



Tip Sheets

Setting the Stage for Success through Behavior Guidance

The Environment

Careful consideration of the environment can help set the stage for success. Sometimes the goal of challenging behavior is to obtain an object. Make it easier for children to see and to access materials they want by arranging the environment in ways that allow them to be as independent as possible. Practitioners can also avoid or reduce the number of challenging behaviors by adding objects, removing objects, or arranging them in ways that support appropriate behavior.

Suggestions for Supporting Appropriate Behavior

- Place toys and materials on low shelves and hooks so the children can help themselves as well as independently return materials to their places.
 - Arrange materials in a way that children can easily see the selections and make decisions about what to play with. For example, display books on the bookshelf with the titles and covers facing forward. This way the child doesn't have to dig through a box or become frustrated looking through the books on a shelf before finding the one he/she wants.
 - Label containers for materials with a picture and put the same picture on the shelf where the container is to be stored.
 - Provide duplicates of favorite toys and materials.
 - Place some materials that are available for use on a table or on the floor. This might draw children to the area and encourage the type of play that is to take place. For instance, place a few puzzles out on the puzzle table rather than leaving them in the rack.
- Limit the number of children who can play in a popular area so there is less competition over desired toys. Place four water shirts near the water table to indicate four children can use these materials at one time. Or arrange two chairs at the computer station to show that two children can use the computer at once.
 - Show where certain materials are to be used. For example, lay a hula hoop on the floor to indicate to the children where to stay with a punch ball.



Program Changes

- Reduce the overall number of transitions each day.
- Plan ahead by letting children know when there will be changes to the regular schedule. Also, within the regular schedule, give five-minute warnings to prepare for ending the activity. Some children may need multiple cues in order to ready themselves for a change.
- Give extra time to children who may need it.
- Allow materials to go from one area to another, when possible.
- Reduce the chaos of some transitions by sending one child at a time. For example, if the children are transitioning from

group time to washing hands, give each child an opportunity to answer a question or do a short activity before going to the sink. The group might all be monkeys jumping on the bed, but one is dismissed to the sink when her name is placed in the phrase, "Jenna fell off and bumped her head." Or the group can sing, "The bear went over the mountain," then dismiss one at a time by singing, "Vincent went over the mountain."

Program Approaches to Transitions

All children at some point will prefer not to leave a play area or a preferred activity. Practitioners can help children by examining their own program schedules carefully and implementing changes where needed. Avoiding a challenging behavior by adapting the need for movement within a program is key. Also, teaching some specific skills for transitions to children will be a useful tool for preventing some problems during change times.

Specific Strategies for Transitions

- Use an activity book to describe the sequence of actions for a given event. The pages of the book might contain pictures for each step, laminated so it can be used again.
- Keep a bag of open ended waiting gadgets handy for especially difficult transitions. Party favors such as mini Slinkys, kaleidoscopes, pinwheels, or squeeze balls are inexpensive gadgets that can be passed out, used while waiting, and then collected until the next time they are needed.
- Capture the interest of the group with an "attention getter." While the children finish an activity and begin to settle into the next, pique their curiosity about what is to come. Introduce the new activity by wearing a costume, showing a prop, giving clues about the next activity, or

asking questions that they can answer at the end of the game or story.

- Give choices to children who have difficulty with the clean up transition. Encourage participation by letting the child choose if he/she will clean the blocks or the puzzles. Another choice might be to decide if he/she will pick up the blocks while you place them in the shelf or the other way around, where you bring the blocks and he/she places them where they go.
- Post a photo in each area of the room that provides an example of what it is to look like when it is clean.
- Use a picture schedule to help children understand what is happening now and what is going to happen next. Make a picture schedule for the day or even for specific activities, like a field trip. Specify each step of the schedule in an easy to understand format. By teaching children to use a picture or activity schedule, we give them predictability, security, confidence, and independence.

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