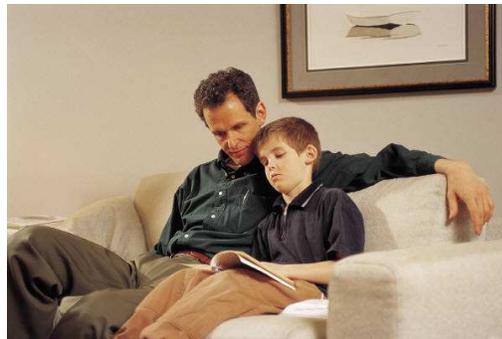


SPECIAL REPORT

Hidden Causes of Behavior Problems Revealed



Horizons 
Developmental Remediation Center

3120 68th Street SE, Caledonia, MI 49316
Phone (616) 698-0306 info@horizonsdrc.com

By Nicole Beurkens, M.Ed., Director

Hidden Causes of Behavior

Problems Revealed

When children exhibit problematic behaviors, there are always underlying reasons. If your child exhibits some challenging behavior, here are some things to consider:

Lack of Flexible Thinking

Many parents use words like “rigid,” “stubborn,” and “inflexible” to describe their children who exhibit behavioral issues. It can certainly feel this way when dealing with a child who seems to be over-reactive, unreasonable, and unwilling to be flexible. For individuals with chronic issues like these, deficits in flexible thinking and problem solving are often at the root of the problem. Being able to think about options and consider multiple ways to solve problems requires a number of higher level thinking skills. People with deficits in the ability to identify and consider options are going to appear inflexible and stubborn when, in reality, they truly do not know how to think about the situation in any other way. ***Specific strategies are needed to help these individuals learn to think more flexibly and participate in the problem solving process***, as opposed to getting “locked in” to one way of thinking about and doing things.

Feelings of Incompetence

Think about your reaction to situations that make you feel incompetent. Do they make you want to dive right into the situation; or do they make you want to crawl into the nearest hole? ***When faced with situations that have the potential to make us feel incompetent, most of us try to avoid them as much as possible.*** If we stop to think about it, we realize that very few adults regularly choose to place themselves in situations where they know they will feel incompetent. *It doesn't feel good to not know what you're doing!* When individuals are exhibiting chronic behavior problems, we need to assess the extent to which they are feeling competent or incompetent throughout the day. The question is not whether they have the capacity to do something well, but whether they think they have the ability to accomplish whatever they are being asked to do. Many individuals who exhibit problematic behaviors on a regular basis do not feel competent at many things. Helping them ***tap into the things they do well, while carefully encouraging them to explore areas that make them feel incompetent,*** goes a long way toward reducing negative behaviors.

Communication Deficits

There is a saying in the field of disabilities: “**Behavior is communication.**” This is true of most behaviors, as there is typically some purpose behind each of them. Think about toddlers, who have a tendency to throw temper tantrums when they don't get their way. They are communicating their anger over not getting what they

want! The same is true for the majority of behaviors children and adults exhibit, and the key is figuring out what the behaviors are communicating so that solutions can be developed. When we look at behavior merely as something the person is doing to cause a problem, we don't allow ourselves to look at what is potentially causing the behavior to occur. This is especially true for individuals who have limited communication abilities, which includes people who can speak but have difficulty using their speech meaningfully. In the absence of a reliable way to communicate appropriately, most people behave in inappropriate ways. ***Thinking about behavior as communication allows for the development of solutions that get to the root of the problem.***

Sensory Processing Problems

Another critical area to explore when individuals exhibit challenging behavior is sensory processing. Sensory processing involves our bodies taking in information from the environment around us and sensations within us (smells, the way things feel, the position of our body, etc.), and our brain making sense of it (processing) so we can do something productive with the information. This can seem like such a simple thing because most of us don't even realize we're doing it! ***For people with sensory processing problems, however, taking in sensations and doing something with them can be very confusing, difficult, and even physically uncomfortable.*** In fact, behaviors can have sensory components that aren't visible, and that the person isn't even consciously aware of. When individuals exhibit

challenging behaviors, it is important to investigate their sensory processing abilities to determine if breakdowns in that system are creating problems. If so, ***a specific treatment plan to address those sensory issues will be needed in order to improve behavior.***

Medical Problems

Some challenging behaviors can be the result of underlying medical problems. Children, especially those with limited communication skills, can have difficulty expressing how they are feeling physically. ***Any number of health issues can be related to behavior problems.*** Some common ones, in our experience, include abnormal blood sugar levels, hormone imbalances, stomach / intestinal problems, seizures, and allergies. It is important to ensure that your child is not suffering from any of these problems, particularly if you have unsuccessfully tried a number of things to address the behaviors. ***A thorough check-up by a physician can assist in determining whether any health issues may be affecting behavior.***

You now have some information to help you think about and explore potential reasons for your child's challenging behavior. *The next step is for you to contact professionals who can get you on the path to identifying your child's specific obstacles accurately, and help you in developing a plan to address them effectively.* You can get all the information and support you need to **start this process by calling the Horizons team at (616) 698-0306 or sending an email to info@horizonsdrc.com**. We look forward to helping you and your child get on the path to less stress, increased competence, and fewer behavioral challenges!



www.horizonsdrc.com

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