

Children/Teens with Special Needs

Information from Marilee Payne, lecture

“Behavior IS Communication!”

Not special needs children but children with special needs.

Stages of Behavior

1. Knowing what the rule is.
2. Knowing the purpose of the rule.
3. Telling others to follow the rule.
4. Now they can follow the rule.

Stages of Development

1. Get in touch with environment with pleasure. (Infant)
2. Get in touch with environment with success. Getting what they want – “Everything is mine!”
3. Become part of the group. They are still the center of the universe but can play on a team. Attitude is: “I am the best player.”
4. Move into recognizing being part of the team: “My team is the best.”

Behavior

If a child does not understand something or how to do something rather than be thought of as stupid they will act out to shift your attention to their behavior and away from what they feel is their lack.

Our attitude needs to be: “How can I help the child be successful?”

It helps to recognize what stage of behavior and development the child is in. It is not necessarily related to their age.

Behavior Management

Goals

- Help to maintain each person’s dignity.
- Be proactive
- Use statements not questions. (*“Line up at the door.” Not, “Let’s line up at the door, ok?”*)
- Help them find replacement behaviors.
(Example – If they have been taught, through example at home, that swearing is what we do when we are angry, then we need to teach them another way to respond to anger. You could tell them that swearing is OK in our classroom only.

Tell them that this is a safe place but you cannot swear outside this room because it will get you into trouble. So if you want to swear you can but you must remain in this room. When the class goes out for recess if they choose to swear they have to stay inside. This gives them a choice – stay in alone and swear or use appropriate language and be with the group and have fun.)

Behavior is purposeful. It is to avoid attention or to gain attention.

Some are learned behaviors. Look at the parents behaviors for clues to the children's behaviors.

Some children have defenses up because they need them in order to survive at home. It is a fine line to help them lower their defenses at home and then put them back up at home. *(Example: Child who seems to be unaware of what is happening around her. She doesn't pay attention to sounds of the street or to the teacher in the classroom. She seems to be off in her own world. Looking at her family dynamics – her parents yell a lot and use harsh language. She tunes them out in order to protect herself. Help her know that your classroom is a safe place. Invite her to imagine that she is wearing earmuffs. When she walks out of her house to get on the bus, she can take her earmuffs off and hang them on a bush. This way she can pay attention to the sounds around her and participate in the group. Then, when she returns home, she can put her earmuffs back on before she enters her house.)*

Children in Stress

- When children are in stress they will divert you with behavior. They are saying, "Stay away!"
- We must look past behavior and make connection with them. Ask yourself, "What do they need?" "How can I provide it?"
- Ask yourself – "How can I connect each Sunday with all the children?"
- If the child is trashing the room/blowing up:
 - Get the other kids out of the room – this takes the audience away and protects everyone.
 - Must help them engage their frontal lobe before you will be able to connect with them.
- Children engaged in a power struggle don't have a lot of control in their life so they try to be in control in the classroom. Give 2 positive choices within your boundaries.
- Getting out of a power struggle:
 - Stop – be honest – take responsibility for your mis-step.
 - Ask to start over (help each other).
 - Have another adult step in and help. This helps everyone stop the behavior and save face.
 - Ask – What is this behavior telling me? How can I help him be successful?

- When unexpected blows up happen – look back at what was happening right before the blowup. People ALWAYS give some sort of signal of what is coming. Recognize it.

Managing Feelings

Create a feelings chart.

- Cut out pictures of people showing different feelings.
- Mount them on a magnetic board, identifying the feeling through the picture and the word.
- Take a picture of each child and mount it on a magnet.
- As the children arrive invite them to place their photo in the column that most closely illustrates how they are feeling.
- Invite them to move their magnet as their feelings change.
- Help them use this tool by talking about different feelings and helping them identify different feelings in themselves.

Affirm Good Behavior

- Have post cards available that can be sent home cheering their good behavior.
- Give them what they need. This may appear to reinforce negative behavior but will really help them.

Teacher Responsibilities

- Know your buttons and take care of them.
- Keep your verbiage simple.
- Apply natural consequences. If natural consequences are not possible, then make them logical.
- Prepare children for transitions. Give plenty of warning.
- Be aware and present.
- Ask for help when you need it.
- Help all children know that your classroom is a safe place. Some children are so used to rejection that they cannot stand the tension of waiting for rejection so they have behaviors to push you into rejection to relieve the tension. Don't give in. Help them to know they are safe and that they can trust you.
- Know that the brain always strives to be the best – best student, best depression, best whatever is in their mind.
- Know that when changing behavior we must admit that we have not been doing our best. The negative behavior will escalate until it changes.
- Develop a system of tools to help them refocus. Teach them what the tools need.
 - *(Example: Job cards with specific directions and responsibilities.)*
- Find out what they like to do and give them a place to be successful.
- Set boundaries and give choices within your boundaries. Make sure the choices are 2 positive choices not “do what I want or suffer the consequences.”

- **Reacting vs Responding**
 - Reacting – Quick response, hair on back of neck goes up, no thinking – You are taking things personally and say what you did not need to say.
 - Responding – Take a breath, center yourself, then make a choice to respond. Stay present and know that it is not about you. Explore – how do we all get through this together.
 - Know your buttons and deal with them on your own.
- Develop a relationship with the children.
- Don't use sarcasm. Children take things literally. They don't always know the multiple meaning of words. Make sure to help them understand the words you are using and the context in which you are using them. Ask them if they understand what you mean.

ADHD

- These children either don't get cause and effect or if they do, they don't care.
- The problem is not that they need to pay attention. They pay attention to EVERYTHING.
- They cannot distinguish between the importance of things. They do not have the filter so everything happening around them is equally important. This is very distracting to them.
- Our goal is to help them FOCUS.

Since they notice everything happening around them and their mind is constantly working, their mind jumps way ahead of the group. They know everything that has happened. We need to help them develop tools to increase their ability to shut out all that is happening around them and to focus on the task at hand.

We can help them focus by attaching learning by associating the learning to what is happening around them because retrieval of a learning experience is dependent on what was happening around them.

Children will always develop their own coping mechanisms. They always give a warning that will tell you a blow up is coming. We must pay enough attention to recognize those signals.

If the brain is in gear the body will be in gear.

Help them by providing a way for them to move. This will help them to be able to focus on what you want them to focus on.

- Use lessons that invite them to move around.
- Provide large balls for them to sit on instead of chairs.
- Provide small "fidget" items. (*Worry beads, stress ball, etc...*)

- *(For the above 2 items – set boundaries around the use of the items and make sure the child understands these boundaries.)*
- Set up the classroom to accommodate their learning style.
- If they need to sit under a table tell them which table they can sit under and which ones they cannot.
- Change activities frequently.

Giving Directions

- Children only hear the noun and the verb. ***They do not hear negatives.***
- So, ***tell them what you WANT, not what you don't want.*** (“Sit down” instead of “Don't run around.”)
- Use as few words as possible.

Planning

- Think ahead so you can adjust your lesson to the needs of the children present.
- How can we be inclusive and help everyone to be successful and to feel a part of the group?
- Helping ADHD student be successful example:
If the project is a wall mural where children need to manage their space and time and stay focused on what they are doing, this will be difficult for an ADHD child.
 - If you want them to work on the mural, put them on the end so there is less distraction by the other children.
 - Or put them in charge of the supplies. The other children are to go to him to get their paint and brushes, etc... He can decide how to give them out.
 - While the rest of the class is completing the mural project, give the ADHD child additional things to do to fill the time. Be specific with the parameters so it will fill the time.

AUTISM

- A child with autism will be an expert on something or love something. Design class projects around them and let them be the authority.