

Managing Challenging Behaviors in Child Care



What is challenging behavior?

Any behavior that interferes with a child's ability to learn and/or develop and maintain relationships with others.

How will I know if my child has challenging behaviors?

You might observe challenging behaviors at home, in public places or your child care provider may report challenging behaviors in the child care setting.

How can a family work together with a provider to support their child with challenging behavior?

Be open and willing to work together with your child care provider. You both want what's best for your child to develop socially and emotionally and watch him or her grow into a competent, caring young person.

Establish a few clear rules and enforce them in both environments. Understand that supporting positive behavior is a process that will take some time.

How do I start?

1. Commit to building a positive, collaborative relationship with your child care provider. Recognize her or his professionalism and commitment to the well-being of children.
2. Develop a trusting, respectful relationship with your provider. Be sure you follow through with commitments whether it's picking up your child on time or keeping appointments for parent conferences.
3. Be open to requests for conferences and set up a communication system that works for both of you. It might be phone calls, e-mails, or a journal that goes to and from home with your child. If you're communicating face to face, be sure you won't be overheard by anyone, child or adult. Whatever method of communication you decide upon is fine if both parties agree.

Next steps ...

1. Commit to being a good observer. Learn how to objectively (without emotion) look at the environment at home and at child care, your child's schedule and routines, likes and dislikes. When and where do challenging behaviors occur? How often and with whom? How consistent are you and your provider with the rules and consequences? Concrete observations will go a long way to understanding the reason for your child's challenging behavior.

2. Share observations with your provider. Develop strategies together to support the strategies and recommendations your provider offers for ignoring negative behaviors and supporting and reinforcing positive behaviors. Work together to develop an action plan to follow at home and at child care.
3. Be consistent in following the plan, and be willing to stick with the plan for as long as it takes.

The rewards will be worth it!

You and your child care provider may have different expectations about behavior but remember you both want what's best for your child and your family. The relationship you have with one another is critical to your success in supporting positive behaviors in your child and helping him or her grow emotionally and socially. That success depends on open and consistent communication.

Remember ...

If you regularly share strategies and successes with one another and work together to be consistent and supportive, you will build strong respectful relationships that will support your child and contribute to healthy social-emotional environments at home and in the child care program.

For more information

Call YMCA Childcare Resource Service HealthLine at 1.800.908.8883 to speak to a Behavioral Health Specialist.

For child care referrals and resources call the YMCA Childcare Resource Service to speak to an Inclusive Child Care Specialist at 1.800.481.2151.

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