

USING POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR STRATEGIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

Louise Tabone

HoD – College Prefect of Discipline

1



I am not 'out of control'.

I am not 'causing trouble' or 'being bad'.

I am a CHILD.

And I am trying to communicate my needs with you.

2

BEFORE FOCUSING ON THE BEHAVIOUR



FOCUS ON THE CHILD

3

- ▶ **Separate the bad behaviour from the child... s/he has made a bad choice and shouldn't be seen as naughty or bad.**
- ▶ **Labels stick hard...help them unlearn negative behaviours (self-fulfilled prophecy).**

4

DE-ESCALATION: NON-VERBAL TECHNIQUES



Calm can be just as contagious as fear/anger and must be communicated to the child. While communicating with children, our body language and tone of voice is just as important as our choice of words. It is useful to remember this when you are trying to de-escalate. Ensure you are modelling the behaviour you want your child to emulate.

7

DE-ESCALATION: NON-VERBAL TECHNIQUES

- ▶ Appear calm and self-assured. Make sure you are not displaying the same signs of agitation that can be seen in your child: unclench your fists and avoid standing square to the child.
- ▶ Maintain a neutral facial expression. Even our eyebrows can indicate we are surprised or angry, and similarly our mouths can betray our emotions.

8

DE-ESCALATION: NON-VERBAL TECHNIQUES

- ▶ Allow space. Entering a person's personal space can be useful to refocus on a task when the situation is calm, but when a child is agitated this can escalate the situation.
- ▶ Lower your voice and keep your tone even. It is hard to have an argument with someone who is not responding aggressively back to you.

9

DE-ESCALATION: VERBAL TECHNIQUES

- ▶ Distraction and diversion are extremely useful. When a child is angry or aggressive, they are responding with their own fight-or-flight instincts and not thinking about their actions. Distract them and engage their thinking brain, perhaps by changing the subject or commenting on something that is happening outside the window.
- ▶ Give choices, repeat these choices if necessary, and do not get drawn into secondary behaviours such as arguing back, which are designed to distract or upset you.

10

SECONDARY BEHAVIOURS

Secondary behaviours are those that occur during your intervention or as you leave a conversation with a child. They are 'chase me' behaviours designed to push your buttons and gain a furious response. When you have exhausted all of your positive reinforcement, redirection techniques, warnings and sanctions, the secondary behaviours are the chair being thrown back, or door being slammed, or the infuriating smile that slowly cracks across their face. They may want to divert the conversation away from the original behaviour or encourage an adrenalin fuelled confrontation. Don't allow the child to take control of your behaviour. Resist the temptation to address the secondary behaviours in the moment. Instead record them and deal with them later on.

PROVIDING CLEAR CHOICES AND TIME TO MAKE A DECISION

- ▶ “You can choose to finish off this homework and go and enjoy playtime or you can choose not to finish this homework and you will have less playtime.”
- ▶ “I will set the timer on for a minute to give you the chance to think well to make the right decision. I will expect an answer when the minute passes.”

DE-ESCALATION: VERBAL TECHNIQUES

- ▶ Acknowledging the child's feelings shows that you have listened to them, and can be crucial when diffusing a situation; for example, 'It must be really difficult for you ... thank you for letting me know'.
- ▶ Use words and phrases that de-escalate, such as
 - I wonder if it would help you to calm down if you go to the bathroom to wash your face.
 - Let's try ...
 - It seems like ...
 - Maybe we can ...
- ▶ Avoid phrases such as "Can you tell me...." or "Would you tell me..." These types of phrases can be answered "No" and often makes your job as a parent harder. 13

DE-ESCALATION: VERBAL TECHNIQUES

- ▶ Be careful with "Why Questions" such as "Why did you insult the your sister?" These type of questions often sound judgemental. Empathize and say instead "You must have felt angry. Tell me what happened."
- ▶ Tell the child what you want them to do rather than what you do not want them to do; for example, 'I want you to sit down' rather than 'stop arguing with me'.
- ▶ Give the child take-up time following any direction and avoid backing them into a corner, either verbally or physically. 14

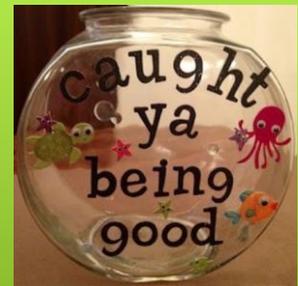
DE-ESCALATION: THINGS TO AVOID

- ▶ Do not make threats you cannot carry through.
- ▶ Do not be defensive or take it personally. What is being said may seem insulting and directed at you, but this level of aggression is not really about you.
- ▶ Using humour is a good distraction but do not use humour unless you are sure it will help.
- ▶ Do not use sarcasm or humiliate the child.

15

SETTING A POSITIVE CLIMATE

- ▶ Start the day on a positive note and with a warm smile. This would ensure that they are calm and in a positive mood before they go to school.
- ▶ Catch them BEING GOOD and doing the right thing
- ▶ Model yourself the behaviour you expect your child to manifest
- ▶ Clearly define what behaviours you expect from your child



16

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE:

- ▶ Take immediate action when misbehaviour occurs.
- ▶ Are consistent in our correction procedure.
- ▶ Are consistent in giving positive and negative consequences.
- ▶ Give immediate consequences.
- ▶ Take note of any patterns in the child's behaviour.
- ▶ Be aware of any conditions the child may have: some behaviours may be stemming from conditions such as autism and ADHD.

17

WHY SOME CHILDREN MISBEHAVE

Seeking Attention:

Denying attention usually stops behaviour however if you constantly need to cope with attention seeking behavior, ignoring is not always enough. Being ignored may be the reason for the problem in the first place.

- ▶ Ignore behaviour when possible.
- ▶ Isolate the child by using timeout when the behaviour is too extreme to ignore.
- ▶ Catch them being good! Reward them for good behaviour.

WHY SOME CHILDREN MISBEHAVE

Seeking Power:

Children often try to find out how powerful they are. Some kids think that they only count when they run the show. Caregivers need to take charge instead of reasoning.



- ▶ Avoid power struggles by taking action in a kind but firm way.
- ▶ Less talk is better! Talking only feeds more into the power struggle.
- ▶ Give limited choices: “Do you want to set the table or clear it after lunch?”

WHY SOME CHILDREN MISBEHAVE

Seeking Revenge:

A child who seeks revenge feels that they have been hurt and need to even the score. When a child is allowed to hurt others they create a painful cycle of relating to people through hurting and being hurt.

- ▶ To break this pattern, adults should never retaliate.
- ▶ Try to build a positive relationship with the child while improving self esteem.
- ▶ Place the child in situations where they can achieve and not fail.

When children have a better opinion of themselves they rarely misbehave to seek revenge.

WHY SOME CHILDREN MISBEHAVE

Feeling Inadequate:

The feeling of inadequacy is an escape for the discouraged child. So when they feel bad, they act badly. It's easier to give up rather than to try and fail again. Inadequate children often brag, boast, to fight and are usually unwilling to try new things. They act with self-fulfilling prophecies. If they believe they are stupid, they won't achieve. If they believe they are unpopular and cruel they will mistreat their peers.

- ▶ Arrange for small accomplishments.
- ▶ Find opportunities to compliment them on their behaviour.

UNDERSTANDING THE GOALS OF NEGATIVE BEHAVIOUR

If you feel...	the child's purpose is ...
 <p>annoyed and irritated</p>	to get your attention
 <p>powerless and out of control</p>	to gain power and control over YOU
 <p>hurt</p>	revenge!
 <p>discouraged and helpless</p>	to withdraw from the task/situation for which he feels inadequate to cope.

REWARDS...

- ▶ Rewards must be wanted
- ▶ Rewards must be age-specific
- ▶ Rewards must be properly earned
- ▶ Rewards must be fit to the individual
- ▶ Rewards might be out of fashion by time
- ▶ Rewards can be negotiated with the child
- ▶ Rewards given at school can be used as a positive contact with the child's home

23

MORE ON REWARDS

- ▶ Instant rewards
- ▶ Achievable
- ▶ Deferred rewards (points system)
- ▶ Rewards are not bribes. Rewards are given for good behaviour and bribes are offered to stop bad behaviour

24

PRAISE SHOULD BE...

- ▶ Personal (not everybody likes being praised in public)
- ▶ Sincere (children have a sixth sense – they can feel if you are not being honest)
- ▶ Specific and age appropriate
- ▶ Complemented with eye contact / touch (such as a handshake, high-five or a hug)
- ▶ An occasion to build relationships and mutual trust

25

POSITIVE BEHAVIOURAL SUPPORT

Positive Behavioural Support means observing the behaviour exhibited in numerous settings in order to develop idea on the function that the behaviour is serving for the child –

Functional Behaviour Assessment

26

POSITIVE BEHAVIOURAL SUPPORT

Thus as parents we can observe what is triggering the behaviour, addressing the functional outcomes and then helping our child opt for a functional behaviour.

A way of doing this is by using the ABC Analysis of Behaviour

ABC Analysis

Date ___/___/___ Name of Person Observed: _____ Observer: _____

Behavior(s): _____

Date	Time	Antecedent	Behavior	Consequence	Possible Function

POSITIVE BEHAVIOURAL SUPPORT

After doing the ABC Analysis of behaviour, choose **2 behavioural goals**.

Though we may have many behavioural goals we want our child to reach, we need to make things achievable for the child so that the child won't give up in reaching their goals

29

TOKEN ECONOMY SYSTEM

This is a type of reward system that motivates children to behave better.



30

REWARD CHARTS

I DID IT!!!

Well done!!

Name: _____
Class: _____

33

WHAT IS A CONSEQUENCE?

- ▶ Sanction / consequence as opposed to punishment
- ▶ Language of choice
- ▶ Punishment shows a sign of pleasure when seeing others suffering

34

APPLYING CONSEQUENCES

- ▶ Sanctions should be applied with care
- ▶ Show empathy
- ▶ Show patience
- ▶ Show care
- ▶ Show concern
- ▶ Explain and express your disappointment for having to apply the sanction
- ▶ Attack the behaviour but not the child

35

DEFERRED CONSEQUENCES

- ▶ Give the child enough time to make the right choice
- ▶ Find opportunities to reinforce positive choices
- ▶ Most important thing is to catch them doing the right choices (catch them being good)
- ▶ Consequences must be escalated starting from less interrupting techniques

36

NATURAL CONSEQUENCES

- ▶ A natural consequence is anything that happens naturally, with no adult interference. When you stand in the rain, you get wet. When you don't eat, you get hungry. When you forget your coat, you get cold.
- ▶ The adult should not lecture or tell the child "I told you so" or do anything that adds more blame, shame or pain than the child might experience naturally from the experience.

37

NATURAL CONSEQUENCES

- ▶ Children usually feel bad or guilty when they make a mistake. By blaming and shaming we lessen the learning that can occur from experiencing a natural consequence because the child stops processing the experience and focuses on absorbing or defending against the blame, shame, and pain. Instead, show empathy and understanding for what the child is experiencing: "I'll bet it was hard to go hungry."

38

NATURAL CONSEQUENCES

Natural consequences- you go out into the rain and get wet

- ▶ Once you've stated the consequence do not rescue the child.
- ▶ Allow the child to experience their choices, safely.
- ▶ After the situation talk with the child about making a different and better decision the next time and what that looks like.

39

THE THREE RS AND AN H OF LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES

- ▶ Related
- ▶ Respectful
- ▶ Reasonable
- ▶ Helpful

40

THE THREE RS AND AN H OF LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES

- ▶ Related means the consequence must be related to the behaviour.
- ▶ Respectful means the consequence must not involve blame, shame or pain; and should be kindly and firmly enforced. It is also respectful to everyone involved.

41

THE THREE RS AND AN H OF LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES

- ▶ Reasonable means the consequence is reasonable from the child's point of view as well as the adult's.
- ▶ Helpful means it will encourage change for everyone involved. If any of the Three Rs and an H is missing, it can no longer be called a logical consequence.

42

LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES- ONES WE CREATE E.G.: IF, THEN.

- ▶ Positive logical – if you get these toys picked up quickly, we can have more time to play
- ▶ Negative logical – if you don't pick these toys up, I am going to put them away for a few days
- ▶ Make sure the consequence is related to the child's behaviour and their actions
- ▶ Be as immediate as possible
- ▶ Match the intensity of the consequence to the intensity of the behaviour

43

Email:

louise.tabone@ilearn.edu.mt

44

