

# Preschool Child Find Chat

Understanding and Improving Your Preschool Child's Behavior

11/14/2023

# What is Preschool Child Find?

## Who are we?



Preschool Child Find Office

407 E Market Street

Leesburg, VA 20176

571-252-2180

Email: [preschoolchildfind@lcps.org](mailto:preschoolchildfind@lcps.org)

Webpage:

<https://www.lcps.org/PreschoolChildFindCenter>

Presenters:

Dawn Harvey, Early Childhood  
Identification Services Supervisor

Lu Klipple, Speech Language Pathologist

# What is behavior?

- Observable actions
- Functional to meet a goal or need
- Form of Communication
- Developmental skill that can be taught (the child may not know what is appropriate)
- Learned**: it has been effective (in meeting the child's need)or reinforced



# Factors that influence behavior...

Medical

Sensory  
differences

Physical

Developmental Stage

Family culture

Individual differences and temperament



# All children demonstrate negative behaviors sometimes.



Negative behaviors become more problematic as they occur more often and are more intense.



# Typical behavior concerns in preschoolers:

- Frustration
- Physical expressions of anger
  - Yelling, screaming, tantrums, holding breath, biting, throwing
- Crying at separation
- Saying “no”
- Not sharing - “mine”



**What does  
this  
behavior  
do for the  
child?**



**What  
does the  
child get  
in return  
for this  
behavior?**



# Typical functions of behavior for preschoolers

Attention

Learned helplessness

Escape/avoidance

Power/control

Revenge





# What is the function of this child's behavior?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0T2R8pTpcoo>



# The ABC's of Behavior

**Antecedent > Behavior > Consequence**



**Antecedent (what happens before):** Child wants candy and is told no.

**Behavior:** Child starts screaming and throws a tantrum.

**Consequence (what happens after):** After a few minutes, parent gives the child the candy.



**Behavior:** Child throws a toy or pushes another child.

**Antecedent:** Teacher was paying attention to another child.

**Consequence:**

- Teacher talks to the child that's upset
- Child gets sent to the director's office
- Removed from play completely



What do  
you do?

What can  
you do?

What will  
you do?



***Prevent the behavior by  
changing what happens before.***



***Decrease the  
behavior by  
changing what  
happens as a  
consequence.***

# Strategies for prevention

- Create family/class rules and clear expectations
- Change how you give instructions
- Give choices
- Change the environment
- Prepare your child for transitions or changes in routines
- TEACH coping strategies
- Pay attention to what you want



# Create family/class rules

- Be responsible (help clean up messes/toys)
- Be respectful (use manners, share, be kind to others)
- Be safe (hold hands on walks, stay on the sidewalk, climb down carefully from playground ladder)
- Be honest (tell me what really happened)

**Parent/Caregiver needs to follow the rules as well!**



# Set clear expectations

- **Use “I need” language**
  - I need quiet in the car, so I can think about driving.
- **Add descriptions of things they CAN DO**
  - You may quietly look at books in the car.
- **Let them know the consequences ahead of time**
  - If you are loud, I will stop driving until you are quiet.
  - FOLLOW THROUGH! Implement the consequence if needed.





# Change how you give instructions

- Use short, single step directions
- No trigger words (e.g. no, don't, stop)
- State in positive terms or what you want your child to do and not what you want your child to stop doing
- Tell, don't ask
- Build direction into routine (after lunch we're going to..)
- Use first/then (first we pick up, then we can have snack)
- Use choices
- Give extra prompts or cues
- Make following the instructions sound fun



# Provide choices

## The Magic Wand



- WIN-WIN solution
- Offer limited choices that YOU can provide  
“It’s time to go inside/take a bath....Would you like  
to walk by yourself or would you like to be  
carried?”

# Change the environment

- Create a routine (Mealtimes, Bedtimes)
- Organize or structure the situation (new or change)
- Keep items kids can't have out of reach
- Provide appropriate toys, rotate toys
- Provide a variety of play locations and types of play
- Build in structured games
- Offer motor breaks
- Meet sensory needs



# Prepare for Transitions

- Warnings
- Reminders
- Picture schedule of day



- Visual Clock (hourglass or egg timer)  
*Takes ownership off of parents! The timer says...*

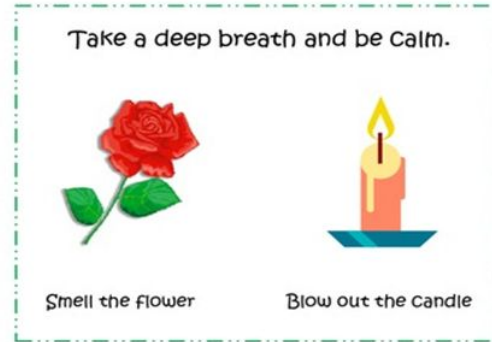


# TEACH Coping Strategies

- Identifying feelings (emotion faces)
- Identifying level of escalation



- Deep breathing



- Sensory items



# Pay attention to what you want

**Catch your child being good.** Talk about the positive behaviors you want to see. Point them out frequently and consistently.

***For every response to a negative behavior, provide 4 responses to positive behaviors*** - Praise works better than error correction

Praise and reward the behaviors when you see them. **Use specific, consistent and frequent praise.**

Use verbal or non-verbal (high-five, hug, smile) praise

**Praise the behavior and not the child.**



# Use behavior specific praise

## *Identify and define both your child and the behavior*

Praise the completion of a task - "You put all the toys away, thank you!"

Praise your child when they show a talent - "You built a great tower with your blocks."

Praise positive character traits/following family rules - "That was responsible/respectful/safe when you ...", "That was helpful/kind/considerate when you ..."

Praise for resisting negative behavior positively - "I like the way you walked with me on the sidewalk."



# Even with the best laid plans, inappropriate behaviors can still occur.





What do  
you do?

What can  
you do?

What will  
you do?



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# Responses to Behaviors/Consequences

- **Stay calm – be in control of your own emotions**
- Ignore the behavior (if not causing harm)
- Managing Tantrums
- Logical and Natural Consequences
- Take a break/Time Out
- Reward the positive – using behavior specific praise
- Consider reward/behavior chart
- Give rewards/privileges

Response must be consistent with...the **function** of the behavior.



# Ignore Behaviors



- **Works best when the function is attention**
- Inform your child that you will wait until they are finished - **Do not give any attention for misbehavior** (no looking or talking at/about the behavior)
- Do not use for aggressive or dangerous behaviors (causing harm to self/others or damage of property)
- Combine with rewards for positive behavior - **Ignore the negative behavior and reward any desired behavior**



# Managing Tantrums

It is ok for your child to be angry.

- Allow the tantrum behaviors to play out on their own, as long as your child is safe.
- It is important for children to learn how to express anger appropriately. **TEACH** them strategies.
- Reasoning with a child *during* a tantrum DOES NOT WORK.
- If possible, distract or interrupt and redirect.

# Logical and Natural Consequences

**Logical consequence:** something created by the parent, related to the behavior

- Toy taken away for the day if it isn't played with appropriately

**Natural Consequence:** something that happens on its own

- Toy breaks when child throws it.



# Take a Break / Time Out

## Don't use if the child's goal is avoidance

- The number of minutes is determined by the age
- Time-out should be in a consistent area
- Do not interact with the child during the time out
- If child leaves time-out, gently/quietly lead them back
- A child should be welcomed back after the time out: always talk about what to do different next time at a level the child can understand – end on a positive note



# Reward Positive Behaviors

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# “Reward” Ideas...

- Going to the park
- Playing with a special toy
- Getting a piggyback ride
- Having a bubble bath
- Watch a special movie
- Making a special treat
- Having a picnic
- Taking a walk with parent(s)
- Going out for a special treat
- Going on a special errand with parent(s)
- Helping choose an activity
- Helping parent(s) with grown-up task
- Riding a bike with parent(s)
- Playing a game with parent(s)





# QUESTIONS



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Dawn Harvey, Early Childhood  
Identification Services Supervisor

[dawn.harvey@lcps.org](mailto:dawn.harvey@lcps.org)



# Upcoming Preschool Child Find Chats:

February 6, 2024 - Raising Young Communicators

April 16, 2024 - Screen Sense for Young Children

Historic Douglass High School  
407 E Market Street, Leesburg

