Understanding Behavior in Foster Children

Syllabus

Introduction

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This course covers problematic behavior in foster children and how foster parents can better understand the purpose of a child's behavior.

Surface Behaviors in Foster Children

A child's behavior is influenced by his temperament, his past experiences, and his environment. Surface behaviors can be understood more clearly by careful observation.

An interactive exercise helps viewers understand how to observe rather than label a child's behavior.

Decoding Underlying Meaning

Offers five “decoders” for understanding why surface behaviors happen:

1. The child tries to gain attention.
2. The child tries to avoid or escape an undesirable task or unpleasant individual.
3. The child may have a medical or physical condition that causes the behavior.
4. The child may have developed a particular point of view based on past experiences.
5. The child may be acting age appropriately.

An interactive exercise based on scenarios helps viewers determine what is driving children’s behavior.

Understanding Behavior as Part of a Sequence

Behavior is part of a sequence. What happens before the behavior is the Antecedent; the Behavior occurs; and the result of the behavior is the Consequence.

An interactive exercise, which includes completing a behavior checklist, helps viewers get a clearer understanding of the behavior sequence.
Parenting Opportunities and Approaches

The opportunity to effectively parent a child with challenging behavior comes at each part of the sequence.

Approaches at Point C

Consequences can be positive or negative, natural or logical. Consequences that have a connection to the behavior and are applied consistently and calmly are the most likely to cause a change in behavior. Physical punishment should never be used.

Approaches at Point B

During a behavior episode, the parent needs to remain calm and insure the child is safe and cannot harm himself.

Approaches at Point A

Emphasis on consequences to reduce problem behavior is reactive. Focus on the antecedent to the behavior helps parents remain proactive and decreases the likelihood of undesirable behavior. Warning behaviors present the opportunity to parent and teach acceptable, replacement behaviors as well as social skills.

The key to successful foster parenting is getting to know the child by tracking his behavior and being proactive.

Closing

Key points and reminder to print handouts.

Bonus Section on Parenting Style

Parenting style is usually based on, or is a modified version of, how an individual was raised and influences how a parent views raising a child.

Describes four parenting styles:

- Balanced
- Authoritarian
- Permissive/Laissez-Faire
- Rejecting/Neglecting

An interactive exercise helps viewers identify their own parenting style.