NAVIGATING TODDLER BEHAVIOR

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1. THE FACTS ABOUT DEVELOPMENT

- Developmental psychology shows us that child behavior is related to their temperament and environment.
- Temperament is inherited in part by genetics and impacts the way a child behaves.
- The social environment is incredibly important in shaping behavior as well (e.g., family dynamics, culture, social activities, childcare providers, etc.)
- Logical reasoning typically doesn't develop until a child is a bit older. Some theorize that logical thought doesn't start until ages 5-6.
- We should model logic and reasoning, but not expect our toddlers to "get it."

(Ormrod, Anderman, & Anderman, 2018)

2. START BY ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

Ask yourself why your child is behaving this way...

Four main reasons for behavior:

1. **Automatic/Sensory Reinforcement:** toddlers may do some behaviors because they feel good and provide sensory satisfaction (e.g., kicking seat).

2. **Attention:** toddlers will demonstrate both desirable and undesirable behaviors for attention (e.g., whining).

3. **Escape:** toddlers learn how to escape demands very early.

4. **Access:** toddlers will use desired or undesired behaviors for access to items, people, and environments.

3. HOW TO PREVENT AND CHANGE BEHAVIOR

- Select a behavior to correct
- Determine the reason why your child is using that behavior (automatic/sensory reinforcement, attention, escape, access)
- Teach your child an appropriate replacement behavior that will give them the same outcome as the undesired behavior.
- Strategize how to prevent the behavior in the future (e.g., preemptive attention, prompting, choices)
- Consistently reinforce the desired behavior

4. REINFORCEMENT AND PUNISHMENT

Reinforcement

Makes the environment desirable and increases behavior.
-Add something desirable (reward)
-Take something aversive away (loud noise)

Punishment

Usually makes the environment less desirable and decreases behavior.

-Add something aversive (extra requirement)

-Take something desirable away

Note on Punishment:

 -Only use punishment when you also use reinforcement to teach the desired behavior.

5. APPLICATION

What can you apply tonight, tomorrow, and next week?