

Why Do Children Do What They Do?

Session

3



Positive Solutions for Families



*The Center on the Social and Emotional
Foundations for Early Learning*

Learner Objectives

- Examine why children do what they do.
- Practice ways to determine the meaning of behavior.
- Understand how to make expectations clear for children.
- Understand effective ways to develop and teach household rules.

Suggested Agenda

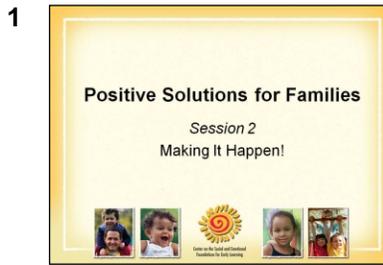
1. Share what happened when you played with your child using the Powerful Parenting Tips.
2. Share the behaviors you would like to see less of, more of and how you might encourage your child.
3. Discuss how we can try to determine the meaning of our child's behavior.
4. Time Out: When behaviors are attention seeking.
5. Discuss "being clear about our expectations.
6. Discuss how to develop and teach household rules.
7. Talk about *Things to Try at Home* activities.

Materials Needed

- PowerPoint or Overheads
- Chart Paper, Markers, Tape
- Video (Make sure you link all the videos to your powerpoint presentation before you present.)
- *Knuffle Bunny* by Mo Willems (optional activity)
- Where Do You Stand? Agree/Disagree Activity Cards
- Ground Rules from Session 1
- Goals from Session 1

Handouts

- *Solutions for Families Workbook Activities #8-12*



Post “Ground Rules” developed in the first session.

Show **Slide 1: Solutions for Families**

Show **Slide 2: What's Happening Today?** Welcome back to the *Positive Parenting Series* and our third *Solutions for Families*, “Why Do Children Do What They Do?” Today we will:

1. Share what happened when you played with your child using the Powerful Parenting Tips.
2. Share the behaviors you would like to see less of, more of and how you might encourage your child.
3. Discuss how we can try to determine the meaning of our child's behavior.
4. Discuss being clear about our expectations.
5. Discuss how to develop and teach household rules as an example of making our expectations clear.
6. Talk about *Things to Try at Home* activities.

Let's start by discussing your *Things to Try at Home* activities. Last week we continued to build on making deposits and encouraging your children. We also talked about play and how important it is for you to play with your child and follow his/her lead. You were going to try to find time to play with your child. How did that go? What kinds of things did you do? How did your child respond? Was it hard to follow their lead? How did you feel? Did you see the benefits?

Ask if anyone tried any of the ideas that we discussed around supporting their children's friendship skills. Did they go to the park or have a child over to play? What happened? How did their child do?

Point out that it would be great if they could continue to try to find time to play with their child even though the *Things to Try at Home* activities may not focus on play. I also want everyone to keep using positive comments and encouragement as well as making deposits into their child's relationship tank!



(Activity #8)

The second *Things to Try at Home* activity was to start thinking about the kinds of behaviors that you would like to see less of and more of. In addition, you were going to think of ways in which you could encourage your child to use the behaviors you would like to see more of. Let's write these on chart paper so we can come back to them during later sessions and see how we are doing.

Now take a few minutes to complete **your** encouragement and positive comment form in your workbook. You all did a great job playing with your children this week!

Let's get started on this week's topic: Why do children do what they do? You have probably asked yourself that question many times!

Explain that behavior is meaningful and communicates a message. Sometimes when children do not have an appropriate way to communicate a message (e.g., talking, signing, using picture symbols), they often resort to using challenging behavior (e.g., hitting, screaming, spitting) as a way to communicate to others what they want and need. A child who has limited social skills, or who has learned over time that engaging in challenging behavior will meet his or her needs effectively, may also use challenging behavior instead of language...even if he/she has language.

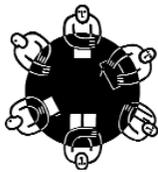
Simply put, children engage in challenging behavior because it works for them! It works for them to send a powerful message, which results in the child obtaining something (e.g., attention, toy, food) or avoiding/escaping something or someone (e.g., a demand, attention, stimulation).

3



To demonstrate this, let's look at a video to see if we can determine what the child is trying to communicate. As you watch the video, see if you can 1) describe what you see the child doing and 2) determine the meaning of the behavior.

The video shows a mother and child going into the library. Point out that this behavior was something that happened frequently. Allow parents to watch the tape several times if they have difficulty answering the questions.



Large Group
Brainstorm

Discuss what parents observed. What behavior got their attention? What do they think the child was trying to communicate? Was it easy or difficult for them to describe what the child was doing? Was it easy or difficult for them to determine what the child was trying to communicate?

That was fun trying to figure out what the child was trying to tell us. Would you consider that videotape to be an example of challenging behaviors? Responses will probably vary. Also have participants look at the list of behaviors that they would like to see less of (chart paper). Are there some examples that they do not consider challenging behaviors in their child?

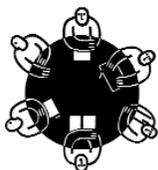
This discussion is a good example of how different people might have different views about what is considered to be challenging behaviors. You have probably seen situations where you silently say to yourself, “Why is that parent not doing something about her child?” Something that drives you crazy may not even bother the person next to you! The families and cultures in which we were raised and our personal experiences have formed our emotions and beliefs about many things—including child behavior.

Values and beliefs often involve strong emotions, and our actions often have tremendous influence over whether our child’s behavior gets better or worse! Sometimes the things we do to try to make the challenging behavior stop actually makes it stronger! And don’t forget that children bring their own personalities to the mix. Some children are tougher, and some are more sensitive than others.

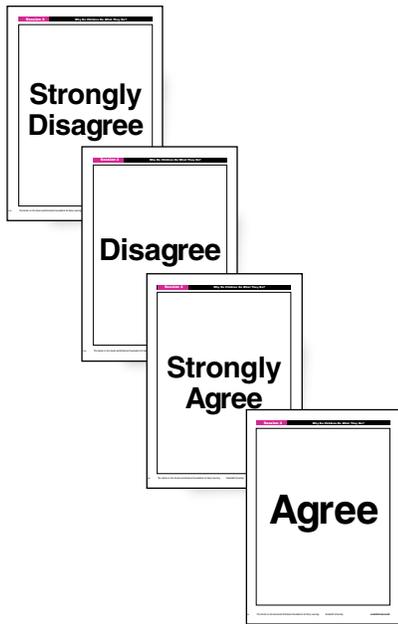
To demonstrate how we all have different views and opinions, choose one of the following activities:

Option 1: Read the book *Knuffle Bunny* by Mo Willems.

The book is a fun story about a little girl named Trixie. During this story, Trixie is trying to communicate something and you want the group to see if they can figure out what she is trying to tell them. Stop during the story to ask what they think Trixie is communicating. Point out the differences in answers and interpretations. Also ask them about the difference in Dad’s interpretation and Mom’s interpretation in the story.



Large Group
Brainstorm



Option 2: Where Do You Stand activity. You have 4 cards included in the materials for this session: strongly agree, agree, strongly disagree, and disagree. Tape these on the wall in different places in the room. You can use the statements below or create your own.

Explain that this is an activity aimed at appreciating and celebrating the variety of beliefs and values represented by the people in this room. Tell them that you are going to read a statement and then they will go and stand by the card that represents how they feel about the statement. Please remember that we are not here to judge, debate, or defend each other's beliefs. We are here to listen and to respect each other and our differences.

After people have moved to their first location, invite one or more participants to describe how their own personal experiences shaped their response to the statement. You can use the statements below or create your own.

Statement 1:

I think children should never drink soft drinks (soda).

Statement 2:

I would rather buy my child whatever he/she wants than have people stare at me because he/she has a temper tantrum in the grocery store.

Statement 3:

It is just bad parenting! It's the parent's fault when a child continues to exhibit challenging behavior.

Statement 4:

Children who hurt other children should be removed from that setting (park, preschool, etc.).

When you finish the activity, thank everyone for participating. Explain that this was a fun way to show how we all have different ideas and thoughts about things—especially challenging behavior! It is also a reminder that we should feel free in this group to express our thoughts and know that our comments will be respected.



Large Group Brainstorm



(Activity #9)

4



Now, let's go back to our discussion about behavior. Does trying to determine the meaning of behavior make you want to go home and observe your child? Do you want to try and see if you can figure out why he/she does some of the things he/she does? It is fun to try to figure out your child's behavior! It is kind of like being a detective. The more you observe, the more clues you will have to figure out why they do what they do.

Let's look in your Positive Solutions for Families Workbook at the *Things to Try at Home—Activity 9*. You will see one of the activities for next week! Take a few minutes to look at the form and then we can talk about it to make sure that everyone understands what they are supposed to do. (Give everyone time to look at the form.)

As you can see on the form, you will be observing your child when he/she is using a challenging behavior (one of those that you would like to see less of—from last week). You will look at what happens **before** the behavior starts and record that information. You can check one of the areas on the form or write down what happened before the behavior began if it is not listed. Then observe what happens **after** the behavior stops. Again, you can check one of the areas on the form or write down what happens after the behavior stops if it is not listed. You will also try to determine what you think your child is trying to communicate!

Show **Slide 4 – Video Segment**. Now that we have discussed how to use the form, let's practice by watching the same video that we watched earlier. Let's see if we can use the form to observe this child's challenging behavior. I am going to give you an extra copy of the form to use for your observations.

What did you see? How did you describe the challenging behavior? What happened before? What happened after?

Now that we have practiced, you are all ready to be a detective for the week! This will help you look for "clues" to try to figure out why your child does what he/she does. This might even help you begin to look at your child's behavior in a new way. You will notice that you have several copies of this form so you can practice observing your child on several different occasions.

5

Time-Out

- Step 1: Provide brief explanation and guide child to chair. Remain calm.
- Step 2: Set a timer (3 to 4 minutes only) and let your child know (calmly) that when the timer goes off, he/she can get up. If your child leaves prior to that time, return your child to the chair.
- Step 3: When time is over, allow child to return to activity. Provide child with positive, calmly stated, and brief reminder to use appropriate skills. Praise an appropriate behavior as soon as possible.

Show **Slide 5: Time-out**

When behaviors happen, we may need a time-out. This is a strategy that most families have heard of, but let's talk about time-out. A time-out may be necessary for some behaviors and for some children. Time-out is effective when the behaviors are done to get the parents' attention. Time-out may also be used when a child is so angry or destructive that he/she must be removed from a situation to calm him-/herself. When children engage in these types of behaviors, parents are usually very angry and also need a chance to cool down before they address the behavior with the child.

If you use time-out with your child, it should be implemented in the following way:

Step 1: When the challenging behavior occurs, provide a very brief explanation (such as, "You cannot hit me to get my attention, so you need to sit in time-out until you're calm.") and immediately guide the child to sit in a chair. Do not interact with the child, either positively or negatively, while the child is in time-out.

Step 2: Time-out is brief, usually 3-4 minutes. Set a timer for your child or let him/her know you will watch the clock or your watch. Only end time-out if your child is calm. If he or she continues to be upset, state calmly that "when you are calm, you can leave the chair."

If your child gets up from the chair before the time-out is over, calmly guide the child back and tell him or her, "You must sit in time-out until you are calm and the time is up." It is very, very important that you do this calmly and with a minimum of talking to your child. Time-out works because the child can't get your attention by using the problem behavior. If you talk to your child (either explaining calmly or being angry), your child gets your attention.

Step 3: Once the time-out is over, the child can return to an acceptable activity. You can calmly remind the child to behave appropriately by saying, "I'm glad you are calm, you can go play; remember to ... (e.g., use your words, solve problems with words, share your toys, etc.).". This statement should be brief (not a time for a lecture) and positive. As soon as possible, praise your child for appropriate behavior in that activity.

6

Common Mistakes: Time-Out

- Angrily threatening time-out
 - Gives child the attention he/she is wanting
- Allowing other children to tease the child who is in time-out
 - Gives the child attention
- Applying time-out long after the behavior has occurred
 - Time-out is only effective when immediately applied.
- Scolding your child when putting him/her in or out of time-out
 - Time-out only works when it is time away from adult attention.

Show **Slide 6: Common Mistakes: Time-out**

Be careful about using this technique correctly. You should never:

- Angrily threaten your child with “time-out” if he/she does not behave. You must calmly state to the child the behavior you expect, and then state (calmly), “If you cannot ____, you will go to time-out.”
- Allow your other children to tease the child in time-out.
- Apply time-out after the episode has occurred as a delayed punishment (for example, giving a time-out after arriving home from the store where your child has misbehaved will not be effective).
- Use it as your only approach. We have reviewed many approaches; they should be used to teach your child new skills.
- Scold or berate your child when putting him/her in time-out. You must be calm.

While time-out can give you and your child time to calm down, it does not teach your child a new skill. Remember that you must teach your child new ways to behave, express emotions, and solve problems.

Ask for a volunteer to do the role play on time-out. You take the role of the parent,



Role Play

Role Play

Scene:

Child is hitting his younger brother.

Mom: You hit your brother; you need to use your words to solve problems. You will have to go to time-out until you are calm.

Child: No, I don't want to go.

Mom: You can go by yourself, or I can help you.

Child: Okay, okay. (Walks over to chair and sits down. After a few seconds, he gets up from the chair and walks off.)

Mom: If you do not stay in the chair, you will do a time-out in the bedroom hall.

Child returns to the chair.

7

Make Your “Expectations” Clear

- Tell your child what to do instead of what not to do.
- Clearly and simply state what you expect your child to do.
- Have age-appropriate expectations.
- Use age-appropriate language. Young children have difficulty with contractions (two words that are combined to form one, such as “don’t” and “can’t”).

After four minutes have passed, and the child is calm, Mom walks over and says: All done with time out. You may go play. Remember to use your words to solve problems.

Show **Slide 7: Make Your “Expectations” Clear**. Now I want to give you an additional powerful parenting tool to think about. That tool is to make sure your child knows what you expect. Often we give children information about what we do not want them to do without ever really teaching them what our expectations are! What do we want them to do? You may have even given up on asking your child to do things because you are so frustrated by his/her behavior. So, stop and carefully consider if your child knows what you want them to do!

Some behavior occurs because your child doesn’t know how to act differently and some because your child won’t. Either way, it helps to know that your child is not being expected to read your mind.

Give one clear instruction at a time.

When confronted with challenging behavior, we tend to conclude that the individual either can’t or won’t do otherwise.” Can’t suggests that the child lacks a necessary skill or ability. Won’t suggests that the child has the necessary equipment but appears to be deliberately refusing to engage in a more desirable behavior. And remember we tend to react differently depending on which way we’re leaning. Or sometimes we just freeze because we’re so uncertain about why the child is doing what he/she’s doing that we don’t know what to do next.

In the middle of a challenging situation, it can be very hard to determine whether the child’s behavior is the result of a “can’t” or a “won’t” situation. Here’s a good rule of thumb: When in doubt, assume “can’t”—at least until you are able to get more information about the child in same or similar situations across time.

A very important approach to getting a better understanding of “can’t” or “won’t” is to be very clear about what you’re expecting in the way of desired behavior. And an excellent technique in that regard is to give just one instruction at a time.

Can your four-year-old make his/her own bed? Will your four-year-old make his/her own bed? Maybe. Especially if you walk

8

What's a Better Way to Say?
Workbook Activity #10

- Stop yelling!
- Don't throw your toys!
- Stop bothering your sister!
- Don't spill your milk.
- Stop whining.
- Be good.
- Be nice.
- Cut it out.



(Activity #10)

through the process with him/her. Ask him/her to begin by taking the pillows off the bed. Then pull up the sheet first on one side and then the other. Bed too close to the wall? Practice kneeling in the middle of the bed to pull the covers in place. Take it step by step until the bed is reasonably well-made.

Show **Slide 8: What's a Better Way to Say?**

Activity: If needed, have parents practice stating clear and positive directions. On chart paper, list some commands (examples below), and ask parents to brainstorm more appropriate and effective directions. Have parents think of directions that they often give to their child to add to the list. (If you feel that the participants have a good understanding of this from Session 3, quickly go over a few and skip down to the next point.)

- Stop yelling.
- Don't throw your toys.
- Stop bothering your sister.
- Don't spill your milk.
- Stop whining!

Also talk about the fact that some directions we give our children are just too vague, and a child may not be sure what we want him/her to do! Use the following examples, and ask parents to come up with clear and positive directions.

- Be nice.
- Be careful.
- Watch out.
- Be good.
- Enough of that.
- Cut it out.

Remind parents that in the third session we talked about stating clear expectations and that they did the **Positive Words—Activity #10** to practice giving clear directions. Re-explain that directions are more effective when they are stated in terms of what you would like the child to do instead of what you would like the child to stop doing.

Open your workbooks to the Positive Words Activity. Get with a partner. Take a look at the “Don’t” column. At times, we may use phrases like this when talking to our children. However, young children often cannot figure out what our

expectation is when we say “no, don’t, or stop.” So, we need to tell children what to do instead of what not to do.

Let’s look at the first example together. Instead of saying “Don’t run,” what could we say instead? (Allow for responses. Possible correct responses might include walk, or use walking feet inside.)

Get with a partner and try to come up with alternative phrases to use so that your child would know exactly what to do. Write your responses in the “Do” column. (Allow for time to write responses.)

Now that you have completed the worksheet, let’s go down the “Don’t” list and you can share how you rephrased the statements. How did it feel doing this activity? Was it hard to rephrase the statements? Do you think you could try this with your children? Do you think part of the reason your child uses challenging behavior might be because he/she doesn’t understand what you expect him/her to do?

To help your children know what your expectations are, let’s develop a few simple household rules. We all probably have household rules that we want our children to follow—but have we written them down and taught them to our children? We are going to talk about ways to create your household rules with your child, teach them to your child, and then use encouragement and positive comments to help him/her learn and practice them.

Show **Slide 9 – “Rules” for Rules**. Let’s begin by talking about how to write your rules. For young children, it is best to:

- Pick only 3 to 5 rules
- State the behavior you want to see. Be descriptive. What does the behavior look like?
- Pick rules that can be applied in a lot of situations.

Show **Slide 10: Rule Examples**
Here are some examples of rules.

1. Clean up after yourself.
2. Use an inside voice.
3. Ask before you use something that is not yours.
4. Use words to solve problems.

9

“Rules” for Rules

- Pick only 3 to 5.
- State the behavior you want to see. Be descriptive. What does the behavior look like?
- Pick rules that can be applied in a lot of situations.



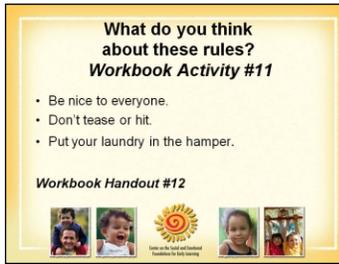
10

Rule Examples

- Clean up after yourself.
- Use an inside voice.
- Ask before you use something that is not yours.
- Use words to solve problems.



11



Show **Slide 11: What do you think about these rules?** Let me show you some examples of rules, and you tell me if they meet our “rules” for rules.

1. Be nice to everyone.

Is this a good rule? What is it lacking or how could it be improved? Would your child know what this means? Would he/she know what you expect of him/her? Does it state the behavior you want to see? (Allow time for responses and discussion.)

2. Don't tease or hit.

Is this a good rule? What is it lacking or how could it be improved? Would your child know what this means? Would he/she know what you expect of him/her? Does it state the behavior you want to see? What does it mean to tease? (Allow time for responses and discussion.)

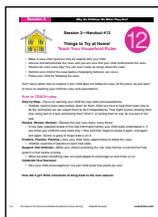
3. Put your laundry in the hamper.

Is this a good rule? Would your child know what this means? Would he/she know what you expect of him/her? Does it state the behavior you want to see? (Allow time for responses and discussion.)

Now that you know how to develop rules, as part of your *Things to Try at Home* activities you can try to develop your own household rules by using the form in your workbook. Let's look at **Activity #11 – Household Rules**. During the next week, you can write your household rules on the form. After you write them on the form, you can put them on the refrigerator where everyone can see them! Ask if parents have any questions about the *Things to Try at Home* activity.



(Activity #11)



(Handout #12)

Now ask parents to look at **Handout #12** in their workbooks. This is a handout to help them teach their child the household rules. Teaching your child the rules is a really important way to help him/her be successful at meeting those expectations! Remember, we want to make sure they understand what we expect them to do. Briefly review the form.

Think about how you will talk to your child and explain the rules. Often parents only teach the rule when the child has violated it. For example, after Joey has hit and punched his sister to get a toy, his mother says, “Joey, you need to go to your room and no snack for you today. You know the rule. You need to ask first.”

Think about how Joey is feeling at that moment. Is he relaxed? Is he listening carefully? Is he excited about learning new ways to behave? Is he happy to have his mother's attention? Is this a "teachable moment"? What if that was the first time anyone told Joey the rule? Do you think he is going to learn it when he is upset? Do you think he even understands the rule?

Think about the last time you were very upset. Perhaps your spouse or partner was 1 hour late meeting you for dinner. You were very angry and proceeded to tell him/her how much it hurt your feelings, and ask why he/she didn't use the phone to call you. Let's say your partner responded with "If you talk to me calmly and nicely, I'll listen to you." How would you react? Don't you think you would just be more enraged? Would that be a teachable moment? Probably not!

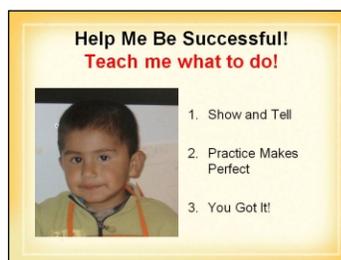
Teachable moments occur when everyone is calm and listening. To talk to your children about the rules, you might turn off the TV, and ask them to join you on the sofa. Show your child the rules sheet; read the rules to him/her. After reading a rule, ask your child what that rule means, or show him/her what it might look like. Give an example of a situation and say, "Is that following the rule?" Show your child where you will post the rules. Use encouragement and positive comments when your child successfully follows the rules ("Catch them being good!").

Do you think your child will follow the household rules? One way to get children more involved is to let them help you develop the rules. They can be a part of the process. Then you can practice, practice, practice! If you show your child the rules chart only one time and then forget to review it again, and again, and again—he/she is likely to forget what is on it.

Show **Slide 12** to reinforce the idea that if you want your child to do something, you need to teach him/her how to do it!

1. Show and Tell
2. Practice Makes Perfect
3. You Got It! (Notice when your child does the skill and celebrate!)

12



13

Using Pictures to Teach Rules

- Get out your camera
- Snap a photograph of what you want your child "to do"
- Post it, model it, practice it, and notice when it's done and praise it!
- If your rule is "clean up"...show him/her



Slide 13: One fun way to teach rules is to use photographs. You can take a picture of what you would expect your child to do and then model and teach your child how to do the expected rule. For example, one rule might be to clean up after yourself. This might mean that your child needs to clean his/her hands after going potty, after playing with finger paint, or after outside play with the dog. "Clean up" can also mean that your child needs to clean up his/her toys. You will need to model how to clean hands (washing at the sink) and how to clean up toys (putting toys in a cabinet or bin). Using a photo while teaching your child will help him/her recall the expectation. It is also a useful tool to use when you tell your child to remember the rule, because the photograph will help him/her recall and do the expectation with more success.

14

Things to Try at Home Making the Connection!

Positive Parenting Tips

- Try to fill/refill your child's relationship tank (Workbook Activity #2)
- Try to use **positive comments and encouragement** with your child (Workbook Activity #3)
- Have fun together!



Show **Slide 14: Things to Try at Home!** This is all we are going to discuss today! You have two very important activities for your *Things to Try at Home*:

1. Use the *Why Children Do What They Do* form to practice observing your child and try to determine what your child is communicating through behavior.
2. Make a rules chart (pictures may be helpful), and review your new rules with your child. Review the rules every day. Remind your child of the rules before challenging behavior can occur.

Are there any questions? Thanks for coming! See you next week! Have fun being a detective this week!



The Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning



Administration for Children & Families



Child Care Bureau



Office of Head Start

This material was developed by the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning with federal funds from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families (Cooperative Agreement N. PHS 90YD0215). The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government. You may reproduce this material for training and information purposes.

Role Play Cards



Directions:

Print the role play cards before the session begins. Make 2 copies of each role play.

Give the role play cards to the volunteer “actors.”

Give role play volunteers a few minutes to read over the cards and familiarize themselves with their role.

Have volunteers “act out” their roles to the group.

Discuss what happened!

**Example 1****Role Play**

Scene: *Child is hitting his younger brother.*

Mom: You hit your brother; you need to use your words to solve problems. You will have to go to time out until you are calm.

Child: No, I don't want to go.

Mom: You can go by yourself, or I can help you.

Child: Okay, okay (walks over to chair and sits down).
After a few seconds, he gets up from the chair and walks off.

Mom: If you do not stay in the chair, you will do a time-out in the bedroom hall.

Child returns to the chair.

After four minutes have passed, and the child is calm, Mom walks over and says:
All done with time-out. You may go play. Remember to use your words to solve problems.

Agree

**Strongly
Agree**

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Session 3—Activity #8
**Parent Encouragement and
Positive Comments!**



Write an encouraging note or positive comment to yourself about something you did with your child this past week that you feel really proud about!

Session 3 – Activity #9
Things to Try at Home!
Determining the Meaning
of Behavior



Describe the Challenging Behavior	Number of times behavior occurred	How long the behavior lasted

What Happened Before?

- I told or asked my child to do something
- Changed or ended my child’s activity
- I removed an object from my child
- An object was out of reach
- My child was doing an activity he/she didn’t like
- My child requested something
- My child was playing alone
- My child moved from one activity to another
- I told my child “No,” “Don’t,” “Stop”
- I was giving attention to others
- The task/activity was difficult for my child
- Other (specify) _____

What Happened After? How did it end?

- I gave my child attention
- I gave my child an object/activity/food
- I removed my child from activity/area
- I ignored my child
- I used “time-out”
- I punished or scolded my child
- I withdrew my request or demand
- I hugged my child
- I helped my child
- Other (specify) _____

Why do you think your child was using this behavior?

What do you think he/she was trying to tell you?

Session 3 – Activity #9
Things to Try at Home!
Determining the Meaning
of Behavior



Describe the Challenging Behavior	Number of times behavior occurred	How long the behavior lasted

What Happened Before?

- I told or asked my child to do something
- Changed or ended my child’s activity
- I removed an object from my child
- An object was out of reach
- My child was doing an activity he/she didn’t like
- My child requested something
- My child was playing alone
- My child moved from one activity to another
- I told my child “No,” “Don’t,” “Stop”
- I was giving attention to others
- The task/activity was difficult for my child
- Other (specify) _____

What Happened After? How did it end?

- I gave my child attention
- I gave my child an object/activity/food
- I removed my child from activity/area
- I ignored my child
- I used “time-out”
- I punished or scolded my child
- I withdrew my request or demand
- I hugged my child
- I helped my child
- Other (specify) _____

Why do you think your child was using this behavior?

What do you think he/she was trying to tell you?

Session 3 – Activity #9
Things to Try at Home!
Determining the Meaning
of Behavior



Describe the Challenging Behavior	Number of times behavior occurred	How long the behavior lasted

What Happened Before?

- I told or asked my child to do something
- Changed or ended my child's activity
- I removed an object from my child
- An object was out of reach
- My child was doing an activity he/she didn't like
- My child requested something
- My child was playing alone
- My child moved from one activity to another
- I told my child "No," "Don't," "Stop"
- I was giving attention to others
- The task/activity was difficult for my child
- Other (specify) _____

What Happened After? How did it end?

- I gave my child attention
- I gave my child an object/activity/food
- I removed my child from activity/area
- I ignored my child
- I used "time-out"
- I punished or scolded my child
- I withdrew my request or demand
- I hugged my child
- I helped my child
- Other (specify) _____

Why do you think your child was using this behavior?

What do you think he/she was trying to tell you?

Session 3 – Activity #9
Things to Try at Home!
Determining the Meaning
of Behavior



Describe the Challenging Behavior	Number of times behavior occurred	How long the behavior lasted

What Happened Before?

- I told or asked my child to do something
- Changed or ended my child’s activity
- I removed an object from my child
- An object was out of reach
- My child was doing an activity he/she didn’t like
- My child requested something
- My child was playing alone
- My child moved from one activity to another
- I told my child “No,” “Don’t,” “Stop”
- I was giving attention to others
- The task/activity was difficult for my child
- Other (specify) _____

What Happened After? How did it end?

- I gave my child attention
- I gave my child an object/activity/food
- I removed my child from activity/area
- I ignored my child
- I used “time-out”
- I punished or scolded my child
- I withdrew my request or demand
- I hugged my child
- I helped my child
- Other (specify) _____

Why do you think your child was using this behavior?

What do you think he/she was trying to tell you?

Session 3—Activity #10

**Positive Words Activity
Let's Practice**



Tell your child **what to do** instead of **what not to do**.

Clearly and simply state what you expect your child to do.

Have age-appropriate expectations.

Use language that your child can understand. Young children often have difficulty with contractions (two words that are combined to form one, such as “don’t” and “can’t”).

Don't...	Do...
Don't run!	
Stop climbing!	
Don't touch!	
No yelling!	
Stop whining!	
Don't hit!	
No coloring on the wall!	
Don't throw your truck!	

Session 3—Activity #11 Household Rules



Write out 3-5 household rules. Remember the “rules” for rules:

- Set no more than 5 rules.
- State rules as “do’s” (not “don’ts”)—tell your children what you want them “to do.”
- Pick rules that apply to many situations.





Session 3—Handout #12

Things to Try at Home!

Teach Your Household Rules



- Make a rules chart (pictures may be helpful) with your child.
- Discuss and demonstrate the rules until you are sure that your child understands the rules.
- Review the rules every day! You can even make up songs about the rules!
- Remind your child of the rules before challenging behavior can occur.
- Praise your child for following the rules.

Don't worry about how to respond if your child does not follow the rules. At this point, we just want to focus on teaching your child the rules and expectations!

How to TEACH rules:

Step by Step—Focus on teaching your child the new skills and expectations.

- Children need to have tasks broken down for them. Often we have to help them learn how to do the skill before we can expect them to do it independently. That might involve showing them how, doing part of a task and having them finish it, or asking them to only do one part of the task.

Review, Review, Review!—Review the new rules many, many times!

- It may take repeated review of the new information before your child really understands it. If you show your child the rules chart only 1 time and then forget to review it again, and again, and again, he/she is going to forget what is on it.

Practice, Practice, Practice—Give your child many opportunities to follow the rules.

- Children need lots of practice to learn new skills.

Support, Not Criticism—While your child is practicing the rule, help him/her or tell him/her how great it is that he/she is trying.

- When we learn something new, we need people to encourage us and cheer us on.

Celebrate Your Success!

- Give your child encouragement. Let your child know how proud you are!

How did it go? Write comments to bring back to the next session: