

BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT – PLANNED IGNORING

BEHAVIOUR

What is meant by problem behaviour?

Problem or challenging behaviour can put the health and safety of a child, and those around him, at risk. It can also interfere with a child's learning. Sometimes, behaviour is a problem because it happens far too much, or not enough. Problem behaviours may take many forms, such as:

- yelling, screaming, or shouting
- hitting, kicking, or punching
- running away
- constantly singing or vocalizing
- spitting or biting
- pinching oneself or others
- throwing things
- doing something too often, or not often enough,
- like looking in someone's eyes, or sitting still
- ignoring people, pretending not to hear them

Why does he do that?

As mentioned above, all behaviour happens for a reason. To better understand why your child is behaving or acting in a certain way, it is helpful to determine the function or purpose of the behaviour. Simply put, what does he "get" for behaving in this way?

The function of behaviour can be categorized as either to obtain (get) or avoid someone or something, objects, activities, attention, or sensory stimulation.

1 This information was researched by staff of RFEYC and was compiled from the Tip Sheets: Facts About Behaviour and Changing Behaviour through Attention and Ignoring found on the website <http://www.connectability.ca> on April 16, 2015.

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Often, problem behaviour occurs because the child is unable to communicate or make his needs known in a way people around him can understand.

Here are some examples:

- Avoid a disliked object
- Avoid an unpleasant activity
- Get away from a certain person or group
- To get a desired object
- Participate in an enjoyable activity
- Get attention from a certain person or group

In some situations, a child might behave in a challenging way in order to make himself more comfortable. Some children can be very sensitive to the sounds, smells, sights, or textures around them. They may look for specific ways to experience (gain access to) sensations they enjoy, or avoid sensations they dislike. It may be more difficult to figure out behaviour that serves the purpose of trying to obtain or avoid sensory stimulation.

For example:

- Avoid or escape sensory stimulation
- To get or obtain sensory stimulation

POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR

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How to give positive attention effectively

- Make eye contact with the child and speak enthusiastically.
- Be specific about the behaviour that you liked.
- Keep praise statements simple.
- give the type of attention that the child enjoys.
- Give attention immediately following the behaviour that you liked.
- Withhold attention for 30 seconds following an inappropriate behaviour.
- Catch the child being good.
- Provide positive attention for behaviours that cannot occur at the same time as inappropriate behaviours.
- Provide positive attention at least once every 5 minutes.
- Be sure that good behaviours receive more attention than inappropriate behaviours.
- Provide many opportunities for positive attention.

How to ignore effectively

Ignorable behaviour is typically defined as behaviours whose function is to gain the attention of others. It is attention that is the fuel that maintains the behaviour of concern. Generally, these are behaviours that are not harmful to the child, others, or others' belongings. It is important that all care providers and parents be aware of the definition to be consistent in their response.

- Ignore as soon as the behaviour occurs. Delaying your response (ignoring) will confuse your child if too much time passes between her action and your response.
- Ignore consistently. Whenever ignorable behaviours occur, be consistent in your response. This will help a child to learn the limits to her behaviour and to determine which behaviours will result in the desired attention.

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- Make ignoring obvious. To have an impact on behaviour, a child must be aware that attention is being removed because of specific behaviours she has done. This is particularly challenging for some children with a developmental disability who are less aware of social cues. Therefore, ignoring must be made obvious by:

- looking away,
- keeping a neutral facial expression,
- talking with others in child's presence,
- restricting physical contact,
- tuning the child out, or
- engaging in other regular tasks within the child care classroom or setting.

- Expect behaviours to escalate. Things often get worse before they get better. This is because the child increases the frequency of behaviours in an attempt to receive the attention she is accustomed to. This does not mean that ignoring is not working—quite the opposite—she is merely testing the new rules that have changed.
- Do not allow the child to escape a task due to ignorable behaviours. If you are working on a task, such as putting toys away, continue to follow through with the task even if behaviours you have defined as “ignorable” occur. Ignoring is a very active strategy that requires that you withhold eye contact and make no verbal response to the child. However, it does not mean to stand back and allow destructive or harmful behaviour to occur. It is important at times to prevent and block behaviours as well as removing or diverting a child from an area or situation. It is important to keep everyone and everything safe.

What is Reinforcement?

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- It is a reward that occurs after a behaviour
- It can include praise, special activities, music, toys and food
- Why Reinforce?
- to teach new skills
- to increase independence
- to build self-esteem
- to motivate and reduce frustration

What Kinds of Reinforcement are there?

- Social reinforcement - smiles, hugs, kisses, tickling, high fives, and cheering
- Tangible reinforcement - favourite toys, blankets, trading cards, sensory items and may include food

Favourite activities may be used but are less portable

How do I Reinforce?

- Reinforce each step of the way when starting something new
- Always tell your child what they have done well
- Always use social reinforcement even if you are using tangible reinforcement as well
- Gradually fade the use of reinforcers from each step to task completion
- Try not to reward behaviour that is negative; ignoring it is best

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