

Training Topic - Understanding

All behavior is communication. Individuals may use a challenging behavior to get a need met. This can occur for various reasons: language development problems, social/emotional delays, difficulties with peer interactions, developmental disabilities, neglect or trauma, not having had the opportunity to learn the skill, or simply – the challenging behavior works to get the need met.

Reframing is essentially changing how we think about the challenging behavior. Reframing is a central cognitive-behavioral technique of "telling yourself a different story" about the same events or characteristics. Reframing means coming up with a different interpretation.

We start the reframing process by putting aside the notion that the individual is trying, on purpose, to make be challenging. We continue the reframing process by asking the question (rhetorically or literally), "What do they want or need that is leading to this challenging behavior?" When we put aside our own discomfort and emotional reaction to the challenging behavior, it may become easier to determine what the individual needs or help them through the situation

Now, ask yourself the next question, "How can we help them obtain what they want using acceptable behaviors?" As staff, you likely know how to seek the things you want or need without resorting to violence or emotional manipulation. This is because we have learned the necessary skills from other adults throughout our lives. In these situations, it is now our turn to teach these skills to individuals who struggle. These skills include how to ask for help, how to offer something in trade, how to share things, how to express our emotions in an acceptable manner and how to calm ourselves.

It is important to share with the team the situations of challenging behavior that you are assisting with. As a team, you will brainstorm potential triggers, potential reasons, and potentially what has worked for others to ensure the needs are met and the behavior is not necessary.

As you work through the process to learn why the individual displays a challenging behavior, below are examples of how you may reframe the behavior:

When you use this – try this instead:

Obsessive – Tenacious, Deliberate
Compulsive - Thorough
Talkative – Gregarious
Easily distracted – Easily fascinated
Emotional – Influential, Charismatic
Controlling – Convincing
Impulsive – Inquisitive
Obstinate – Determined, Persistent
Aggressive – Assertive
Opinionated – Confident
Isolated – Selective
Immature – Innocent
Dramatic – Powerfully vivid
Disorganized – Creative
Oppositional – Independent
Anxious - Cautious or concerned
Boisterous - Enthusiastic
Bossy - A leader
Chatterbox - Communicative
Clingy – Loving
Controlling - Determined
Disruptive - Eager
Distractible - Perceptive

Dreamy - Imaginative
Explosive - Dramatic
Fearful - Sensitive
Giddy - Good-humored
High strung - Energetic, enthusiastic
Hyper - Loves to move
Intense - focused; dedicated
Moody - Charismatic
Non-participatory - An observer
Picky - Selective
Self-centered - Proud
Serious - Contemplative
Shy - Reflective
Silly - Joyful
Stubborn - Tenacious; persistent
Troublesome - Challenging
Unpredictable - Curious
Whiny - Willing to communicate