

Four Functions of Behavior



The Why?

A child exhibits a behavior to meet a need for one (or sometimes multiple!) of the following reasons: sensory, escape, attention, and access to a tangible. When we can identify **WHY** the behavior may be occurring, we can identify an appropriate response and replacement behavior.

Sensory

- A child engages in this behavior because **it feels good or relieves discomfort**
- Often occurs when anxious or excited and can present as tapping, repeatedly touching objects, etc.
- Redirect to more functional behavior.
- Provide access to other sources of stimulation

Escape

- Behaviors that are performed to **escape or avoid a situation or activity that is perceived as unpleasant or uncomfortable**
- When a task is too under stimulating or difficult.
- Use "First/Then" language
- Offer choices and give a clear explanation

Attention

- Actions and behaviors that result in **social interaction or attention from others, positive or negative.**
- Increase praise for appropriate behavior and teach appropriate ways to get attention
- Ignore the behavior but not the child

Tangible

- Behaviors that are performed to **gain access to tangible items or preferred activities**
- Tangibles and escape often occur together
- Provide a transition activity / object
- Deny access but consider an opportunity to earn

