Circle Time™ MAGAZINE

ADDRESSING CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR: GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

EDITION 5

POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT



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Developing a behavior support plan
Individualizing teaching supports

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For more great resources on this topic, and to watch the *Circle Time Magazine* professional development talk show series, check us out at: http://cultivatelearning.uw.edu/circle-time-magazine/

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ADDRESSING CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR HIGHLIGHTS AND KEY IDEAS

ACROSS ALL AGES



BUILDING SOCIAL EMOTIONAL SKILLS

To promote healthy social and emotional development, ***all children*** need nurturing and responsive relationships and an accessible, supportive environment. To address challenging behavior, ***some children*** need more direct instruction to build specific social emotional skills. A ***few children*** have persistent or severe challenging behavior, even with the above strategies in place. These children need highly intensive, individualized support to build positive social emotional skills.

A child with persistent or severe challenging behavior is more likely to have disrupted relationships, delayed cognitive development, and ongoing mental health issues. Educators, however, can mediate these outcomes by prioritizing children's social and emotional development and targeting the skills needed to build healthy relationships and realize their full potential.

UNDERSTAND THE BEHAVIOR

Pause to think about the influences on a child's behavior and adult perceptions of behavior. Consider the Three Rs: **Review, Reflect, Build Resilience**.

DEVELOP A BEHAVIOR SUPPORT PLAN

- **Observe:** Observe the behavior so you understand what the child is communicating.
- **Partner with Families:** Family involvement and participation is critical to the success of highly individualized intervention.
- **Plan and Teach:** Develop a behavior support plan that has the strategies adults will use to avoid behavior triggers, teach new skills the child can use to meet their needs, and respond to the challenging behavior when it happens, to avoid reinforcing it.

INDIVIDUALIZE TEACHING SUPPORTS

For a behavior support plan to be effective, the intervention and teaching supports must be tailored to match the child's developmental level, preferences, and unique needs.

EQUITY MATTERS

The expectations we have for behavior are influenced by our cultural background and past experiences. Subtle biases that we are often unaware of can impact the behavior we notice and respond to. Uncovering these implicit biases takes time and reflection.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Is this behavior persistent or severe? Is it interfering with the child's learning or relationships?
- Why is this behavior challenging to me? How do I think the child should behave?
- What behavior has the family noticed and what would they like to see instead?
- How am I feeling about the family's observations and desires?
- What is the child trying to tell me with this behavior?

TIP: Think of a child whose behavior is challenging to you. First take time to list 10 strengths of the child and family. Then list the strategies you have implemented to support the child. Does the child need more intensive intervention?

POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT AND ADDRESSING CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR

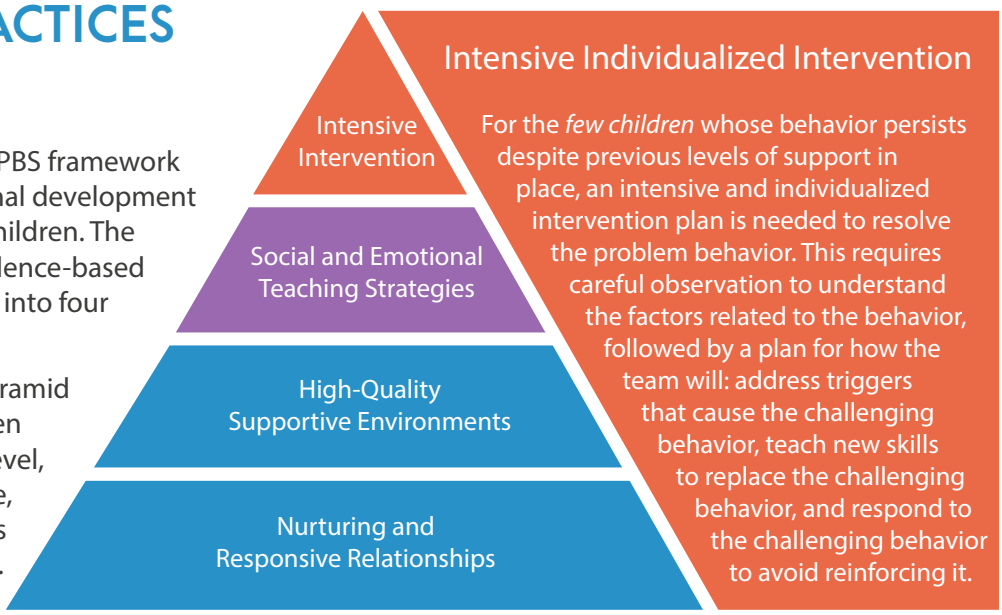
Positive Behavior Support (PBS) is a positive approach to challenging behavior that focuses on building social and emotional skills. PBS recognizes that all behavior communicates a message or need. Once educators understand the meaning of a child's behavior they can, together with the family, teach the child more effective ways to communicate their needs.

PBS TEACHING PRACTICES

A Continuum of Support

The Pyramid Model is an established PBS framework for addressing the social and emotional development and challenging behavior of young children. The framework offers a continuum of evidence-based teaching practices that are organized into four levels of support.

When the three lower levels of the pyramid are in place, a small number of children will need more support. At this top level, practices focus on providing intensive, individualized intervention to address a child's persistent or severe behavior.



Based on the CSEFEL Pyramid Model: A multi-tiered PBS framework of evidence-based practices designed to build the capacities of teachers and parents to support the social-emotional development of young children ages birth to 5 years.

LEARNING ABOUT MY WORLD

DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE EXPECTATIONS FOR BEHAVIOR

It is important that behavior we expect from young children and the support strategies we use are developmentally appropriate. If children are unable to meet expectations, they will find creative ways to express themselves and get their needs met. Sometimes these behaviors can be perceived as challenging.



INFANTS EARLY ON

Children who are at an early stage of social and emotional development may have behavior, such as persistent crying or withdrawal, that is challenging to an adult. When educators establish a nurturing and responsive relationship with the infant they can easily read the infant's cues and respond as needed. An infant that is overwhelmed with emotion, needs trusted adults to offer support through co-regulation strategies, such as calm responses, nurturing, and soothing. It is important for the adult caregiver to practice self-regulation and resilience skills when supporting an infant who demonstrates a high level of need.



TODDLERS EMERGING SKILLS

Children who are at an emerging stage of social and emotional development may have behavior that is challenging to adults and some other children. Toddlers are just beginning to build the language skills needed to express themselves, but they experience frustration when the right words don't come to mind. A toddler interacts with others in the moment and is often not yet able to understand how their behavior impacts others. A toddler typically has a short attention span, likes to move, and is curious about the world they live in. Keeping these developmental needs in mind when setting behavior expectations for toddlers can help to prevent challenging behavior. When supporting the emerging social emotional skills of a toddler, it is important for the adult caregiver to practice self-regulation and resilience.



PRESCHOOLERS INCREASING MASTERY

Children who are increasing their mastery of social and emotional development may have behavior that is challenging to adults and other children. Preschoolers experience increasing demands for cooperative behavior, friendship skills, managing their emotions, social problem-solving, and using language to express their needs. Understanding the individual needs of each child when planning behavior expectations can help prevent challenging behavior. It is important for the adult caregiver to practice self-regulation and resilience skills when supporting preschoolers with challenging behavior.

For more guidance on building relationships and supporting self-regulation in the early stages of development, refer to the following resources:

- **Washington State Early Learning and Development Guidelines** (https://www.del.wa.gov/helpful-resources/washington-state-early-learning-and-developmental-guidelines)
- **Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework** (https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/interactive-head-start-early-learning-outcomes-framework-ages-birth-five)

UNDERSTAND THE BEHAVIOR



Challenging behavior is any repeated pattern of behavior that interferes with—or shows signs of interfering with—learning and relationships. However, adults ultimately decide what behaviors they expect in their learning environment and when a child's behavior is challenging. Defining a behavior as *challenging* is influenced by the adult's culture, beliefs, and biases. In addition, the child's temperament, home environment, and cultural norms influence behavior. It is important to explore these influences to get a clear picture of the child's behavior and needs. Consider the following tips when determining if a child's behavior is alarming and in need of intensive support.

CONSIDER THE 3Rs | REVIEW, REFLECT, RESILIENCE

REVIEW
THE UNIVERSAL PRACTICES THAT ALL CHILDREN NEED

- How have I worked to establish a trusting relationship with this child and family?
- Am I aware and accepting of the child's temperament?
- In what ways have I intentionally designed the environment to support the child?
- How am I teaching the child to understand and regulate emotions?
- How am I teaching the child problem-solving skills?
- Are my expectations developmentally appropriate?
- How have I incorporated the child's home culture and values into my planning and expectations?
- Is there anything outside the child's control impacting behavior—could the child be sick, tired, hungry, uncomfortable, overstimulated?
- Is there anything outside of my control impacting the child's behavior—such as homelessness, food insecurity, grief, trauma? How am I showing empathy or adjusting for this in my expectations and responses?

REFLECT
ON MY OWN VALUES, THOUGHTS, AND FEELINGS ABOUT THE BEHAVIOR

- Why is this behavior challenging for me? For other children?
- Am I frustrated with the behavior or the child?
- What biases are impacting my reaction to the behavior?
- Is there something about this child's cultural norms that are different from mine?
- Am I making any assumptions about the child's intentions?
- How have I partnered with the child's family to understand the behavior?
- Am I doing my best to help this child and family realize their full potential?

RESILIENCE
BUILD IT BY ASKING YOURSELF KEY QUESTIONS

- Does my typical response to the child's behavior make me feel better or worse?
- What steps can I take to calm myself when I start to feel triggered by the child's behavior?
- How is my typical response impacting the pattern of the child's behavior? Is it helping?
- Am I able to be my best self when I am with the children in my care?
- What self-care practices can I try or do more often?

DEVELOP A BEHAVIOR SUPPORT PLAN

OBSERVE SYSTEMATICALLY: ANTECEDENT, BEHAVIOR, CONSEQUENCE (ABC)



Gaining a clear understanding of what the challenging behavior is and why it is happening forms the basis of an individualized **behavior** support plan. Gather information about the environment and the child's behavior through interviews with significant adults in the child's life and direct observations. To observe, look at what triggers the behavior (**antecedents**) and what happens for the child as a result of the behavior (**consequences**), and see if a pattern emerges over time.

With this information, make a hypothesis or best guess about why the child is engaging in the challenging behavior (function). Typically, children engage in challenging behavior to *get* something or *avoid* something.

ABC | ANTECEDENTS BEHAVIOR CONSEQUENCES

ANTECEDENTS:

Some possible events that may trigger a challenging behavior.

- The child is asked to do something
- Someone took away an object
- The child is having difficulty with a task
- The child wants an object that's out of reach
- The child has to stop a preferred activity

BEHAVIOR:

All behavior has form and a function

Form: The behavior that you can see.
Function: The need that the behavior is communicating.

CONSEQUENCES:

What happens after the challenging behavior occurs.

- The child gets attention
- The child gets something
- The child gets help
- The child is ignored
- The child gets out of participating in something

POSSIBLE FUNCTION:

A guess about why the child might be engaging in the behavior.

- To obtain an object
- To get attention
- To get help
- To avoid an activity or a request
- To avoid a change or transition

Use the ABC Observation Card as a tool for documenting your observations

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ABC Observation Card Example

Child's Name: Sonia Date/Time: 3/21 9:30 am

Activity: Free Choice, dramatic play Observer: Demitri

Who was there/involved (other adults or children)? Baruch

Any unusual health concerns or changes at home? Runny nose

Antecedent What Happens before?	Behavior What happens during?	Consequence What happens after?
Sonia was playing with a toy in dramatic play and Baruch reached to take it out of her hand.	Sonia bit the arm that Baruch was reaching for the toy with, did not break the skin.	Baruch dropped the toy and Sonia quickly grabbed it, I rushed over to console Baruch and remind Sonia to be gentle with our friends.

Possible Function:

It seemed like Sonia bit Baruch because he was reaching for her toy and she didn't know what to do. She might have also liked the attention from me (even though it was negative attention).

This form is adapted from CSEFEL. The CSEFEL Tools for Developing Behavior Support Plans: Observation Cards is available in English and in Spanish at: http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/strategies.html#toolsplans

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ABC Observation Card*

Child's Name: _____ Date/Time: _____

Activity: _____ Observer: _____

Who was there/involved (other adults or children)? _____

Any unusual health concerns or changes at home? _____

Antecedent What Happens before?	Behavior What happens during?	Consequence What happens after?
Possible Function:		

This form is adapted from CSEFEL. The CSEFEL Tools for Developing Behavior Support Plans: Observation Cards are available in English and in Spanish at: http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/strategies.html#toolsplans

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MAKE A PLAN AND TEACH NEW SKILLS

Once a pattern emerges in your observations and there is a clear understanding of the behavior and why it seems to be happening (the function), an individualized behavior support plan can be developed to replace the challenging behavior with new, more positive ways to communicate.

PLAN: To plan, first determine the new skill(s) you will **teach** the child in place of the challenging behavior. For the plan to be effective, the new skill(s) should be easier for the child than the challenging behavior, serve the same function, and be more effective at getting their needs met. Usually the replacement skill involves new ways to communicate, self-regulate, or socially engage with peers. It is also important to plan for how you will **prevent** the challenging behavior from getting triggered, and how to **respond** to the challenging behavior to avoid reinforcing it.

Example:
Behavior & Function: Child bites other children. After observing, the pattern shows that the child uses the behavior to communicate that he wants a toy that another child has taken.

Replacement Behavior: Because the child is not yet verbal, we will teach her through modeling and/or prompting to point and say, "my turn" or "please" with sign language to request the toy back. Initially, the child will get the toy back immediately, and eventually we'll teach waiting skills.

TEACH: After the plan is in place, implement strategies for preventing the child's need to engage in the problem behavior, and use individualized intervention and supports to the teach the child the new skill(s). Also, be sure to respond to the new and challenging behavior as planned. Individualize materials and strategies by matching them to the child's unique developmental level, preferences, and needs. Teach the new skill(s) consistently during daily activities and routines and closely monitor changes in the child's skills or behavior. Ensure any materials or visual supports being used are easily accessible to the child and educators.

Consider strategies that
- Expand verbal and non-verbal communication skills.
- Foster nurturing and responsive relationships.
- Utilize a safe, predictable, and engaging environment.
- Promote emotional literacy and self-regulation.
- Support friendship and social problem-solving skills.

Use the Behavior Support Plan: Prevent, Teach, Respond (PTR) tool to make a plan.

What if I Continue to Have Concerns?
- Continue to partner with families.
- Collaborate with other colleagues, when possible.
- Contact professionals to discuss a possible referral for developmental screening. This step always includes the families.

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Behavior Support Plan: Prevent, Teach, Respond (PTR) Example

Child's Name: _____ Date/Time: 4/10 10:15 am

All team members that agree to implement the plan: _____

Mom, Dad, Lead Educator, Colleague 1, Colleague 2

Antecedent What Happens before?	Behavior What happens during?	Consequence What happens after?
	Child bites peer, usually on the arm Function Pattern shows that child bites to get toy back and possibly attention from adults	Peer drops the toy and adults rush in to respond to both children
Prevent	**Teach New Skills**	**Respond**
	When a peer takes the child's toy, we will teach child to sign "stop" or say "please wait" using verbal and visual reminders for "stop" and "please wait" and make sure peers don't interfere with play	To challenging behavior: Child does not get access to the toy when dropped by the peer and attention is only given to the peer. To new skill: Celebrate with verbal praise, high-fives, and a friendship loop.

This form is adapted from CSEFEL. The CSEFEL Tools for Developing Behavior Support Plans: Observation Cards are available in English and in Spanish at http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/strategies.html#toolsplans

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Behavior Support Plan: Prevent, Teach, Respond (PTR)*

Child's Name: _____ Date/Time: _____

All team members that agree to implement the plan: _____

_____

Antecedent What Happens before?	**B**ehavior What happens during?	**C**onsequence What happens after?
	Function	
Prevent	**T**each New Skills	**R**espond
		To challenging behavior: To new skill:

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PARTNER WITH FAMILIES

Working together with families to understand a child's challenging behavior and identify prevention and support strategies is essential. Creating a behavior support plan in partnership with the family significantly increases the likelihood of success. Approach this partnership with open curiosity and respect.

- Focus on child and family strengths.
- Respectfully discuss concerns. Avoid placing blame on the child or family. Be positive and reassuring.
- Ask families for their perspective on the challenging behavior and be open to understanding different viewpoints.
- Discuss with families how they would like to help develop and implement the plan.
- Integrate the family's culture in the replacement behavior.
- Be understanding of constraints on a family's involvement (e.g., time, stress, culture).
- When professional specialists are needed, focus on how this process will support the child, family, and educators.

TRY IT OUT
INDIVIDUALIZED TEACHING SUPPORTS

Try out these materials to provide individualized support to children who have one or more challenging behavior. Be sure supports are tailored to each child's unique culture and needs. If a visual support is needed, make an individual set specific to the child's intervention plan and place it in a visible or easily accessible location. For quick and easy access throughout the day, keep portable sets of support materials in a fanny pack.





STICKERS

Focus on a child's successes to build relationships and promote confidence and self-esteem! Give a sticker when the child engages in specific behaviors, i.e., uses a new replacement skill instead of a challenging behavior, tries to find a solution to a problem, or manages a strong emotion. You can find the template for our PBS specific stickers on our web page for this episode: https://cultivatelearning.uw.edu/circle-time-magazine/season-2/



TRANSITION CARDS

Create special transition cards for an individual child who may have difficulty transitioning from one activity to another. These may feature an image of the next planned activity, preferred colors or characters, a preferred transition activity, or photos of the child engaged in the expected behavior.



FEELING FACE CARDS

Make a portable version of feeling face cards. Group them on a metal ring and have them handy throughout the day to help children who are receiving targeted emotional support identify how they are feeling.



STRESS RELIEVERS

Use sensory fidget toys as needed throughout the day to help yourself or a child manage in moments or periods of stress.



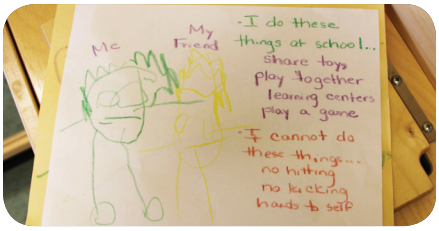
FRIENDSHIP VISUALS

Help children increase their friendship skills by placing sets of images illustrating friendship behaviors in areas of the learning environment where conflict is more likely. Create individualized images or sets for individual children who need extra or more frequent reminders of ways they can interact with peers in a positive way.



FRIENDSHIP LOOPS

Make colorful friendship bracelets. Use them to recognize and encourage children's prosocial behavior with peers. Slip a friendship loop on a child's wrist as you see them engaging in positive interactions with peers. At the end of the day celebrate the individual children, then have children deposit their loops in a personal or a group "friendship" jar. Celebrate as a group when the jar is filled.



SOCIAL STORY

Write a short, individualized story for a child, from their perspective, about any topic that is challenging for them. Describe the situation that triggers the child's challenging behavior, then include directions about what the child can do in that situation that will result in a positive outcome. Add line drawings or actual photos to personalize it, and plan time to read and teach the story. To learn more: http://headstartinclusion.org/social_stories.



PLAY SKILLS PHOTO ALBUM

Use a photo album to give children ideas of what to do in play. Use pictures and photos to create simple play scripts. Teach individual children how to follow the script in play.



SOLUTION KIT VISUALS

Make portable versions of solution kit cards. These include pictures of ways children can solve a social conflict. Create unique sets for individual children as needed.



TIMER

A 5-minute timer can be a tool for supporting transitions and taking turns. Children can see how much time is left before they need to stop an activity.



COUNTING CLICKER

Use a manual tally counter to keep track of the number of times children engage in positive social behavior. Keep a record for yourself or team and review it each week. Celebrate as you see increases in children's positive behavior!



FANNY PACK

Use a fanny pack to carry all of your visuals and other individualized supports so they are handy when you need them. Use binder rings to hold sets together and for easy clipping or hanging.

IT'S ALL ABOUT YOU

BUILDING RESILIENCE

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Caring for and educating young children is physically and emotionally demanding work. By taking time to learn resiliency practices and self-care, you can increase your feelings of happiness and satisfaction. These positive emotions can help you face daily stressors such as challenging behaviors with empathy, patience, and intention. The good news is that people can start learning resilience at any time; it develops with practice.

SNOW GLOBE



Feeling overwhelmed is like being caught in a snowstorm of anxiety and worries—a sort of "worry storm." Use a snow globe to help calm down and re-center.

- Watch the snow fall.
- Take a deep breath. Imagine your worries falling to the bottom of the snow globe, just like the snow.
- Engage in self-compassion. Realize that you are doing your best.
- Let the snow or worry storm settle. Recover your calm and think about how to move forward in a positive way.

IDEAS TO TRY

Set a personal goal or note the strategies you are excited to try.

HOW DID IT WORK?

Jot down what worked well and how the child responded. Is there something you'd like to do differently next time? Note that too!