Think of a Child

Module: I
Topic: Understanding Children’s Behavior
Type: Reflection/Journaling
Group Size: Individuals or Small Groups
Time: 20 - 30 minutes

Purpose:
For participants to apply the information on underlying causes of behavior to the children in their care in order to provide more responsive, individualized, effective child guidance.

What you will need:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Materials</th>
<th>Trainer Materials</th>
<th>Equipment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The following handouts:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>:: Understanding a Child’s Behavior</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Directions:
1. This is an information application activity and, therefore, should be preceded by information on understanding and responding to underlying causes of behavior.
2. Identify a child and describe the child’s challenging behavior. Select one behavior at a time. This part could be done as an arrival activity or could be done at the beginning of this activity.
3. Consider each of the following possible causes one at a time. For each cause that seems to apply to the child’s behavior written above, describe what it is that leads you to believe that is a cause. For example, if you think developmental stage contributes to the behavior, explain what it is that causes you to think so.
4. Identify possible strategies for supporting the child and/or teaching appropriate behavior.
5. Consider providing the handouts listed below as support for this activity.
**Variations:**
:: This activity could be done individually, by a primary and secondary caregiver working with the same child, or in classroom groups.
:: Handouts that are attached and might be helpful references for this activity:
   - Things to Consider - for looking at individual differences and developmental stages
   - Temperament and Behavior - for looking at individual differences
   - Attitudes and Actions - for looking at possible strategies

**Links to Head Start Program Performance Standards:**
Includes but not limited to:
:: 1304.21(a)(1)(i) Observe and recognize individual differences
:: 1304.21(a)(3)(1)(C)-(D) Limits and expectations

**Activity Developed by:**
Activity and handouts created by Cheri Longaker, PITC Certified Trainer, from a variety of materials as credited on each document.

**Source Material:**

## UNDERSTANDING A CHILD’S BEHAVIOR

**Child** ____________________________/**Age**_____  **Date** _________________

**Behavior:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause (Describe indicators)</th>
<th>Strategies Tried</th>
<th>Additional ideas/strategies to teach/guide appropriate behavior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developmental Stage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Differences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Environment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doesn’t know-Ready to learn</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unmet Need</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From PITC handout, *Toward a Better Understanding of Children’s Behavior*

Adapted by K. Johnston and L. Thompson from Janes Hymes’ *Understanding Your Child*
**THINGS TO CONSIDER**

**WHAT IS YOUR IDEAL CHILD?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>active</th>
<th>approaching</th>
<th>cautious</th>
<th>cooperative</th>
<th>dependable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>honest</td>
<td>independent</td>
<td>industrious</td>
<td>loyal</td>
<td>obedient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>persistent</td>
<td>quiet</td>
<td>predictable</td>
<td>playful</td>
<td>assertive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>confident</td>
<td>curious</td>
<td>sensitive</td>
<td>sense of humor</td>
<td>spirited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>takes risks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Janet Poole, Program for Infant/Toddler Caregivers, WestEd

**What to Expect . . .**

Much of the behavior of young children that is annoying to adults is normal and is part of the child’s learning process and growth. Adults can save themselves much worry and trouble if they know what to expect from children at different stages of development.

**Most 2, 3 and 4 year olds:**

- Pay no attention to what they are asked to do
- Say “no;” refuse to do what is expected or asked
- Are poky, waste time eating, dressing, etc.
- Leave tasks undone, start but don’t finish
- Wriggle; don’t sit still
- Laugh, squeal, jump around
- Grab toys, shove, hit, attack others
- Refuse to share things with other children
- Ask “unnecessary” questions
- Cry, sulk easily
- Pick nose, play with fingers
- Stay close to adults
- Seek attention by showing off, look for praise
- Go to adults with criticism of others
- Boss others
- Stay awake at nap time; don’t want to rest
- Refuse food
- Speak indistinctly
- Are hard to reason with

Of course, none of the 555 children in the study did any of these things all of the time. But all of the children did some of these things some of the time. Large percentages did some of them almost daily.

*From “Including All of Us” Caring for Children with Special Needs in Early Childhood Settings: Module III Handout

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TEMPERAMENT AND BEHAVIOR

**Temperament** is the how of behavior or behavioral style.

**Ability** is the what of behavior or content

**Motivation** is the why or reason behind the behavior.

from *The Emotional Life of the Toddler*, Alicia Lieberman

Temperament is thought to be a set of relatively stable tendencies to react in certain ways. These tendencies can be *magnified*, downplayed, or *changed in quality* depending on the nature of one’s encounters in the environment.

### Supporting the Three Types of Temperaments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Temperament Type</th>
<th>Helpful Techniques</th>
<th>Things to Remember</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Flexible</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Regular rhythms</td>
<td>+Check in regularly</td>
<td>&gt;Can be “invisible”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Positive mood</td>
<td>+Set aside special time</td>
<td>&gt;Can be taken advantage of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Adaptability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Low intensity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Low sensitivity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fearful</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Adapts slowly</td>
<td>+Allow to observe from sidelines</td>
<td>Frequently:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Withdraws</td>
<td>+Draw child in slowly</td>
<td>&gt;Labeled insecure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Not highly active</td>
<td>+Allow independence to unfold.</td>
<td>&gt;Ridiculed for natural tendencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Express emotions mildly</td>
<td></td>
<td>&gt;Parents may feel social pressure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Feisty</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Active/Tends to approach</td>
<td>+Use redirection</td>
<td>&gt;Problems eating, sleeping, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Intense reactions</td>
<td>+Be flexible</td>
<td>&gt;Need secure base even more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Distractible</td>
<td>+Prepare the child for change</td>
<td>&gt;Don’t take behavior personally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Sensitive</td>
<td>+Make the most of quiet moments</td>
<td>&gt;Use sense of humor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Irregular rhythms</td>
<td>+Provide for vigorous play</td>
<td>&gt;Be available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Moody</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Often field independent</td>
<td></td>
<td>&gt;Clear guidelines</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From PTC Trainer’s Manual Module I, *Resource Materials for Module I* (Temperaments Powerpoint handouts developed by Janet Poole), and *Fearful, Flexible, or Feisty* Video Magazine

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ATTITUDES AND ACTIONS

REFRAMING SOME COMMON ATTITUDES ABOUT DISCIPLINE

Get rid of conflict ⇒ Conflict is inevitable. Use it to teach.
Same problems over & over ⇒ What skills are missing?
Discipline interrupts teaching ⇒ Discipline/guidance is a key part of curriculum

Adapted from: Reframing Discipline Unit 1, Educational Productions, 1-800-950-4949

TECHNIQUES OF DIRECT GUIDANCE

PHYSICAL
1. Give help based on the individual child's need.
2. Demonstrate or model the desired behavior or skill.
3. Lead the child by the hand to give direction, reassurance, or assistance.
4. Restrain the child where necessary to protect him or others.
5. Remove the child from the scene to help him relax and regain composure.
6. Use no punishment that is meant to hurt or humiliate the child.
7. Get down to eye level and use meaningful gestures.
8. Use your body language to help the child feel good about himself and comfortable in school.
9. Use gentle touch (slight pressure) to help children refocus.

VERBAL
1. Speak to the child eyeball to eyeball.
2. Use short sentences.
3. Use positive directions, telling the child what to do instead of what not to do.
4. Place the action part of your direction at the beginning of your statement.
5. Give no more than two directions at a time, preferably only one.
6. Give the child directions when it is the time and place you want the behavior to occur.
7. Give only directions the child really needs.
8. Make it clear whether the child has a choice or not.
9. Give logical and accurate reasons for requests.
10. Keep competition to a minimum by motivating the child through helping him set new personal goals for achievement.
11. Praise the child for jobs well done.

AFFECTIVE
1. Give positive feedback for occasions other than when the child follows directions.
2. Give attention before the child demands it.
3. Reflect the feeling the child is expressing and give it a label.
4. Get to know the child better if you find yourself feeling negatively toward him.

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