



BE HAPPY

PROBLEM BEHAVIOR WHY IT HAPPENS & CONTINUES BE HAPPY PARENTING SKILL

The University of Texas at Tyler School of Medicine

WHY DO CHILDREN ENGAGE IN PROBLEMATIC BEHAVIOR?

When kids are disruptive or defiant, it is usually because they are trying to get their needs met. The type of need they are trying to meet can vary – from connection with caregivers to something they want. The types of behaviors they use to meet these needs can also change based on lots of different factors, like their temperament, the environment, the people around them, or what gets reinforced. **Children are not “bad”, they are just trying to get needs met in an unhelpful way!**

UNDERSTANDING PROBLEM BEHAVIOR WITH THE ABC MODEL.

Understanding what occurs before, during, and after problem behaviors can help us understand why the behavior keeps happening. When we know what factors keep the behavior going and what need is getting met, then we can help kids learn more helpful ways to meet their need. To do this, we use the **ABC Model**:



Activating Event:

What happens immediately before the behavior occurs? Who was involved, when and where did it occur?



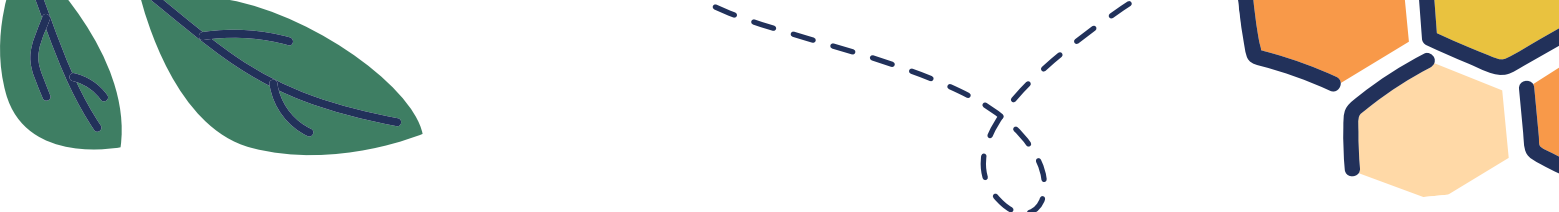
Behavior:

Be specific! What did your child do? How long did it last? How intense was it?



Conclusion:

What happens immediately after the behavior occurs? How did the people involved respond? How did the child respond? Was there reward or punishment?



Date/Time	W's (Who?, Where?, When?)	Activating Event (What was your child doing right before the behavior occurred?)	Behavior (Action, length, severity.)	Conclusion (How people/things responded, what child got/did not get, punishments, rewards.)	Function (What need was the behavior trying to meet? Sensory, Escape, Attention, Tangible?)
Friday, 4:30 p.m.	Mom, sister, Jack.	Watching TV when sister walked in and asked to change the show.	Yelling loudly, hitting couch, stomping feet hard. 15 minutes.	Sister started crying and yelling back, I ran in and yelled at them to stop, I took the remote and turned off the TV.	Escape – didn't want sister to change the channel.

WHAT IS THE FUNCTION?

The function is what the behavior is trying to do – in other words, what need is this behavior trying to meet?

Common functions of behavior can be:



Sensory:

Child is trying to get more sensory stimulation, burn energy, or relieve physical stress.



Escape:

Child is trying to avoid something they don't want to do, escape an uncomfortable situation or person, or feel overwhelmed by something (e.g., sounds).



Attention:

Child is trying to get connection with their caregiver, get peers to notice them, or feel socially involved.



Tangible:

Child is trying to get a physical item or activity that they want.



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