



## **Strategies for the Top Ten Most Difficult Classroom Behaviors**

**Presented by**

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## **1) ADHD Behaviors: Hyperactive, Impulsive, Inattentive, Distractible**

Fidgets – attach beads, bobbles, etc. to a key chain that can attach to the child’s belt loop.

Isometrics – Allow child to burn energy by pushing against the body, floor or table.

Carpet Square – Individualize a carpet square. It creates a concrete, defined space for the child to keep their body within. Can be moved anywhere.

Red Light/Green light – Paint two Popsicle sticks (one red, one green). Use the sticks for visual cues, red for when a child needs to wait and the green to proceed.

Centering – Stretching, deep breathing, feeling the space between the bottom and the floor.

Environment change - Dim the lights, play calming music and speak in a whisper. A whisper voice permits children to quiet their bodies to hear the instructions.

Rag Doll – Encourage children to tense their whole body and hold for a few seconds and then relax and flop like a rag doll.

## **2) Separation Anxiety**

Parent Stays - If anxiety is mild, allow the parent to stay until the child is settled.

Photos - laminated or covered with contact paper photos of child and parent. Allow the child to keep on their desk or hole-punch and clip to belt loop.

Ink Stamp – Parent places a stamp (or sticker) on upper arm, kisses it and reminds child that their kiss will be with them all day long. Variation: Kissing hand

Audio Recorder – Allow parent to record a message for the child, “I love you, you’re my big boy and I’ll see you soon”. Allow child to play it after nap time or as a reward for completing a task.

Parent Message Board – Allow parent to post a message to their child on a poster or bulletin board. Encourage all parents to participate. A family picture next to the message provides visual guidance.

Key – Allow child to wear a “key to the house” around their neck on a chain.

### **3) Angry/Aggressive Behaviors**

Anger Emergency Kit – Have children identify & use items from the anger emergency kit.

Calming Collage – Have children create a collage using all 5 senses. Glue pictures that look, feel, taste, smell and sound calming. Laminate and have the child use it and look at it when angry.

Calming Rug – Encourage the child to move their rug to a quiet section of the room.

Coping Ball – Adapt and use the coping ball as a way to reinforce learning adaptive coping skills.

Tucker Turtle – Teach and encourage the child to use Tucker Turtle’s method. (CSEFEL website)

Teach with books– “**Hands Are Not for Hitting**”. Have children make their own book.

### **4) Oppositional Defiant Behaviors (ODD)**

Positive reinforcement – ignore negative or inappropriate behavior. Comment frequently about the positive opposite. Avoid reinforcing the negative.

Planned ignore – Ignore the inappropriate outburst, encourage children to keep their attention on you or the activity at hand. Avoid power struggles or shaming the acting out child.

Behavior Chart – Identify 1-3 target behaviors. Reward with verbal praise/hand stamp/stickers.

Puppet Reinforcement – Use a puppet to model appropriate behavior and correct neg behavior.

Toy Time-Out – put the toy or object (not the child) on time-out. “When you get the toy back you will need to help the toy behave better”.

### **5) Avoidant Behaviors/Shy/Withdrawn/Disengaged Behaviors**

Create a specific plan - Identify the origin of the behavior & identify what reinforces it (ABC).

Classroom Helper – Assign child a role that will cause them to interact with other children. Have the child pass out napkins or collect the finished art work.

Display artwork - and projects for others to see in the classroom.

Assign a friend – assign child a classmate who can model appropriate interactions with peers.

Telephone – Encourage them to use the play telephone to call and speak with others they are comfortable speaking to (mom, grandma, sibling, etc).

Play-dates – Have parents to schedule play-dates or park play to promote social interaction.

## **6) Sexualized Behavior**

Age appropriate - Know what's developmentally appropriate and acceptable for their age.

Set boundaries - Set non-shaming boundaries about masturbation, voyeurism, exposure, etc.

Talk to parents - educate from a developmental perspective and respect their beliefs.

## **7) Autistic/ Eccentric/ Odd Behavior**

Observe behavior for patterns (time of day or situation of occurrence) or cluster of symptoms.

Ask a Mental Health clinician to come in the classroom and observe. Refer for assessment.

## **8) Bed Wetting**

Bed and Pad - Suggest bell and pad method for use at home. It has the highest success rate.

Avoid liquids – Have child avoid liquids 1 hour before bed and nap times.

Potty time - Take child to restroom prior to nap time, even if they do not have to go.

Clean-up - Have child initiate the clean-up (strip sheet, wipe down cot with Lysol, change clothes, etc.)

## **9) Whining**

Attunement - Read the behavioral cue and ask...are they tired, hungry, feeling powerless, sad, mad, in need of closeness, etc?

Praise the positive opposite – Thank you for using your big boy/girl voice.

Re-doing – Sure, I'll be happy to help you tie your shoe, when you use your big girl voice to ask. (Be sure to provide a lot of praise for using the big girl voice).

Puppet play - Use dolls or puppets to model the difference in tone of voice.

Laughter – Whining can indicate the child's need for a break in emotional tension. Laughter, crying and tantrums are ways children release bad feelings. (Go for the laughter!).

## 10) Replicating Action Figures

Action Hero? - Determine if the superhero act is a thin disguise for a more “acceptable” form of violence and aggression.

Outside game – Bats and spiders live and play outside; inside the classroom is for boys and girl to have fun and learn (violence and aggression not permitted anywhere)

Glean the good – find and discuss how Spiderman uses the web to sit and relax (create a web on the carpet square in circle time).

Limit exposure – Encourage parents to limit the viewing of violent, aggressive movies. Super Heroes are no longer just comics and cartoons, they are action adventure films targeted to adults. Preschoolers are not developmentally ready to filter and understand complex rational for aggressive behavior.

### Additional Challenges that May Arise in the Classroom

#### Parent Issues

Listening and Validation-Many parents just want to be heard.

Use empathic, solution focused questions - What can I do to help make this situation better for you? I really want to help you regarding your concern about X; how do you see this problem (X) being resolved?

Make an appropriate referral: Mental Health, Regional Center, school district, 211 assistance for case management needs.

Mentally “trash can” the garbage – don’t take on what isn’t yours. Think of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Human Needs (mental health might not be parent’s top priority right now). Glean the good from the conversation and filter the rest into the “garbage can”.

Defer and Refer – If you don’t know the answer, defer your response until you can get back to the parent. Refer to your head teacher or supervisor if needed.

## **Stigma of Mental Health**

Sensitivity - Refer to as “child counseling” or “behavioral support” vs. “Mental Health Referral”

Answer questions- Always take the time to answer questions and direct the parent to the counseling agency to discuss concerns.

Introductions- Offer to introduce the parent to the agency therapist/representative at the school site. Encourage the parent to ask questions about the treatment.

Stress Outcome Success – Educate parents to understand that help and interventions early on can thwart problems later on in school. Behavioral support can also give children the needed coping skills to face new challenges.

Community Partners – Be aware of agencies and other community partners who specialize in working with children who have specific behavioral concerns or learning disabilities. Provide the parent with referrals to those agencies and resources.