

# Toward a Better Understanding of Children's Behavior

## Developmental Stage

Why is This Happening?	How Can I Tell?	What Should I Do?
<p><b>Possible Cause</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Maturation --The Behavior is due to the child's developmental stage</li> <li>2. The behavior is the child's practicing, a necessary aspect of mastery and human development</li> </ol>	<p><b>Clues</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I have read about it in books</li> <li>2. I have seen children at the same stage behave this way</li> <li>3. I remember doing it myself when I was a child</li> </ol> <p><b>Always reflect on:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sense of child's expectations</li> <li>• Sense of relationship with child</li> <li>• Child's sense of self</li> </ul>	<p><b>Action</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Relax</b> --All children do it. It will end/evolve.</li> <li>2. <b>Tolerate</b> --It is developmentally significant/useful.</li> <li>3. <b>Channel</b> --Allow the child a safe, tolerable way to practice.</li> <li>4. <b>Stop</b> --Stop behavior when it is disruptive or dangerous but remember it will return.</li> </ol>

## Individual Differences

Why is This Happening?	How Can I Tell?	What Should I Do?
<p><b>Possible Cause</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Not all children of a certain age act in exactly the same ways</li> <li>2. Temperamental or constitutional qualities account for differences in behavior</li> <li>3. All children experience the world according to their unique physiology</li> </ol>	<p><b>Clues</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Not due solely to developmental stage</li> <li>2. Information about child's unique qualities from birth</li> <li>3. Have read about it ~ research on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• temperament</li> <li>• constitution</li> <li>• sensory motor capacities</li> <li>• disability</li> <li>• health issue</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	<p><b>Action</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Observe and identify child's unique style</li> <li>2. Adapt expectations and interactions</li> <li>3. Offer options that allow for and appreciate children's unique expressions and responses to the world</li> <li>4. Continue asking parents for attributions and possible explanations</li> </ol>

## The Environment

Why is This Happening?	How Can I Tell?	What Should I Do?
<p><b>Possible Cause</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The specific environment: child care setting</li> <li>2. Other environments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The home setting</li> <li>• Family situation</li> <li>• Lifestyle</li> <li>• Cultural differences</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	<p><b>Clues</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Behavior not due to developmental stage or individual difference</li> <li>2. In child care setting, several children exhibiting similar behavior</li> <li>3. Home/childcare have different expectations</li> <li>4. Sudden change in behavior at home</li> </ol>	<p><b>Action</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. In childcare setting, <b>do something</b> to ensure protection/attention/stimulation/order/calm</li> <li>2. <b>Get more information</b> from parents/professionals</li> <li>3. <b>Don't focus on individual child</b> (who is not in control of conflict)</li> <li>4. <b>Change</b> or <b>adapt</b> expectations to reduce conflict</li> </ol>

## Lack of Skills

Why is This Happening?	How Can I Tell?	What Should I Do?
<p><b>Possible Cause</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The child does not know something but is ready to learn</li> </ol>	<p><b>Clues</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Behavior is not due to developmental stage, individual differences, or environment</li> <li>2. The child is <b>young</b> and inexperienced</li> <li>3. The child is in a <b>new/unfamiliar situation</b></li> <li>4. The child is facing a <b>new task</b> or problem</li> </ol>	<p><b>Action</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Teach a <b>new skill</b></li> <li>2. Talk ~ <b>explain over</b> and over</li> <li>3. Give reason</li> <li>4. Give <b>encouragement</b> for small successes</li> <li>5. Be <b>patient</b> with failures</li> <li>6. Always <b>offer help</b></li> </ol>

## Unmet Emotional Need

Why is This Happening?	How Can I Tell?	What Should I Do?
<p><b>Possible Cause</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The child has missed out on something that is developmentally and emotionally important</li> <li>2. Instead of going away the need or hunger has intensified</li> <li>3. Child is searching for ways to meet the need. The behavior is the child's attempt to meet the need without being able to rely on adult assistance</li> </ol>	<p><b>Clues</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The behavior is developmentally inappropriate. The child is not "acting his age"</li> <li>2. The behavior has a driven quality. The child <b>has</b> to do it</li> <li>3. The behavior is <b>everywhere and always</b></li> <li>4. The behavior, even when channeled or stopped, <b>keeps popping up</b></li> <li>5. The usual ways of handling and helping most children with this behavior do not seem to help this child</li> </ol>	<p><b>Action</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Do something</b> –This behavior will not pass; it will get worse</li> <li>2. <b>Respond to the child's need</b> actively <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• –Through deeds ~ not words</li> <li>• –Through giving ~ not withholding</li> <li>• –Through support ~ not punishment</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. You may <b>stop the behavior</b>, when the child is hurting self or others. "No" is not a period – it is a pause</li> <li>4. Meet the needs as much as possible with <b>quiet firmness</b> and <b>patience</b></li> <li>5. Remember the <b>child can't stop</b> or control behavior at this time</li> <li>6. <b>Get additional support</b> for yourself and the family</li> </ol>