

Challenging Behaviors: Suggestions for Families with Preschool Age Children

What are They?

Behaviors that:

- Interfere with learning and prosocial interactions
- Are not responsive to the use of age appropriate guidance
- Cause stress on the family or school
- Examples: tantrums, screaming, biting, running away, property destruction, injuring self or others, or noncompliance

Why do They Happen?

- A way to interact or connect with others
- Help with self-regulation
- For attention
- To get out of a situation
- Communicate a message or a feeling "I'm in pain, I don't understand, I'm frustrated, I need help"



Tips & Tricks

- Acknowledge good behaviors frequently
- Give specific praise to good behavior, stating clearly what the child did well
- Establish routines, help your child know what is expected of him/her and what will happen next
- Minimize known triggers
- State rules clearly and be consistent in enforcing them
- Model the behavior you expect from your child
- Take notes to help understand the purpose of the behavior:
 - When/Where it is happening
 - What happened before
 - What is the child trying to get out of the behavior
- Talk to your child's Pediatrician about developmental milestones, assessments, and referrals



How to Work with Your Child's Preschool Teacher

- Don't wait for a Parent-Teacher conference to talk, reach out as soon as you have concerns
- Discuss and ask questions about what happens before, during, and after the behavior
- Review any changes that have occurred at home or school that might be causing the behavior
- Keep an open line of communication, keep each other informed
- Meet on a regular basis, talk about good things as well as the challenging behaviors
- Establish a reward system that you can use at home and school for consistency
- Talk about having your child evaluated by the school for more formal support
- Create a 3x3 card to share with the teacher:
 - 3 Strengths
 - 3 Challenges
 - 3 Strategies that Work at Home

"It is critical to remember that any individual is doing the best he can do in each situation, given his skills, education, physical and emotional state, and past experiences. We classify certain behaviors as challenging because we as individuals or a society find them to be difficult to accept. It will be important for you to become a careful observer, working to understand the purpose of behaviors. Taking a step back and considering why a person might behave in a certain way is the first important step toward understanding and learning how to help. It is also essential to reducing your own frustration. In fact, it is often helpful to think of an individual's actions as a response, rather than a pre-determined or willful behavior." – Autism Speaks: Challenging Behaviors Tool Kit