

SUPPORTING POSITIVE BEHAVIOR IN CHILDREN & TEENS WITH DOWN SYNDROME: Respond, but don't react!

Adapted by Andrew Crim with permission from *Supporting Positive Behavior in Children and Teens with Down Syndrome: The Respond but Don't React Method* by David Stein, PsyD and published by Woodbine House.

The Facts



~30% of children with DS have diagnosable behavior condition

McCarthy, 2008; Cuskelly & Dadds, 1992

3 times the rate of typically developing children

More have common behavior problems, even without a diagnosis

But Why?

Nadel & Fidler, 2007

Brain Differences

- Reduced growth in the frontal lobe
- Smaller brain stem and cerebellum
- Problems in the temporal lobe & hippocampus



Brain differences result in...

SOCIAL

Hyper-aware (hypersensitive)
Hyper-engaged
Social Emotional Radar
Aggressive Problem Solving

LANGUAGE

Stronger receptive versus expressive
Difficulty with articulation & formulating ideas

FRUSTRATION

PROCESSING & MEMORY

More visual, less verbal processing
Hard to encode & consolidate - prefer repetition
The world is ever-changing... *and scary?*

MOTIVATION

Challenges with intrinsic motivation
Greater frustration, over time, can lead to avoidance

EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING

May not see the stop signs (e.g., impulsivity)
May struggle to plan a behavior and/or consider its consequences

Nadel & Fidler, 2007



Important Points to Remember

Reinforce the behavior you want to see

Notice & react to it
Praise it with a little party






Every behavior has a purpose

Escape & Avoidance (Math is hard - RUN)

Attention-seeking (I don't have words to ask another child to play, so WHACK!)



Key Questions to Ask

-  What is the function of the behavior?
-  What is reinforcing this behavior?
-  What could be done differently?



Positive, Powerful Strategies for Intervention

Choices

Do math or reading first?

Redirection

Can you be line leader?

Provide the Carrot

First writing, then group reading

Planned Ignoring

Based on Ross Greene, PhD's "The Explosive Child"

1. Safety issue? Intervene!
2. Frustrating for all and working on it? Selectively intervene.
3. Annoying but not causing harm? IGNORE it.

With early intervention, behavior problems can be addressed before they interfere with LRE, social connections and independence now and later in life!

Use visual timers & schedules

Time is an "abstract" concept

Use social motivators

Give attention, praise

Use social stories/video modeling

Repetition and structure

When disciplining, avoid...

- Long sentences (No Hit!)*
- Inconsistency/Unpredictability*
- Making eye contact*
- Raising voice*
- Trying to reason with child*

