



Session
3

Why Do Children Do What They Do?



Positive Solutions for Families



The Center on the Social and Emotional
Foundations for Early Learning

Session 3 Adapted for California

Positive Solutions for Families: Why Do Children Do What They Do?

Learner Objectives: Examine why children do what they do. Practice ways to determine the meaning of behavior. Understand how to make expectations clear for children. Understand effective ways to develop and teach household rules.	Suggested Agenda: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Share what happened when you played with your child using the powerful parenting tips.2. Share the behaviors you would like to see less of, more of, and how you might encourage your child.3. Discuss how we can try to determine the meaning of our child's behavior.4. Discuss "being clear" about our expectations.5. Discuss how to develop and to teach household expectations.6. Talk about <i>Things to Try at Home Activities</i>.
Materials Needed: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• PowerPoint™ or Overheads• Chart Paper, Markers, Tape• Video clips (make sure you link the videos to your PowerPoint™ presentation before you present)• Where Do You Stand? Agree/Disagree Activity Cards• Shared Expectations from Session 1	Handouts: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Solutions for Families</i> Workbook Activities 10-13

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Slide 1



Slide 2



Slide 3



Chart paper

Post “Expectations” developed in the first session.

Show **Slide 1: Why Do Children Do What They Do?**

Show **Slide 2: Shared Expectations**

Show **Slide 3: What’s Happening Today?** Welcome back to the *Positive Parenting Series* and our third *Solutions for Families*, “Why Do Children Do What They Do?” Today, we will:

1. Share what happened when you played with your child using the powerful parenting tips.
2. Share the behaviors you would like to see less of, more of, and how you might encourage your child.
3. Discuss how we can try to determine the meaning of our child’s behavior.
4. Discuss being clear about our expectations.
5. Discuss how to develop and teach household expectations as an example of making our expectations clear.
6. Talk about *Things to Try at Home Activities*.

Let’s start by discussing your *Things to Try at Home Activities*. Last week, we continued to build on making deposits and encouraging your children. We also talked about play and how important it is for you to play with your child and follow their lead. You were going to try to find time to play with your child. How did that go? What kinds of things did you do? How did your child respond? Was it hard to follow their lead? How did you feel? Did you see the benefits?

Ask if anyone tried any of the ideas that we discussed around supporting their children’s friendship skills. Did they go to the park or have a child over to play? What happened? How did the child do?

Point out that it would be great if they would continue to try to find time to play with their child even though the Things to Try at Home Activities may not focus on play! I also want everyone to keep using positive comments and encouragement, as well as making deposits into their child’s relationship bank!

The second *Things to Try at Home Activity* was to start thinking about the kinds of behaviors that you would like to see less of and

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Slide 4

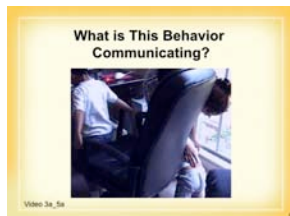


Positive Solutions for Families Workbook – Activity 8
Parent Encouragement and Positive Comments!

Slide 5



Slide 6



DVD video segment



Large group discussion

more of. In addition, you were going to think of ways that you could encourage your child to use the behaviors you would like to see more of. Let's write these on chart paper so we can come back to them during later sessions and see how we are doing!

Slide 4: Celebrate! Now take a few minutes to complete your encouragement and positive comment form in your workbook. You all did a great job playing with your children this week!

Let's get started on this week's topic – Why do children do what they do? You have probably asked yourself that question many times!

Slide 5: Behavior Communicates *Explain that behavior is meaningful and communicates a message.* Infants do not have words, yet they clearly can communicate. Behavior lets us know what the child is experiencing, how it feels to be in their body, what it feels like to be in their world. This is also true for older children and even adults! Sometimes when children do not have an appropriate way to communicate a message (e.g., talking, signing, using picture symbols), they often resort to using challenging behavior (e.g., hitting, screaming, spitting) as a way to communicate to others what they want and need. A child who has limited social skills, or who has learned over time that engaging in challenging behavior will meet his or her needs effectively, may also use challenging behavior instead of language...even if they have language!

Slide 6: Video Clip To demonstrate this, let's look at a video to see if we can determine what the child is trying to communicate. As you watch the video, see if you can: 1) describe what you see the child doing and 2) see what he is trying to communicate.

The video shows a mother and her two children in the home office. The older brother, Joshua, is playing on the computer. The mother is with Brendan and we are watching his behavior. Point out that this behavior was something that happened frequently and his mother had a plan she was trying out. Allow parents to watch the tape several times if they have difficulty answering the questions.

Discuss what parents observed. How would you describe the behavior? What do they think the child was trying to communicate? Was it easy or difficult to describe what the child was doing? From your description, could a person who has not seen the video get a clear picture of what was happening? That is one key to observation. Was it easy or difficult for them to determine what the child was trying to communicate?

Slide 7: Understanding Behavior Now, let's go back to our discussion about behavior. In order to determine the meaning of behavior you need to focus on **FOUR** things: 1) What happened

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Slide 7

Understanding Behavior

- Often we understand what a child is communicating through their 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?

Slide 8

Challenging Behavior Works

- 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.

Slide 9

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

Positive Solutions for Families workbook - *Things to Try at Home* – Activity 9 - Why Children Do What They Do?

Slide 10

Use the Form to Document What You Observe In This Video



Video 3a_5a

BEFORE the behavior; 2) the **FORM** of the behavior; 3) what happened **AFTER** the behavior; and 4) the **FUNCTION** of the behavior. It is kind of like being a detective. The more you observe – the more clues you will have to figure out why they do what they do!

Slide 8: Simply put, children engage in challenging behavior because it works for them! It works for them to send a powerful message, which results in the child expressing emotions (e.g., sadness, frustration, anger, fear, confusion), obtaining something (e.g., attention, toy, food) or avoiding/escaping something or someone (e.g., a demand, attention, stimulation).

Slide 9: Let’s look in your Positive Solutions for Families workbook at the *Things to Try at Home* – Activity 11. You will see one of the activities for next week! Take a few minutes to look at the form and then we can talk about it to make sure that everyone understands what they are supposed to do. (Give everyone time to look at the form.)

As you can see on the form, you will be observing your child when they are using a challenging behavior (one of those that you would like to see less of – from last week). In the first part, describe the behavior like a camera would capture it. Use simple, descriptive words. Avoid general terms or emotion words. For instance, say, “B. kicked the toy and gave a loud yell; then cried loudly” instead of “B. threw a tantrum and got mad.”

You will look at what happens **before** the behavior starts and record that information. You can check one of the areas on the form or write down what happened before the behavior began if it is not listed. Then observe what happens **after** the behavior stops. Again, you can check one of the areas on the form or write down what happens after the behavior stops if it is not listed. You will also try to determine what you think your child is trying to communicate! You can see if he/she was trying to express emotion (and guess which ones), or obtain/get (list what), or avoid/escape

Show Video again – Slide 10. Now that we have discussed how to use the form, let’s practice by watching the same video that we watched earlier. Let’s see if we can use the form to observe this child’s challenging behavior. I am going to give you an extra copy of the form to use for your observations.

What did you see? How did you describe the challenging behavior? What happened before? What happened after? Does it make you want to go home and observe your child? Do you want to try and see if you can figure out why he/she does some of the things he/she does? It is fun to try to figure out your child’s behavior! Now that we have practiced, you are all ready to be a detective for the week! This will help you look for “clues” to try to

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Slide 11

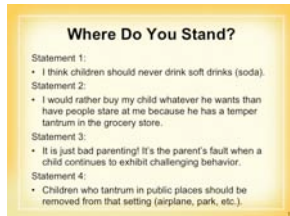


figure out why your child does what he/she does! This might even help you begin to look at your child's behavior in a new way! You will notice that you have several copies of this form so you can practice observing your child on several different occasions.

That was interesting to try to figure out what the child was trying to tell us. Would you consider that videotape to be an example of challenging behaviors? *Responses will probably vary. Also have participants look at the list of behaviors that they would like to see less of (chart paper). Were there some examples that they would not consider to be challenging behaviors in their child?*

This discussion is a good example of how different people might have different views about what is considered to be challenging behaviors. You have probably seen situations where you silently say to yourself, "Why is that parent not doing something about her child?" Something that drives you crazy may not even bother the person next to you! The families and cultures in which we were raised and our personal experiences have formed our emotions and beliefs about many things –including child behavior.

Values and beliefs often involve strong emotions, and our actions often have tremendous influence over whether our child's behavior gets better or worse! Sometimes the things we do to try to make the challenging behavior stop, actually makes it stronger! And don't forget that children bring their own personalities to the mix. Some children are tougher, and some are more sensitive than others.

Slide 11 To demonstrate how we all have different views and opinions, we will do an activity: "Where Do You Stand."

You need to make 4 cards for this session: strongly agree, agree, strongly disagree, and disagree. Tape these on the wall in different places in the room. You can use the statements below or create your own.

Explain that this is an activity aimed at appreciating and celebrating the variety of beliefs and values represented by the people in this room. Tell them that you are going to read a statement and then they will go and stand by the card that represents how they feel about the statement. Please remember that we are not here to judge, debate, or defend each other's beliefs. We are here to listen and to respect each other and our differences.

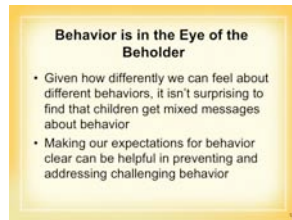
After people have moved to their first location, invite one or more participants to describe how their own personal experiences shaped their response to the statement. You can use the statements below or create your own.

Statement 1:

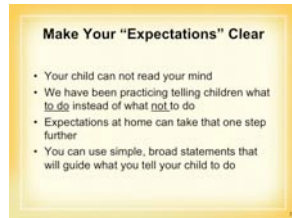
I think children should never drink soft drinks (soda).

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Slide 12



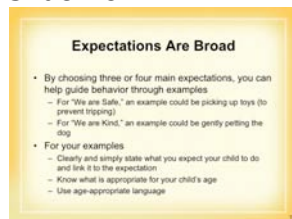
Slide 13



Slide 14



Slide 15



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 settings should be removed from that setting (park, airplane, etc.).

Slide 12: Behavior is in the Eye of the Beholder *When you finish the activity, thank everyone for participating. Explain that this was a fun way to show how we all have different ideas and thoughts about things – especially challenging behavior! It is also a reminder that we should feel free in this group to express our thoughts and know that our comments will be respected.*

Show **Slide 13: Make Your Expectations Clear.**

To help your children know what your expectations are, let's develop a few simple household expectations. We all probably have household rules that we want our children to follow – but have we written them down and taught them to our children? We are going to talk about ways to write your household expectations with your child, teach them to your child, and then use encouragement and positive comments to help them learn and practice the rules!

Slide 14: Remind them of our Expectations for Behavior. *Expectations are a way of letting your child know what behaviors are expected.*

- *If your program/classroom has shared expectations, discuss them here*
- *These apply to everyone in the program/classroom*
- *These may also work for you at home*

Show **Slide 15 – Guidelines for Expectations.** Let's begin by talking about how to write your expectations. For young children, it is best to:

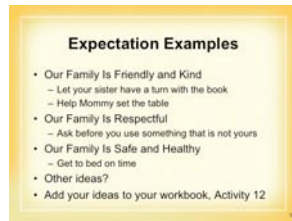
- Pick only 3 to 5 expectations
- State the behavior you want to see. Be descriptive. What does the behavior look like?
- Pick expectations that can be applied in a lot of situations.

Show **Slide 16: Expectation Examples**

Here are some examples that fit under each expectation (*feel free to share additional examples from your program or school site*).

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Slide 16



Be Friendly and Kind

- Let your sister have a turn with the book
- Help Mommy set the table

Be Respectful

- Ask before you use something that is not yours

Be Safe and Responsible

- Get to bed on time

See if there are other ideas

Now that you know how to develop expectations and examples, as part of your *Things to Try at Home Activities*, you can try to develop your own household expectations by using the form in your workbook. Let's look at Activity 12 – Household Expectations. During the next week, you can write your household examples of the expectations on the form. After you write them on the form, you can put them on the refrigerator where everyone can see the examples! *Ask if parents have any questions about the Things to try at Home Activity.*

Slide 17



Show **Slide 17** to reinforce the idea that if you want your child to do something, you need to teach him/her how to do it!

Now ask parents to look at Handout 13 in their workbooks. This is a handout to help them teach their child the household expectations. Teaching your child the expectations is a really important way to help him/her be successful at meeting those expectations! Remember, we want to make sure children understand what we expect them to do! Briefly review the form.

Think about how you will talk to your child or children and explain the examples. Often parents only teach the expectation when the child has violated it. For example, after Joey has hit and punched his sister to get a toy, his mother says, "Joey, you need to sit by me until you are calm. You know the expectation. You need to ask first."

Think about how Joey was feeling at that moment. Is he relaxed? Is he listening carefully? Is he excited about learning new ways to behave? Is he happy to have his mother's attention? Is this a "teachable moment?" What if that was the first time anyone told Joey the expectation? Do you think he is going to learn it when he is upset? Do you think he even understands the expectation?

Think about the last time you were very upset. Perhaps your spouse or partner was one hour late meeting you for dinner. You were very angry and proceeded to tell him/her how much it hurt your feelings, and ask why he/she didn't use the phone to call you. Let's say your partner responded with "If you talk to me calmly and nicely, I'll listen to you." How would you react? Don't you think you would just be more enraged? Would that be a teachable moment?

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<div data-bbox="191 850 482 1066" data-label="Image"> </div> <div data-bbox="183 1173 308 1209" data-label="Section-Header"> <h3>Slide 19</h3> </div> <div data-bbox="191 1209 482 1425" data-label="Image"> </div> <div data-bbox="183 1459 308 1497" data-label="Section-Header"> <h3>Slide 20</h3> </div> <div data-bbox="191 1497 482 1713" data-label="Image"> </div>	<p>Probably not!!!</p> <p>Teachable moments occur when everyone is calm and listening. To talk to your children about the expectations, you might turn off the TV, and ask them to join you on the sofa. Show your child the expectations sheet; read the expectations to him or her. After reading an expectation, ask your child what that means at school, or show them what it might look like. Give him an example of a situation and say: "Is that following the expectation?" Show your child where you will post the expectations. Use encouragement and positive comments when your child successfully follows the expectations ("Catch them being good!").</p> <p>Do you think your child will follow the household expectations? One way to get them more involved is to let them help you develop the examples. They can be a part of the process! Then you can practice, practice, practice! If you show your child the expectations chart only one time and then forget to review it again, and again, and again - they are likely going to forget what is on it.</p> <p>Show Slide 18. Using visuals is a good way to show your child the expectations of routines, such as getting ready for school. Putting together a simple picture schedule such as this can help your child know what to do without you having to constantly remind them. You can draw simple pictures, or take photos of your child doing each step.</p> <p>Show Slide 19: Things to Try at Home! This is all we are going to discuss today! You have two very important activities for your <i>Things to Try at Home</i>:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use the <i>Why Children Do What They Do</i> form to practice observing your child and try to determine what your child is communicating through behavior. 2. Make an expectations chart (pictures may be helpful), and review your new expectations with your child. Review the expectations every day. Remind your child of the expectations with positive examples before challenging behavior can occur. <p>Are there any questions? Thanks for coming! I hope you learned some new skills! Have fun being a detective this week!</p> <p>Slide 20: Words of Wisdom Nice to remember</p>
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