



BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT IMPORTANT FACTS

By nature, children are wiggly and fidgety and have difficulty sustaining attention for long periods of time. Take advantage of opportunities to observe children in their natural environment to gain a better understanding of typical behavior.

Typical attention span: When trying to estimate realistically how much time a child can focus on one activity, you can use the following formula (source unknown):

$$\text{Attention span for learning} = \text{chronological age} + 1$$

For example, an eight-year-old child ($8+1=9$) would have a nine-minute attention span for a learning activity. This information can be quite useful when the tutor is planning his activities for the tutoring session. By planning a variety of literacy activities based on the child's age and attention span, the tutor is more likely to maintain the child's attention and limit inappropriate behavior.

Behavior: Remember that behavior serves a purpose. Young children often do not have the words necessary to express themselves; they express themselves through their behavior. If a child behaves inappropriately during the tutoring session, the tutor should not take the behavior personally. The child is not misbehaving with the sole purpose of irritating the tutor. Rather she is choosing her behavior to meet a need. When a child chooses inappropriate behavior, the tutor should first try to pinpoint the cause of the behavior.

Choice Theory: According to Choice Theory (William Glasser), all behavior is motivated by an individual's internal desire to satisfy basic physical and psychological needs. The physical need is survival, and the psychological needs are 1) love and belonging, 2) freedom, 3) power, and 4) fun. One important concept of Choice Theory is that individuals have choices about how to behave. (For more information, go to <http://www.choicetheory.com>)

If a child chooses an inappropriate behavior, he is doing so because his desire to meet one of the above basic needs is stronger than his desire to follow the tutor's instructions. The tutor should view the child's inappropriate behavior as a teaching opportunity – an opportunity to teach the child to make good choices and that he is responsible for his actions. Tutors can teach children about responsibility and appropriate behavior by providing them with choices and by setting clear boundaries. A boundary is presented as a good thing that will happen when the child behaves appropriately. Boundaries should 1) be specific and clearly communicated, 2) respect the needs of the tutor and the child, 3) be set before a problem occurs, and 4) focus on the positive outcome. Additionally, the tutor should always follow through by allowing the positive consequence to occur when the child behaves appropriately.



Examples: If the child has a psychological need that is stronger than his desire to behave appropriately during the tutoring session, the tutor may respond in the following ways:

1. Need for fun: The tutor might say to the child, “After you spend 10 minutes on this writing activity, you can choose a game for us to play at the end of the tutoring session.”
2. Need for love and belonging: The tutor can provide the child one-on-one attention and specifically recognize the child’s good behavior.
3. Need for power: The tutor can provide the child with choices. For example, the tutor can bring two books to the session and ask the child, “Do you want to read this book or this book?”
4. Need for freedom: Providing choices will help satisfy the child’s need for freedom. For example, the tutor can let the child decide what activity they will do or where the tutoring session will take place (if feasible).

What doesn’t work: Tutors will not be able to teach the children responsibility or get them to make appropriate choices by using threats, losing their tempers, instilling fear, or being permissive.