Challenging Behaviors and Children with Developmental Disabilities

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Considerations
Support Teams
Attitude   Attitude   Attitude
Attitude is Important

- Behavioral support is a vital and interesting aspect of parenting
- Attitude can be adversely affected by challenging behaviors
- This is natural.
- Parents are faced with a contradiction
- Strong need to develop strategies to maintain a positive attitude
Paying Attention to Attitude

- Child centered approach
- How to talk about the child’s challenging behaviors
- Encourage full community participation
- Pro-active vs. Reactive
Support Teams

- Encourage shared parenting
- Regular meetings to coordinate behavioral support
- Team Spirit
- Systems of communication
- “Communicative intent of behavior”
- Develop a “Support Plan”
Considerations Regarding Behavioral Support

- No quick fixes
- Change is slow
- Be open minded
- Identify the pressure
- Be creative
How the Disability Affects Behavior

- Communication
- Sensory organization
- Stamina
- Mental health issues
- Physical limitations
- Need for structure/routine
- Learning style
Consider the Environment

- Create environments that can accommodate challenging behaviors
  - Home
  - Car
  - School
  - Public places
Precursors to Challenging Behaviors

- What daily activities/pressures contribute to challenging behaviors?
- How can the support team minimize the negative influence of these precursors?
Relationships

- Relationships are important
- Challenging behaviors can preclude good relationships
- Sometimes children become disconnected from family/school
- Develop skills for reestablishing relationships
Support with a Behavioral Approach

- Is not always the first consideration
- Should always have a positive focus
- A good behavioral approach:
  - Organizes parents and teams
  - Emphasizes on the positive
  - Assures thoughtful limits
Organized Behavioral Approach

- How is the challenging behavior meeting a need?
- How can we teach new behaviors?
- How do we motivate change?
- Do we need limits? If yes, assure that the limit is in a form of caring and not punishment.
Behavioral Approach: Relationship Guidelines

- “Catch children being good”
- Passion vs. dispassion
- Develop a simple framework for responding to the child’s behaviors
Expectations of Parents

- Need to be realistic
- Realistic expectations can reduce pressure on both the child and family
- Sensitivity to amount of support
Stress Reduction for Parents

- Plan for shared parenting
- Time away from the child
- Support from other parents
- Humor
- Diversions
- Exercise/relaxation/spirituality
- Good diet and sleep
Supporting Dangerous Challenging Behaviors

- Understand how behaviors escalate
- Know how to present effective support
  - Personal space
  - Body language
  - Tone of voice, volume, rate of speech
- Dealing with personal feelings of fear and anxiety
- Safe, last resort physical interventions
Considering Medications

- Find psychiatrists/physicians sensitive to the needs of persons with DD
- Parents/team represent the needs of the child
- Parents learn about the medications effects and side effects