

Whose Behavior Has to Change?

June 2011 Newsletter

How many of us have been in a grocery store and have seen a young child crying, stomping their feet and screaming? Some typical reactions might be: “There’s a child who must be really tired,” or “That child is having a bad day,” or maybe even “He’s really trying to get some attention!” Change the setting to a classroom. The teacher greets the students amid the commotion of the beginning of the day. One student yells at others and refuses to engage in the class activity. The teacher’s reaction? *“He’s non-complaint!”*

The way we label behavior is an extension of how we label children. A student with autism is seen as having “autistic behavior;” a student who is labeled as non-verbal is perceived as having nothing to say, and a student who is seen as “retarded” is at risk of having his/her behavior devalued. Educators will often write a behavior plan for a child who is identified as having “attention-seeking behavior.” They can’t or won’t recognize the child’s behavior as a form of communication, as ordinary childhood behavior, the child having a bad day, etc. If a child is labeled “non-compliant,” adults may focus on teaching the child to follow directions without any questions or protests.

What are the outcomes of labeling behaviors in negative, demeaning ways? Students learn that others will not listen and cannot be trusted; a student’s behavior may actually escalate because he/she is not being heard; adults see a child’s behavior as reinforcement of the original (and erroneous) belief; and classmates stay away—no one wants to be friends with a child who is always “in trouble.”

What’s the alternative? Parents, educators, and service providers can really listen to a child’s behavior; see a child’s behavior in the context of the whole child and the environment, instead of as a result of the child’s disability; and help children be more successful, rather than trying to punish, impose consequences, etc. Instead of trying to change others’ behavior, let’s work on changing our own behavior.

Identify your vision: **so others are not required to change in order to belong.**

Use your voice: **after understanding what was communicated (verbally and behavioral).**

Work together: **to have a deep understanding of the reasons for behavior.**



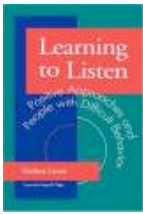
Resources

**Learning to Listen: Positive Approaches
and People with Difficult Behaviors**
by Herbert Lovett



Websites

Would you like to learn some questions to
ask to uncover the causes of behavior?



Lovett shows how typical behavior management strategies are used to *manage* students' behavior instead of understanding it is a form of communication. The author shares how educators and service providers can focus on the needs and wishes of people they support and help them gain control of their lives. A must read for parents and educators!

[Click here](#) to learn about the [Constructivist' Approach to Classroom Discipline](#).

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Ever tried to change old behaviors – quit smoking, dieting, etc.?

Substituting new behaviors for old ones is tiring and it burns self-control.

What about when we ask kids to change their behaviors? They can often be like us and run out of self-control.

Watch this interesting 4-minute [video](#) by Dan Heath, [Why Change Is So Hard](#)



As a parent and an educator, I bring 30+ years of experience and enthusiasm to create positive change for students, families, and educators! How may I support you? Click the links below to learn more.

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Let us share our **Visions** of possibilities and opportunities.

Honor the **Voices** of students, families, and educators,

Choose to work **Together**,

To achieve **Educational Success for All!**

Please let me know if you're interested in one of my presentations and/or customized consulting and coaching.

What we anticipate, determines what we find!

Charmaine Thaner

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