



Tools and Strategies for Working with Challenging Behavior

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A bit about me...

Education:

- B.A. in Communication from Bethel University
- M.A. in Special Education from Bethel University
- Teaching licenses:
 - Specific Learning Disabilities
 - Emotional Behavior Disorders
 - Academic Behavior Strategies
 - Montessori Education

Work Experience:

- SPED paraprofessional—7 yrs.
- SPED case manager—5 yrs.
- SPED department lead—1 yrs.
- Christian Montessori guide—5 yrs.
- Adjunct at Bethel University—7 yrs.
- Director of the Thrive Ministry at Salem Covenant Church—3 yrs





At the heart of it...

2,250,000+

make up the largest unmet people group!



Objectives

1. Learn about the depth of challenging behavior
2. Learn strategies for behavior intervention to **PREVENT** challenging behaviors effectively
3. Learn strategies for behavior management to **RESPOND** to challenging behaviors compassionately

Where are we going?





All behavior is a form of communication.

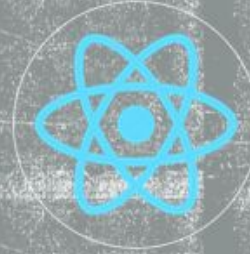
Respond with patience, understanding, and compassion.



Action



Interaction



Reaction



Behavior Defined

Visible

What
we see

THE ICEBERG OF BEHAVIORS

Invisible

Feelings

Thoughts

Values

Beliefs

The meaning
behind
the challenging
behavior





**To address the invisible
components, an authentic
relationship is non-negotiable.**



The Importance of Grace

- Behaviors may be communicating
 - Overstimulation
 - Fear
 - Confusion
 - Anger
 - Sadness
 - Anxiety
 - Discomfort

In the process of building an authentic relationship, behaviors may surface as the individual “tests the waters” and becomes more comfortable.

This is part of building trust and grace is key.

4 Functions of Behaviors

S-Sensory

E-Escape

A-Attention

T-Tangibles



S is for Sensory

- Communicates a more preferred sensory experience
 - May be due to under or over stimulation
- Needs sensory input:
 - Jumping
 - Star jumps
 - Jumping jacks
 - Burpees
 - Squat jumps
 - Carrying “heavy things”
 - Crate of books
 - Weighted backpack
 - Weighted lap pad
 - Fidgets
 - Sensorial textures



E is for Escape

- Communicates the necessity to avoid something (or someone)
 - Bright lights
 - Loud noises
 - Large groups of people
 - Something perceived as scary
 - Maybe rational or not
 - Still very real
 - Games that make the individual feel uncomfortable
 - Unknown rules
 - Physically challenging
 - Fear of losing
 - Lagging social skills



Ais for Attention

- Communicates the need for attention from others
 - For the sake of communicating wants or desires
 - Love
 - Acceptance
- Often done repeatedly until need is met
- Usually disruptive
- Any attention is “good”--even the negative
 - Give minimal attention to the negative
 - Notice and praise positives
 - Give preferential seating
 - Seek assistance for classroom jobs and leadership opportunities



T is for Tangibles

- Communicates the desire for a particular item or activity
- Tangibles can vary
 - Edible vs. non-edible
 - Consistent vs. Inconsistent desires
- Behaviors will continue if given into
- “First_____, then,_____”
 - Reinforce undesired task/activity before desired one
 - Visual
 - Verbal



Going Deeper

- **Communicate with parents and caregivers**
 - They are the experts!
 - *(More on this in personal considerations)*
 - First step in building relationship
 - Consistency improves implementation
- **Observe Patterns**
 - Discuss these with ministry partners
 - Identify triggers
- **Embrace and model acceptance**
 - Ignore noises and minor disruptions



Increase Accessibility

- “All individuals do well if they can.”
~Ross Greene
- Bridging the gap—that’s up to us!
- Increase accessibility through accommodations
 - Programming
 - Activities
- *What barriers currently exist?*





PREVENT



Prevent: Personal Considerations

- New or returning?
- Temporary or permanent?
- Gather as much information as possible
 - Identify triggers
 - Learn signs of dysregulation
 - Effective strategies



Prevent: Environmental Considerations

- Size of space
- Number of people present
- Sound
- Lighting
- Flexible seating
- Proximity
- Visual noise
- Exit options



Prevent: Schedule Considerations

- Visual
- Consistent
- Intentional
- Notification of change
- Social Stories?



Prevent: Accommodations

- Addresses HOW material is delivered
 - How will the information be presented?
 - How will content be shared?
 - Presentation: alters how the task is given...
 - Response: allows alternate ways to complete the task
 - Setting: changes where the task is given...
 - Timing: Increases time allowed or changes the task organization

Accommodations do NOT alter the rigor or reduce the expectations of WHAT the individual is learning.



Prevent: Accommodations

- Purpose:
 - REDUCE or ELIMINATE the effects of the individual's disability

Accommodations should provide individuals with access to identical content as their peers.



Prevent: Accommodations

- Breaks
- Preferential seating
- Noise cancelling headphones
- Pencil grips
- Written directions
- Pictorial directions
- Directions read aloud
- Fidgets
- Pre-warning when called on
- Pre-warning for transition
- Transition object
- Visual Timers
- Positive peer
- Small groups
- Extended times on tasks
- Additional opportunities



Prevent: Accommodations

- Normalize them!
- Set ground rules
- Provide consistently
- Build a “tool box”
- Be creative



Prevent: Modifications

- Addresses WHAT content is delivered
 - Prioritize the most important concepts and simplify
 - Caution: Choices made now can have a lasting impact so err on the side of less, then give more as needed

Modification ALTER the rigor and reduce the expectations of what the individual is learning.

It's a lot like pole vaulting...

The bar is set at 11 feet, but the athlete can only clear 3 feet. We must lower the bar for them to be successful.

What does this mean?

Children are reciting Psalm 23

Modify by providing fill-in-the-blanks

Adult: "The Lord is my _____"

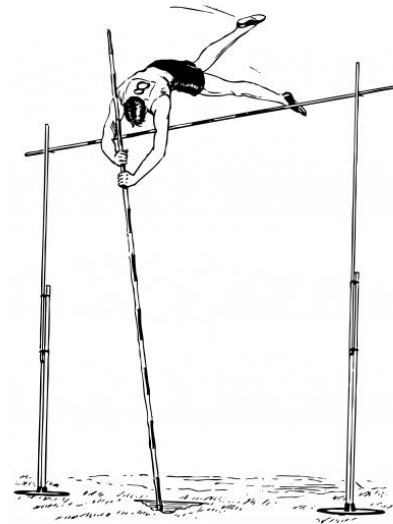
Child: "Shepherd"

Adult: "I shall not _____"

Child: "Want" ...etc.

Modify by shortening the verse

"The Lord is my shepherd"





Prevent: Modifications

- Purpose:
 - **REDUCE** unreasonable pressure for individuals with disabilities
 - Stamina
 - Behavior
 - Processing Speed
 - Intellectual Ability
 - Attention
 - Allows access to content



Prevent: Modifications

- Think about any “hard and fast” requirements that programs within your church may have:
 - Awana
 - Sunday School
 - Bible Study
 - Weeknight Programming
 - Confirmation
- Then, determine if modifications are necessary
 - Alter or shorten requirements
 - Change material



- **Stay calm!**
- **Maintain dignity**
 - Remove audience
 - Get support
 - Contact parent/caregiver
 - Document, if possible
 - Make safety a priority
- **Emphasize de-escalation**
 - Remove triggers
 - Minimizes choices
 - “First, then...”
 - Offer preferred calming strategies
 - “Lower, slower, less”
 - Quieter voice
 - Slower cadence
 - Fewer words
- Document
- Debrief with anyone involved
- Determine a plan to move forth, if programming needs to be altered



Questions?

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