



Understanding and Responding to Students With Disabilities

Training to Go

Session Goals



YOU FOR YOUTH



- Reflect on communication barriers
- Understand that behavior serves a communication tool
- Explore the unique need for advocacy in students with disabilities
- Provide strategies for responding to students with disabilities



What is Behavior?



Measurable Actions





What Is Not Behavior?

Emotions



Communication Barriers



- Physical
- Intellectual
- Language/cultural
- Social-Emotional



The Advocacy Key

The key to effectively responding to students, but especially those with a disability, is recognizing that behavior can be an important communication tool.



It's Communicating...

- A need
 - attention
- An inability or discomfort
 - unsure how to complete a task
- A mismatch with the environment
 - a change in routine or schedule



Influences on Behavior



The Student's Feelings



The Activity



The People



The Environment



What is the Student Communicating?

Scenario

Tim is a 9-year-old who usually completes his homework and other program activities before others in his group. When he's done, he begins talking to other students or moving around the room.

Homework time is individual, silent worktime in the program. When he talks or moves around, the Group Leader tells him to rest his head on the table or grab a book to read.

One day, Tim tore small pieces of paper from his notebook, crumpled them into balls, and threw them at other students when the Group Leader wasn't looking. One student, after being hit by the balls, started yelling and threatening Tim.



What is the Student Communicating?



Strategies Match the Need



When you understand what the student is communicating and the influences, you can find a strategy to match the need.





Possible Strategies

- Build relationships
- Design and monitor the environment
- Intentional skill building

Strategy 1 - Relationships



Trusting, caring relationships are the foundation of positive behavior and effective communication.

Build Relationships By



- Greeting each student by name
- Using a neutral tone of voice
- Praising specifically
- Finding common ground

Strategy 2 – The Environment



Well organized, sensory-sensitive environments with appropriate accommodations support positive behavior.

Considerate Setup



- **Physical environment**
 - How the space is arranged, variety of materials/activities available
- **Sensory environment**
 - Pay attention to noise level, brightness, visual breaks on the walls
 - Have noise reduction headphones available, chill zones with calming materials
- **Social-emotional environment**
 - Consistency in routines and expectations

Strategy 3 – Intentional Skill Building



YOU FOR YOUTH



Enhancing students' social-emotional and communication skills decreases anxiety and negative reactions.

Examples Skills



- **Self-regulation/coping skills**
 - How to take a break
 - How to pause and think of a solution to a problem
- **Communication Skills**
 - How to communicate respectfully with peers for conflict resolution
 - How to compromise
 - How to self-advocate



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Scenario

| The Need | Strategies | | |
|----------|---------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| | Relationships | The Environment | Intentional Skills Building |
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Next Steps

1. Select one part of your day.
2. What have your students, whether disabled or nondisabled, been communicating through recent behaviors?
3. What responses can you make to address their needs?

