can be used to document behavior.

Where Do You Stand?

Statement 1:
- I think children should never drink soft drinks (soda).

Statement 2:
- I would rather buy my child whatever he wants than have people stare at me because he has a temper tantrum in the grocery store.

Statement 3:
- It's the parent's fault when a child continues to exhibit challenging behavior. It is just bad parenting!

Statement 4:
- Children who tantrum in public places should be removed from that setting (airplane, park, etc.).

Behavior is in the Eye of the Beholder

- Given how differently we can feel about different behaviors, it isn't surprising to find that children get mixed messages about behavior.
- Making our expectations for behavior clear can be helpful in preventing and addressing challenging behavior.
Make Your “Expectations” Clear

• Your child cannot read your mind
• We have been practicing telling children what to do instead of what not to do
• Expectations at home can take that one step further
• You can use simple, broad statements that will guide what you tell your child to do

Remember our Expectations

• We are Friendly and Kind
• We are Respectful
• We are Safe and Healthy

Expectations are Broad

• By choosing three or four main expectations, you can help guide behavior through examples
  – For “We are Safe,” an example could be picking up toys (to prevent tripping)
  – For “We are Kind,” an example could be gently petting the dog
• For your examples
  – Clearly and simply state what you expect your child to do and link it to the expectation
  – Know what is appropriate for your child’s age
  – Use age-appropriate language

Expectation Examples

• Our Family Is Friendly and Kind
  – Let your sister have a turn with the book
  – Help Mommy set the table
• Our Family Is Respectful
  – Ask before you use something that belongs to someone else
• Our Family Is Safe and Healthy
  – Get to bed on time
• Other ideas?
• Add your ideas to your workbook, Activity 12
Help Me Be Successful!
Teach Me What to Do!

1. Show and Tell
2. Practice Makes Perfect
3. You Got It!

Using Pictures to Teach Expectations

- Get out your camera
- Snap a photograph of what you want your child “to do”
- Post it, model it, practice it, and notice when it’s done and use positive descriptive acknowledgement!
- If your expectation is to “clean up”…show him/her

Things to Try at Home!

- Observations – Determining the Meaning of Behavior
  – (Activity 11)
- Developing Household Expectations
  – (Activity 12)
- Have fun with your child!

Words of Wisdom

You are raising adults, not children. The work you do now will make life much easier as they get older…