

# WHAT IS CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR?

## GOAL

Differentiate between developmentally appropriate behaviors and truly challenging behaviors.

## BACKGROUND

Every person engages in challenging behavior at one time or another. Think about your own behavior. Do you engage in behavior others might perceive as challenging?

While you might not like it, some oppositional and challenging behaviors are actually developmentally appropriate.

## SPEEDING

Is speeding a challenging behavior? What if it's only 5 miles per hour over the speed limit? What about 10 miles per hour over the speed limit? What if you have a really good reason for speeding?

When does speeding become a challenging behavior? How about when you get stopped by the police or cause a serious accident? If this happens again and again, we would probably call this a challenging behavior.

Speeding is a behavior that many, especially those in law enforcement, consider inappropriate, but it's only a problem when it reaches a certain level or begins to seriously impact others.

# WHY WE SPEED

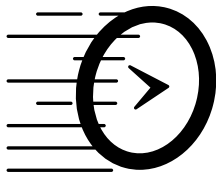
## NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES

### **Possible negative outcomes of speeding**

We know that speeding could result in outcomes that we want to avoid. Although there could be more, the main 2 are:

- Getting a speeding ticket
- Causing an accident

The chances of these outcomes increase the more we speed, but are still not guaranteed no matter how often or how fast we speed.



## POSITIVE CONSEQUENCES

### **Possible positive outcomes of speeding**

We are much more familiar with the positive consequences associated with speeding that include:

- Getting to your destination faster
- Feeling of accomplishment or superiority from being faster than the driver next to you
- Not paying attention to your speed because you are thinking about other things

These positive consequences are more likely to occur and happen much more frequently than the potential negative consequences.

## **Changing behavior**

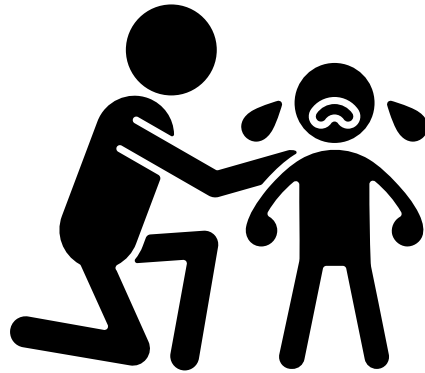
If you knew that your speed was constantly monitored and there was a sufficient amount of money coming for driving under the speed limit, would you be more inclined to drive slower? This might motivate some people, but probably not everyone.

Changing challenging behavior is something that is unique to the individual. You have to understand what motivates the person to engage in the challenging behavior and what might motivate that person to engage in an alternative behavior.

# TRADITIONAL TECHNIQUES

## Super Nanny

Maybe you have tried all the traditional parenting techniques recommended by Super Nanny and yet your child still engages in these behaviors. What Super Nanny doesn't take into consideration is that challenging behavior is usually a form of communication. Your child doesn't engage in challenging behavior because she's a bad child or because you're a bad parent. Challenging behavior develops because a child doesn't have an effective way to communicate what she needs or wants. This is true even if your child speaks very well.



**WHAT MIGHT YOUR CHILD BE TELLING YOU WITH HIS BEHAVIOR?**

# CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR IS COMMUNICATION

## Children learn what gets them what they want and need

Imagine you're on the phone talking to someone at the bank after being on hold for almost an hour. Your child comes up to you and says, "Dad, I need a drink, can you get me one?" You probably respond by turning your back and continuing with the call. The call is important and will be finished soon. You will help your daughter when it's done.

But this isn't your daughter's plan. She starts to cry and soon she is in a full blown tantrum. You can barely hear the person on the other end of the phone, so you walk to the kitchen and grab her cup from the refrigerator just to make it quiet enough for you to finish the call. Experiences like this one teach your child that when her words don't work, her behavior does.

## Behavior develops gradually

We rarely see these behaviors as they develop over time because a single instance that isn't real intense probably goes completely unnoticed, just like a single instance of going 5 miles per hour over the speed limit. As the behavior escalates over time the problem becomes more apparent and it's at that point you decide you need to intervene. Only now, you don't know what to do.



# CHANGING BEHAVIOR

## DAY ONE:

Your job at this point is to become a detective. This lesson will help you understand your child's behavior and figure out what she is saying with her behavior.

Once you have this information, you can teach her to get what she wants in a better way, without challenging behavior. At the same time, you must also identify what skills your child needs to be able to better manage difficult or disappointing situations when they come up in the future.

The process to get to this understanding and effective teaching is the basics of ABA that are covered in this course. If your child engages in severe, dangerous behavior, make sure you are working with a qualified BCBA and not trying to do this on your own.





## BEHAVIOR IS COMMUNICATION

Children, and some adults, engage in challenging behavior because it's the most effective way to get what they want. When the positive consequences are more predictable and frequent than the negative ones, the behavior continues.