

POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT
IN EARLY YEARS

PRACTICAL ADVICE AND STRATEGIES

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POSSIBLE STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING UNWANTED OR CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR

Remember, the only way you are going to change a child's behaviour is to change your own. Also, behaviour is a form of communication and so practitioners need to consider what the behaviour is telling you?

In addition, all practitioners should be aware that if a child has SEND, then they must work with the child according to his or her developmental level.

Different things work for different children. It may be helpful for all staff to consider the following strategies questioning which of these ideas have been tried. Were they successful? If not why not? Are there other strategies here that may be more appropriate to try?

- Note when behaviour is good. (Positive praise)
- Note what sparks off negative behaviour.
- Find out about likes/dislikes - child may be frustrated particularly if favourite activities are put away before he/she has finished with them.
- Make sure child is not bored.
- Make sure the activity suits the child's level of ability, attention span and interest.
- Encourage attention span - short tasks, observations of favourite activity; try to extend play with new ideas.
- Positive attention for good behaviour.
- Praise for achievement and specifically say what you are pleased with and why.
- Reward system - e.g. verbal praise, stickers, choice of activity;
- Consistent approach by all staff.
- Ask parents how they manage unwanted behaviour at home; which may be adapted to the setting.
- Give positive feedback where appropriate at the end of the session to child and parent.
- Specifically teach social skills e.g. sharing, turn taking, listening to others and helping others.
- Discuss rules / boundaries and why.
- Remind children of what is unacceptable behaviour and why.
- Discuss results of behaviour e.g. broken toys, hurt child, safety if child is at age and stage of development to understand this .
- Talk about what makes him/her angry and that we all get angry sometimes but we must not hurt anyone.
- Remind child that we would not let anyone hurt him/her and therefore we cannot `let them `hurt others.
- Suggest using play dough or cushion to vent anger rather than against another child.
- Encourage child to ask adult for help in resolving conflict rather than retaliating.
- Include and support child in small group activities to encourage friendship.
- Avoid situations that set up the unwanted behaviour e.g. story time too long.
- Anticipate problems and be one step ahead.
- Gain full attention before giving instructions e.g. make eye contact, bend to child's level, say name.

- Give clear, short, simple instructions.
- Show the child what to do as well as saying it. '
- Seat him/her near adult for activities.
- Give prior warning when changing activity.
- Ignore attention seeking behaviour where safe to do so.
- Distract rather than confront e.g. please don't draw on the table, here is some paper instead.
- Teach and model alternative behaviours, e.g. how to ask another child for a toy.
- Use the ECAT monitoring sheet to record the child's developmental level across the four areas of speech and language (listening and attention, understanding, talking, social communication). Children whose behaviour is causing concern are often delayed in their speech or understanding which may explain some of their actions.

MANAGING EVERYDAY UNWANTED BEHAVIOUR

The following are general guidelines when working with a child who has challenging behaviour.

All staff need to: -

- Be consistent in dealing with unwanted behaviour.
- Be clear about what is expected. If staff give in after a period of time, children will learn that persistence allows them to 'get their own way.'
- Be aware of the importance of routine in helping the child to feel safe and secure.
- Give lots of specific praise for the desired behaviour e.g. 'Tom good sitting' rather than 'Tom good boy'.
- Consider increasing the setting's focus on positive behaviour by reviewing your reward systems for the group. Do you have a 'kind hands' tree, a golden book, a sticker chart or a bead jar?

Anticipate

- Can you see what is going to happen?
- Can you stop the behaviour happening by diverting the child 's attention?

Respond

- Can you ignore what the child is doing?
- Does it really matter?
- Can you just walk away?
- Can you give the child a five-minute warning that something is going to happen? e.g. tidying up, snack time etc

How to ignore the unwanted behaviour.

- Remain calm!** If you are cross – stop and think - you are modeling anger
- Get close** A touch from you may calm the situation. Do not try to tell the child off from across the room, but instead try to be within touching distance.
- Use a calm voice** Keep quiet. Say 'stop hitting', or whatever is appropriate, firmly but do not shout. Say it again to be sure you have been heard. Say nothing more. Say what you want not what you don't want. For some children the Makaton sign for 'no' or 'stop' will reinforce your words with a visual clue.
- Limited eye contact** Calmly remove the child or object from the situation giving little or no eye contact.
- Divert** Change the subject by doing something else to which you can both give your attention. Give eye contact, smile and talk during the new activity. Give an immediate reward for good behaviour.

MANAGING CONFLICT

1 Approach Calmly

Observe as you approach, prepare yourself for a positive outcome. It may help to give 'touch support', or to physically get down to the same level as the children.

2 Acknowledge feelings

Give recognition to the feelings the children are expressing by using simple, descriptive words (you seem angry/sad/upset). Use words that also reflect the intensity of the emotions (you are very, very upset). This will ultimately help the children 'let go' of the feelings, although the feelings may briefly increase in intensity before they subside. This 'emptying out' is an important step that must occur before children can think clearly about solutions. Once children have 'let go' of their feelings, let them know that you think they can find a way to solve their problems. .

3 Gather information

Tell children you want to hear from each of them. Ask open-ended questions that help them describe the details of the actions or materials that are part of the problem (not 'Why did you do this?' or 'How do you think she feels?' — such questions are too abstract). Listen carefully for the details and needs children are describing; they are the key to finding the solution.

4 Restate the problem

Using the details and needs children have described, restate the problem, clarifying any issues by asking for more details and rephrasing any-hurtful language. {e.g., 'You can't play 'cos I hate you' can be rephrased 'You are very angry and you want to play on your own?')} Check with the children to see if they agree that you have identified the problem.

5 Ask for ideas for solutions and choose one together

Respect and explore all of the children's ideas even if they seem unrealistic, considering how each might work. Help children to think through the specifics of cause and effect so that complicated or general solutions become concrete and are possible to carry out. Children may suggest, for example, 'we can share'. Help to implement the suggestion until it is clear that the problem has been resolved. Smile, reassure and move away.

If there seem to be many different unwanted behaviours, completing an ABC could prove valuable in determining what to work on first.

INTERVENTION FOR SPECIFIC AREAS OF CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR

1) Observe the target child for part of a session. Keep a running record of everything the child does — not your impressions (he seems unhappy), but exactly what you can see or hear (she throws the doll) (see example page 10)

2) Carry out an ABC analysis of each behaviour

A- Antecedent (What was happening exactly before? This should never say 'nothing')

B- Behaviour (What did the child actually do? How did adults respond?) .

C- Consequences (What happened next?)

How to use the information gathered from your ABC Chart:

Day and Time

- Does the unwanted behaviour happen at the same time each day? (Could the child be hungry, thirsty, tired, bored?)
- Does the unwanted behaviour happen on the same day each week?

What did the child do?

- Is it always the same unwanted behaviour? (pushing, biting, arguing etc.)

What provoked it; What happened before?

- Is there a pattern emerging to show what made the child behave in this way?
- Is there a problem in sharing, change of activities, not knowing boundaries?

When and where did it happen?

- Does the unwanted behaviour happen more often during structured activities, free play or tidy-up time?
- Does it happen more indoors or outside?
- Is it at noisy times or quiet times?

What did you do?

- How did staff respond?
- Did you remove child from situation?
- Did you distract?
- Did you ignore?
- Did you verbally reprimand?
- Did you remove toys/equipment that caused the problem?

What happened as a result of your efforts?

- How did child respond? (calmed down, sulked etc)
- Did the child continue with unwanted behaviour or did the behaviour get worse? `
- Has a pattern emerged? Can you use this to form any future action to reduce the frequency of the unwanted behaviour?

3) Select just one behaviour to work on first - one that is easy to change or one that is causing most disruption

4) Decide what you think is keeping that behaviour going, you might be right or you might be wrong, but it is a starting point that you can then revise in the light of the intervention and its success.

5) Draw up a plan to change the A, the B or the C.

Changing the antecedent – A

- Avoid likely situations e.g. If a child cannot sit still during a story avoid that situation and concentrate on teaching the child to listen 1:1 with an adult first.
- Distract rather than confront e.g. "please don't draw on the wall, here's a piece of paper to draw on instead".
- Make sure the activity suits the child's level. Children often misbehave because they cannot succeed in their learning and need to "save face". They do this by distracting others or avoiding the learning situation altogether.
- Get the child's full attention before giving directions - you may need to cue individual children by giving their names, even when addressing the whole group.
- Give some positive attention before the trouble happens. Some children need a great deal of positive attention. Target your praise specifically "thank you for giving that to Daniel" rather than "good boy".
- Give a warning of a change of activity — some children may benefit from simple sequences of symbols or pictures which show which activity will follow another, a visual timetable.
- Anticipate problem times and be a step ahead e.g. For children with language and social difficulties "free play" can be difficult because they don't know what is expected of them. For others the time between activities can be a problem. For those with attention difficulties sitting on the carpet for long periods can be a challenge. Get to know individual needs and look for alternative ways to manage these difficult times.
- Simplify adult speech — choose what you want to say, making it simple and clear. The more you elaborate the more attention you are giving the child for behaving inappropriately. Choose another time to talk about reasons and learning to be kind, e.g. In circle time.
- Show the child what to do as well as saying it — you will add meaning to your words by showing children what do.
- Choose a few simple rules and stick to them — circle time is a good time to discuss these and the children can contribute as well. Talk about what it means to be kind and helpful, giving concrete examples.

Changing the behaviour — B

- Stop it if you can — a key worker who is on the look out and can intervene at the right moment might prevent escalation of unwanted behaviour.
- Teach the child a new behaviour opposite to the first — if the only play a child knows is rugby tackling then s/he will need to be taught other types of play that can be equally exciting and pleasurable.
- Praise another behaviour that is incompatible with the first "please don't slam the door. See if you can close the door gently like this. Well done you closed that door really well".

- Consistent — if a child learns through constant 'tantrums' that there are some days when you will give in, she/he will learn to 'tantrum' longer and louder until you do eventually give in. At first every incident of inappropriate behaviour needs dealing with, just as every example of positive behaviour needs encouraging and praising. Gradually you will be able to step back and reward and praise less frequently.
- Reward when the child is not doing the inappropriate behaviour — catch them being good and reward appropriate behaviours.
- Ignore attention seeking behaviour where it is safe to do so. easier said than done in front of other interested youngsters! You may need to withdraw with the child away from the attention but not give further attention of your own.
- Make it fun to behave appropriately — behaving inappropriately may have become a habit, so you will need to make your rewards and praise particularly strong to break the habit. Emphasise your praise, make sure it is relevant for that child and immediate. Pair all concrete praise with verbal praise as well, so that eventually the child will find praise rewarding in itself.
- Star charts and stickers can work well - try not to overuse these. Make sure the child knows exactly why they have earned a sticker; never remove once it is given. Stickers are a concrete sign that the child behaved in an appropriate way at that particular moment, and helps them to learn that you have praised them because they did something not because you decide to be pleased with them.

Example of a completed ABC Model for observation

Day & Time	What did _____ do?	What provoked it? What happened before?	Where did it happen?	What did you do?	What happened as a result?
B		A	B	C	C
Tuesday 10.00	X kicked A and made him shout in temper while I was sitting at the table	He wanted the game S was playing with.	Playing in the hall	I explained how he should share.	X shouted at first but then calmed down. X was then praised.
Wed. 10.15	X snatched a toy from M and refused to return it.	He wanted the toy. I was talking to another member of staff.	In floor play area	I asked X to give the toy back to M which he did reluctantly.	He grabbed it again 5 minutes later.
Wed. 10.30	X had a tantrum when I turned off the computer because drinks were ready.	He wanted to carry on playing.	In the quieter computer area	I showed him the photos of snack 'first', garden 'next'.	After 5 minutes slamming about he joined us for snack.
Thurs. 10.00	X pinched A and left marks on his arm.	Don't know	In floor play area	I comforted A and reminded X about 'kind hands'.	He answered back and stormed off.
Thurs. 11.15	X threw stones at other children.	Don't know	In the garden	I brought X inside to sit quietly and then say sorry to the others.	He reluctantly helped me to pick up the stones.
Friday 11.30	X argued with A over whose turn it was to use the bike.	He wanted the bike.	In the garden	I found the sand timer so X could see when it was his turn.	He lost interest in the bikes and found something else to play with.

EXAMPLES OF POSSIBLE IEP TARGETS

These examples will need to be adapted for each child. The child's specific difficulty, concentration span and how often s/he attends the setting needs to be taken into consideration.

- Will join in singing/saying a nursery rhyme, in a small group 3/5 times observed.
- Will play a simple turn taking game with 1 adult. 3/5 times.
- Will play a simple turn taking game with 1 other child, under adult supervision. 3/5 times.
- Will play alongside another child for 5mins and get a positive comment from an adult about how they are playing.
- Will share toys or resources with another child 8/10 times.
- Will seek adult rather than resolve conflict by retaliating. 3/5 times observed.
- Will sit when requested for the duration of a short story, (no more than '?' mins.) 3/5 times observed.
- Will walk from 1 activity to another. 3/5 times observed.
- Will follow a simple verbal instruction, with visual support 3/5 times.
- Will help to tidy when requested. 8/10 times.
- Will sit to eat snack/lunch. (not expected to remain at table once finished). 3/5 times observed.
- Will join in role-play with 1 adult for 5 mins. 3/5 times.
- Will join in role-play with 1 other child and 1 adult. 3/5.
- Will join in role-play for 5 mins 3/5 times.

IDEAS FOR SPECIFIC PROBLEM TIMES.

CANNOT LISTEN TO STORY FOR ANY LENGTH OF TIME

- Consider where the child is sitting – can they see/hear and can the story teller make good eye contact with them?
- It may be appropriate to place the child directly by the story teller where they will feel safe and involved either on the floor nearby or on a chair.
- Consider having another adult sitting near to the child to encourage when necessary, or to cuddle the child whilst listening.
- Use 'special' little mat, which helps good sitting and can be positioned where the adult wishes i.e. away from disrupting influences.
- Ask the child to choose the book.
- Read book on a one to one basis in a quiet cosy corner. Gradually increase number of children to small group, then whole group.
- Ask child to bring a favourite book from home.
- Use visual aids whilst telling the story.
- Hold a puppet and let the puppet tell/read the story.
- Ask child to predict what is going to happen (this helps to retain interest).
- Ask simple questions relating to the picture before turning over (not too many otherwise interest will be lost)
- Praise, during and after story e.g. good sitting, good listening, good looking.
- Do not expect the child to stay any longer than the duration of the story. If you wish the other children to remain on the mat for longer, quietly praise and allow the child to move off. This could be to look at the book just read or to play with quiet things in a box placed behind the other children. Or, if you are reading 2 stories, just bring child in for the second one so s/he can leave the mat with the others.

RUNS AROUND FOR MOST OF THE MORNING, SCREAMING, BEING NOISY, MAKING A FUSS IF S/HE CANNOT DO SOMETHING

- Provide a wide range of activities
- Show child how to use the toys, demonstrate making simple Lego model, constructing road way, role play of car going to shops / petrol etc.
- Play with the child to encourage involvement
- Request child makes and then brings something to show you – keep asking e.g. 'is my cup of tea ready yet?' (pretend!)
- Distract with other activities especially cause and effect toys e.g. wind up toys that then perform in some way.
- Present noisy and physical activities.
- Give reasons for rules.
- Speak quietly to the child.
- Avoid shouting across the room.
- Encourage walking by walking with the child holding hands.
- Praise if the child is seen doing 'anything' well and rather than just saying 'you are being good' say what is good e.g. 'you are sharing the cars nicely', 'good sharing'.

ANXIOUS AND UNABLE TO PLAY WITH OTHERS

- Smile, take an interest, and listen to the child.
- Provide opportunities to share feelings.
- One to one support to build confidence.
- Try pairing with another child.
- Limit number of children to an activity to encourage confidence and friendship. Encourage good attendance.
- Find out from the parent if anything is known to be worrying the child.
- Find out from the parent if the child is the same at home or in other situations.
- Give running commentary so that the child is aware of what will happen next/routine.
- Regular observations to build up a picture of how the child is interacting.

AGGRESSIVE WITH OTHER CHILDREN

- Ask parent what the child is like in other situations.
- Explain rules simply. .
- Explain safety simply.
- Remind that you do not allow others to hurt them so you cannot allow s/he to hurt others.
- Try to predict high-risk times or situations.
- Ensure that there is enough equipment for all.
- Small group work where everyone shares under adult supervision.
- Use an egg timer to help child take turns.
- Stories about feelings. Acknowledging negative feelings and how to cope with them.
- Encourage child to go to an adult to help deal with a situation rather than retaliate.
- Make child feel important and valued by giving tasks to do.
- Give lots of praise for appropriate behaviour

Make sure that your explanations are simple and are able to be understood by the child.
Make sure that all staff are consistent in their approach.

'Changing Don't' to 'Do', i.e. negative to positive

Consider rephrasing your language to children, e.g.

- Change: 'don't throw sand on to the floor'
- To: 'keep the sand in the sand tray'

- Change: 'don't run'
- To: 'walk please'

- Change: 'don't shout at Billie like that'
- To: 'talk quietly, thank you'

- Change: 'come away from there, you know you shouldn't be there'
- To: 'look (name) come and see what I've got! / I'm doing'.

Positive Praise

Good looking/listening
Good sitting/ walking
FINE!
SUPER!
TERRIFIC!
You're on the right track now
That's right!
That's good
WONDERFUL!
You are very good at that!
Much better!
That's coming along nicely
You've just about got that!
That's much better
GOOD WORK
That's better than ever
Nice going
I'm happy to see you working like that
You're really going to town!
You're really working hard today
OUTSTANDING!
Exactly right
FANTASTIC!
You're doing a good job!
TREMENDOUS!
I'm proud of the way you've worked
You are doing much better today
You did that very well
Now you have it!
You must have been practicing
You're doing beautifully
GREAT!
You're really improving
Now you've figured it out
THAT'S IT!
That's great
That's the best you've every done
Superb!
You've just about got it
Good remembering!
Congratulations!
Congratulations. You got (number) right!
I knew you could do it
Keep it up
I couldn't have done it better myself
Good sharing!
You're a star!

You are learning fast
You did a lot of work today!
Keep working on it, you're getting better
That's IT!
Good for you!
Well, look at you go!
That's quite an improvement
You make it look easy
Now you have the hang of it!
You certainly did well today
That's the right way to do it
You're doing fine!
One more time and you'll have it
Good thinking!
You are really learning a lot
That's the way
Keep on trying!
You're getting better every day
You out did yourself today
You did it that time!
I've never seen anyone do it better
Good for you!
WOW!
Think you've got it now!
That's the way to do it
Good going!
Keep up the good work
BRILLIANT!
You haven't missed a thing
MARVELLOUS!
Now you've figured it out
I'm very proud of you
SENSATIONAL!
You're a winner now
That's better
It's so lovely to help you when you're like that
Nothing can stop you now
Keep working on it. You're getting better
EXCELLENT!
Good job (name of child)
PERFECT!
You figured that out fast
That's the best ever
You remembered
That's really nice.
That kind picture makes me happy

Websites

www.familylives.org.uk Parents' website of the National Family and Parenting Institute. Has a 'Worried about Behaviour' section.

www.bbc.co.uk/parenting Lots of information including behaviour advice, tips from parents and very active message boards, with moderators.

TOP TIP: From — Positive Discipline: 'Teach by example - children learn a great deal about how to behave and how to cope with situations by copying adults, usually you'.

www.mumsnet.com News, tips from parents and an 'ask the experts' section. Easy to use, with a friendly and approachable feel to it. An active message board with descriptions and photos of the moderators.

TOP TIP: From Behaviour and Development: 'My toddler hates having her face wiped after meals. If I give her a wipe as well as one for myself and we "work together" we don't have such a struggle'.

www.practicalparent.org.uk Not related to Practical Parenting magazine, and offering an easily accessible site including a wide—ranging Parenting Tips section. There is a message board but with only a few answers to queries raised by parents.

TOP TIP: 'Reward positive behaviour...catch children being good and reinforce those behaviours.'

www.parentlineplus.org.uk Advice covering a wide range of issues from the voluntary organisation that provides a UK wide free and confidential helpline to parents and other carers of children. The sections include toddlers, pre-schools and discipline.

TOP TIP: From Toddler's lips: 'To feel strong and calm you may need to work at managing your own stress levels'.

www.raisingkids.co.uk Lots of advice from experts as well as parents' tried and tested tips, with information divided into age groups. Colourful, eye-catching layout. The message boards are divided into age groups, plus support group message boards for specific groups e.g. autism, lone parents, cerebral palsy. There are also time-specific chatroom sessions.

TOP TIP: From — Tantrum Taming Tips: 'Don't try to talk your child out of it: The attention tends to make the tantrum last longer'.

www.awareparenting.com A site based on the ideas of child-centred parenting with interesting articles on a range of subjects, including behaviour, and a large links, section.

TOP TIP: From — Twenty Alternatives to Punishment: 'Find acceptable alternatives. If you don't want your child to build a fort in the dining room, don't just say no. Tell her where she can build one'.

www.parentsandkids.co.uk A busy-looking site but with a section dedicated to parenting issues with good behaviour advice provided by their team, all of whom are parents. Very broad message forums and chat sessions on specific subjects.

TOP TIP: From Confident Parents, Confident Children: 'Parents and children have to learn that they will make mistakes and that they need forgiving and the chance to get it right next time'.

www.positiveparenting.com Very American in style but with useful articles on parenting and discipline. Also has a newsletter to subscribe to and book reviews

TOP TIP: From — 10 Keys to Successful Parenting: 'Withdraw from conflict — if your child is testing you through a temper tantrum... it is best if you leave the room and tell your child you'll be in the next room if he wants to "try again"'.