

Understanding Behavior as a Form of Communication

Participants Guide

Objectives

This workshop will cover:

- Overview of **Trauma Invested Practices**
- Defining **challenging behavior and exploring how to observe behavior**
- **Interpreting behaviors** as communication

✓ Defining Trauma

- Trauma is an exceptional experience in which powerful and dangerous events overwhelm a person's capacity to cope.
- Keep in mind the experience does not have to be life threatening to trigger a trauma response.

✓ Impact of Trauma

Early childhood trauma affects every aspect of children's stress regulation. Trauma can attribute to a child's inability to find and sustain a comfortable level of arousal.

- Low energy
- Lack of motivation
- Aggression
- Defiance

Trauma Invested Practices: The Foundation



✓ The Three Rs to Intervention

- **Relationship:** Just one safe, connected adult can help build resilience in a child
- **Responsibility:** Follow through on what you say or promise and express importance of following through even in difficult times
- **Regulation:** Emotional regulation strategies start in the body and move to the mind.



Defining Challenging Behaviors

Challenging Behaviors Are...

- Behaviors which disrupt social exchanges, including learning.
- Behaviors which harm others or property.
- Behaviors which don't respond to typical limit-setting strategies.
- Behaviors which are not understood as "normal."
- OR...Any behavior that adults don't like and want to stop!



Two Approaches to Addressing Behavior

Two Approaches to Addressing Behavior

Front End Approach

- Considers moment as part of history.
- Observes antecedents.
- Considers developmental stage.
- Be proactive and process-oriented
- Search for meaning and function
- Goal: social cooperation

Back-End Approach.

- Addresses current moment
- Observes consequences.
- Focuses on behavior
- Be reactive and product-oriented
- Search for results
- Goal: social compliance



Underlying Assumptions about Behaviors

- Challenging behaviors are the result of unmet needs.
- Behavior is a way to communicate.
- All behavior has meaning, however, not all meaning is always clear.
- *Misbehavior is not always misbehavior.*



All Behavior Has a Function

- **To Obtain:** *I need or I want...*
 - Objects
 - Activities
 - Attention/Emotions
 - Sensory input
- **To Avoid/Escape:** *I need to escape...*
 - People
 - Objects
 - Activities
 - Attention/Emotions
 - Sensory input



Resources

- S. Sandall, et al. Exceptional children: Practical ideas for addressing challenging behaviors. Longmont, CO: Sopris West and Denver, CO: DEC.
- Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations of Learning:
<http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/>