

Top 10 Tips: Behavior 101

1. Behavior is anything we do, and it always has meaning.
 - So often we hear about negative or challenging behaviors, but it's important to remember anything and everything we do in a day is behavior. In addition to this, it all has meaning. Therefore instead of labeling behavior as good or bad, right or wrong, I choose to define it for what it is. It's an action that is serving a need. When I take this more global approach, I find I am not so quick to make the behavior personal or about me, and therefore can work with the child, connect with the child, and assist the child in the calmest way possible.
2. Behavior is efficient and predictable.
 - We do what we do to serve a need. We also do what we do in the quickest, most efficient way that we know how. This is what makes behavior predictable. Students learn very quickly, what the quickest way to meet their needs is going to be. Knowing that behavior is efficient and predictable allows us as the adult to be ready for it, and to be thinking of an alternative behavior we can teach that is more efficient for the student to have their needs met.
3. Behavior is a solution to a problem, not a problem in need of a solution.
 - When we change our lens of what behavior is, we become a part of the equation instead of standing on the sidelines "hoping" for a change. When we view behavior as a solution, we create a deeper understanding to the problem and therefore can help provide alternatives to solve the problem instead of waiting for a different response or reaction.
4. Behavior serves four main functions.
 - All behavior serves a need and these needs fall into four categories:
 - *Escape or Avoidance*
 - *Attention*
 - *Tangible*
 - *Sensory or Automatic*

5. All behavior is expected or unexpected depending on societal and environmental context.
 - Instead of right or wrong, good or bad, we can look at behavior as expected or unexpected for the environment you are in. This again helps to keep the focus on the situation instead of the individual person engaging in the behavior. Teach what is expected for specific situations or environments, and help children understand the difference between different sets of environmental criteria.
6. The only behavior we can truly change is our own.
 - Simple as this. We control our own attitude and effort and that is it! We can coach, guide, support, assist, you name it, and we can do it, but at the end of the day, we are only in control of our own behavior.
7. Keep looking forward but remain present for today!
 - So quickly we can look in the past or jump to the future. We start to live in regret of the past, or should-ville of the future. Focus on today. Focus on the present. Focus on the here and now. What changes can be made today to assist the momentum building forward? I use the 80-10-10 rule; 80% of time and energy on the present day; 10% reflecting on the past, and 10% guiding into the future.
8. Connect first, direct second.
 - Connection always comes first. Connect first with the student or child, and then provide direction. When we trust in another person, our ability to follow their lead elevates. Connect first, then direct.
9. Understand the difference between “can’t do” or “won’t do”
 - If I am given a sheet of paper in Spanish and was told, “read this in fluent Spanish and I’ll give you \$100, you have 5 minutes, go”, it doesn’t matter how I try, I can’t do it. I don’t have the skill set yet. Sure, I can learn it, but I don’t have it now. I need to be taught the skill. Same goes for our children. Recognize when the child doesn’t have the skill set and needs explicit teaching AND recognize when they do have the skill set, but something is blocking them from showing it. If this is the case and they won’t do it, see # 8 – connect first to figure out why and then direct in a way that best suits the child you are working with.
10. Always keep teaching!
 - No matter what! Always show up...always keep teaching!