Behavior as Communication

Brief Informational Guide



Autistic children may have behaviors that interfere with their daily activities. Some examples include tantrums, aggression, not listening, and self-harm. Although these behaviors can be labeled as "problem behaviors," behaviors are often used to communicate a need.
By showing these behaviors, your child may be trying to tell you something.



Scan Me

Scan Me for More Information



ABC's of Behavior

Antecedents

- What is happening right before a behavior occurs. These can be things happening outside the child (external- mom turning off the TV) or inside the child (internal- a headache or hunger).

Behaviors

- A behavior is anything that someone does. They can be observable (a tantrum) or internal (pain or daydreaming). Most interventions focus on the external behaviors that are observable and measurable.

Consequences

- A consequence is anything that follows as a result of the behavior. Ex: A child may say "juice," and the consequence is the parent pouring a glass of juice. Consequences can increase or decrease the likelihood of a behavior happening again or have no effect on behavior.

Example:

A child is having a tantrum (behavior). Right before the tantrum, his dad told him to sit at the table for dinner (antecedent). Dad gets frustrated and sends him to his room (consequence). The tantrum likely occurred to get out of sitting at the table, and Dad indirectly supported this behavior by sending him to his room.

Five Main Reasons Any Behavior Happens

1. **To escape or avoid a non-preferred situation**
   Ex: Hiding before bath time
2. **To get attention** (positive or negative)
   Ex: Throwing a tantrum
3. **To get what they want**
   Ex: Refusing to eat until they get a preferred food
4. **For sensory input**
   Ex: Head banging
5. **Emotional expression**
   Ex: hitting when mad

ECHO AUTISM COMMUNITIES
echoautism.org

Resources

Behavioral Basics

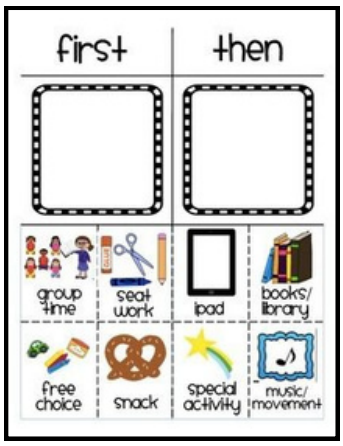


- ☐ Video Toolkit: ABCs of Behavior
- ☐ Video Toolkit: Reinforcement
- ☐ Introduction to Behavioral Health Treatment Toolkit
- ☐ Applied Behavioral Analysis - A Parent's Guide
- ☐ Managing Challenging Behaviors - The Pathway 2 Success

Tools For Success

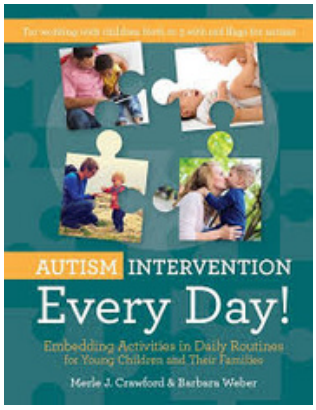


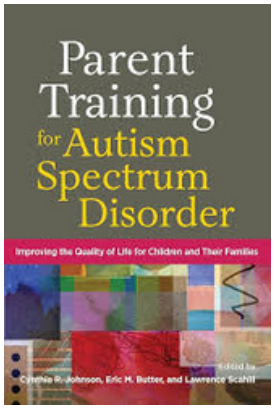
- ☐ Visual Supports (eg: stop sign)
- ☐ Visual Schedules
- ☐ First/Then Boards
- ☐ Feelings Chart
- ☐ Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)



Addressing Interferring Behaviors

- ☐ Take Action Webinar
- ☐ Behavior Therapy
- ☐ ABA - Applied Behavior Analysis
- ☐ Books
  1. Parent Training for ASD: Improving Quality of Life
  2. Autism Intervention Every Day





Collecting More Information

- ☐ ABC Behavior Worksheet
- ☐ Request a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA)
  - Process by a trained individual for identifying interferring behaviors and developing helpful behaviors.

NOTES:

If you have questions about behavior, please talk to your healthcare clinician.