

## Supporting Your Child with Challenging Behaviors

Generally speaking, it is normal for children to be angry, behaving or not doing as told. It is their way to communicate what they want. It is part of growing up. However, some children may show an ongoing pattern of emotional, social and behavioral challenges that affect their learning and other daily activities. In this video, I will describe some of ongoing challenging behaviors and share some ideas what parents can do to improve their child's challenging behaviors.

Aggression, tantrums, social withdrawal, self-injury and noncompliance are challenging behaviors that get our attention and force us to respond. It is a way children used to get what they want. For some children, these behaviors may reflect mental health needs or disorders.

Examples:

Behaviors often seen in children with attention deficit hyperactive disorder include trouble taking turn in games or activities, difficult staying seated, interrupts others, difficult listening, trouble finishing work or staying on task, accident-prone and reckless.

Behaviors often seen in children with anxiety include difficult getting along with peers, avoid new experience, quick to anger, negative comment about self, give up easily, appear unmotivated and easily frustrated/shuts down.

Behaviors often seen in children with Autism Spectrum Disorder include lack or need support in social interaction, communication and the presence of restricted, repetitive, and stereotyped pattern of behaviors, interests, and activities.

Behaviors often seen in children with depression include feeling sad, hopeless, or irritable a lot of the time, not wanting to do or enjoy doing fun things, showing changes in eating patterns – eating a lot more or a lot less than usual, showing changes in sleep patterns – sleeping a lot more or a lot less than normal, showing changes in energy – being tired and sluggish or tense and restless a lot of the time, having a hard time paying attention, feeling worthless, useless, or guilty, and showing self-injury and self-destructive behavior.

Challenging behaviors at home can result in life long struggles with family relationships, create an underlying hostile environment, or keep the child from participating in family events.

Challenging behaviors in school may result in missed instruction, poor school performance, having problem with peers, difficult moving towards graduation, and frequent interactions with disciplinary procedures or may face disciplinary actions such as class suspension, out of school suspension and expulsion.

If you see or hear from school that your child has challenging behaviors, you can shift away from your thinking about behavior as “being bad” or “misbehavior”. You can approach

proactively by looking at the behavior as a way a child is getting a need met and then, you can ask school in writing to evaluate your child and take a team approach with school to come up with a plan called positive behavioral intervention and support (PBIS) that helps your child learn new skills to manage and improve your child's behavior without punishment or consequences. If your child is already received PBIS services and you feel the plan is not working, you can communicate with his/her teacher or ask for a team meeting to discuss your concerns and develop a new plan.

Parents, too, can use positive behavioral support plan at home by identifying what behaviors you would like to work on with your child. Supporting positive behavior does not mean changing your child – it means changing the environment so that it supports and reinforces the kind of behavior you want to see. To make it work, your family need to decide what behavior you expect at home and in the community and what consequences will be for negative behavior. Remember that behavior change is a family affair and your family members have to respond the same and use the same language and expectation as much as possible.

Understanding that behavior is about communication, and for your child, that his/her behavior serves a useful purpose will help you put your focus on teaching new skills instead of just reacting and punishing.

If you are not sure what to do or want to talk to me how to approach school, please call me and I will provide information to help you do just that.