

OT/PT PROGRAM

TIP SHEET

IS IT BEHAVIOR OR IS IT SENSORY?

What happened before? During? After? Consider the **ABC** approach. Ask:

- Antecedent—The environment, situation, or demand that precedes the behavior
- Behavior—Observable responses
- Consequence—An event or situation that occurs after the behavior

Causes of Behavior

Medical, interoception: is the student in pain? Medication side effects? Hungry? Fearful? Stressed? Consider the acronym **SEAT**.

Sensory: Seeking or Avoiding

- Seeking sensation: touching others, bumping into people/things, making noises, humming, running, jumping, biting
- Avoiding: hiding under tables, zoning out, not listening, crying before going to gym, cafeteria, screaming (provides a predictable input to block out unpredictable or unpleasant input)

Escape: Doing anything to get out of the requested action. Avoiding demands being placed on them. People tend to engage in escape behavior when the task is too difficult, they simply do not want to do it, or they want out of the situation or environment.

Attention: Acting out to gain positive or negative attention from adults or peers. Trying to evoke a reaction from an individual

Tangible: Doing something to earn a treat or other item. Often displayed when an item is taken away from the child (take a doll away from a child), or there is a delay in the presentation of a reinforcer (you don't give him his candy fast enough).

What to do?

1. **Ignore.** If it is not harmful to self or others or a major infraction of a rule, ignore the behavior. No reaction from you and the behavior stops. It may increase in the short term, but it will stop. Take a deep breath and ignore.
2. **Redirect.** Move your child to a different activity. CalmLy. Even it is the tenth time that day.
3. **Positive reinforcement.** Catch your child being good and reward that behavior. You are showing your child what you want from him or her. Once he or she knows what you want and has received reinforcement for the behavior, the behavior will increase.
4. **Give choices if possible.** Kids often exhibit behavior as a way to control SOMETHING in life. We tell them what to do all day long! At some point they shut down and decide that we can make them do everything else, but we can't force them to eat peas. Fine. Peas or carrots? Pick one.
5. **Teach consequences.** Use natural consequences when able. Set up a private behavior contract to make expectations clear and attainable.

If it is a true sensory issue—Talk to your OT. They can provide safe sensory alternatives to meet needs.