



Meeting needs helps to manage child's behavior

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Parents often report difficulties managing their children's behaviors. Many children's behaviors become even more problematic due to such disorders as Oppositional Defiant Disorder, Conduct Disorder, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Anxiety Disorders, Depressive Disorders and numerous others disorders.

Often parents do not feel that they have the strength, knowledge and support to know how to effectively manage the symptoms of these disorders.

According to Barbara Tylenda, Ph.D., every child has five fundamental needs: structure, consistency, predictability, non-punitive limit setting and nurturance.

Structure involves providing your child with a routine. Children benefit from knowing what is supposed to be happening next and this can help to reduce anxieties about the future. Many children's behaviors become more problematic when they are unsure of the future. Structure can also benefit children academically and teach good organizational skills.

Consistency can be related to structure, in that you provide your child with a similar routine every day. Consistency is also related to people involved in a child's life. Acting out behaviors may occur in response to inconsistent living situations and people coming in and out of their lives frequently. Parents also need to be able to work together to find a consistent pattern of discipline that is effective for both parents. Following through with discipline is important in order to develop a consistent pattern of discipline.

Predictability includes allowing your child to know information in advance before something happens. Structure and consistency allow for predictability. This can reduce a child's anxiety about their daily needs being met. They will know ahead of time what is supposed to be happening next or, for example, when they are going to be fed. Predictability also teaches a child what to expect regarding discipline and they in turn will learn to make better decisions regarding their behavior.

Children want to know what their limits are. Parents need to provide clear, logical and consistent consequences for problem behaviors. Do not threaten your child with consequences if you do not plan to follow through with them. Consequences also need to be consistent over time so that your child will know that their problematic behaviors will always yield the same results. There should be more of a focus on positive behavior rather than negative behaviors. Instead of telling your child what not to do, tell them what you want them to be doing instead.

Nurturance is the most fundamental need of a child. This includes providing your child with their basic needs for survival such as: food, clothing, shelter, proper hygiene, medical care, education, physical attention and comfort, and positive praise and support. Without nurturance children can become physically ill or, in extreme cases, die.

Additional behavioral techniques to help manage problematic behaviors include the use of time out, behavior charts and calming areas. Time out

needs to be consistent and follow through is a necessity for this to be effective. Children may respond well to behavior charts because the focus is more on positive behaviors and children are rewarded for this. Behavior charts need to be specific and identify what the correct behavior is. Calm down areas are also more focused on positives because this allows the child to go to an area to calm down before they lose control of their temper. Parents can prompt children to use the calm down area or children may choose to do this on their own. A calm down area may include such things as: books, clay or play-doh, calming music, a comfy place to sit and drawing materials. This area is not viewed as a consequence, such as time out. It is a preventative technique for you and your child to use before behaviors become a significant problem.

Children may not appear to want rules and limits. Although, when they are not provided, children's behaviors often become more problematic due to seeking out redirection and discipline. By setting rules and limits, a child learns that someone cares about them and will protect them.

Providing your child with the five fundamental needs identified above along with effective behavioral management techniques will help your child to develop a sense of trust, comfort and respect for themselves and others.

This column was written by Lisa Lehman, LCSW, Outpatient Therapist for Southwestern Behavioral Healthcare, Inc. Contact the organization at 812.436.4221 or comments@southwestern.org.