

Behavioral Strategies 101

All behaviors serve a function. To develop an effective behavior management strategy it is important to first determine its' function.

There are four main reasons (**functions**) that behaviors occur:

1. Attention (remember even negative attention counts)
2. Access to an item or activity
3. Escape from a demand or situation
4. Sensory (either sensory seeking or sensory avoidance)

In order to help you understand the function of a behavior it may be necessary to collect data. Collecting data is simple. You will want to identify the **Antecedents**, what is happening before the behavior takes place (keep in mind time of day, environment). Then record what the **behavior** looked like, thinking about the duration and intensity of the behavior. Last, record the **Consequence**, what happened immediately after the behavior occurred.

How we respond to a behavior can lead to an increase in our child's behavior (reinforcing) or a decrease in our child's behavior (punishing). Research has shown the reinforcement is more effective than punishment.

- Positive Reinforcement: something is given which leads to an increase in the behavior
- Negative Reinforcement: something is removed which leads to an increase in the behavior

Reinforcement works best when immediate and personal.

There are some strategies that can be helpful in preventing challenging behaviors from occurring.

- Tell the person what to do, instead of what not to do
- Use direct instructions to provide clear expectations
- Offer choices to promote task completion
- Prepare your child in advance

