


Special Needs Inclusion Project (SNIP)

TIPSHEET #8: Rethinking Behavior

An Inclusion Resource Sponsored by: 

Behavior is simply an observable action and is not inherently good or bad. All behavior has meaning, and is a form of communication.



Problem or Solution?

Challenging behavior or “acting out” may be a problem for staff when it has a negative impact, but it may also be a solution for a child who is trying to get their needs met. It is up to the adults to reframe their view of behavior in order to teach children more positive and appropriate ways of communicating their needs.

Reframing “Misbehavior”

Reframing means changing the way we think about something by considering a situation from a different, broader point of view. In out-of-school time, we can reframe the way we see a “problem” with a child by understanding the child’s point of view and using that understanding to teach them alternative behaviors.

Ask Yourself

1) What underlying strengths are shown in this behavior?

This question can be tough at first, but inspiring once you get the hang of it. For example, a child who is “bossy – demands that others do what s/he wants” – might also be seen as a child with well-developed opinions who wants to be a leader.

SNIP is a program of:

Special Needs Inclusion Project (SNIP)

2) What is the child communicating?

Begin by identifying a challenging behavior –define it clearly, objectively, and without judgment (e.g., “Student talks with neighbors during homework time” instead of “student is lazy and doesn’t do homework.”)

Then observe before, during, and after a challenging behavior AND appropriate behaviors. You are looking for patterns, like increases in challenging behaviors during transitions.

Finally ask yourself, and the student

- What is the student trying to communicate, get, or avoid?
- Does the student have the skills or knowledge needed to participate appropriately?
- What is happening in the environment when the student *is* engaged and *is not* engaged appropriately?
- How does the student know what behavior is expected of them?

Now what?

Once a behavior has been reframed in a more positive light, it is easier to see how to help children be more successful. In the case of the child who is “bossy,” we might proactively prevent challenging behavior by helping her find appropriate opportunities for leadership through class jobs. We may have noticed that she needs to be taught new language for asking others to play with her rather than demanding. The same strategies might apply to a child who hits to get their way, coupled with consistent, logical consequences when behavior does escalate to hitting.

<< Quick Tip >>

Remember to listen! When we truly listen, we are more likely to actually understand an individual’s experience, and in turn understand how we can better include them in our programs. Often, children can tell us what accommodations or supports they need to be successfully included, but sometimes adults forget to listen.

Find additional Tip Sheets and more information about the Special Needs Inclusion Project (SNIP) at:

www.SNIPSF.org
SNIP is a program of:



Special Needs Inclusion Project (SNIP)

SNIP is a program of:

