



Quick Tips for Providers: *Educating Families about Disruptive Behavior Disorders (DBD)*

It is normal for young kids to be naughty, defiant, and/or impulsive from time to time. However, some children have very challenging behaviors that occur more frequently than other kids their age, such as refusing to follow rules, tantrums, aggression, and school avoidance.

We can think of these disruptive behaviors as a math equation:

$$\begin{array}{ccccccccc}
 \text{Environment} & & \text{Child Behaviors} & & \text{Stressors} & & \text{Parent Behaviors} & & \text{(Disruptive) Behavior} \\
 \text{(e.g., In the checkout line} & + & \text{(e.g., Asking for a new} & + & \text{(e.g., In a hurry to get} & + & \text{(e.g., Telling child they} & = & \text{(e.g., Yelling,} \\
 \text{at the store)} & & \text{toy)} & & \text{home, long line)} & & \text{cannot have a new toy)} & & \text{screaming, tantrum)}
 \end{array}$$

The best way to change the unwanted or disruptive behavior is to understand the function of the behavior and then change the equation through the ABCs of behavior

- **Antecedent**: what happens before a behavior
- **Behavior**: what happens during the behavior
- **Consequences**: what happens after the behavior

Behavior (or actions) have 3 primary functions:

- For attention (positive or negative, such as receiving a hug or getting reprimand or lecture)
- To escape or avoid (e.g., avoid going to bed)
- To access an item or activity (e.g., go outside to play, use a certain toy, get a cookie)

Youth with disruptive behaviors often struggle in school, with peers, and at home. Without help, symptoms can last into adulthood leading to trouble in relationships, with work, at home, and with self-care tasks. People with these behaviors are also more likely to have anxiety, depression, and to abuse substances (e.g., alcohol and drugs).

What to do if your child is experiencing excessive anxiety:

There are several treatments available to help with problematic anxiety:

- ***Behavioral Parent Training***: Parents learn skills to improve the parent-child relationship and reduce problematic behaviors by changing the environment to best support or compensate for the child's symptoms. This includes helping to create a more structured environment (e.g., routines), giving clear instructions, giving praise and positive reinforcement for desired behaviors, and setting limits on misbehavior. This type of training is used to prevent and treat child behavior problems.
- ***Collaborate with your child's school***: If kids are showing these behaviors in school, it can sometimes be a sign of a learning difference or difficulty that may need additional evaluation or intervention.