Working with Children with Challenging Behavior: A Team Approach©

THIRD EDITION

Challenging Behavior in Young Children
Understanding, Preventing, and Responding Effectively

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Providing support and understanding to teachers and families when there is a child with challenging behavior at the center

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Between a rock and a hard place

← Rock
Hard Place →

- You are an advocate for:
  - The child
  - The staff
  - The family
  - Inclusion and quality care

Building a team and working together

- Develop a common approach to discipline that the team has helped to shape and can support
- Develop goals and procedures based on the this approach
- Identify individual strengths/skills that will help the team reach their goals
- Identify concerns that may make it difficult to obtain their goals
- Develop roles and procedures that will encourage appropriate behavior and discourage inappropriate behavior
- Ensure mutual accountability, trust, support and commitment

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Develop an approach to discipline that the educators have helped to shape and can support

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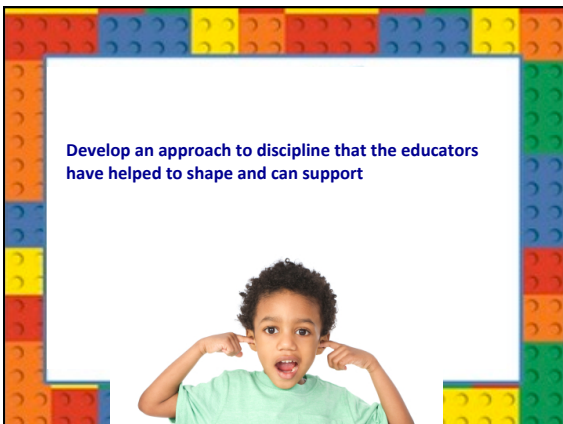
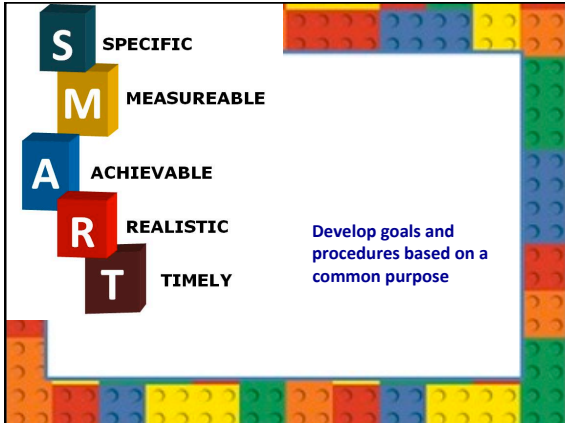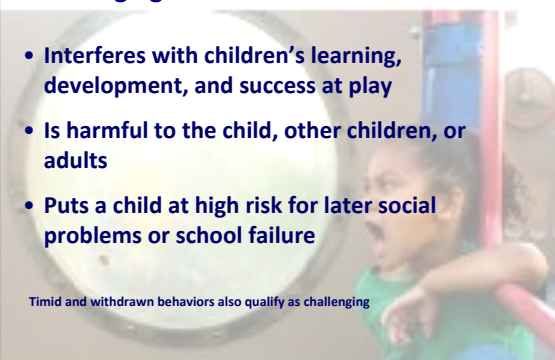## What do I mean by challenging behavior?

Makes it impossible to achieve our goals & interferes with learning opportunities

**Not a diagnostic term
There may be no diagnosis
Need to survive period before diagnosis**

Challenging behavior

- Interferes with children's learning, development, and success at play

- Is harmful to the child, other children, or adults

- Puts a child at high risk for later social problems or school failure

Timid and withdrawn behaviors also qualify as challenging

S SPECIFIC

M MEASUREABLE

A ACHIEVABLE

R REALISTIC

T TIMELY

Develop goals and procedures based on a common purpose

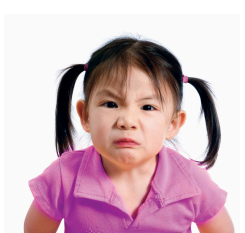## Do you think that this child should remain in the center?

Your attitude affects your staff's attitude

Do you know how the teachers feel about having a child with challenging behavior in their class?

Help teachers to understand how having a child with challenging behavior in the group/class changes their attitude and/or behavior?

Why is it important for you to identify your button pushers as well as to help your teachers to identify their buttons?

Team building with the family

Parents want their communication with you and the teachers to be frequent, open, honest and non-judgmental

- *Commitment* - Educators who regard their work as more than just a job.
- *Recognition* - Teachers who acknowledge the validity of their point of view
- *Skills* - Educators who can make things happen for their child and who admit to not knowing something but are willing to find out
- *Trust* - Educators who will treat their child with dignity and protect him/her from hurt
- *Respect* - Teachers to show respect by valuing their child as a person and acting and acknowledging their efforts and contributions on behalf of their child

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Identify individual strengths/skills that will help the team reach their goals

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Promote a philosophy of staff and family ownership of the <u>solution</u> as well as the problem?

- The staff and family need to believe you are there to support them
- Acknowledge each person's unique contribution and personal/ professional knowledge
- Acknowledge the importance of everyone's work and ideas
- Provide opportunities for success
- Help them meet their goals!
  - Consider their individual needs, interests, experience and skills

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The administrator's role

Enhance staff capacity to provide the best behavioral supports for all children

- Create an atmosphere of trust
- Understand the teacher's and family's reality
- Role model ways of dealing effectively with the child and his/her family
- Provide physical, emotional and informational support
- Create a team that works together
- Believe in the educators' and family's ability to succeed

Getting things out in the open

Do you know….

- What the teachers know about children with challenging behavior?
- What they feel they need to learn?
- How they perceive their role?
- What they feel <u>you</u> should be doing?

What role do you play?

When the teachers have a problem with behavior, what do they expect you to do?

OFFICE

- What would the teachers say if you asked why children behave inappropriately?

- Their interpretation affects their attitude and response

Children behave inappropriately

BECAUSE THE BEHAVIOR IS WORKING FOR THEM!

1. To avoid/escape a situation or person(s)
2. To obtain an object or attention
3. To change level of stimulation

Since many children use challenging behavior at times, why do some children come to depend on these behaviors while others discover more effective strategies to help them meet their needs?

- **BIOLOGICAL RISK FACTORS**
- Genes
- Temperament
- Complications of pregnancy and birth
- Developmental delays
- Gender

- **ENVIRONMENTAL RISK FACTORS**
- Family factors and parenting style
- Poverty and the social conditions surrounding it
- Exposure to violence
- Violent media
- Cultural dissonance
- Child Care/School

Getting parents on board

- Get to know all the families before there is a problem
- Try to see things from their point of view
  - They may be afraid there is something wrong with their child
- Look for their strengths, competencies, and resources
  - What information do they have – is there a diagnosis
- Invite them to share their thoughts and concerns and past successes with their child
- Don't judge or blame them
- Check your feelings at the door
  - Define the behavior objectively
- Listen carefully

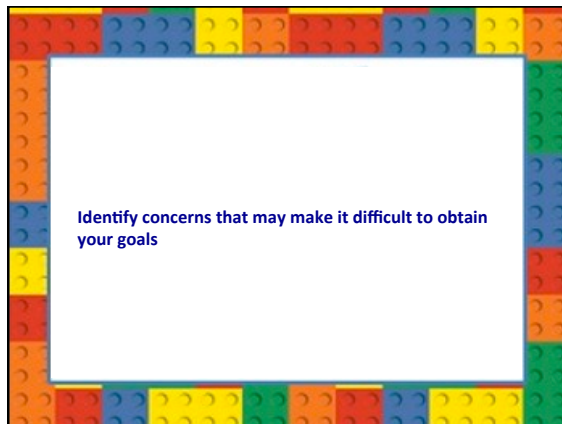## Prevention is the best intervention

Effective teachers spend more time promoting appropriate behavior than responding to inappropriate behavior

Prevention

Creating opportunities for ALL children to succeed

- **Changing the social climate**
  - Changing your approach with the children
  - Utilizing preventative pro-social skills curricula
- **Changing the physical environment**
- **Changing the program**

Identify concerns that may make it difficult to obtain your goals

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"If there is anything that we wish to change in others, we should first examine it and see whether it is not something that could better be changed in ourselves."

Carl Jung

Adults have worked hard to become who they are

- Sometimes we have to unlearn what we now in order to learn what we need to know

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Reasons why educators resist change

- Decisions or requests that are sprung on teachers without notice
- Not knowing enough about the change
- Feeling that changes are being done to, rather than done by them
- Concerns that change will require them to question familiar (and comfortable) routines and habits
- Change implies that the former way of doing things was wrong
- Educators question their ability: Can I do it? How will I do it?
- Change in one area can disrupt other projects or activities, even ones outside of work
- Change often increases workloads
- Lack of information

Reasons why families resist

- There is no relationship built between teacher/family or director/family
- They don't feel you recognize their efforts or understand their lives
- They feel judged
- They are afraid there may be something wrong with their child
- The behavior has not been defined objectively
- The behavior does not occur at home
- Lack of information

Any challenging behavior that persists over time is working for the child.

Any intervention that does NOT produce a change in behavior is NOT working for the child or the teacher

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Reframing How We Approach Challenging Behaviours

Old Approach   vs.   New Approach

• General intervention for similar behaviors (cookie cutter "fix")	• Intervention matched to purpose (function) of the behavior
• Intervention is reactive	• Pro-active - Prevention is emphasized
• Focus on behavior reduction	• Focus on teaching new skills
• "Quick Fix"	• Long-term intervention

- Discipline is helping a child solve a problem
- Punishment is making a child suffer for having a problem
- To raise problem solvers we need to focus on solutions, not retribution

L.R.Knost

Develop roles and procedures that will encourage appropriate behavior and discourage inappropriate behavior

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Understanding the behavior

- **Challenging behavior is a form of communication**
  - A child's solution to a problem

- **The function of the behavior is as important as the behavior**
  - Obtain
  - Avoid/escape
  - Change the level of stimulation

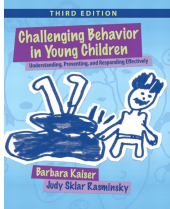- **It is the behavior that is inappropriate, not the function**

Ensure mutual accountability, trust, support and commitment

Responding to challenging behaviour

An effective response to challenging behavior is a process, not an event, that provides children with the opportunity to develop the skills and attitudes they need to meet their needs appropriately

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THANK YOU

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