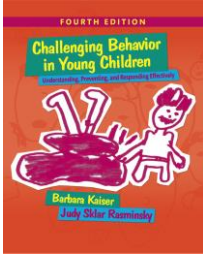


Challenging Behavior in Young Children: Understanding, Preventing, and Responding Effectively



Working with Families and Other Experts

Barbara Kaiser

www.challengingbehavior.com





Helping families get involved as partners in their child's learning...

Starts with listening and responding



It is all about building relationships



“Parents are a powerful, usually under utilized source of knowledge about youngsters....We too often dismiss their insights as subjective and overly involved. In fact, the insights of the parents - urgent, invested, passionate, immediate - are exactly what we need.”

William Ayers

What are you doing to:

1. Get to know the families?
2. Help the families get to know you?
3. Engage the families as partners in their child's experience?



Effective Parent Engagement

- Individual and personal
- Respectful
- Meaningful
- Reciprocal

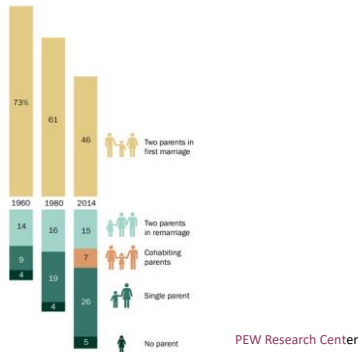


What do I need to know about a child's family?

- Family structure
- Difficult issues they may be facing
- Culture
 - Each family and each child care setting has a culture all its own
- Their expectations



Changing demographics



65 % of women with preschoolers are working mothers



Those guilty feelings

- 25% of working mothers felt parents should stay at home and look after their children
- 68 % thought they should work less
- Envy the educator who witnesses their child's early triumphs
- Fear that the educator will replace them in their child's affections
- Worry about how the educator will judge their parenting skills

A child's behavior is often a response to important changes in their lives



When children feel the stress at home



Be aware of your biases

“Parents especially in need of support, those coping with difficulties such as poverty or minority status, are the least likely to receive it.”

E. Galinsky

Implicit Bias

“The automatic and unconscious stereotypes that drive people to behave and make decisions in certain ways.”

- Influences how a child’s behavior is perceived and how it is addressed
- Creates a vicious cycle over time exacerbating inequalities

Gilliam, W. et al. 2016. Do Early Educators’ Implicit Biases Regarding Sex and Race Relate to Behavior Expectations and Recommendations of Preschool Expulsions and Suspensions?

Communication with parents of different cultures can be more difficult than communication with parents of the mainstream culture



An Indian Father’s Plea

When his son began to have trouble in school, he wrote this letter to his son’s teacher:

Robert Lake, a member of the Seneca and Cherokee Indian tribes (1990).

Building that partnership when the
"Lion Roars"



Families know their child best

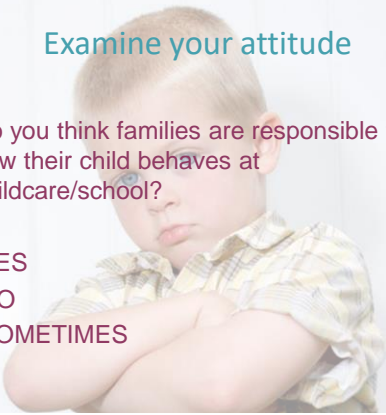


POLL

Examine your attitude

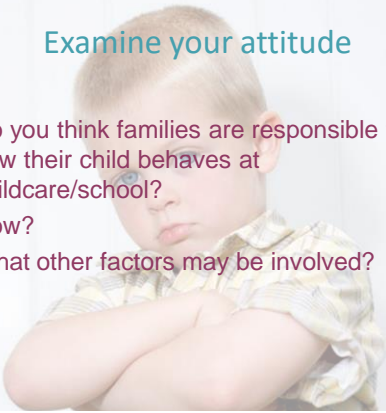
- Do you think families are responsible for how their child behaves at childcare/school?

YES
NO
SOMETIMES



Examine your attitude

- Do you think families are responsible for how their child behaves at childcare/school?
- How?
- What other factors may be involved?



Don't play the blame game

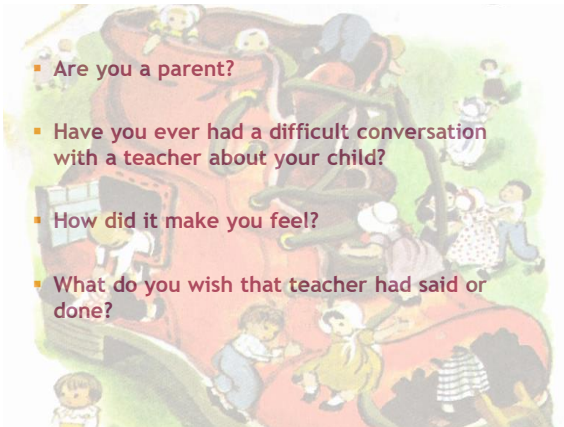
FAMILIES ARE STRESSED

- Financial instability
- Lack of family support
- Time





Parenting a child with challenging behavior is not easy



- Are you a parent?
- Have you ever had a difficult conversation with a teacher about your child?
- How did it make you feel?
- What do you wish that teacher had said or done?

What is the toughest conversation you have had with families?



POLL

What makes talking with families about their child's challenging behavior so difficult?

- You aren't sure how the family will react to what you have to say
- You are worried that they will hold you responsible for the child's difficulties
- They may simply refuse to believe you
- Other

Family's Responses

- Thinking that this didn't happen before so it must be the fault of the teacher or the other children
- Feeling they should have been told about problems before they became so severe
- Feel judged because of previous negative experiences and leave the center
- Feel that they should punish the child at home

What do I do if the family denies that there is a problem with their child's behavior?



What About These Tough Topics?

- Discussing a child's challenging behavior
- When you and the parents don't see eye-to-eye...
- When the parents are afraid of "labeling"...
- What to say to the parents of other children when there is a child with challenging behavior in the group...
- When the child needs more help...
- When you may have to ask the child to leave...

Family involvement varies

- Actively involved in every activity
- It's your problem - see a clear separation between home and childcare
- May not have the resources
- Parents' attitude toward authority
- Have heard this so many times from people who really have not helped them in the past
- Consider you the cause of their child's problems
- They feel incompetent, helpless, and alienated
- Not appropriate to discuss family dynamics or personal problems with a teacher

When the time has come to meet with the family

Who should request/attend the meeting?

- The teacher
- The director/administrator

Letting families know there is a problem

- Make the first contact by telephone
- There should be as little delay as possible between the initial call and the first meeting

Most children behave one way at home, and another away from home



Who should be at the meeting?



Before you meet with the family

- Stop and think about your expectations
- Maybe what you consider challenging behavior is considered acceptable by the family and others.

Arranging a meeting

- Select a time that is convenient for everyone
- Find a comfortable place to meet
- Choose a private space where everyone can sit on adult size chairs
- Avoid an expert/authoritarian approach



Be prepared

- Set an agenda with objectives and main points
- Make an outline of what you are going to say
- Collect all supporting data that you have;
- Think about something positive to tell the family

The Agenda

1. Describe the problem
2. Generate multiple solutions
3. Discuss the pros and cons of each suggestion
4. Come to a consensus about which solutions to try
5. Discuss how you will implement these solutions
6. Agree to meet again

Ellen Galinsky
Ellen Galinsky



- What do you think this conversation is about?
- Is it positive?

Communication is a 2 way street



Our expectations vs. family values



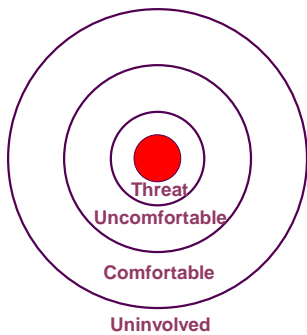
Focus on Culture

Children naturally develop the characteristics that their own culture values:

- Emotional display and affect
- Moral development and values
- Rules
- Means of communication
- Gender roles
- Cognitive abilities

The culture of school/childcare	Values in diverse cultures
De-contextualized learning: Emphasize words and facts	Context is key Connect what's happening to their own experience by telling stories and by observation
Teachers instruct by asking questions to which they already know the answer	Children find such questions puzzling Adults ask questions to challenge them or to find out new information
Children must be called on and respond one at a time	Children may not want to stand out from the group They join in and add their opinions They demonstrate their wit and intellect by responding spontaneously and creatively
To show they're paying attention, children sit still and maintain eye contact	Listeners join in and respond with gestures, movement, and words
Teachers often use Implicit Commands Indirect statements ask children to do what they want	Parents use Explicit Commands Direct statements tell children what they want them to do

Circles of Comfort



Talking about the problem

- Be factual and specific
- Talk about what you have seen - not what you think
- Ask open ended questions
- Invite them to share with you what they have found works at home
- Brainstorm as many ideas as possible



Words Count

Avoid Negativity Bias



Reframe

- Demanding - holds high standards
- Argumentative - strongly committed to his/her goals
- Wild - energetic
- Anxious - cautious



Help families understand that behavior is a form of communication

- To avoid a task or person
- To obtain attention or an object
- To change the level of stimulation

Offer some suggestions

1. Let your child know what to do instead of waiting for him to make a mistake
2. Tell your child what to do, not what NOT to do
3. Look for opportunities to recognize close approximations to do what you are requesting
4. Always keep in mind that your goal is to build your child's self-esteem and avoid win/lose situations
1. Be intentional – have a plan for what you will do if he loses control

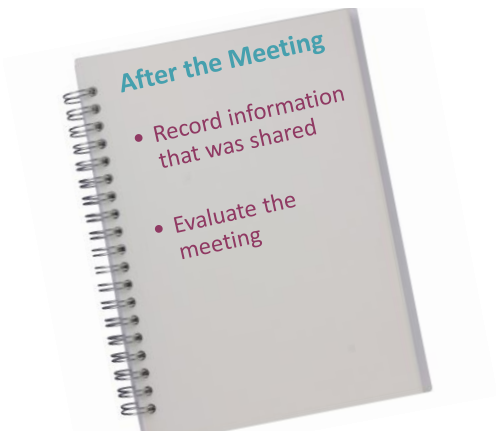
The hardest conversation of all

When the child needs more help

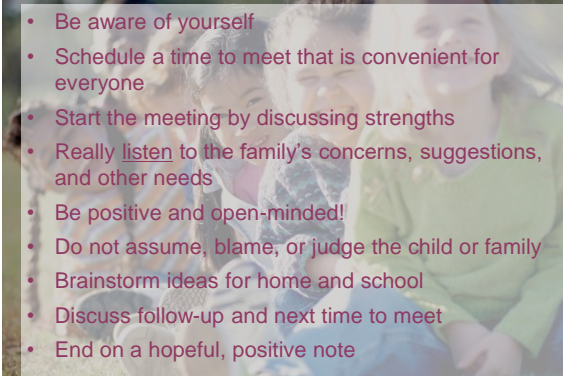
- Be prepared
- Be specific
- Reassurance is definitely required
- Find out if they've worked with professionals before and what they felt about their experience
- Let them know that you will support them through each step
- Keep the door open

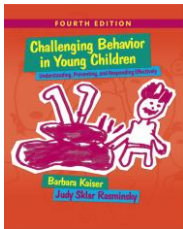
If the family rejects the idea of outside intervention





REMEMBER





THANK YOU

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