

# Tips for Managing Challenging Behaviors

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Challenging behavior can be described as an individual's solution to a problem and a form of communication. In order for a behavior to be categorized as challenging, it must interfere with either the individual's learning or learning of the individual's peers. Severe challenging behavior can result in self injury or injury to others, damage to the physical environment, and can socially isolate an individual.

There are many strategies to help manage challenging behaviors. The strategies we will discuss in this blog post are: **1) Environmental Arrangement 2) Set clear expectations 3) Honoring requests 4) Give choices 5) Visuals**

**1.Environmental Arrangements :** Environmental arrangement can teach individuals expected behavior by arranging the physical space in ways that support growth and development. Particular areas designated for specific activities may help an individual learn what behaviors are acceptable in an area. For example, break area for relaxing vs. desk for academic work. In addition, physical boundaries, such as partitions, can be added to separate a break environment from a work environment.

**2. Set Clear Expectations :** Setting clear expectations can help manage and prevent challenging behavior for an individual. Using simple, literal language will be useful when explaining an expectation. For example, you will determine if someone needs to have a visual paired with the verbal expectation. Some individuals will need added support when it comes to giving details about their expectations. Setting clear expectations can be helpful when someone is resistant to change

**3. Honoring Requests :** Honoring an individual's appropriate requests is a strategy implemented to decrease challenging behaviors by improving and developing an individual's communication. For example, an individual may point to a food item in the kitchen instead of hitting your leg with their closed fist. You will want to honor that request to increase their appropriate communication in the future. When honoring appropriate requests you want to keep in mind whether or not the requests interfere with an individual's work and if the request is reasonable. This will all need to be determined on an individual basis. For example, did the individual appropriately request for a break 1 minute into desk work or 10 minutes into desk work?

**4. Providing Choices:** Providing choices in an individual's day is an effective strategy to manage challenging behavior. It allows someone to become involved in his or her activity schedule, gives them control of their environment, and can increase participation while teaching new skills. When providing choices, it is important to pay attention to the individual's skills and learning level. This will influence how many choices you present to the learner.

**5. Visuals:** Implementing visuals in an individual's day can be an effective way to manage challenging behaviors while increasing independence. Visuals are an efficient way to teach rules and routines, support verbal prompts, and show individuals what to do in certain social situations. For example, an individual who is unable to read and who struggles with receptive language can use a visual of picture icons to learn how to wait in line with the rest of his or her class.



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