



Understanding Behavior

Pyramid Resources for Infant-Toddler Social-Emotional Development
University of Kansas

Adapted from:
The Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning
Vanderbilt University

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Learner Objectives

Participants will be able to:

- Understand and describe that all young children's behavior is a way of communicating and has meaning
- Use a variety of strategies, including observation and self-reflection, to increase capacity to support social-emotional development of infants, toddlers, and their families

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Training Agenda

- **Setting the Stage**
- **Observation**
- **Examining our Reactions**
- **Responding to Challenges**
- **Wrap-up & Reflection**

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Our Learning Environment

What can the trainer do to facilitate a safe learning environment?

How can other training participants help make the training environment conducive to your learning?

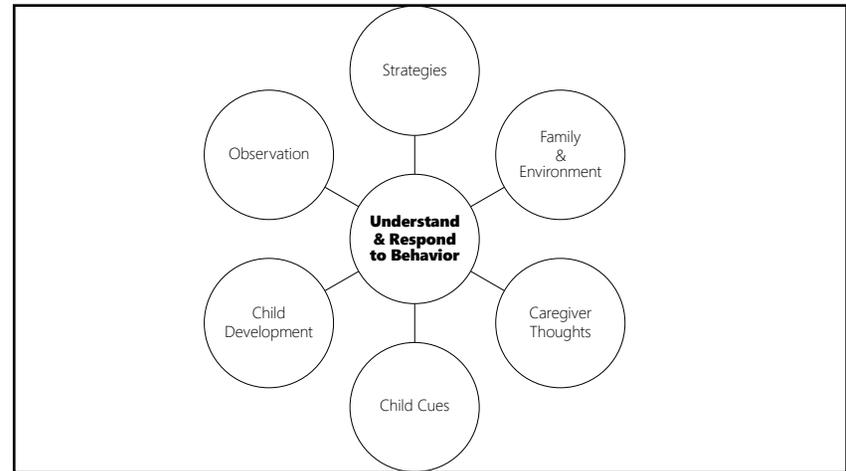
What are some agreements we can make?

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Possible Shared Agreements

- **Confidentiality**
- **Take Care of Yourself and Others**
- **Demonstrate Respect for all**
- **Right to Pass**
- **Right to Take Risks**
- **Assume Positive Intent**
- **Recognize We Are All Learning, and in Different Ways**

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Understanding Behavior

Observation helps us understand children's development and behavior

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            graph TD
              A((Understand & Respond to Behavior)) --- B((Observation))
              A --- C((Family & Environment))
            
```

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Understanding Behavior: Observation

Look: Ongoing Monitoring

- **Record what you see and hear**
- **Be objective – just the facts**
- **Use all of your senses (see, hear, touch, feel, smell)**
- **Note your own responses and how you are feeling**
- **Observe different days, different times of day, different places and activities**

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Understanding Behavior: Observation

What do you see in this picture?



Look: Ongoing Monitoring

Shared by Kristin Tenney-Blackwell

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Understanding Behavior: Time for Reflection

- What was my purpose for observing?
- Do I notice any similarities or patterns?
- What do these observations suggest?
- What else might be going on?
- Is there anything else I want to observe or find out?
- How does this observation fit with other things that I know about the child?

Think: Why is it happening?

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Understanding Behavior: Temperament – A Continuum of Traits

Think: Why is it happening?

Handouts 4 & 5

Think about where you feel each child falls on the continuum of traits, such as activity level, adaptability, persistence, mood, etc.

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Understanding Behavior: Learning From Families

Look: Ongoing Monitoring

Encourage families to share their observations.

Let families know their observations are important and valued.

Place a basket at sign-in for families to drop off photos and notes to support careful observation.



Shared by Kristin Tenney-Blackwell

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Look:
Ongoing
Monitoring

Understanding Behavior Cues of Young Children	<pre> graph TD A((Understand & Respond to Behavior)) --- B((Child Cues)) </pre>
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Look:
Ongoing
Monitoring

Understanding Behavior: Cues of Young Children

Engagement cues: "I want more."		Disengagement cues: "I need a break."
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Look:
Ongoing
Monitoring

Understanding Behavior: Cues of Young Children

Engagement Cues	Disengagement Cues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eyes widen • Turn eyes, body, or head toward speaker • Alert face • Steady breathing • Hand-to-mouth activity • Hand clasped together • Grasping finger or object • Smooth movements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crying or fussing • Gagging, spitting • Frowning • Hiccupping, yawning, sneezing • Jittery or jerky movements • Falling asleep • Back arching • Turning away • Stiff or limp posture

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Understanding Behavior: Cues of Young Children

How Would You Respond to These Young Children?

Look:
Is there a problem?

Think:
Why is it happening?

Think:
What should be done?

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Understanding Behavior: Development & Challenges

Development & its influences on challenges and behaviors

Child Development

Understand & Respond to Behavior

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Understanding Behavior: Development & Challenges

New challenges may emerge with development

Challenges may occur because development has not yet occurred

Development creates the need for caregiving shifts and modifications

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Understanding Behavior: Development & Challenges

A 3-month-old screams and cries for long periods of time because...

A 17-month-old hits another child because ...

A 2-year-old says "no" frequently because...

Think: Why is it happening?

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Challenging Situation with a 9-Month-Old

cdc.gov/Milestones

Learn the Signs. Act Early.

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Understanding Behavior: Examining our Reactions

Caregiver values, beliefs, & assumptions

Understand & Respond to Behavior

Caregiver Thoughts

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Understanding Behavior: Examining Our Reactions

Handout 7

What behaviors push your buttons?

How do these behaviors make you feel?

How does this impact your relationship with a child and their family?

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Understanding Behavior: Examining our Reactions

- **Pay attention to your own behavior, thoughts, and feelings**
- **Use thoughts and feelings as a signal**
- **Take extra effort to remain calm or take a break**
- **Ask for help**
- **Take time for additional observations**
- **How do these feelings impact your relationship with the child? the family?**

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Understanding Behavior: Noticing & Challenging our Thoughts

Original Thoughts

That child never stops crying. He is driving me crazy.

I can't calm him. Nothing works. Maybe center care is not for him.

Reframed Thoughts

This child is getting to know me and learning how to regulate. My job is to stay calm and help soothe him. As I stay calm and keep trying to find ways to comfort him, we will develop a better relationship which will help him.

I can handle this. I am in control. I am not alone in this. I can ask others for help and support.

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**Understanding Behavior:
Noticing & Challenging our Thoughts**

Original Thoughts

Sarah is only trying to get to me and ruin my day.
I don't know how to do this.
This child's needs are beyond my training.

Reframed Thoughts

Sarah is not developmentally capable of this. She may have learned that this is a good way to get her needs met. I can work harder to teach her better ways to get her needs met.

I work as part of a team. We can work together to try to figure this out. This child and family need our help.

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**Activity: Reframing Behavior
Handouts 7 & 8**

Read the example listed
Pick a "Hot Button" behavior from Handout 7 to record on Handout 8
Write down thoughts you have about the behavior
Challenge your thoughts in order to reframe and replace with a more objective thought

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Noticing & Challenging Our Thoughts

PRISM Behavior – Noticing & Challenging Our Thoughts (Part 1 of 2)




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Noticing & Challenging Our Thoughts

PRISM Behavior – Noticing & Challenging Our Thoughts (Part 2 of 2)




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Strategies for Reframing

- **Notice your own feelings, step back**
- **Observe the behavior**
- **Ask "I wonder" questions about the behavior**
- **Revisit developmental resources about child's age and stage of growth**
- **Think about how this might feel for parents and families**

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Understanding Behavior

Effective strategies for addressing challenging behaviors & situations

Strategies

Understand & Respond to Behavior

Act: Implement plan or strategy

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Responding to Classroom Challenges

Act: Implement plan or strategy

Respond immediately

Remain calm & supportive

Help children recognize & deal with emotion

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Responding to Challenging Behaviors

Act: Implement plan or strategy

Provide positive attention once the child is calm

Use the opportunity to teach problem solving

Redirect often & use planned ignoring when necessary

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**Self-Reflection:
Practice
Implementation
Checklists**

Handout 9

**Responding to Distress &
Managing Challenging
Behavior**

**Communicating Age-
Appropriate Behavioral
Expectations**

Practice Implementation Checklist: Behavior
Place a star next to the items you feel are a strength for you.
Then, check any of the boxes that apply.

Communicate & provide feedback about behavioral expectations	I would like to...			
	I want more about this	I do this more often	I do it other places or differently	I do this in better ways
Expectations are developmentally appropriate & individualized as needed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Let toddler know what they should do in a positive tone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Temperate behavioral expectations through modeling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Acknowledge & encourage appropriate behavior	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use simple words to explain natural consequence of unsafe behavior	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provide feedback to toddlers when behavior does not meet expectations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Anticipate potential conflict and provide guidance before situation gets out of control	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My Notes:				

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Major Messages to Take Home

- **Caregivers who reflect on their own well-being, skills, and perspectives will be better equipped to contribute to the positive social-emotional development of infants and toddlers and to support families rearing infants and toddlers.**

- **Caregivers who use a variety of strategies, including observation, will be better able to form close relationships with infants, toddlers, and their families.**

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