



Behavior Management for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder

One main aspiration of all parents is to provide the tools necessary for their children to reach adulthood as independent productive people in society. Although this is a difficult feat for any parent, it is especially challenging for parents who have children that struggle with autism. These parents must give extra consideration to the behavior management or behavior modification aspect that many children with autism spectrum disorder require. An effective behavior management plan can make independent living for a person with autism an obtainable goal. Here are some guidelines for parents who wish to use behavior modification effectively:

Establish the behavior goal or objective- The parent should consider relevant yet achievable objectives or goals. They must be observable and measurable. Key questions to bear in mind are when trying to establish these goals are:

- What is the desired behavior?
- How long or well should the child perform the wanted behavior?
- Under what circumstances will he or she perform this behavior?

Determine the stimulus and the response- The stimulus refers to the action or verbal command that precedes the preferred behavior (e.g. a clap or calling of the child's name). The response is what the child does that lets the parent know that the wanted behavior has or has not occurred.

Decide on appropriate awards and positive consequences- This is extremely important and must be specific to the behavior that the parent is trying to enhance. Discovering the consequences/rewards that work for children with autism will be the greatest challenge so try various methods. There are basically three types of rewards:

- Those that are eaten (candies, cookies)
- Those that are felt (games, toys, sensory)
- Those that are social (parties, plays)

One key factor to remember is that changing and/or teaching new behaviors to children with autism takes a consistent approach and a very keen observation. Parents should only focus on positive behaviors and ignore negative behaviors. Also, parents should consult with a professional prior to implementing behavior modification to determine the best strategy for their individual child.

For more information or to schedule an appointment, please call 337-436-9533 or 1-888-414-FYCA.

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