

Engaging Compliance: Addressing Challenging Behavior & Promoting Prosocial Behavior



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Introduction

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Objectives

- Explore theory-based explanations for children's challenging behavior and how those theories point to particular interventions.
- Learn some effective approaches to challenging behavior
 - Direct techniques (e.g. using positive language to guide children's behavior, focusing on and rewarding the behavior you want – instead of the behavior you don't want, providing acceptable alternatives (choices), and natural and logical consequences.
 - Indirect techniques – room arrangement, schedules



Why do children engage in challenging behavior?



What is “challenging behavior”?

(Kaiser & Raminsky, 2012)

- Defined as:
 - Any behavior that:
 - interferes with a child’s cognitive, social, or emotional development
 - is harmful to the child, other children or adults
 - puts a child at high risk for later social problems or school failure
- Aggressive behavior
 - Behavior that aims to harm or injure others
 - Physical
 - Relational (social)



What messages?

- When children engage in challenging behavior, what might they be trying to tell us?



Messages in challenging behavior

- “I don’t know how to do what you are asking me to do.”
- “I don’t know how to get what I want.”
- “I want/need your attention right now.”
- “I am bored.”
- “Engaging in this behavior gets me what I want/need.”
- “I am overwhelmed by my emotions and don’t know what to do.”



Causes of challenging behavior

- Depends on your theoretical perspective:
 - Maturationist theorist
 - Genetic predisposition
 - Psychoanalytic theorist
 - Uncontrolled aggressive drive
 - Insecure attachment
 - Internal working model
 - Behaviorist theorist
 - Rewarded for aggressive or other challenging behavior
 - Experienced or witnessed aggressive behavior



Causes of challenging behavior

- Cognitive theorist
 - Lack of perspective-taking
 - Lack of understanding of cause & effect relationships
 - Egocentrism
- Information processing theorist
 - Social information processing
 - Hostile attribution bias
- Ecological systems theorist
 - Direct and indirect influences from immediate family to society at large
- It might be a combination of any or all of these!



Having realistic expectations

- Infancy
 - Learning to trust the world
 - Need consistent, nurturing care
 - Are not capable of trying to “make Ms. Kaitlyn mad”
- Toddlerhood
 - Developing autonomy
 - Need opportunities to exercise power within limits
 - Are learning about cause and effect
- Preschool – developing initiative
 - Developing initiative, learning to pursue goals
 - Not yet able to see things from another point of view or from multiple points of view at the same time
 - Not yet able to mentally walk back through a process they just completed
 - Need help understanding others’ perspectives



Guidance perspective: Challenging behavior as “mistaken behavior”

(Gartrell, 2007)

- Child has made a mistake
 - Intentional behavior = mistake in judgment
- Three levels
 - Level One: Experimentation
 - Curiosity and involvement
 - Wants to find out what would happen if . . .
 - So involved, doesn't realize something happened
 - Level Two: Socially influenced
 - Desire to please and emulate others
 - Reinforced (sometimes unintentionally) by others important to them
 - Level Three: Strong, unmet (emotional) needs
 - Acts out against a perceived hostile and uncaring world
 - May be due to
 - Physiological factors(temperament, untreated chronic health problems)
 - Neurological (ADHD, autism, language delay, information-processing disorder)
 - Early environmental factors (prenatal drug exposure, child abuse or neglect)



From a behaviorist viewpoint

(Quinn, Gable, Rutherford, Nelson, & Howell, 1998)

- Looks for the *function* of the misbehavior
- What's the “payoff”? What is reinforcing the behavior?
- Functional Behavioral Assessment
 - Antecedent
 - What happens immediately prior? What are the circumstances under which the behavior is likely to occur?
 - Behavior
 - Consequence
 - What happens immediately afterward that maintains the behavior, that increases the likelihood that it will be repeated?



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The behavior may be inappropriate, not the function

- The function of the behavior is not necessarily inappropriate; the behavior may be an inappropriate way of meeting the need (function)



What are some potential functions (“payoffs”)?

- Attention from parents, peers, teachers
 - Children need attention and will take negative attention over none (rather be yelled at than ignored)
- Power or control
- Social status
- Avoidance of tasks found boring or aversive
- Avoidance of tasks for which they do not have adequate skills
- Touch



Conducting a functional behavioral assessment

- Define the behavior in concrete terms
- Identify the contextual factors that contribute to the behavior
 - Situations in which the student is **most likely** to engage in the behavior
 - Situations in which the student is **least likely** to engage in the behavior
 - Multiple sources and methods of gathering information
- Keep in mind that the “trigger” (antecedent) may not be directly observable, may be emotional or cognitive
- Determine what the “payoff” is for engaging in either appropriate or inappropriate behavior
 - What the child “escapes” or “avoids”
 - What the child “gets”



Example: Number of spills

	3/18/16	3/19/16	3/20/16	3/21/16	3/22/16
# of spills	///	///	////	///	////

Teachers brainstorm strategies to decrease spilling; decide to use smaller pitchers

	3/25/16	3/26/16	3/27/16	3/28/16	3/29/16
# of spills	//	/	//		/

Teacher complained that a particular child spilled juice on purpose every day. Do you think there's a function for this behavior?

Every time a child spilled something, the teacher jumped up and turned on a song about spilling. The children love this song.



What to do with the information

- Look for patterns
- Develop a hypothesis that predicts the general conditions under which the behavior is most likely to occur, as well as the probable consequences that serve to maintain it
 - “During circle time and time to line up, John pushes his friends because it gets his teacher’s attention.”
- Make changes to the environment based on the hypothesis to see if there are any changes in the behavior
 - What changes could be made in the situation described above?



Group Activity: ABC's

- A challenging behavior
- What's the situation? What happens immediately prior?
- What happens immediately afterward that might be maintaining the behavior?
 - What's the payoff?



The payoff tells you how to change the behavior

(Nelsen, Erwin, & Duffy, 1995)

- Attention
 - Pay attention when the child is engaged in desirable behavior
 - Behavior reflections, paraphrase reflections
 - “Catch them being good”
 - Effective praise (selective, specific, and positive)
 - “You took out the trash without being asked. That was helpful.”
- Power
 - Give choices
 - Acceptable alternatives
 - “You can wear the blue shirt or the green shirt. Which would you like to wear?”



Creating a positive verbal environment: Behavior reflections

- Non-judgmental statements regarding some aspect of behavior or person
 - Narrating a child's actions
- Effects:
 - Shows an interest in children
 - Children learn that their everyday actions are important enough to be noticed; extreme behavior is not needed to gain attention
 - Increase receptive language skills, vocabulary
 - May give children an opening to talk with adults if they wish



Skills: Behavior reflections

- Describe some aspect of the child's physical being or actions in a statement to the child
- Phrase behavior reflections as statements (not questions)
- Direct reflections to the child ("you")
- Use descriptive vocabulary as part of your reflection
- Use a nonjudgmental vocabulary and tone when reflecting children's behavior
- Use a conversational tone
- Summarize children's actions and words



Creating a positive verbal environment: Paraphrase reflections

- Nonjudgmental restatement by the adult of something a child has said
- Tentative statements of what the adult thinks he/she heard
- Can enrich children's language
 - Expansions: fill in or extend what the child is saying
 - Recasting: restructuring the sentence into a new grammatical form
- Conveys the message: "I hear you, I understand you"



Skills: Formulating paraphrase reflections

- Listen closely to the child's words
- Restate in your own words what the child has said
- Rephrase erroneous reflections
- Match your reflection to each child's ability to understand language
- Select one idea at a time to paraphrase
- Add interest to your reflections by periodically phrasing them in a form opposite of that used by the child



Becky Bailey on “Noticing”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ddLD__8AQo



Effective praise

- Meaningful feedback pertinent to the task at hand
 - Selective
 - Reserved for situations in which it is genuinely deserved
 - Specific
 - Provides explicit information about what is being praised
 - Positive
 - Most effective when delivered from close proximity



Skills: Effective praise

- Use behavior reflections to acknowledge children's efforts and accomplishments
- Make non-evaluative comments
- Note positive changes you've observed in children's abilities over time
- Point out to children the positive effects their actions have on others
- Focus on some positive aspect of children's efforts to do something, not simply the product they achieve
- Be honest in your praise and offer children authentic feedback
- Challenge yourself to use more effective praise daily



Group Activity: Effective praise

The child who was exhibiting challenging behavior
– what does that child do right or well?

Think of examples of effective praise to use with
that child.



The payoff tells you how to change the behavior

(Nelsen, Erwin, & Duffy, 1995)

- Social status
 - Happens in group situations; have a group meeting about the rules
- Avoiding a boring or aversive task
 - Find a way to engage them
 - Work on the task together
 - Positive reinforcement for completing the task (but not begging for compliance)
- Avoiding a task for which they lack skills
 - Teach the underlying skill
- Touch
 - Provide loving, affectionate touch when child is behaving appropriately



Another side of behaviorism: Modeling and vicarious learning

- Social learning theory (Bandura)
 - Children learn vicariously from observing the experiences of others (models)
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ZXOp5PopIA>
 - Further research showed that all of the children learned the behavior but
 - If they witnessed the behavior being rewarded, they were more likely to exhibit the behavior
 - If they witnessed the behavior being punished, they were less likely to exhibit the behavior



A word about punishment

- Definition of punishment:
 - Intended to decrease the likelihood of an undesirable behavior being repeated by
 - following it with something undesirable (time-out, spanking)
 - taking away something desirable (loss of privileges, being grounded)
- Do you think punishment is effective? Why or why not?



How effective is their current strategy? (Barkin, et al., 2007)

- Survey of parents at well child visits:
 - Time-out = 45%
 - Removal of privilege = 41.5%
 - Yelling = 13%
 - Spanking = 8.5%
- Almost 1/3 reported that they did not perceive their strategy to be effective
 - “Never” or “sometimes” = 30.9%
- Less than half (45%) thought their discipline strategy was “often” effective



Ineffective strategies

(Kostelnik, Soderman, Phipps Whiren, Rupiper, & Gregory, 2012)

- Ineffective strategies for dealing with aggressive behavior
 - Ignoring it
 - Implies permission
 - Displacing onto a “safe” target
 - Doesn’t teach acceptable alternative
 - Inconsistency
 - Only way to find out what the reaction will be is to try it and see what happens



Ineffective strategies

(Kostelnik, Soderman, Phipps Whiren, Rupiper, & Gregory, 2012)

– Physical punishment

- “The more often children experience physical punishment when they are young, the more defiant and aggressive they become as they grow older” (Kostelnik, et al., p. 372)
- Teaches:
 - “Aggression looks like this” (modeling)
 - “Might makes right”
 - “Aggression is the only option”
 - “This adult can’t be trusted”
 - “Watch out for Number 1”
 - “Don’t get caught!”





DENNIS THE MENACE



"I'M SORRY."



"SORRY I GOT CAUGHT."

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“If a child doesn’t know how to read, *we teach.*
If a child doesn’t know how to swim, *we teach.*
If a child doesn’t know how to multiply, *we teach.*
If a child doesn’t know how to drive, *we teach.*
If a child doesn’t know how to behave, *we . . .*
. . . teach? . . . punish?

Why can’t we finish the last sentence as automatically as we do the others?”

Tom Herner (NASDE President) Counterpoint 1998, p.2

More effective alternatives

- Guidance approach (Gartrell, 2007)
 - Firmness without harshness
 - Goal is to help child learn positive behaviors from their mistakes
 - Teach children to learn from their mistakes, rather than punishing children for making mistakes
 - Teach children how to solve their problems rather than punishing children for having problems they cannot solve
 - Strategies: conflict mediation

The consequence of a mistaken behavior is learning an acceptable behavior



Speaking of consequences . . .

(Kostelnik, et al., 2012)

- Natural consequences
 - Direct result of the child's behavior, not imposed
- Logical consequences
 - Obvious connection between behavior and corrective action
 - Rehearsal (practice desired behavior)
 - Restitution (make amends for behavior)
 - Temporary loss of privilege
- Unrelated consequences
 - Penalty is unrelated to the original behavior



Deciding which consequence to use

- Which consequence addresses the behavior appropriately while giving the child the most opportunity to exercise self-direction?
- Start with natural consequences
 - Is the outcome acceptable?
 - Will the child recognize that a consequence has occurred?
 - Will the consequence make a difference to the child?



Deciding which consequence to use

- Logical consequences
 - Would the child benefit from rehearsal?
 - Does this situation call for restitution?
 - Is the child developmentally able to see the connection between the infraction and the loss of a privilege?
- Unrelated consequences
 - Implemented only when no other logical consequence is available



Group Activity: Consequences

- Go back to the challenging behavior
- Is there a natural consequence?
- What would be a logical consequence?



What to do

- First: regulate your own emotions so that you can deal with the child effectively
 - Stop, Take a deep breath, And Relax (Be a STAR)
- Second: try to figure out the underlying cause
 - Physiological – Tired? Hungry?
 - Cognitive – lack of perspective-taking, egocentric
 - Environmental factors – noise, stimulation, arrangement
 - Social – inability to read social cues
 - Function of the behavior?



What to do

- Third: Respond in a way that meets the child's need(s) and teaches acceptable behavior
 - Pay attention when the child is engaging in acceptable behavior
 - Use effective praise (but don't overdo it)
 - Be clear about rules and expectations
 - Give choices between acceptable alternatives
 - Use natural or logical consequences
 - Make changes to the environment and/or the schedule



Being clear about rules & expectations

- “Rules should be phrased as statements rather than questions, using words with precise rather than ambiguous meanings, and in a way that leaves no doubt as to who is expected to follow them” (Kostelnik, et al., 2012, p. 326-327).
- Tell them what to do, not what not to do
- Be clear – don’t imply a choice where there isn’t one
 - “Clean up your room, okay?”



Group Activity: Rules & Expectations

- What are some rules in your classroom?
- How are those rules taught or talked about?
- How can you reframe those rules to make the expectation(s) clear?



Environment design and arrangement

- How might children's behavior be affected by the design and arrangement of the classroom or other environment?



Role of the environment & other factors

- Factors in the environment may increase the likelihood of challenging behavior
 - Noise level
 - Visual stimulation
 - Furniture arrangement
- Time of day
- Child's physiological state (tired, hungry)



Environment design and arrangement

- Furniture arrangement
- Accessibility of materials
- Lighting
- Noise level
- Visual and environmental cues



What is This Environment Telling Children to Do?



What is This Environment Telling Children to Do?



Group Activity: Environmental Influences

- Go back to that challenging behavior
- Is there anything in the environment that might be contributing?



Keep in mind

- Be aware of what behaviors you (the adult) are modeling
 - Platinum rule: “Do unto others as you would have others do unto others” (Pawl, 1995)
- Be aware of what behaviors you may be inadvertently reinforcing



Questions?



To review . . .

- There are many causes for challenging behavior and many strategies for addressing it
- Figuring out the underlying cause may help with deciding on a potential solution
 - Pay attention to what happens immediately before and immediately afterward
- Using “noticing” skills (behavior reflections, paraphrase reflections) and effective praise will reduce the likelihood of challenging behavior
- Using clear language for rules and expectations will help children comply
- Pay attention to environmental influences
- Be a STAR – and teach children the same skills



Thank you!



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