A child’s behavior is influenced by numerous factors. Unfortunately, responding to difficult and challenging behavior can be a struggle for both teachers and parents, especially when the triggers are unique to each child.

A functional assessment will determine the underlying causes of problem behavior and will be used in creating a treatment plan.
FACTORS INFLUENCING CHILD BEHAVIOR & DEVELOPMENT

One way teachers and parents can directly influence a child’s behavior is by making changes to the environment.

Making Changes

To help a child improve his or her behavior, a teacher can:

- Use a token system to reward good behavior.
- Allow the student to take breaks and walk around the classroom.
- Create a clear schedule that will give the student a sense of control.
- Create lessons that connect to current events, athletes or well-known public figures.
- Seat the student away from distractions, such as doors and windows.

At Home, Parents Should:

- Identify triggers that precede challenging behavior.
- Take actions to prevent challenging behavior and encourage good behavior.
- Clearly communicate behavior expectations and identify the consequences of challenging behavior.
- Help the child prepare for transitions by providing a countdown or visual timer.
- Clearly communicate behavior expectations and identify the consequences of challenging behavior.
- Avoid using complex or wordy instructions or asking too many questions at once.
- Remove distractions during homework time.
RESPONDING TO DIFFICULT BEHAVIOR

Behavior analysts use various techniques and approaches to intervention to help a child improve his or her behavior.

POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT (PBS)

PBS is defined as “a process that combines evidence-based practices from applied behavior analysis (ABA) and other disciplines to resolve behavioral challenges and improve independence, participation and overall quality of life of individuals living and learning in complex community environments,” according to an article published by the Association for Behavior Analysis International (ABAI).

THE MAIN FEATURES OF PBS INCLUDE:

- Caregivers engaging in behavioral intervention
- Interventions designed to be effective during natural routines
- Implementing lifestyle and discrete behavior changes
- Durable strategies that reduce dependence on professionals and encourage independence

PBS draws on the theories and practices of ecological and community psychology to increase intervention effectiveness.
THE PBS PROCESS INCLUDES:

1. Identifying concerning behaviors
2. Setting achievable goals based on student performance
3. Gathering and analyzing data relevant to patterns affecting behavior
4. Formulating strategies and a comprehensive plan
5. Implementing the plan
6. Monitoring the results

FUNCTIONAL ASSESSMENT-BASED INTERVENTIONS

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFECTIVE INTERVENTION APPROACH:
Routines or activities that are difficult for the parent and child are identified, and parents are provided with support that may include:

- Addressing why the behavior is occurring
- Implementing strategies to reduce problem behavior
- Developing new skills

INTERVENTION APPROACHES ARE FAMILY-CENTERED

INTERVENTION APPROACHES ARE AIMED AT IMPROVING PARENTS’ ABILITIES TO:

- Read the child’s emotional and social cues
- Encourage the child’s development of self-regulatory behavior, problem-solving skills and emotional expression
WHEN TO REACH OUT TO A PROFESSIONAL

When challenging behavior is escalating, prior to it becoming a danger to self and others, or disrupting learning in a classroom setting, it may be necessary to reach out to a professional. A Board Certified Behavior Analyst is trained to assess, intervene, and offer support to caregivers and teachers.

CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS THAT WARRANT INTERVENTION

When a child’s behavior persistently interrupts participation in school, interaction with peers, learning, growth and social development, it is time for parents to reach out to a professional for assessment and intervention.

A CHILD CONSISTENTLY EXHIBITING THE FOLLOWING DIFFICULT BEHAVIOR OR SYMPTOMS OF DISORDERS MAY BENEFIT FROM INTERVENTION:

- Disobeying classroom rules
- Disrupting classroom routines
- Destroying property
- Aggression to self or others, such as kicking or hitting
- Social withdrawal leading to delayed or stunted social development
- Inability to focus, participate in classroom activities and complete assignments
ONCE A CHILD HAS BEEN PROPERLY ASSESSED, THERAPY OPTIONS MAY INCLUDE:

**BACB**
Parents can search for qualified providers in their zipcode or by an individual’s last name using the find a certificant feature on the Behavior Analyst Certification Board website. Parents can not only check that an individual is in good standing and actively certified, but they can also see how long they have been practicing in the field as a certified behavior analyst.

**PARENT EDUCATION**
Parents will learn how to make changes in the home environment to increase the effectiveness of intervention.

**SOCIAL SKILLS TRAINING**
The child will develop the skills necessary to interact with others, solve problems and develop friendships, as well as decrease antisocial or undesirable behavior.

**FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES**
These services are provided by the community and can include cash subsidies, respite, family training and recreation services.

**ACCEPTANCE AND COMMITMENT THERAPY**
The child will learn to monitor their thoughts, feelings, and moods, while engaging in perspective taking to provide further context to their personal experiences. The child will work on achieving cognitive flexibility while meeting their behavioral goals.
TIPS FOR PARENTS

PARENTS CONSIDERING:

PRIVATE SERVICES. Parents should reach out to their health care provider and request a copy of their health plan’s mental health service options.

COMMUNITY SERVICES. Parents should reach out to a community health center to learn more about the services available for children demonstrating difficult or challenging behavior.

Though a “perfect” family or environment does not exist, parents can take steps to support their child’s development of skills and behaviors. Having a professional conduct a functional assessment and subsequent intervention will not only teach parents how to support their child’s growth, but also greatly impact their child’s future success.

SOURCES:

http://www.pacer.org/cmh/getting-help/
https://www.bacb.com/verify-certification/
https://www.nap.edu/read/10017/chapter/12#116
https://www.hindawi.com/journals/cdr/2011/835941/
https://chadd.org/for-parents/social-skills-interventions/
https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5048254/
https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/supporting/support-services/
https://childmind.org/article/managing-problem-behavior-at-home/
https://effectivechildtherapy.org/therapies/cognitive-behavioral-therapy/
https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/75a6/43bd54c3aa03cb76955e3acc45a21d9f4fce.pdf
http://www.urbanchildinstitute.org/sites/all/files/databooks/TUCI_Data_Book_VII_2012.05_family.pdf