

“Autism itself does not cause challenging behaviors!”

Core features of autism include deficits in communication, emotions, social behaviors, motor activities and balance. These difficulties can lead to feelings of frustration, confusion, anxiety or lack of control, resulting in behavioral responses.

Students with autism may often find the world confusing and anxiety provoking. To increase appropriate behaviors for students with ASD, it is important to create more predictability and safety, while also building self-regulation, communication, and self-determination skills.

****CONSISTENCY IS VITAL**

****CONTINUATION IS VITAL**

Challenging behaviors are more likely to appear when a person is feeling unhappy or unhealthy. Check for medical concerns, mental health issues, and/or sensory issues.

Because students with ASD may learn different than neuro-typical students, different approaches may need to be used to teach appropriate behaviors.

Behaviors can be improved when a student with ASD is able to communicate their wants and needs, to recognize their own biological and behavioral responses, and to build an increased ability to self-calm and self-regulate.

For the most part, behavior occurs because it serves a function and/or produces an outcome. Behavior also serves as a form of communication.

There is a difference between understanding behaviors that we, as teachers/society, feel are appropriate, and accepting those behaviors. However, when address a student’s behavior one must first take a step back and consider why that student is behaving in that way in the first place. The knowledge of why the behavior is occurring will be beneficial in preparing the appropriate response/intervention for the behavior.

Much behavior is learned over time and through experiences. Behavior generally serves one of several functions:

- Obtaining a desired object or outcome
- Escaping a task or situation
- Getting attention, either positive or negative
- Tring to self calm, self regulate, feel good (sensory)
- Blocking or staying away from something painful or bothersome (sensory avoidance)
- Responding to pain or discomfort
- Attempting to gain control over an environment or situation

Once you have established the function of the behavior, you’re better equip to understand how to help.

When addressing maladaptive behaviors remember to:

- Consider the students strengths
- Show respect for the student’s thoughts and feelings
- Do not speak ill of the student in front of them or other students
- Talk to the student and provide them with information
- Build a student’s trust in your support