

A red speech bubble with a white outline and a white drop shadow, pointing downwards. The text "It's For Attention" is written in white, bold, sans-serif font inside the bubble. The background features a pattern of concentric, overlapping circles in light gray, some solid and some dashed, creating a ripple effect.

**It's For
Attention**

What does
attention-
maintained
behavior look
like?

- Whining
- Yelling
- Running away
- Tapping on the table
- Taking peers toys
- Repeating name over and over again
- Looking at you or getting in your face
- Climbs
- Falling down
- Throwing items on the ground
- Refusing to do something they typically do
- Spontaneous hugs
- Refusing to eat

**What have you
tried that works
and what
doesn't work?**

Works	Does not work
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ignoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ignoring (seconded)

Attention maintained behavior

How is it reinforced?

- What usually happens after they do something “for attention?”
- These may all work to reinforce this type of behavior: reprimands, laughing, teasing, praise, swearing, eye contact, slight changes in expression, people running towards them, etc.
- Attention alone is typically not the reinforcer
- What can you provide?

Why is it a problem? How does it negatively affect your family?

- Annoying
- Disruptive
- Destructive
- Dangerous
- Things they “know not to do”

Components to consider when choosing what to do:



Who is a part of your child's daily life?



What stressors are part of your daily life?



Can you follow through with what you decide to do?



Will it help your child build new skills?



How comfortable are you with the procedure?

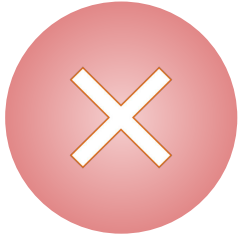


What are your child's current abilities?



Is the behavior predictable? Certain times of day, activities, people, etc.?

Types of Interventions:



Ignoring



**Functional
Communication**



**Reinforcing less
intense behaviors**



**A combination of
these and other
interventions**

Strategy #1: Ignore

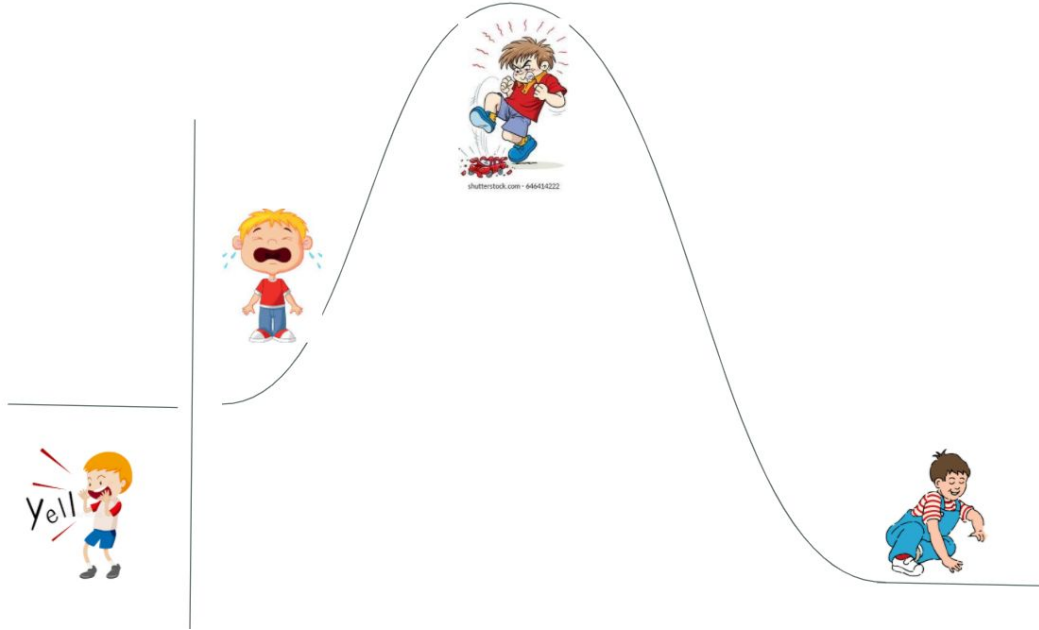
(we do NOT recommend)



Definition: Do not provide any attention to the child for demonstrating the undesired behavior

1. Ignore the behavior, don't ignore the child
2. Parent should find an alternative behavior (deep breath, reading, etc.)
3. If you and everyone can't ignore consistently or if the behavior gets worse, pick a different strategy

What happens when we ignore?



- We are putting the behavior on extinction, removing reinforcers that maintain it.
- We will likely see an extinction burst
- Extinction burst: a temporary increase in responding when the behavior is no longer reinforced.

Considerations before selecting ignoring as a strategy

1. Can everyone in your child's life implement the strategy?
2. Can you keep yourself and your child safe by ignoring?
3. Are you prepared for it to get worse before it gets better? Can you REALLY ignore all the time?
4. Are you teaching an appropriate skill in addition to ignoring?
5. Are you CERTAIN this behavior is purely for attention?

Strategy #2: Functional Communication

Teach appropriate language to get attention and reinforce the communication.



Rationale: Why would this work?



- This way of communicating should:
 - Get the same/better results as engaging in challenging behaviors
 - Be quicker
 - Is easier or require less effort
- “Behavior goes where reinforcement flows” Aubrey Daniels, *Other People’s Habits* (2007)

Who would a functional communication strategy be good for?



A child with an already developed language system- good ability to echo, knows how to use picture cards, sign, or AAC device

Considerations for teaching functional communication:

1. Your child's current language level
2. Will everyone in your child's life honor this communication?
3. Are you available to be a listener?
4. Have a plan to teach waiting/accepting no later on



Strategy #3: Reinforce Lower Levels of the Behavior

If there is a prerequisite to “really challenging” attention-seeking behavior, reinforce the low-level behavior and then help turn that behavior into something more appropriate



Examples

Small hit on shoulder



Tap adult on the shoulder

Quieter scream



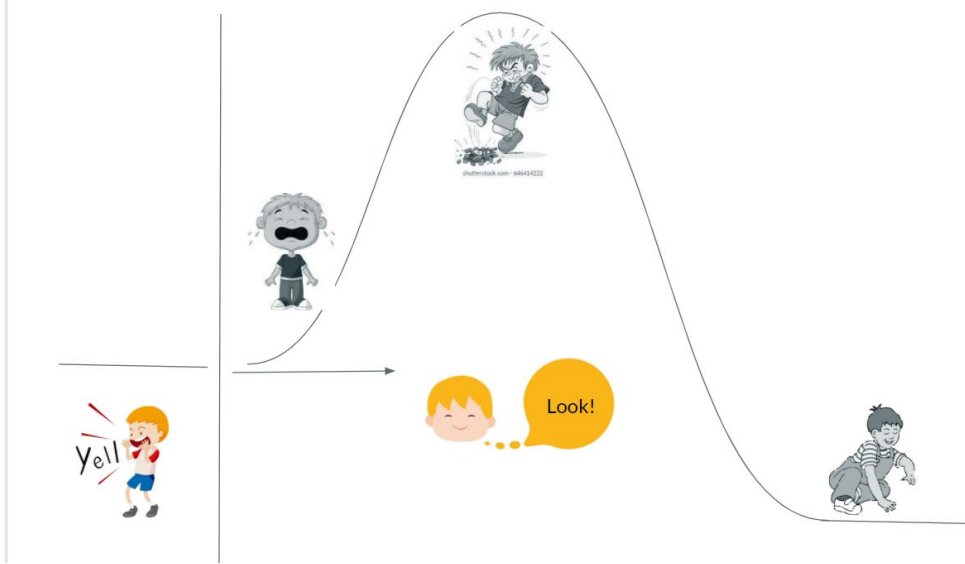
Say "look" or "hey" or "hi"

Starting to run away



Turn and look at adult
or go get adult

Rationale: Why would this work?



- When you reinforce a lower level behavior, your child does not need to try out any behaviors that are higher level
- Your child is calmer at a lower-level behavior and is more open to learning new skills

Who would this strategy be good for?

A child who has not yet developed a reliable means of communicating or is not yet reliable with following models to communicate



Considerations for Reinforcing Low-Level Behavior



1. Your child's current language level
2. Will everyone in your child's life honor this communication?
3. Are you available to be a listener?
4. Do you have an immediate plan for how you will turn that low-level behavior into an appropriate response?

When the behavior is not happening

1. Catch your child being “good”
2. Provide attention at alternative times throughout the day when the behavior is not happening
3. Practice needed skills: Play skills, communication, social skills, leisure skills/waiting skills

When the behavior is happening

- Stay or get calm
 - Take a deep breath
 - Think about what you DO want your child to do
 - Think about what your child wants from you (pause and evaluate)
- Follow through with your chosen intervention
- If you have gotten to a higher level behavior, ensure safety and give yourself grace

After the behavior happens, re-evaluate

- How did it go?
- What would you do the same or differently next time?
- Was what you thought they wanted ACTUALLY what they wanted?
- If it was an intense reaction, were there less intense behaviors leading up to it? Also, do they usually engage in these behaviors before the destructive or dangerous actions?

Questions and Discussion