

Behavioral Complications: We Have to Respond Now!

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The Problem

- ▶ Troubling Behaviors Can Interfere With
 - ▶ Academic performance
 - ▶ Peer relationships
 - ▶ Adult relationships
 - ▶ Family members

- ▶ To succeed in all aspects of school and life, children need to get along with others, follow the rules, and manage stress in appropriate ways.

Talk with Children about Their Strengths and Weaknesses

"In the adult world, what really counts is how strong your strengths are, not how weak your weaknesses are." – Dr. Mel Levine



- ▶ Eliminate any stigma
- ▶ Discuss strengths and interests
- ▶ Discuss area of weakness
- ▶ Emphasize optimism
- ▶ Identify an ally
- ▶ Protect from humiliation

Teacher Strategies



- ▶ Create a positive, caring environment.
 - ▶ Be a mentor or help find one.
 - ▶ Establish a fair and equitable discipline system.
 - ▶ Discuss the behavior in concrete terms using explicit language.
 - ▶ Develop contracts.
 - ▶ Track improvements and reward good behavior.
 - ▶ Manage the learning environment
 - ▶ Engage children in meaningful activities.

Behavioral Complications

- ▶ “The worst tragedy occurs when kids with learning and behavior problems and misinterpreted and, therefore, mismanaged. We have to recognize that a behavior problem in a kid with a learning problem, among other things is a distress signal. It’s a kid crying out for help. We have to respond.”

- Dr. Mel Levine

- ▶ ALL BEHAVIOR HAS MEANING!

Behavioral Complications

- ▶ “Our first instinct is to punish misbehavior. And if a kid can’t do something, all the punishment is world is not going to empower him to be able to do it.”

- Dr. Edwin Ellis



Strategies for Acting Out

- ▶ **Involve the child.** Ask "what can I do to help you manage your behavior?"
- ▶ **Teach children how to self-monitor their behavior.** Teach children to ask themselves "how's it going?" and "do I need to make changes?"
- ▶ **Develop incremental goals.** Do not expect a child to change behavior overnight.
- ▶ **Substitute non-disruptive strategies.** Show them how to do stretching exercises without leaving their desks.
- ▶ **Teach relaxations strategies.** Use "stop and think" strategies in which student stop and pause and ask "What should I do next?"
- ▶ **Help children stay alert.** Allow them to take frequent breaks. Plan what children will do during these breaks to ensure they are refreshed.

Strategies for Noncompliance

- ▶ **Understand the problem from the child's perspective.** Refrain from judging the child with statements such as, "If you would only try harder."
- ▶ **Reinforce completion of tasks.** Let children choose their reward whenever possible.
- ▶ **Give children choices.** Help children develop a sense of control by presenting things they do not want to do as choices.
- ▶ **Analyze situations in which a troublesome behavior occurred.** Consider whether or not the child needs help dealing with the trigger.
- ▶ **Remain calm.** When people are upset, they have difficulty listening.

Strategies for Anger and Aggression



- ▶ Ensure safety.
- ▶ Calm the child before discussing the outburst.
- ▶ Let children know you want to find out what is bothering them.
- ▶ Do not force children to talk about their feelings.
- ▶ Enlist children's help in solving the problem.
- ▶ Note when behavior is most disruptive.
- ▶ Intervene early.

Strategies for lack of Social Abilities

- ▶ **Teach social skills.** Ask the child to practice the skill with you.
- ▶ **Help children develop social observation skills.** Encourage them to watch people whom they admire and identify positive traits.
- ▶ **Talk to children about their social misconceptions.** Discourage the notion that being “popular” means boasting, bragging, or acting silly.
- ▶ **Role play.** Select familiar social situations and act them out.

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Strategies for Alienation

- ▶ **Foster hope.** Point out daily accomplishments and keep track of them over time.
- ▶ **Discuss children's interests.** During mealtime, talk about family events and things that are of interest to the child.
- ▶ **Reinforce children for trying.** Provide frequent praise when children are exerting effort in the face of challenging goals.
- ▶ **Find daily activities where children can feel responsible.** Ask them for their help.
- ▶ **Find opportunities for children to help others.** For example, encourage the child to tutor or help a younger child with homework, or help out an elderly couple with chores.

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