



ISLAND PARK UFSD  
UNIVERSAL PRE-K PROGRAM

# PARENT WORKSHOP

## MANAGING THE BEHAVIOR OF MY PRESCHOOLER

BY: ALLISON JANOFSKY, LCSW

# What words come to mind when you think of a preschooler?

\*Turn and talk - think about strengths and challenges

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# What is Behavior?

- Behavior is a complex interaction of a child's biologic vulnerabilities, innate strengths, a nurturing environment, and parenting styles.
- A problem in any area may lead to undesirable behavior.
- A mismatch between areas can also result in concerns with behavior (e.g. a strong-willed child with a parent who has difficulty with or is unable to set limits; different rules between primary caregivers)
- Misbehavior is not intentional or planned – often has a reason
  - Seeking attention, power, or revenge, or feeling inadequate
- Tip: Parents/Caregivers should ask themselves *how they feel* when their child acts up to learn the reason behind the misbehavior.
- Asking “why” is not effective – children unable to verbalize or understand why themselves

# CHILD BEHAVIOR QUIZ

\*you may work with a  
partner



# Behavior Quiz: A Starting Point

1. What is the most effective way of rewarding positive behavior?
  - A) Through sweets and treats
  - B) Praise and encouragement
  - C) Star charts
  - D) Toys
  
2. What is the main effect of "positive reinforcement?"
  - A) Can increase wanted/unwanted behavior
  - B) Decrease wanted/unwanted behavior
  - C) Children expect to be "bribed"
  - D) Parents have no more money
  
3. What is the main effect of punishment?
  - A) Decreases behavior
  - B) Strengthens behavior
  - C) Parents become upset
  - D) Children learn to get their own way


# Behavior Quiz

4. What does current research say about the impact of hitting a child?
  - A) Always reduces poor behavior
  - B) Children become more self confident
  - C) Helps children to solve their own problems
  - D) Increases aggression
  
5. How does imitation help children learn?
  - A) They can copy desired behavior
  - B) They learn how to make funny faces
  - C) They learn right from wrong
  - D) They become closer to their parents
  
6. What is the most effective way of playing with children?
  - A) You decide what to play
  - B) Giving the child time
  - C) Allowing the child to decide what to play and how
  - D) Always play with their favorite toys



## PIAGET'S STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

Stage	Characterized by
Sensori-motor (Birth – 2years)	Differentiates self from objects  Recognizes self as agent of action and begins to act intentionally (e.g. pulls a string to set mobile in motion or shakes rattle to make noise)  Achieves object permanence: realizes that things continue to exist even when no longer present to the sense
Pre-operational (2-7 years)	Learns to use language and to represent objects by images and words  Thinking is still egocentric: has difficulty taking the viewpoint of others  Classifies objects by a single feature: e.g. groups together all the red blocks regardless of shape or all the square blocks regardless of colour
Concrete Operational (7-11 years)	Can think logically about objects and events  Achieves conservation of number (age 6), mass (age 7) and weight (age 9)  Classifies objects according to several features and can order them in series along a single dimension such as size
Formal Operational (11 years and up)	Can think logically about abstract propositions and test hypotheses systematically  Becomes concerned with the hypothetical, the future and ideological problems



## JEAN PIAGET (1896-1980) PIAGET'S 4-STAGES OF INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT

# What is typical preschool behavior?

## STRENGTHS:

- Imaginative and creative = amazing stories
- Curious minds = Great problem solvers and ready to learn
- Increasing independence
- People-pleasing = wants to help and be well-liked; wants to follow directions
- Interaction – playing with peers
- Increased attention span



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# 4-year-olds

## Typical Behavior

- Will start to be critical and will define the world in simple terms. Things and people will be right or wrong, good or bad, nice or not nice.
- They will start to realize the power of their words and will sometimes use them to get their way or to control others. Their command of language will still be loose, so they will often back up what they are saying with actions (hitting, pushing, grabbing, stomping foot) or non-verbal (tone, volume, facial expressions, posture/stance).
- Will become competitive.
- Imaginative - Will still blur reality and fantasy sometimes. Might tell lies, extravagant stories, or have imaginary friend/s.
- Will do all sorts of things to avoid bedtime.
- Might have bad dreams.
- Might develop a fear of the dark
- May become anxious about being separated from parent or caregiver.
- Will start to enjoy playing with other kids rather than simply alongside them.
- Will test their limits with you but will still be keen to please and help you out when they can.
- Still building their sense of self and experimenting with independence, so might be stubborn, defiant and bossy.

# 4-year-olds

## The Support They Need

- When you set rules, talk to them about why the rules are important. They are curious and developing their ideas about how the world works. \*\*It doesn't mean they'll 'get it right away, or that they'll comply.
- Keep your requests simple.
- They desperately want to make you happy. Catch them demonstrating good behavior!
- Don't argue with a four-year-old! Just don't. They'll out-do you any day and if they don't have the words or a sound argument, they'll just keep asking 'why.'
- When they do something wrong, apply gentle consequences but explain why the behavior is wrong and that you know they can do better next time. They need to know you believe in them – they will do as you do.
- Be **consistent**. If you don't think it's always important to enforce a rule, your child will think it's not always important to follow it.
- Encourage their independence but remember they are still young. Let them be little people when they are stressed or tired.
- Give them lots of kisses and cuddles, even though they are 'big people now.'
- When it comes to less-than-impressive behavior, ask *what* happened **BUT** don't ask *why* they did it.
  - Asking 'Why did you do that?' will just encourage a lie because the boundary between fantasy and reality in the world of a four-year-old is very – very – loose.
  - They also don't always understand 'why' they did/did not do something. 4-year-olds are learning about their emotions and how to handle them
  - They may not have the words to explain 'why'

# 5-year-olds

## Typical Behavior

- Will understand the importance of rules but might divert from the rules when playing. Rules tend to be 'flexible' – for them at least.
- May accuse others of cheating if they don't win a game.
- Will start to show empathy and an understanding that other people might have points of view that are different to their own.
- Will be able to share but might still find it difficult, especially when it comes to their special things.
- Might be afraid of failure, criticism and spooky things like ghosts or monsters.
- Attention span will start to increase which will impact on the type of discussions you are able to have with them.
- Might come across as being an 'expert' on everything.
- Will enjoy joking around and will start to develop 'potty' humor.
- Independence-will be looking to make their own decisions, particularly around what to wear and what to eat.
- If starting at school, might be moodier, more sensitive or more tired than usual. It's exhausting having to sit still and concentrate for long periods.

# 5-year-olds

## The Support They Need

- Start to expand your child's emotional literacy by naming and discussing feelings.
- Connect rewards to responsibilities. 'How about you help me clear the table and then you can have dessert?'
- Continue to keep rules simple and try not to have too many.
- Get Moving! -- Encourage anything that will get your child moving
  - Group or a team with others - develop important skills like taking turns, getting-along with others, working together, negotiating, compromising, and winning or losing graciously.
- PLAYTIME! -- Set aside time each day to play with your child
  - Spend one-on-one time together
  - Opportunity to enter their world
  - Enhances relationship/bond; creativity

## Understanding the Goals of Negative Behavior

If you feel...	the child's purpose is ...
annoyed and irritated	to get your attention
powerless and out of control	to gain power and control over YOU
hurt	revenge!
discouraged and helpless	to withdraw from the task/situation for which he   feels inadequate to cope.



# When to get help

- Behavior problems usually start before school-age. They are behaviors which are beyond a normal response and persist beyond the usual age where they are common. Some of these include:

- Too aggressive at play, other children won't play with him/her
- Temper tantrums – severe, long or age inappropriate
- Won't comply with requests
- Can't tolerate any change in routine
- Excessive fears
- Can't play quietly
- Can't stay seated for meals or short activities
- Always moving

# When to get help

- Behavior problems usually start before school-age. They are behaviors which are beyond a normal response and persist beyond the usual age where they are common.
- Consult with pediatrician first—rule out any medical issue causing the behavior

- Doing poorly in school
- Difficulty paying attention
- Not completing projects or tasks
- Not following directions

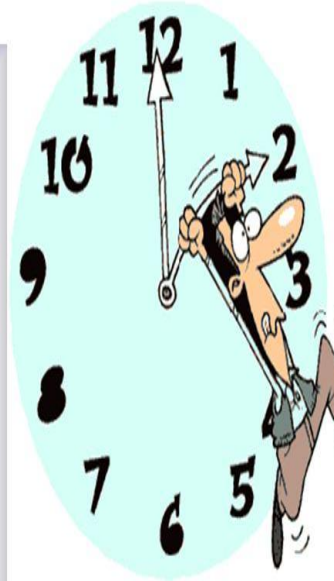
# WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO CREATE STRUCTURE AND ROUTINES FOR YOUR CHILD ?











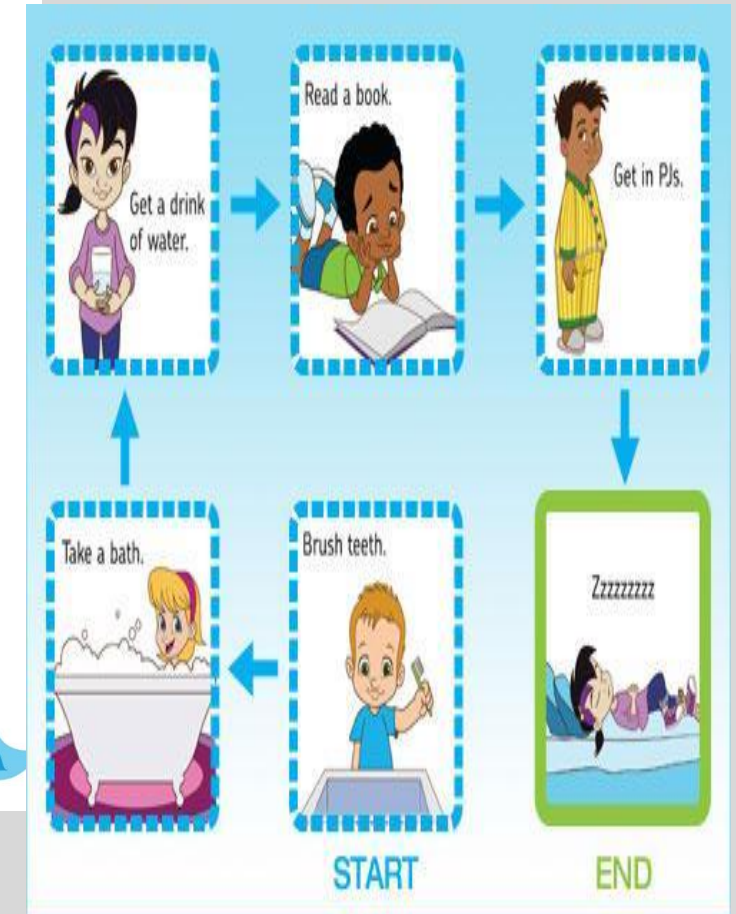
- Decreases child's anxiety
- Develops self-discipline and responsibility
- Organizational skills
- Builds confidence and independence
- Improves cooperation
- Can adapt to change

# Home Routines

## Back to School Routines



M O R N I N G	
	make your bed
	get dressed
	brush your teeth
	eat breakfast
	shoes and coat
	backpack
	hug your mom
	off to school



# Using Rewards to Encourage Prosocial Behavior

- Social Rewards

- Verbal praise

- Physical – pat on the back; fist bump

- Doing activities selected by your child following the desired behavior

- Non-Social Rewards (ALWAYS combine with praise)

- Treats/toys/sticker chart

- Use the reward *IMMEDIATELY* after the behavior you want to increase

- Initially reward the behavior frequently – we are shaping desired behavior

- Focus on the desired behavior NOT those that are inappropriate/unwanted (unless safety issue)

- Focus on the positive. (e.g. "I saw you share the toys with your sister. That was so kind!")



# Finally...

- Children have a lot of important “work” to do on the way to adulthood
- It can be very hard to be a kid
- There are things to learn, mistakes to be made, boundaries to be pushed, and independence to be found
- For parents/caregivers: this can be amazing and beautiful AND exhausting, confusing, overwhelming, and terrifying all at the same time
- Be patient and don’t take their mistakes and less-than-ideal behavior personally – doing this takes their opportunities to learn and grow away from them. Their greatest growth will come from the mistakes they make and the boundaries that they push up against.
- Even with the strongest supports in place, they are going to make mistakes – sometimes pretty big ones! Provided they have the support they need, their mistakes will be about their growth; not your parenting.
- For our part, it is important that we are there with love, nurturing and a steady hand to guide them and with boundaries for them to feel the edges of themselves against. Understanding what is normal behavior for children and teens will make this easier.
- Remember: Children learn most of their social behaviors by imitation. This means that they will learn from watching US!

# Helpful Resources for Parents

Centers for Disease Control

<https://www.cdc.gov/parents/>

Child Mind Institute

<https://childmind.org/>

Nassau County Early Intervention Program

<https://www.nassaucountyny.gov/3899/Early-Intervention>

Long Island Crisis Center – 24/7 hotline for crisis & resources: (516) 679-1111

<https://longislandcrisiscenter.org/>

American Academy of Pediatrics

[www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org)