

Strategies to Reduce and Manage Challenging Behavior



KAUFMAN
CHILDREN'S CENTER
— Kids with Challenges Become Champions —
Speech-Language • Sensory-Motor • Autism



Challenging Behavior:

- Behaviors that occur and become predictable under certain situations
- Adults often try to “get the behavior to stop” in the moment, thinking this will help
- The child actually gets the outcome they are seeking and “learns” to demonstrate this behavior again under similar situations
- Behaviors occur for REASONS and are demonstrated because they have WORKED in the past.
- If the behavior is an ongoing concern adults must change their **response to the behavior** to reduce it **in the future**

**Who has experienced their
child having a meltdown in
the store ?**





Preventative & Reactive Strategies:

Preventative Strategies:

- Put in place so challenging behavior is less likely to occur in the first place.
- Includes establishing skills so the challenging behavior is **not necessary**.
- If a child had a skill that offered a more appropriate *WAY* to get their desired outcome, we need to teach that skill.
- Examples: improving communication and language skills, Improving ability to wait for a turn, Expanding play skills, Expanding Social Skills, Establishing and understanding/following routines.



Preventative & Reactive Strategies

- **Reactive Strategies:**
- What others should do once the behavior is happening to make certain the behavior is NOT reinforced or “taught as effective response”
- Adults should be sure the behavior **does not** have the outcome that child is seeking.
- All those interacting with the child must respond consistently for behaviors to be decreased across all settings and situations.



Functions of Behavior=Reasons

- **Access to tangible:** To gain access or to keep access to a preferred item or *activity (I want it-I want it NOW, I am not going to wait or take “NO” for an answer)*
- **Escape:** To get out of doing something that they've been asked to *(I don't want to do it; I will do whatever it takes to AVOID doing it)*
- **Attention:** To gain attention from a person *(Look at me, I am going to MAKE you pay attention to ME)*
- **Automatic:** Nobody else needs to be around... the behavior itself is reinforcing



Our Focus for Training:

- We will be discussing the two **most common** situations where you are likely seeing problem behaviors
- BCBA's can discuss challenging behaviors that are self-stimulatory and interfere with daily living or attention seeking behaviors that are a problem with you individually

Why is this happening?

Access to tangible

- Child who does not tolerate being told “**no**” when they want something.
- This is the child who melts down when told to **STOP** a preferred activity. (TRANSITIONS)
- Child has trouble waiting or taking a turn with peers.





Why is this happening?

Access to tangible

- Child wants to go down to basement. Cannot go because home repairs.
- Basement is “not available” for playing.
- *Child’s Motivation: “I want it; I want to do it; I don’t want to wait; I will do whatever it takes to get it!”*
- Behavior may include significant crying, tantrum or just repeated asking/persisting.

Why is this happening?

Access to tangible



Access to Tangible

Child wants item/activity but they can't have it



Access to Tangible

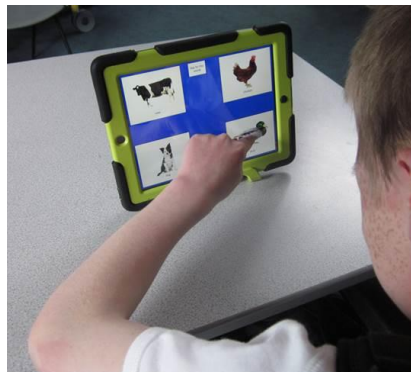
Child has item/activity that is being removed or terminated



Preventative Strategy: Access to tangible

Effective communication system for the child to make requests for items they want and need

- Vocal communication
- Signs/Gestures
- Picture exchange
- Augmentative communication device





Expand Communication

- Teach child appropriate replacement communication to render the challenging behavior **less necessary**
- As communication increases, challenging behavior decreases.
 - Requesting:
 - To request more time with a preferred item or activity (*i.e., one more minute*)
 - To ask WHEN can I have it?

Preventative Strategy: Access to Tangible

Visual supports clarify what child can and cannot have (what is available)

- How long they have left with preferred item/activity





Signaled Availability

Visual cue using a color or item to let child know when a request for an item/activity will be rewarded

- **green** signals the iPad is available and **red** signals the iPad is not available

Preventative Strategy: Access to Tangible

- When preferred item/
activity is available and when it is not



Monday:	Tuesday:	Wednesday:	Thursday:	Friday:	Saturday:	Sunday:
Get Dressed	Get Dressed	Get Dressed	Get Dressed	Get Dressed	Get Dressed	Get Dressed
Home Therapy:	Home Therapy:	Home Therapy:	Home Therapy:	Home Therapy:		
Lunch:	Lunch:	Lunch:	Lunch:	Lunch:	Lunch:	Lunch:
School:	School:	School:	School:	School:		
Dinner:	Dinner:	Dinner:	Dinner:	Dinner:	Dinner:	Dinner:
Bath:	Bath:	Bath:	Bath:	Bath:	Bath:	Bath:
Bedtime:	Bedtime:	Bedtime:	Bedtime:	Bedtime:	Bedtime:	Bedtime:

*Rule: We can have iPad on Saturday and Sunday



Preventative Strategy: Access to Tangible

- Set and teach limits for items that may later be denied when not available.
- Show the child **how many times** they can have an item each day
- Allow access but remind child of limits ahead of time as they “get a preferred item”

Limit Setting:





Preventative Strategy: Access to Tangible

- Use *First* _____, *Then* _____
language

First _____, Then _____



What if the Problem Behavior is Already Happening?

REACTIVE STRATEGIES FOR ACCESS TO TANGIBLE



Reactive Strategy : Access to Tangible: Tolerating “NO”

- Child **wants something** but it is NOT available to them





Reactive Strategy :

Access to Tangible: Tolerating “NO”

- Adult should: tell them once, “No ____.”
Then ignore problem behaviors
- Adults could “remind” the child one time using a visual when they CAN have the item.
- Avoid “over explaining”
- Only stay near the child if needed for behaviors that may put them or others at risk (hitting, throwing, etc.)
- Busy yourself with other tasks making it clear you are not available to “negotiate”

Reactive Strategy : Access to Tangible: Tolerating “NO”





Reactive Strategy : Access to Tangible “Time to be all done with _____”

- Child is doing something and they have been told they have to **give it back, put it away, stop doing it, give it to someone else.**
- **Adults should: Tell them once, “___ is/are all done.” prompt to put item away using hand over hand or simply remove item.**
- **Adults could “remind” the child one time using a visual when they CAN have the item again next.**



Walk and Peel Strategy

- You have told the child “no”
- Problem behavior occurs, **WALK** in opposite direction of the child (this won’t work out in the community)
- **DO NOT REDIRECT THE CHILD** to more preferred activities
- Return only to protect the child or property with no talking, and minimal eye contact
- If child grabs you or pulls at you, **PEEL** them off and go about your business
- When child stops problem behavior for at least one minute return and redirect them to some thing else or another activity .

Reactive Strategy : Access to Tangible:

- Child **wants something** and they **CAN** have it, but they have started to cry/whine/grab to get it 😞
- We do not want to allow the child to get the item, unless they ask for it appropriately





Count and ASK again Strategy:

- Tell child to stop the behavior (hands to your self, stop crying)
- Begin counting to five (one, two, three, four...)
- If problem behavior continues during counting... Say “stop” or “quiet” and restart counting to five
- Allow three attempts for the child to be calm/quiet when counting to five, then prompt the child to request the item/activity appropriately
- Deliver the item after the child appropriately requests

Count and Ask again:





What **NOT** To Do In The Event Of Problem Behavior (Access To Tangible):

- Do not allow the child to have item or to keep item longer due to problem behavior
- Do not talk about the problem behavior or attempt to explain why they cannot have it
- Do not engage in dialogue or argue with the child about giving the item up
- Do not begin offering better options because the child engaged in problem behavior.



Check for Understanding

What procedure would you use
if your child wants an item, but
they cannot have it

walk and peel

OR

count and ask again



Check for Understanding

What procedure would you use
if your child wants an item, but
they cannot have it

walk and peel

OR

count and ask again

Escape/Avoidance: Demands





Escape/Avoidance: Demands

- Child engages in challenging behavior to avoid something they do not want to do
- In the past, less preferred activities are delayed, put off or altogether skipped when child has problem behavior
- What are some things a child might try to avoid/delay?



Escape from Demand

- <https://o.canada.com/news/enforcing-bedtime-when-your-child-wont-go-to-sleep>



Reasons Why A Child Wants To Escape:

- Child does not have the skill well-established
- They are unsure what is going to happen/unexpected
- They are not sure HOW LONG they will have to do the activity
- Sensory challenges (bath, teeth brushing, hair brushing, toileting)

Preventative Strategy : Escape/Avoidance **Reduce Difficulty**

- Help child learn the skill
 - Help your child complete any tasks that they aren't yet independent in doing
 - Develop a plan with BCBA to teach a child a **new skill** like falling asleep on own



Preventative Strategy : Escape/Avoidance Break Tasks Down

Morning Routine



1

Hang up Backpack



2

Hang up Coat



3

Take folder, lunch and
snack to room



Preventative Strategy :

Escape/Avoidance Break Tasks

Down



Brushing Teeth

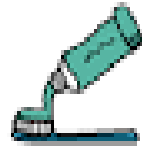
1

wet toothbrush



2

toothpaste on brush



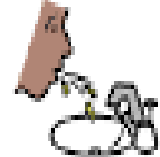
3

brush teeth



4

spit in sink



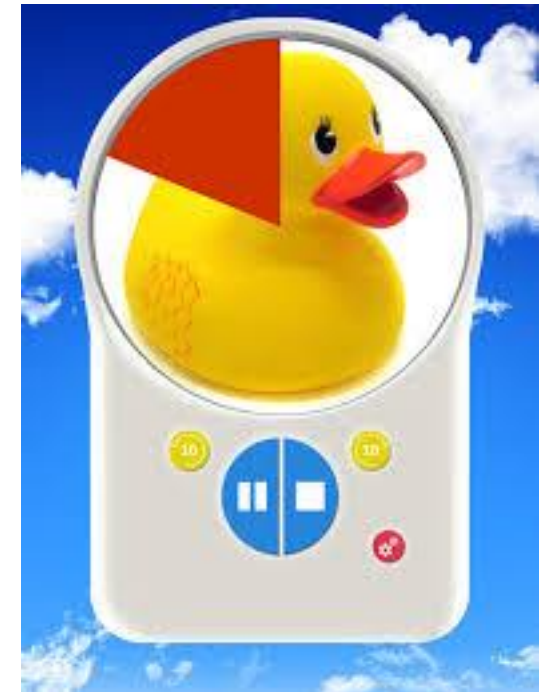
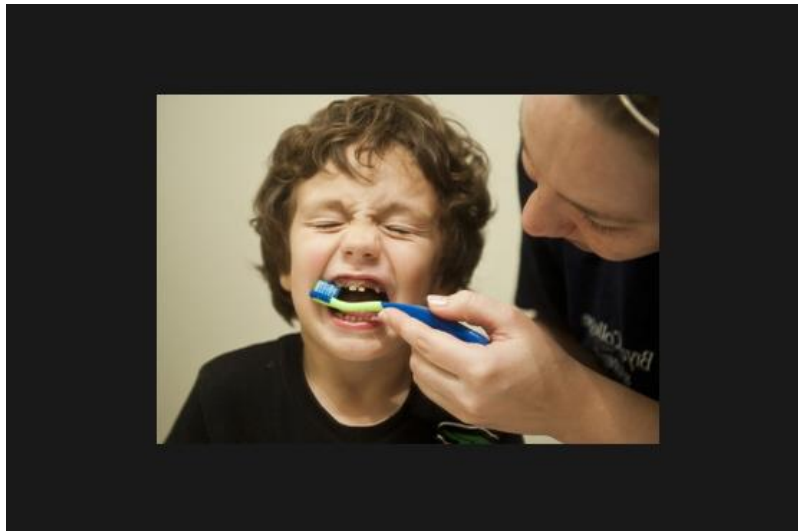
5


rinse toothbrush



Preventative Strategy : Escape/Avoidance

- Timers can help know “how long” until child can be done with a less preferred activity.
- Look, almost done!





Preventative Strategy :

Escape/Avoidance Fade Demands Slowly

- Start with only the LAST part of the task
- Example: Child rinses with water, then gets reinforced with praise or small “prize”.
- Then end teeth brushing because it is **finished (not because they had a meltdown)**
- Gradually when child values the “prize” they will tolerate more steps (letting you scrub briefly, THEN rinsing)

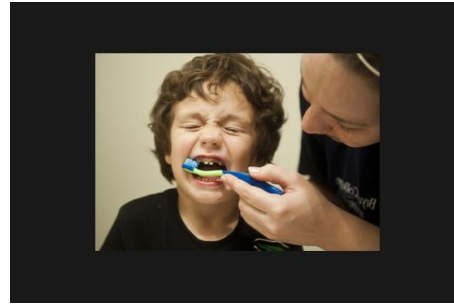


Preventative Strategy : Escape/Avoidance **First---Then---**

- Principle of using a more preferred activity **AFTER** a less preferred activity
- Promise: you will get to do _____ as long as you do _____ **FIRST**

Preventative Strategy : Escape/Avoidance First---Then--

- FIRST



- THEN



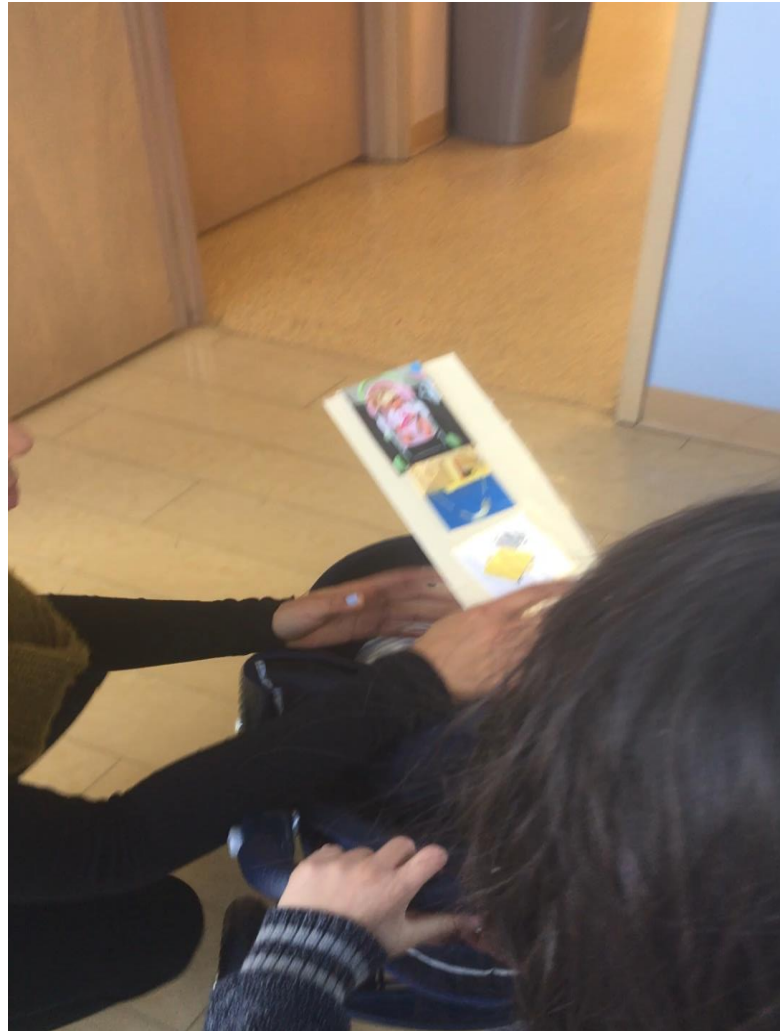
Visual Schedule 1



Preventative Strategy : Escape/Avoidance **First---Then---**



Visual Schedule





Preventative Strategy : Escape/Avoidance

- Embed a preferred activity between difficult tasks rather than requiring several difficult tasks in a row
 - Can use a visual schedule to support communication
- Pair the environment with preferred items

Preventative Strategy: Escape/Avoidance

- Reward Compliance for OTHER behaviors the child DOES do.
- Too often we focus our attention on challenging behaviors but ignore appropriate behaviors
 - Sticker chart



Reactive Strategy: Escape/Avoidance

- Child has been told it is time to ____
- Child is attempting to avoid/delay some demand by engaging in challenging behaviors (yelling, no, running away, etc.)





Reactive Strategy: Escape/Avoidance

- Adults SHOULD:
- FOLLOW THROUGH WITH DEMAND
- IF YOU SAID IT...It needs to happen
- Prompt the child through the activity



Reactive Strategy: Escape/Avoidance

- Adults SHOULD NOT:
- Never remove demands contingent on problem behavior (“okay, you don’t have to___”)
- If the child avoids/escapes tasks when they engage in problem behavior they will be MORE likely to engage in problem behavior in the future to avoid/escape tasks

Reactive Strategy 1: Avoid/Get out of Demand

Do NOT Use Time Out!

- Time-out will allow child to *escape/delay/avoid* the non-preferred task
- Time-out will reinforce the problem behavior and therefore **strengthen *this as a learned response to avoid tasks that are not preferred***





Check for Understanding

True or False?

You ask your child to brush their teeth and they begin to have a meltdown. It would be appropriate to implement a time-out procedure.



Check for Understanding

True or **False**?

You ask your child to brush their teeth and they begin to have a meltdown. It would be appropriate to implement a time-out procedure.



Closing Statements

- Address challenging behaviors in a function-based way (the WHY?)
- Preventative strategies are equally important as reactive strategies
- Communicate to others the plan when behaviors occur
- Consistency is key!
- It may get worse before it gets better because your child is learning that challenging behaviors do not get results



Thank you!

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