



VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

Challenging Behaviors in Public Places

Families living with autism spectrum disorder often look for tips on how to handle the many different challenges that may arise. “Real life tips for kids with Autism” is a series of practical videos and resources presented by the experts at Children’s Specialized Hospital.

Problem behavior or appropriate behavior for anybody occurs to get something or to get out of something. It could be happening to get attention, it could be happening to get access to something or to get out of something: a crowd, a light, a demand. It could be to get a certain stimulation, a sensation, or to get out of something that has a certain sensation.

We try to really systematically look at not just the behavior, but what happens before and after. Where does it happen most? Where does it happen least? At what time does it happen most and least? With whom does it happen most and least? What happens before the behavior? What happens after the behavior? If the behavior is happening to get out of something, something’s difficult, does the child know how to ask for help? Does the child know how to ask for a break? Maybe yes maybe no. We want to make sure the skill is there and also that we could reinforce it so that we get the break, we get the help when we ask for it.

It’s definitely a good point of view to always view a situation as if you’re the child. Sometimes we can’t quite see what they’re getting out of their behavior and always think about what’s in it for me from the child’s perspective. A lot of what we do is prevention actually, a lot a lot of what we do is prevention and prevention and antecedent types of strategies are teaching appropriate skills like waiting, asking for things, tolerating transitions. All those kinds of things we work on and we practice those kinds of things. Using reinforcers, not just something someone likes, but something that somebody will do something for. A very effective way to teach behavior, to change behavior, to maintain behavior. Doesn’t mean that they’re always enough to change behavior. In some situations as a last resort, punishers might be warranted.

Visuals really help, you can get pictures of the places, you can get them online, or you can take the pictures of the places you are going to go to, and show a visual schedule. Now there are skills leading up to be able to understand a visual schedule, but for a child who can do that, preparation can be done by saying “Here’s a sequence of events to expect.” Really good to have a highly valued item, that is not readily available all the time, to keep the behavior appropriate. If you’re sitting in traffic, you’re waiting for a spot, you’re waiting, you’re walking around the store, all those kinds of things wherever you are, really good idea to have something or a few things ready. It’s also really good to be hands free yourself. In case you do have to pick up your child and get out. It’s good to have an exit strategy.

One of the things that can really help is practicing when you don't need something from the store, when you aren't really planning on watching the movie, when you're not really going to the doctor, when you don't need anything from the pharmacy. So for some kids it would really, really be baby steps. You're in you're out, you get something good. You're in, you're there for a couple seconds, you're out. Some kids could do it for a little bit longer. One of the things we like using a lot is timers, because when we say we are only going to be in the store for ten minutes, a lot of children don't understand what that means.

Parents who feel like they need to handle the situation, they want people to understand, but they don't really have time to talk much about it, might want to have some information, something that fits in their pocket they could pull out, give it to someone, something general. My child has autism, a little bit about what that is. We have other videos that talk about resources where you can get some information like that, you don't have to reinvent the wheel.

Sometimes when you ask people about how it goes in their community with their child they just say "oooh" you know it can be a really difficult situation. Not all places, but for some families, a lot of community locations can be hard: the pool, the playground, the store. Either the kid doesn't want to go or he doesn't want to leave, a little bit of both and some families might wind up not going anywhere or struggling through every community event they go, leaving upset, leaving in a situation where they feel unsupported, everyone's looking at them, the kids are upset, they're upset and it's unsuccessful, and it doesn't have to be that way. There are a lot of things that you actually can do successfully and get some support, but parents have a lot of power to change many things for the better for the child's behavior. So you don't wind up being isolated or you don't wind up always having to leave the kid back with somebody or dragging him with you don't have a choice and not achieving what you meant to achieve. So even if sometimes you feel like you planned and then there was a setback and you get discouraged, the point is, with some retooling, saying okay what happened, let's go back, let's plan, we're going to cover some steps about how you can plan for success for community trips. You will be able to go out and have a nice family meal together outside and in public, you might be able to go to the library or the pool or whatever destinations are important to your family. It'll take some work, but it can be achieved.



Through a partnership with Kohl's Cares, Children's Specialized Hospital is improving access to care for children with special health care needs.



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