

Pyramid Model Infant-Toddler Module Series

# Understanding Behavior



# Pyramid Model Infant-Toddler Module Series

Introduction & Understanding Social-Emotional Development

Focusing on Relationships

Responsive Routines, Schedules, & Environments

## Understanding Behavior

Teaching About Feelings

Promoting Positive Peer Interactions

Individualized Teaching

Challenging Behavior

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### Adapted from:

The Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL),  
Vanderbilt University

Pyramid Resources for Infant Toddler Social-Emotional Development, Juniper  
Gardens Children's Project University of Kansas

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# Pyramid Model Infant-Toddler Module: Understanding Behavior

Working with infants and toddlers is rewarding, but it can also sometimes be challenging. In Understanding Behavior, participants will learn how to use observation to better understand child behavior. We will look at the many influences affecting behavior and use this knowledge to examine our own beliefs. We will practice reframing our thoughts to better respond to challenging situations.

## Learner Objectives

- ▶ Understand and describe that all young children's behavior is a way of communicating and has meaning
- ▶ Use a variety of strategies, including observation and self-reflection, to increase capacity to support the social-emotional development of infants, toddlers, and their families

## Agenda

I. Setting the Stage: Behavior	10 minutes
II. Observation	15 minutes
III. Learning from Families	15 minutes
IV. Cues of Young Children	15 minutes
V. Development & Challenges	15 minutes
VI. Examining Our Reactions	30 minutes
VII. Responding to Challenges	30 minutes
VIII. Wrap-Up & Reflection	5 minutes

## My Notes

## Training Preparation

- ☐ Print participant handouts
- ☐ Review videos
- ☐ Prepare and print certificates of completion
- ☐ Activity: Examining Our Reactions—Review questions so you have examples of your own to share
- ☐ Activity: Noticing and Challenging Our Thoughts—Prepare to share some of your thoughts that can be challenged, past or present

## Handouts

- ☐ 1 PowerPoint
- ☐ 2 Agenda
- ☐ 3 Components to Better Understand & Respond to Behavior
- ☐ 4 Temperament Continuum
- ☐ 5 Understanding Temperament in Infants & Toddlers
- ☐ 6 Communicating with Families: 3 Key Steps
- ☐ 7 Examining our Emotional Reactions to Behaviors
- ☐ 8 Reframing Behavior
- ☐ 9 Making a Scripted Story for Early Childhood Education & Care Environments
- ☐ 10 Practice Implementation Checklist
- ☐ 11 Training Feedback

## Videos

- ☐ Challenging Situation

## Materials Needed

### Technology

- ☐ PowerPoint file
- ☐ Video files
- ☐ Computer
- ☐ Projector and speakers

### Printables

- ☐ Handouts
- ☐ Certificates of completion
- ☐ Sign-in sheet

### Supplies

- ☐ Name tags
- ☐ Pens
- ☐ Snacks and drinks
- ☐ Chart paper/white board and markers
- ☐ Table fidgets/manipulatives

### Other Items

- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

# Setting the Stage: Behavior



## Slide 1: Introduction

Welcome to the next session in the Pyramid Model Infant-Toddler Training Series, where we are going to learn about how we can better understand and respond to behavior.

I am *(name)* and *(give some personal background history relevant to training)*.  
Here with me are *(introduce rest of team)*.

Let's get some logistics out of the way before we begin.

- ▶ Breaks:
- ▶ Lunch/Snacks:
- ▶ Parking:
- ▶ Restrooms:

Last, you should have a set of materials that includes handouts, slide notes, and other useful information. We will reference some of these throughout the training, so keep them handy. If you don't have the materials you need, please let us know.

*Depending on how familiar members of the training team are with the participants, it may also be important to have participants do introductions—and include classroom and their role in the classroom, if appropriate.*

*You may want participants to ask questions when they think of them, or have them write questions down to ask at the end of sections.*



## Slide 2: Learner Objectives

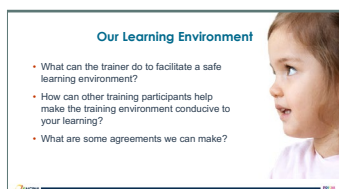
Today we're going to talk about an area you deal with everyday—child behavior. When we say “behavior” we mean anything you can observe as children act and respond within their environment. We'll start with an overview of what helps you to make sense of what you are seeing and hearing and appropriately understand and respond to behaviors. We'll talk about behavior as communication, factors that influence behavior, and we'll do some thinking about factors that influence our own perceptions of behavior. Finally, we'll talk about tools to observe and respond to behavior.



## Slide 3: Agenda

You can find our training agenda for today on *Handout 2*. While the learning objectives represent what we hope you receive from the training, the agenda represents how we are going to get there.

At the end of the training, we will ask you to complete a questionnaire about the training. We look forward to receiving this input, as it will improve the training for others.



## Slide 4: Our Learning Environment

We will be spending a lot of time together throughout this training and future trainings. It's helpful to decide together what sorts of agreements are important to the group. Think about what makes a positive learning environment for you. What are those things?

*Pause for responses.*



## Slide 5: Possible Shared Agreements

With that in mind, what are some agreements we can make about how our learning environment should look? You can use the agreements on the slide as a guide.

*Pause for responses, then summarize agreements.*



## Slide 6: Topics We Will Discuss

It might help you to have *Handout 3* readily available throughout today's training. It shows the different topics we will talk about that feed into understanding and responding to behavior.

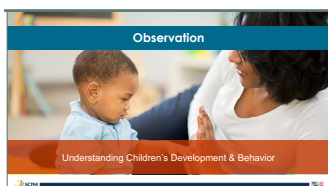
There are many different factors that come into play when we are thinking about child behavior. We will discuss many of these, so let's step back and talk about how broad these factors can be. As we think about behavior, it is always important that we consider:

- ▶ Child development, what is typical in infants and toddlers, and how changes in development can affect behaviors. We covered that in the first part of this training, and we'll keep coming back to child development and age-appropriate expectations throughout our trainings.
- ▶ We also need to know how to observe and gather information about behaviors. This involves gathering information from a child's family and home experiences.
- ▶ We need to be aware of and understand how to interpret a child's gestural and facial cues and understand how the child communicates.
- ▶ Finally, understanding and responding to behavior requires us to be aware of our own thoughts and expectations, and even unconscious or implicit biases about behavior, so we'll spend some time talking about how we perceive behavior. We will also be reflecting on behaviors for which we might have stronger reactions.

All of this will give us the background we need to successfully use effective strategies to respond to behaviors, and we'll wrap things up by talking about some specific strategies that can be used in the classroom to prevent and address challenging behaviors.



# Observation



## Slide 7: Observation

Let's start with a critical component that is needed in order to make sense of behavior—careful observation.

How do we know when things make sense and feel comfortable to a child? How do we understand individual children's needs and behavior? How do we know when a child is struggling? How do we make sense of the behavior we see and hear, and figure out how to respond?

Careful observation can help caregivers understand each child's level of social-emotional development, as well as help measure and describe progress, engage with families, and individualize the curriculum to best fit each child's needs.

Observation of young children's social-emotional development takes time and even though caregivers observe and care for the same children daily, details can be missed.

- ▶ For example, one caregiver described an infant in her care as “fussy all the time.” However, when she was able to step back and spend time observing this infant at different times throughout the day, she realized that he was not really fussy “all the time.” He actually seemed quite content after his bottles. This observation led the parent and caregiver to try feeding the baby more frequently. This baby needed more frequent feedings than most. A closer observation of the infant's behavior led to more responsive care for this baby.

Observation is a natural part of what caregivers can do each and every day as they care for and interact with young children.



## Slide 8: Observation Tips

Here are some great tips for observation that will help you form relationships and promote social-emotional development with those in your classroom.

- ▶ Record what you see and hear by writing down young children's actions and their reactions to the environment. For example, note if a young child pulls or clings to your leg when you greet another family or if a child sits with her back to the group, examining a toy bus.
- ▶ Be objective and record only the facts (i.e., what is actually happening without opinions).
- ▶ Use all of your senses.
- ▶ Note your own responses and how you are feeling.
- ▶ Observe on different days, different times of day, and in different settings—complete as many observations as possible over time.

Watching a child once gives you a snapshot. To get a complete picture, you need to watch again and again as each time you watch, you may learn something new. Try to observe all children across different activities and areas of your setting. Children behave differently in different places and with different caregivers.

It is also important to check in with yourself about how you are perceiving behavior. What expectations or biases might you have about individual children or their behaviors? Ask yourself if your perceptions might be influenced by certain child characteristics, such as race, disability, or gender.



## Slide 9: Sample Observation

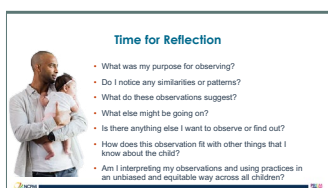
Let's practice observing now. In this case, we only have one sense to rely on—our sight.

What are some observations you can make, just looking at this picture? Remember, be objective and share only facts.

*Possible responses include...Two children are outside playing with shaving cream. It is sunny outside or the sun is shining. One child has an arm up. The other child is looking at and touching the shaving cream.*

Drawing conclusions is a natural thing to do. We need to be aware of this when we observe and try to start by being objective—just noting the facts, without immediately interpreting what we see.

This awareness is important because our own personal experiences and unconscious biases can have an impact on how we see children. As we become more aware of how we think and feel, we are better able to understand and appreciate what we learn from our observations. It is important in our observations of young children to be very aware of not only how we see things, but how we interpret what we see.



## Slide 10: Time for Reflection

Once you take time to document your observations, it is helpful to pause and reflect on what you observed and make meaning of the information you have. Each of us has our own values, beliefs, and emotions that can impact our interpretation of what we see and hear.

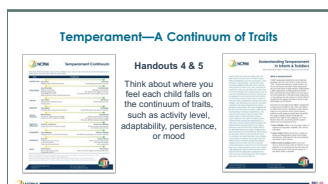
Here are some sample reflection questions you can be thinking about.

- ▶ What was my purpose for observing?
- ▶ Do I notice any similarities or patterns?
- ▶ What do these observations suggest?
- ▶ What else might be going on?
- ▶ Is there anything else I want to observe or find out?
- ▶ How does this observation fit with other things that I know about the child?



- ▶ Am I interpreting my observations and using practices in an unbiased and equitable way across all children?

When reflecting on young children's behavior, it is important to include perspectives and observations from all the adults who care for a child. Each adult sees a vital aspect of the child's world.



## Slide 11: Temperament—A Continuum of Traits

When learning about children, we are watching for specific patterns of behavior. By carefully observing over time, you can anticipate how children might behave or react in certain situations, and be responsive.

These consistent behaviors or reactions can tell us something about where a child falls on a continuum of traits, such as high vs low activity level. But, we should always remember that even though we can find patterns in how children behave, these patterns can change, and they are complex—they may not always show up in the same way in every scenario, or remain consistent over time.

To leave you thinking more about observation and children's patterns of traits and patterns of responding, *Handout 4*, gives you some traits to think about with regard to individual children.

- ▶ Think about a couple of children from your classroom as you fill out this handout for each of them.
- ▶ Think about patterns you see over time, and how you might tailor your interactions to particular children.
- ▶ If you're interested in more information about traits and temperament, you can check out *Handout 5*, which is an article about temperament, and a good resource for staff and families.

## Learning from Families



## Slide 12: Learning from Families

Observation can tell us a lot about a child's behavior and the situations in which it happens, but in many cases, it can be helpful to also have input from families on their perspectives and observations. Families have knowledge about their children from their day-to-day interactions, and can observe their children in different situations and settings.



## Slide 13: Encourage Input & Sharing

Caregivers can actively seek collaboration with families by asking and encouraging questions about their children's play, and the way in which children interact and behave at home or out in the community.

Asking families to share their perspectives and observations can help caregivers enhance their understanding of a child and family, as well as determine additional ways to provide responsive care. You may find that families are experiencing challenges. Opening the door to having conversations with families may provide opportunities to support social-emotional development in new ways.

Sometimes asking questions can feel a bit awkward or create instances where people feel judged and in some cases, families may respond defensively.

Beginning questions with “I wonder” is a great way to ask questions in an open-minded and accepting way (Parlakian, 2001). Posing such questions allows all the adults to think about the child’s social-emotional development and offers them an opportunity to include additional information in their answers.

- ▶ For example, “I wonder if she might be ready for potty training” or “I wonder if she’s getting ready to grow out of using the pacifier?”

You can find more tips for communicating with families on *Handout 6* in your packet.

## Cues of Young Children



### Slide 14: Cues of Young Children

We just finished discussing how observation is one of the most powerful strategies for learning about infants and toddlers. When we observe infants and toddlers we see they often use a variety of ways to communicate with those around them. This might include gestures, sounds, movements, and facial expressions. That’s why we are now going to spend some time focusing on behavioral cues of young children, and how these cues function to communicate with caregivers.



### Slide 15: Engagement & Disengagement Cues

Young children let us know of their needs and wants through cues, or behavior. Since families know their children best, it is usually helpful to communicate with parents and other caregivers about their children’s cues and behaviors and what they notice at home. This gives teachers a nice head start in getting to know the cues of infants and toddlers.

Cues can tell us a child is ready to interact—such as when an infant looks at you with an alert facial expression. We’ll refer to these as “engagement cues.”

Cues can also tell us when a child needs a break from interaction, such as when an infant turns their head or looks away. We’ll call those “disengagement cues.”

Think about infants and toddlers, as well as the cues that might be observed when children have communication delays or disabilities, or are dual language learners.

Can you share some examples of cues from both infants and toddlers that tell us when they are engaged or disengaged?

*Pause for responses.*

How do you tell an infant is done playing with a toy? What about a toddler?

*Pause for responses.*

How do you know when an infant is tired? What about toddlers?

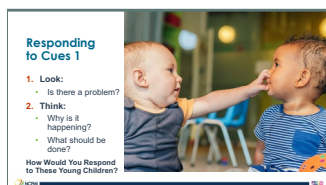
*Pause for responses.*

*Possible responses include...fussing, looking away, or rubbing eyes.*

Engagement and Disengagement Cues Examples	
Engagement Cues	Disengagement Cues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eyes widen</li> <li>• Turn eyes, body, or head toward speaker</li> <li>• Alert face</li> <li>• Steady breathing</li> <li>• Hand-to-mouth activity</li> <li>• Grasping finger or object</li> <li>• Smooth movements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crying or fussing</li> <li>• Gagging, spitting</li> <li>• Frowning</li> <li>• Hiccoughing, yawning, sneezing</li> <li>• Jittery or jerky movements</li> <li>• Falling asleep</li> <li>• Back arching</li> <li>• Turning away</li> <li>• Stiff or limp posture</li> </ul>

## Slide 16: Engagement & Disengagement Cues, Examples

All of the examples you've given, plus those you see on the slide, are cues of engagement or disengagement. By knowing these cues, you can help children feel understood and secure, and you can support them in developing self-regulation skills before they become distressed.



## Slide 17: Responding to Cues 1

Let's put this into practice with some photos. Since these are only photographs, we'll have to rely on visual cues; in the classroom, you'll also have the benefit of hearing auditory cues and seeing gestural cues. For each picture, we'll identify some cues we are seeing, as well as how you might respond to the cues. Observe the cues they are giving; think about what you know about cues of young children and, based on that, share how you would respond to the child in the photograph. We each have different approaches to caregiving, so let's hear from everyone so we can all get more ideas for how to be responsive caregivers.

*Give time to view image, then prompt for responses.*

**In this image, one child is holding another child's nose.** One child's hand appears to be in another child's mouth. The children's faces appear neutral. Here, a caregiver might show the children a different way to interact with each other.



## Slide 18: Responding to Cues 2

How about this one?

*Pause for responses.*

**In this image, two children play on the floor.** The child on the right is smiling and offering the child on the left a toy block. A caregiver might comment on how the children are enjoying playing together. A caregiver could say, "Kaley is sharing her toy with Sofia. We can all have fun when we share."



## Slide 19: Responding to Cues 3

Here's one more. How would you respond to these children?

*Pause for responses.*

**Here, the child on the left is holding the middle child's hand and smiling.**

The child in the middle is looking with a serious face toward the child on the right, who has his hand on her shoulder. The child on the right is looking into the distance. Since the child in the middle is looking serious and the child on the right has his attention elsewhere, a caregiver might make the child on the right aware that he is touching the girl's shoulder.

## Development & Challenges



## Slide 20: Development & Challenges

Together, we have discussed social-emotional development and why it is important.

We also highlighted the importance of observation, and how this can help us understand children's development and behavior.

Each of these concepts will help us understand a young child's strengths and possible areas of need. Now, we're going to take a closer look at what we mean when we talk about "challenging behavior" and how a child's developmental skills influences behaviors.



## Slide 21: Development's Influence on Challenges

Often very young children have not yet developed a wide variety of skills to communicate their needs and wants; and some of the behaviors young children use to communicate might be described by some as "challenging behaviors." For instance, we sometimes see crying, fussing, tantrums, or even biting in infant-toddler care, and we can usually agree that the purpose of these behaviors are to communicate a need or a want. We can also probably agree that these behaviors might be considered typical at this age.

When we use the words "challenging behavior," we are referring to the range of challenges that caregivers may experience in caring for infants and toddlers. Sometimes these behaviors might be more accurately described as "challenging situations" than "challenging behavior"—they are behaviors that might be considered typical for infants and toddlers, but are challenging nonetheless.

We will keep talking about how we can appropriately and effectively respond to an infant or toddler's challenging behavior—that may be intense, frequent, and lasting in duration—in future sessions. Today, however, we will focus on addressing the day-to-day challenges that occur in infant-toddler classrooms as children develop new social-emotional skills.

## Challenging Scenarios

- A 3-month-old screams and cries for long periods of time because...
- A 17-month-old hits another child because...
- A 2-year-old says "no" frequently because...



## Slide 22: Challenging Scenarios

Keeping in mind what you've learned about reading cues, behaviors, and the developmental continuum, let's break up into small groups and talk about the following scenarios. Identify what the infants or toddlers may be trying to communicate with their behavioral cues. After a few minutes, we'll come back together to discuss.

*Give 10 minutes for groups to talk, then come back together.*

Let's look at the first scenario. "A 3-month-old screams and cries for long periods..."

What ideas did your group have about what the baby might be communicating?

*Possible responses include...Perhaps the child has colic; maybe the baby needs soothing or to be held; maybe the child doesn't know the caregiver or feel secure; perhaps the baby is uncomfortable or in pain; perhaps the child is hungry, cold or wet; maybe it is a new environment and the baby is scared.*

What about the 17-month-old that hits another child? What is this behavior communicating?

*Possible responses include...The toddler might want a toy the other child has; the toddler might be curious about what the child will do in response; the toddler might want to play; perhaps the other child is in the toddler's space; the toddler might not know what else to do to get their needs met.*

What were your group's thoughts about the 2-year-old who says "no" frequently? What is this behavior communicating?

*Possible responses include...Perhaps the child has heard "no" frequently and is experimenting with language; the child might be trying to have some power, and exert their independence; the child might be trying to understand what "no" means; they may not want to do something, or had a bad experience with this activity in the past.*

Did anyone have a group that talked about interpretations of a child's behavior that were very different from each other?

*Pause for responses.*

## Challenging Situation with a 9-Month-Old



## Slide 23: Challenging Situation with a 9-Month-Old

The following video clip of a challenging situation comes from the CDC's Learn the Signs Act Early program website. Their site includes information about child development and resources to share with families. As you watch, observe closely the sequence of events, and afterward, we'll talk about what you observed.

*Play Challenging Situation (11 seconds)*

What does the age of this baby tell you about what she is going through?

*Possible responses include...Child may be fearful of a stranger, experiencing some separation anxiety, worried mom is leaving, wants to stay with her caregiver, feeling anxious, or feeling nervous.*

What might this baby be trying to communicate?

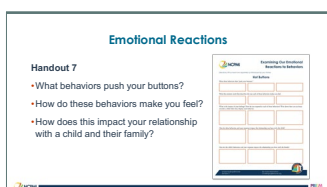
*Pause for responses.*

## Examining Our Reactions



### Slide 24: Examining Our Reactions

Caring for infants and toddlers can be difficult. When infants and toddlers engage in challenging behavior, it can be emotional work, making it very hard to see beyond the behavior itself. Exploring our own perceptions, beliefs, biases, and feelings about behavior is critical to supporting young children. How we think and feel about children's behavior greatly impacts how we will respond to it.



### Slide 25: Emotional Reactions

Go ahead and take out *Handout 7*—Examining our Emotional Reactions to Behavior.

We all have behaviors that really bother us or “push our buttons.” We might call those “hot button” behaviors. The purpose of this activity is to help us identify some of our own hot buttons. For now, just fill out the top row with your own “hot button behaviors.” There are no right or wrong answers, but do try to focus on behaviors that are specific to infants and toddlers, since that is the focus of this training.

*Give time for trainees to fill out top row.*

What are some behaviors that push your buttons?

*Offer your own 'hot button' behaviors. Are there certain behaviors that push your hot buttons? Biting, spitting, running away? Share those with the group as a way to indicate that all of us can have hot button behaviors.*

*Write responses on chart paper.*

Now think of infants and toddlers whom you have cared for and have displayed these types of behaviors. Go ahead and complete the second row by listing feeling words that describe how you felt when you were working with infants or toddlers who engaged in that behavior. Or, you can write how you felt when people shared the list of behaviors that “pushed their buttons.”

Let's share the ideas or words you wrote on row two. Remember there are no right or wrong answers here.

*Write responses on chart paper.*

Now, write responses to the third question in the third row on your paper: What is the impact of your feelings? How do you respond to each of these behaviors? Write down how you act or react towards a child when they display each behavior.

*Give time for trainees to write.*



There's a strong connection between feelings and behaviors, since often the way we feel leads to how we behave. This can sometimes make it difficult to maintain positive, warm interactions with all children and families we work with. For example, if a “hot button” behavior causes you to feel defensive or angry, how do you behave?

*Write responses on chart paper.*

Write responses to the fourth question in the fourth row on your paper: How do these behaviors and your response impact the relationship you have with the child?

*Give time for trainees to write.*

When we feel defensive or angry, we might use a frustrated or stern voice, we might be more directive (verbally or physically), or we might use sarcasm to make ourselves feel better. Over time, these feelings might result in avoiding interactions with that child or finding yourself feeling negatively about that child across the day. How might your feelings and reactions be impacting the relationship you have with the child?

*Write responses on chart paper.*

Finally, for the last question, how do the child's behaviors and your response impact the relationship you have with the family? Write your responses to the fifth question in the fifth row.

*Give time for trainees to write.*

Hopefully this activity has illuminated how important our thoughts and reactions about our own behaviors are to our ongoing relationships with a child, our colleagues, and the families we work with. The good news is that there are strategies to help us acknowledge and reframe our thinking about our own thoughts and reactions.

#### Examining Our Feelings

- Pay attention to your own behavior, thoughts, and feelings
- Use thoughts and feelings as a signal
- Consider what our facial expression, tone, and movements might convey to the child or family
- Take extra effort to remain calm or take a break
- Ask for help
- Take time for additional observations
- How do these feelings impact your relationship with the child? the family?

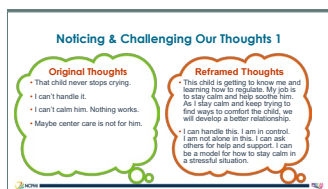
## Slide 26: Examining Our Feelings

Our own “feelings” can be an emotional signal to tell us to:

- ▶ Think deeply about your own actions, beliefs, expectations, and emotional state. Identify your feelings.
- ▶ These feelings can be an emotional cue to pause and reassess the situation.
- ▶ Take a deep breath, or several. Think about your facial expression, your words, the pace, tone, and volume of your voice. These “feelings” cues can help us think of a different or more positive way to proceed. On the other hand, we may need to step aside for more reflection or consideration, even if only for a moment or two.
- ▶ Some young children and some adults might expect harsh or negative judgment. For this reason it is even more important to consider your tone, facial expressions, and convey a nonjudgmental and sensitive approach to children and families.
- ▶ Recognize that other adults are there to aid you, in supporting the children's social-emotional well-being and successful interactions within the group

setting. There is no shame in recruiting assistance or the input of others. Using a team approach to problem-solving challenging situations often results in finding a variety of effective and creative strategies.

- ▶ It is easy to miss things “in the moment,” especially if the behavior evokes strong reactions and responses. Creating brief times to watch a child more intently enables us to learn more about their interests, patterns of responding, and interactions.
- ▶ Our feelings influence our interactions with the child and can affect the relationship with the family as well.
- ▶ Sometimes feelings let us know we need to think about or interpret behavior in a different way. This is called “reframing,” or thinking about behaviors and why they are occurring in a more positive or objective way.



## Slide 27: Noticing & Challenging Our Thoughts 1

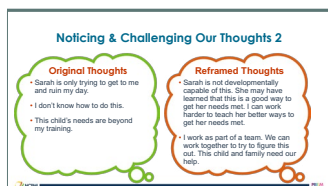
If we notice and challenge our thoughts and reframe them with a more objective lens, we are better able to address the reason behind the behavior. These slides will help us practice reframing our thoughts with a new perspective.

Let's take a look at some examples.

“That child never stops crying. I can't handle it. I can't calm him. Nothing works. Maybe center care is not for him.”

Ever had a thought like these? Most of us have! Let's look at how we can replace these with new, more objective thoughts. Instead of feeling unable to help a child, we can tell ourselves, “I can handle this. I am in control. I am not alone in this. I can ask others for help and support. I can be a model for how to stay calm in a stressful situation.”

*It may help to share some of your thoughts that need challenging.*



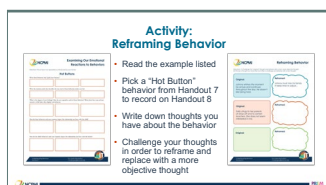
## Slide 28: Noticing & Challenging Our Thoughts 2

Let's look at a couple more thoughts.

“Sarah is only trying to get to me and ruin my day. I don't know how to do this. This child's needs are beyond my training.”

We can replace these thoughts with new thoughts, like:

“Sarah is not developmentally capable of this. She may have learned that this is a good way to get her needs met. I can work harder to teach her better ways to get her needs met. I work as part of a team. We can work together to try to figure this out. This child and family need our help.”



## Slide 29: Activity: Reframing Behavior

Take out the handout you just filled out—*Handout 7*—because we are now going to practice reframing with your hot button behaviors.

You'll also need *Handout 8* to do this activity. There are two examples of hot button behaviors and associated thoughts listed. The first example shows a reframed thought. The second does not. You'll complete that in a moment.

In the last box on *Handout 8* that says "original," go ahead and write down a behavior from *Handout 7* that pushes your buttons.

*Give time to complete*

Think about the original, or initial, thoughts and feelings you have about that behavior and list them by the behavior you wrote down.

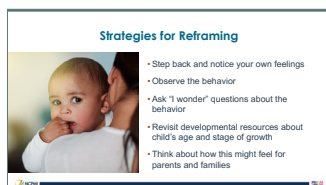
*Give time to complete*

In the next few minutes, practice challenging and reframing thoughts—first looking at the example of an original behavior and thought, and then challenge your thoughts and feelings about the hot button behavior you picked. Replace the original information with a more objective thought, or restate the problem to make it more manageable.

*Give time to complete.*

Let's come back together and share what you've written.

*Give time for sharing responses.*



## Slide 30: Strategies for Reframing

There are many strategies for reframing, but you might find some work better for you than others. Deep breaths, focusing on what you can do, and finding someone else to talk to are just a few ideas. Be aware of what you find helpful; as you look at these strategies, think about what has worked for you in the past, and new things you might want to try in the future.

# Responding to Challenges



## Slide 31: Responding to Challenges

Now that we've explored different components influencing behavior, let's look at some strategies for addressing everyday behaviors that can create challenges in the classroom. We'll talk about the strategies briefly today. Consider discussing these strategies with a coach, supervisor, or colleague, as they apply specifically to children or situations in your setting.

## Responding to Classroom Challenges

- Respond immediately
- Remain calm and supportive
- Help children recognize their emotions



## Slide 32: Responding to Classroom Challenges

Classroom challenges include situations that may or may not include challenging behaviors. Some strategies include:

- ▶ By responding at the first signs of distress, you show the children that you are there for them, and that you see and hear them. The earlier you respond and acknowledge the distress, the more likely you will be able to prevent the situation from escalating. You'll also be more able to use the situation to teach a coping skill if they are not overly upset.
- ▶ Responding quickly and calmly also helps children feel secure and safe. It communicates a message to children that you are there to help them when they need assistance.
- ▶ When you respond with increased intensity, you can also escalate the intensity of what the children are feeling. By staying calm and supportive, you are modeling self-regulation and how to successfully approach challenges, while also showing the children you are an adult on which they can depend.
- ▶ Take the opportunity to help children recognize their emotions. You can do this by: labeling and affirming the emotion in the infant or young toddler (e.g., "I see that you are frustrated."); providing visuals to toddlers to help them identify their emotions; and modeling and teaching toddlers strategies for calming, such as using breathing techniques.

## Responding to Challenging Behaviors



- Provide positive attention to the child and acknowledge feelings
- Provide soothing support
- Use the opportunity to promote social-emotional development
- Redirect with choice

## Slide 33: Responding to Challenging Behaviors

Now, let's focus on how to use the next three strategies to address challenging behavior—such as crying or taking toys from another child. These are typical behaviors for young children and we need to respond in a way that promotes their social-emotional development.

When a child is in distress, we want to be immediately responsive and acknowledge their feelings. As caregivers, we must be calm and self-regulated as we respond with empathy and support. For example, a caregiver might say, "You look so upset. I can see how frustrated you are." Next, we want to help the child build their regulation strategies by providing them with soothing support, such as rubbing the child's back or rocking or holding the child. When the child is calm, help them understand that feelings can change, and that they can have multiple feelings at the same time. For example, "It is so hard to wait for your bottle. Now that you have it, look how much better you feel. It is hard to wait when you want something."

Caregivers can guide children's development by talking through the actions they are providing to soothe the infant, or the actions they are guiding the toddler to use. For example, a caregiver might help the infant reach the toy they have dropped while saying "Let's find your toy. Here it is. You can get it (as baby reaches for it in caregiver's hand)." In assisting a toddler who is pulling a book away from another child, the caregiver can begin to teach the foundations of problem-solving by saying,

“We have two children who both want the book. Let me see if I can help you. What can we do? I can help you find a different book, or I can read it to both of you. Do you want to sit with me and look at the book together?”

Redirection to another activity or toy is also an important strategy to use. As much as possible, you want to redirect by offering a choice to the child. This provides children with an opportunity to communicate and engage in self-direction. For example, you might respond to a toddler who is beginning to have a tantrum because another child has the toy they want by saying, “I see you are frustrated. Damien is playing with that baby now and you want it. You can play with this one or we can go and read a book together.” In response to a toddler who grabs a toy from another child, the caregiver might respond by offering a different toy and saying, “Emma was playing with that car, here is one for you. We can’t pull a toy out of our friend’s hands.”



## Slide 34: Understanding Guides Our Response

When responding to behavior, the caregiver must consider the developmental level of the child and the context of the behavior. We will respond to the crying of an infant who is hungry differently from the toddler who cries because an activity has ended. Both situations require us to respond, validate the child’s emotion, and offer a resolution. However, for the toddler who continues to cry after we have validated their emotions and offered choices, we might allow the child some more time to express their emotions (e.g., cry, express anger, etc.) and then make a choice. If the child remains upset for an ongoing period of time, the caregiver can check in and offer the child comfort, support, and choices (e.g., “I see you are still feeling sad because you don’t want to stop the activity. It is ok to feel sad sometimes. Would you like a hug? Or maybe you just want me to stay close? When you are ready you can join your friends or help me at the table.”) When the child is calm and engaged in an activity the caregiver can talk to the child about feelings. For example, “I see you are feeling like joining the other children. It looks like you are having fun.”

In addition to considering child development, we want to consider what the behavior is communicating. Is the child seeking comfort, attention, food, a toy, or a person with the behavior; or is the child trying to avoid sensory input, a person, or an activity? Understanding the communicative message of the behavior helps us in our response. If a toddler hits a teacher to avoid being guided into the classroom after playing outside, we want to respond to the behavior in ways that reduce the negative behavior (hitting) from being effective. For example, the teacher can state, “We can use our words when we are angry, but we can’t hit.” The teacher can continue to guide the child indoors while expressing empathy and validating the emotion (e.g., “You are sad we need to go inside now.”) while encouraging the child to move through the transition and stating the fun activities that are options when indoors (“When we get inside, you can play with the cars or blocks.”).

## Strategies that Support Toddlers



- Objects or visuals
- Visual boundaries
- First-Then
- Choices
- Preferences
- Transition warnings and cues

## Slide 35: Strategies that Support Toddlers

On this slide, we provide strategies that can be helpful for children who have challenging behavior in the classroom.

### Objects or Visuals

For children who are just developing language, using objects, photographs, or visuals paired with our verbal direction can be helpful. By showing an object or visual while we give a direction, we provide the child with more information that helps them understand. For example, you might show the child a diaper while saying “Let’s get on the changing table. It’s time to change your diaper.” For an older toddler, a photograph of the upcoming activity can help the child anticipate and participate in the transition.

### Visual Boundaries

For toddlers, we might make boundaries more obvious for them. For example, if you have a toddler who takes other children’s food off their plate, you might provide a placement and redirect the child to only touch food on their mat. For children who are distracted by a toy shelf while you are trying to do a song or movement activity, you might cover the toy shelf with a sheet for the duration of the activity.

### First-Then

Using first-then statements can be helpful. For example, you might say to an infant as you get them down from their highchair, “First I need to wipe your face, and then I can put you on the floor to play.” You can also use visuals with your first-then statement. For example, you might show a child a photograph of washing hands and playing with toys and say, “First you need to wash your hands, and then we will go play with toys.”

### Choices

We discussed choices previously when talking about redirection. Providing choices is a wonderful strategy to use with toddlers who are developing their autonomy and asserting social control. Offering limited choices within routines can be very helpful to a child who might be resistant or engage in power struggles. Children can be offered choices of objects, activities, locations, and order of activities in almost all routines. Identify routines where the child is resistant and then add in choices as a prevention strategy to make engaging in that routine more interesting or appealing for them.

### Preferences

Take note of children’s preferences and then add those items to activities to help them cooperate and engage. For example, if a child is drawn to a particular character (e.g., Elmo) or interest (e.g., trains), use that image within the routine to gain the child’s interest. You might put it on the placement for encouraging the child to engage in snack or on a visual that you use to transition the child to the bathroom to



gain the child's attention. In addition, you might use object or activity preferences to support a child's activity engagement. For example, if you have a child who has a hard time staying with the group during movement time, you can play their favorite song as you see them losing interest.

### Transition Warnings and Cues

Transitions can be difficult for everyone. Even adults! Children will need a lot of time to anticipate and engage in the transition. Provide transition warnings to children by letting them know what is coming next and supporting them as they engage in the transition. This might be where you use visuals or first-then language. In addition, you might use environmental cues like playing a song to signal the end of an activity and the start of another or you might dim the lights and have children help you put out the cots to signal the transition to nap time.



### Slide 36: Scripted Stories

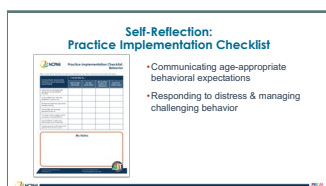
Scripted stories are stories about the expectations of a routine or activity. It is a strategy that you might use for a child who is interested in books and can be helpful for older toddlers. You have a handout on how to develop a scripted story. For toddlers, these will have to be short and use simple language. For example, you might have a scripted story for a child about naptime that describes the steps and expectations for nap time and the comfort that the teacher will provide (e.g., *I can Take a Nap*). The steps might include: I can take a nap at preschool; I can lay on my mat and snuggle my blanket; the teacher will rub my back to help me sleep; and the other expectations with photos of the child in the routine. For a child that is adjusting to being at preschool and separating from their parent, you could also do a scripted story that reassures the child of the fun activities they will do in the classroom, what the parent is doing while they are there, and that the parent will always come to pick them up at the end of the day.

## Wrap-Up & Reflection



### Slide 37: Wrap-Up & Reflection

Now that we've covered some practices related to challenging situations and behavior expectations, let's do some more self-reflection.



### Slide 38: Self-Reflection: Practice Implementation Checklist

Take out your Practice Implementation Checklist found on *Handout 10*. There is a front and a back this time, since you will be reflecting on practices related to responding to distress and communicating about age-appropriate behavioral expectations.

Star items that are a strength for you, and check any boxes that apply. You might find you check multiple boxes in one area, but may not check any in another.

We'll take a few minutes for you to fill it out, and then we'll come back together and discuss.

*Give time to fill form.*

Can anyone share some practices you already use on a regular basis?

*Pause for responses.*

What about practices you use sometimes, but you'd like to use more often or in a new way?


*Pause for responses.*

Are there any practices you aren't using but would like to learn to implement?

*Leave time for group to respond. Remind participants that the checklists can be used during coaching, action planning, or as a self-reflection tool after this session.*

**Major Messages to Take Home**

- Caregivers who reflect on their own well-being, skills, and perspectives will be better equipped to contribute to the positive social-emotional development of infants and toddlers, as well as support families rearing infants and toddlers.
- Caregivers who use a variety of strategies, including observation, will be better able to form close relationships with infants, toddlers, and their families.



## Slide 39: Major Messages to Take Home

Today we talked about the importance of careful observation and knowing the cues of young children, including engagement and disengagement cues.

We also talked about the importance of recognizing and challenging our own thoughts, expectations, and biases and how doing so can help us understand and respond to behaviors and cues.

Finally, we went over some strategies to use class-wide when encountering challenging situations or behaviors.

The focus of this training has been to learn about:

- ▶ Behavior as communication and factors that influence behavior
- ▶ Factors that influence our own perceptions of behavior
- ▶ Tools used to observe and respond to behavior

**Thank You**

The contents of this presentation were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, #H325B170003. However, these contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the U.S. Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.



## Slide 40: Thank You

Thank you for attending, and I look forward to seeing you next time, where we will discuss *(share information about next training)*.