Behavior Management Basics Sheet—some guideline for managing behavior in young children (1 to 7 years)

Instructing the child: When we want them to do what we say
Make eye contact
Come down to the level of the child
Give one step instructions
If there are more parts to an instruction, reinforce every correct step
Give the instruction once, use Makaton to clearly and visually communicate
Give the child enough time to respond
If they are not complying, STOP WHAT YOU ARE DOING
Make them do what you asked them to do
Place negative behavior on extinction:
   While you are correcting them remain neutral, limit direct and intense eye contact
   Make no additional verbal comments and let them first finish the task
Once the task is done, act as if nothing has happened, “this is the “ignore” part of the process
   Make friendly eye contact and redirect the child to something positive
Immediately reinforce positive behavior when the child is back on track by using praise or a small reward

When we want the child to say something: copy what we say to improve his language
We use the word “say” when we prompt correct language.
Pair with Makaton to visually prompt
And/or PECS or other visual aids to support non-verbal children
There must be a 2 second break between the word “say” and what we want the child to say.
We only use this when the child wants something and is therefore motivated.
Prompt “say….I want to paint” we want the child to copy the words, sign or point/give a picture
When prompting, use the full sentence you require from the child. (According to their ability)
Only accept the child’s best response
Reinforce enthusiastically with social praise once you have the child’s best response
Giving the requested object AFTER the communication, is very rewarding to the child
DO NOT repeat the prompt “say…car, say…red” once the child has the requested object
They already have what they want and will not be motivated to reply
The child is likely to ignore you… and will often look away and break eye contact
Place highly reinforcing objects in sight but out of reach to motivate the child to ask for it.
Ignore as much as possible - IF YOU SEE SOMETHING YOU LIKE – SAY SOMETHING...YOU WILL SEE IT AGAIN. IF YOU SEE SOMETHING YOU DO NOT LIKE, AND SAY SOMETHING, YOU WILL ALSO SEE THAT AGAIN. ANY attention to negative behavior makes it stronger. We will deal with the behavior by making the children do what they are suppose to do. We do not have any exchange with them on an energy level during this time by remaining neutral, limiting intense eye contact and making no further unnecessary verbal comments.

**How to deal with inappropriate behavior:** We will deal with the inappropriate behaviors by using the behavior technique called **extinction**. When you first place inappropriate behavior on extinction you may have an extinction burst. Things will get worse before it gets better. The child tries harder to get their own way by using their old behavior patterns. The more consistent you are in applying the technique the better it works. Both parents need to be on board and present themselves as a united front when dealing with inappropriate behaviors in the home.

**Consistency** with placing the behavior on extinction is important. Any attention to negative behavior makes it stronger. There is usually a lot of talking to children with behavior symptoms when they are acting inappropriately. All the comments on the inappropriate behaviors like, “don’t kick, don’t scream, don’t cry, don’t hit, don’t … or why did you spit, cry, run away not listen…..no, stop, why? Etc.” .... All of this commenting on the inappropriate behavior is highly reinforcing to the child and you are in fact strengthening this pattern of behavior. The child gets energy from you in the form of attention. We comment on what we want to see more of (from the child) and we fade the inappropriate behavior out by not giving it any attention or energy, especially through intense emotions, reactions, eye contact and repeating the instruction or their name. All you are teaching them is NOT to listen to you the first time.

**Commenting VS Questions**
Comment in simple language instead of asking questions when children are non-verbal or while their language skills are still emerging.
Don’t say: What are you doing? What Color is the car? What is your name? Etc.
Children without language or weak skills will simply ignore you
Rather make simple comments as another child might do: Red car. Wroom Wroom! I like cars. They are likely to copy this form of commenting.
Children with delayed language skills cannot distinguish “wh” questions. They do not know if you said why, where, when or who. **Use your Makaton to help them distinguish**
Setting the situation up to get the behavior that you want:

When the child is moaning and not using their language or appropriate behavior...
Prompt: What do you want? (Pair with Makaton)
Once the child indicates by using words, pictures or signing (even copying you, or with support)
Prompt: Ok, you can have it.
First (Now) do or say....
Then (Next) I will give you the ..... 
This is a simple way of bringing the child back to using their language or communicating their needs and not rely on inappropriate behavior to get their needs met

Makaton!!!!

Signing helps children understand what we expect from them and help them communicate their needs – they need visual cues. Even if you do not know Makaton, use gestures for “sit, come, drink, say” that will help the child understand and process the instruction better.

Understanding how the brain works:
Driven to Distraction
by Edward M. Hallowell, MD and John J. Ratey, MD (page 71 to 72, 274-276)

Between 1970 and 1973 Dr. Zametkin proved in a series of studies that most non-neuro-typical children have an under-stimulated brain state in common. This is often their natural state of mind and was not determined by a specific diagnosis or label, but span across different diagnoses.

He tracked how the brains of different children utilized the energy source available to it, a form of glucose. He discovered that the brains of children with ASD, AD/HD and other developmental disorders used LESS of the energy source available to it. This was an interesting discovering as this also explained why stimulant medications seemed to “calm” the already hyper active minds of young children. The stimulant medication was of course “correcting” the under-stimulated mind state and the child would be able to pay attention more consistently as well as have better impulse control.
The under-stimulated mind state shows directly in daydreaming, zoning out and zombie like or strange staring as if into space. I call this the “TV face”. Some children can actually pay attention even when their eyes seem to be focusing on nothing. But a lot of children are not present to the NOW, while in an under-stimulated mind state, similar to daydreaming. A lot of children can remain in this first phase. (As girls often do). They might sit quietly and do not get into any trouble. None the less they might be underachieving and might not be reaching their full potential.

After a while some children however start to be very uncomfortable in their own skins and move into a second phase. They automatically start to do things to stimulate themselves in an unconscious effort to correct the under-stimulated brain state. Some will become restless, fidget, talk to other children, call out inappropriate things, get out of their seats and even run around. Some of these behaviors will seem very strange and inappropriate, but they are actually an attempt from the child to correct the under stimulated brain state.

Once you understand this you will be able to recognize that the child is becoming under stimulated and you can take control of the situation. Get them to do something more positive and constructive, like help you in the class, clean the board, go for a drink of water, or pick up some papers. A SENSORY BOX filled with stimulating objects and activities unique to the interests of the child or mild exercises (Braingym, Physio and Occupational Therapy Activities) can provide the additional stimulation that the child’s body requires for their mind to stay focus and under their control. It is good to have a back-up plan like sending them with a note to the counselor where they can have a little chat or a short walk to get them stimulated again. You have to be pro-active and take control of the situation before the child becomes so under-stimulated that they unconsciously start with the inappropriate SSB’s. (Self stimulatory behaviors. These include stimming or any behavior to get moving.)

Other reasons for inappropriate behavior, other than the need for self stimulation, might be attention seeking or avoidance strategies. If the child needs attention you might need to schedule one-to-one time to pair up and work on your connection. Although these children sometimes seem uninterested in engaging with adults appropriately they are actually highly dependent on a good relationship connection. They need to feel that you really care about them.
The real problem with behavior Symptoms:
The real problems are inconsistent attention and weak impulse control. This leads to behavior as a symptom. The behavior is not the primary problem; it is the result of an inability to pay focused attention when something is not interesting to the child and their weak impulse control over their thoughts and feelings. (Impulses) (more will be discussed in blogs that will follow)

EXTINCTION – Fading inappropriate behavior out (brief notes - further discussion and modeling required as each situation and child is unique)

Remain neutral, without an emotional response
Don’t say, “no, stop, don’t do that, what are you doing?, why are you laughing?”
Tell the child what you want them to do, instead of what you do not want... only once
Say NOTHING about the negative behavior
Make him do what you want him to do, or make him stop what you don’t want him to do.
Most children already know what they are supposed to do and already understand what is required of them after one verbal instruction.
Limit eye contact, Turn your face to the side
When the behavior stops you wait another 3 seconds.
Turn back as if nothing happened
Redirect and Reinforce only the positive behavior.

If the child retaliates or wants to hurt you or another child, use “body brushing”, (it is a very simple technique but you will need further guidance to use this technique correctly) and again limit eye contact, no further additional unnecessary comments and remain neutral. Prevent the child from harming themselves or anyone else. Keep them gently at arm’s length. If the child is pushing another child, you can use “body brushing”, which will prevent them from continuing the inappropriate touching and will naturally separate him from the other child.

Tantrums - When there is a tantrum you have to wait it out. While remaining neutral you do not look at the child. Turn you face to the side. Do not speak to them. If they try to hit you or pull at you, you can gently hold them at arm’s length. Use “body brushing” if you need to, to calm the child. Wait till the screaming or tantrum stops. Wait another three seconds and then turn back as if nothing happened to redirect or distract. We stay and support the child through the tantrum, but we do not interact verbally or show any emotions as we do not want to reinforce the behavior. Most importantly...DO NOT give IN and GIVE the child what they WANT...this is not what they NEED.
**Time out chair** – use extinction for timeout on a chair. Place the child on the chair and maintain them in the seat for 1 minute for each year. Stand behind the child when he is in the chair and maintain him there by gently pushing down on his shoulders to keep him sitting when he tries to get up. Use a visual reminder for the start and finish of “thinking time”. Remember to remain neutral and do not look at the child, or talk to them at this time. When the time is up you allow them to get up and redirect them to something else. Use this technique when the child understands what they did wrong. You can talk about the behavior later, but not while it is happening. You can send them off with a gentle reminder of the behavior you WANT TO SEE, e.g. “gentle hands with our friends please).

**A few Tips when Teaching:**

Make sure that you **pair up** with the child in the beginning of the morning

**Stimulate** him before circle time with one-to-one time or his favorite activity

When you have a circle time it is best if he sits down last

Teaching time on the carpet - call on him early to get him involved

**Errorless** learning, Easy questions at first will encourage him to participate more

When you know that he cannot sit any longer it is best for you to take control of the behavior before it goes wrong and redirect him to do an activity that he enjoys by himself while you finish with the group or send him for a glass of water so that he gets some **physical release**

**VISUAL!** A daily schedule for the class, individual schedule, re-inforcement charts, ABC charts, PECS books, mini key ring Pecs, Makaton, Now and Then...ETC (VISUAL SUPPORT IS KEY)

**Reinforcement:**

Provide social praise all the time. You have to understand that the child is getting energy from you in the form of attention. You withhold this energy by not paying attention to negative behaviors while you are dealing with it (using extinction). You are literally removing a source of energy and stimulation from them as they are stimulating themselves with the inappropriate behaviors as well as by your reaction to the behavior. When you use extinction the technique takes this source of attention away and you have to replace it by paying attention to EVERYTHING that they are doing RIGHT. Praise especially all the small things they are doing right, but you might be taking for granted. Comment and praise them while they are lining up right, sitting nicely in the beginning of circle time, playing nicely in the beginning of soft play. Praise the specific behaviors and use their name, e.g. good standing/sitting/walking/eating etc, Praise and pay attention to positive behavior before it starts to go wrong, continuously. When things are going well it is very important to continue to reinforce the behavior you want to see.
Don’t take a break now! Use visual re-enforcement, activities and praise. You need a good connection with a child for the re-enforcement to work.

**Compliancy training and teaching the child to follow instructions:**

**Use Motor Imitation and Receptive Instructions.**
Use MI and RI as single instructions or chain them.
Use MI and RI to improve the group and individual compliance.
For MI the instruction is: “Do this” you clap your hands and the children follow
For RI: say “clap your hands”
Then you chain: “do this” or RI “clap your hands, touch body parts, wave, blow kisses”, vocal imitation etc
Combining MI with RI and then chaining them are excellent ways of teaching children in a fun way to listen to your instructions. Most of the children can follow one step instructions, but they need to follow chains. When the children follow you in the group, the individual child that actually needs the behavior intervention learn to follow you and the group and your work on the carpet becomes a lot easier. The physical activity also stimulates the children before they have to listen to your lesson, or it helps them release built up energy if they were sitting for a while. You can also use it for short breaks. When children are used to following these non-threatening playful instructions they are far more likely to follow the general classroom rules and instructions.

Children get conditioned up with adult direction in a negative way, because we are constantly instructing them, telling them what to do or not to do and giving consequences. They become de-sensitized and very resistant. The MI and RIs are playful and can break the ice, to facilitate better listening and following of instructions in general.

Please contact me directly for an appointment. These are just a few simple notes for parents and teachers, following a proper consultation.