



Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning

Project funded by the Child Care and Office of Head Start in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services



CSEFEL Module Three Infant Toddler

**Individualized Intervention with
Infants and Toddlers: Determining
the Meaning of Behavior and
Developing Appropriate Responses**

Learner Objectives

Participants will be able to:

- Define and identify the characteristics of challenging behavior for infants and toddlers
- Describe behaviors exhibited by infants and toddlers and the relationship between behavior and forms of communication



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Learner Objectives

Participants will be able to:

- Identify ways to partner with families in understanding and addressing concerns about infant and toddler behavior
- Describe a process for developing a response to challenging behavior



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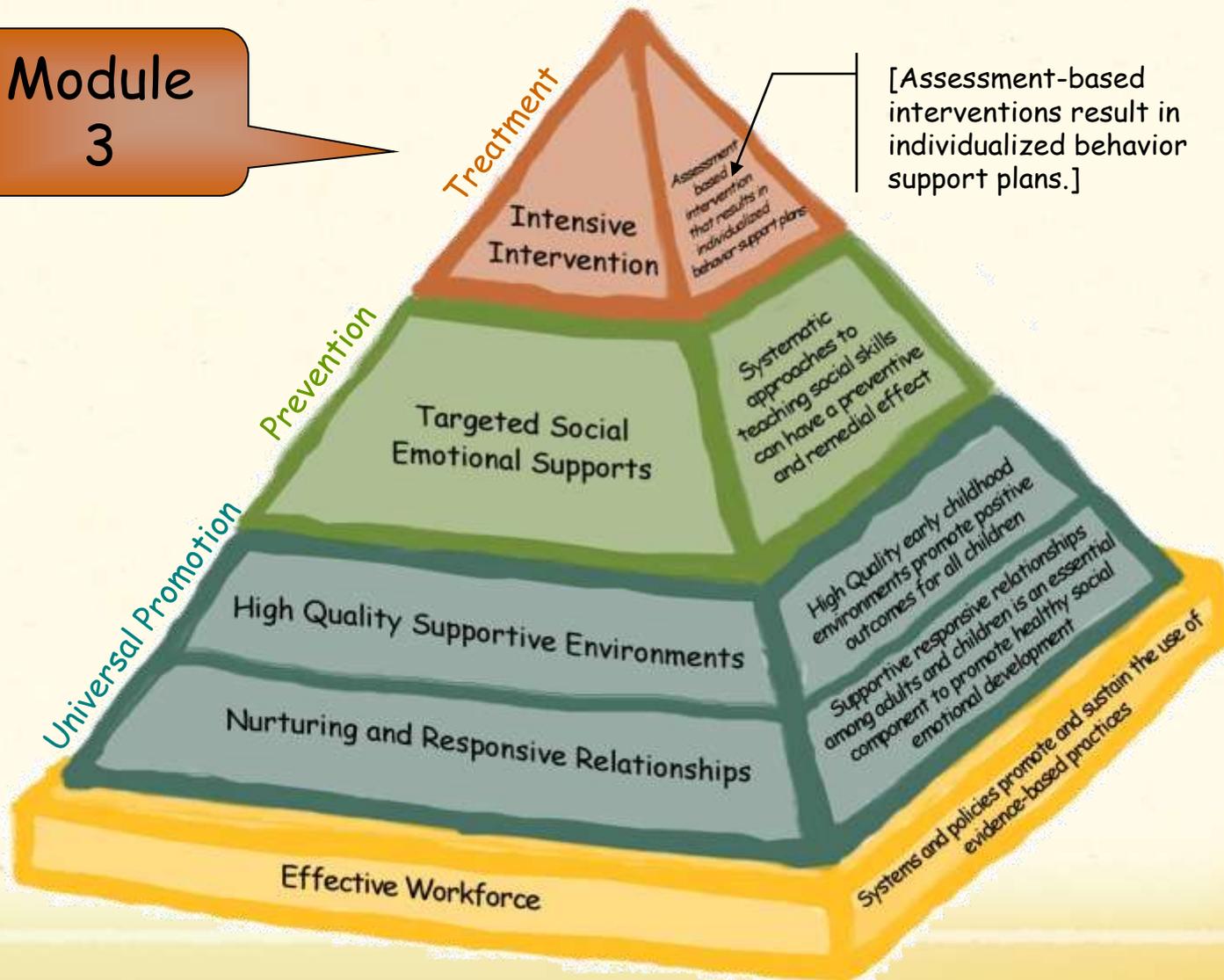


Agenda

- Setting the Stage
- What is Challenging Behavior?
- A Relationship Based Approach to Challenging Behavior
- Review process for an Individual Support Plan
- Wrap-up, Reflection and Action Planning

The Pyramid Model: Promoting Social Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children

Module
3



Social Emotional Wellness

The ability to:

- Experience, regulate and express emotions
- Form close and secure interpersonal relationships
- Explore and learn from the environment



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What Is Challenging Behavior?



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CSEFEL Definition of Challenging Behavior

What we are referring to when we say “challenging behavior:”

- Any repeated pattern of behavior that interferes with learning or engagement in pro-social interactions with peers and adults
- Behaviors that are not responsive to the use of developmentally appropriate guidance procedures

Reasons for Challenging Behavior

- Developmental surge
- Medical reasons
- Biological differences
- Social emotional environment
- Discontinuity between care program and home
- Lack of skill in communicating and interacting with others
- A combination of more than one above

Activity: Considering Circumstances

Use **Handout 3.4** to reflect on the circumstances of the child and family.

Module 3

Handout 3.4: Home Environments or Circumstances

Infant-Toddler Home Environments or Circumstances

Family Circumstances	Parent's Likely Feelings	Identified Child's Experience	Caregiver Actions that Could Relieve Child's Distress

A Relationship Based Approach to Challenging Behavior

Examining Behaviors



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Behavior Is a Form of Communication

- What the infant or toddler is experiencing
- What it is like to be in that child's body
- What it is like to be in that child's world

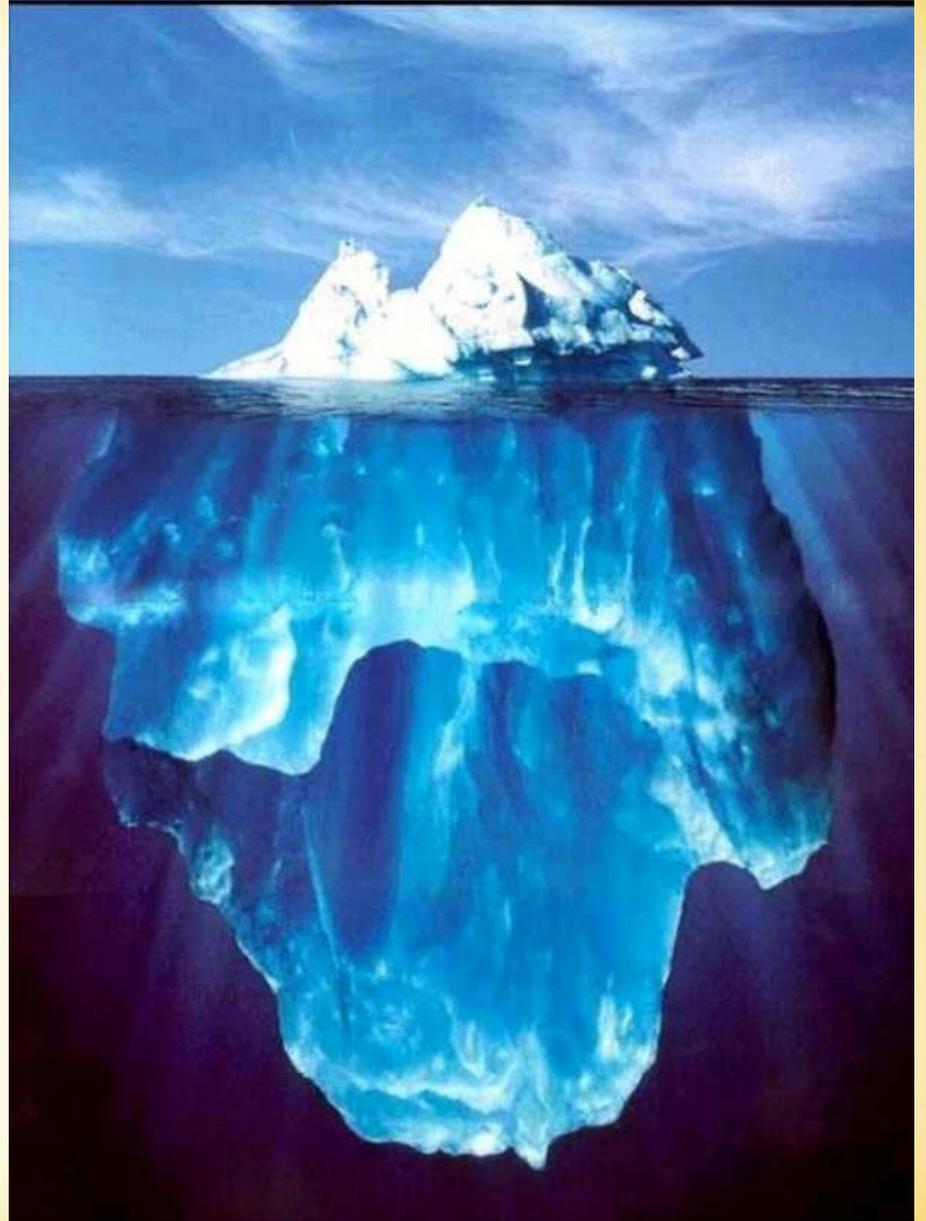


Behavior

→
Is communicating...

Potential unmet need

→
Skill to be developed



Expression of Emotion



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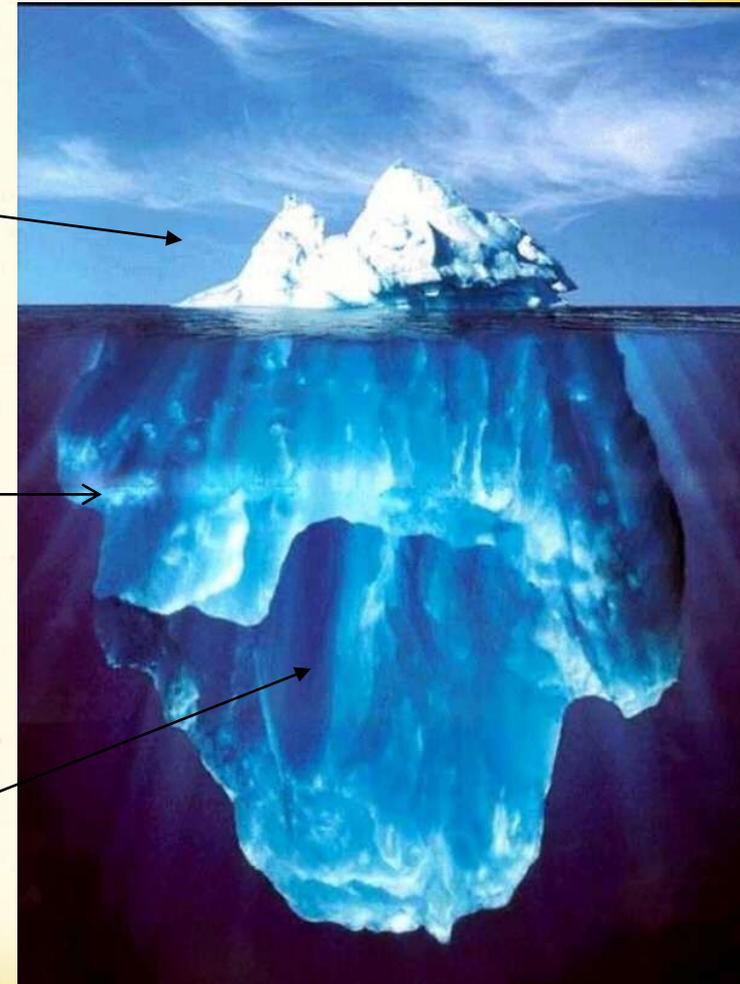
- Intensity
- Frequency
- Duration

A 6 month-old cries for long periods of time unless held by his caregiver...

1. What is the 'tip of the iceberg' behavior?

2. What social-emotional skill is needing support?

3. What might be going on for this child? (possible unmet needs)



Video 3.1 – What is the Biting Trying to Tell Us?



Continuum of Emotional Expression

Social Withdrawing.....Acting Out

*Two different and extreme
forms of emotional expression*

Acting-Out Behaviors

- Fussing
- Inconsolable crying
- Frequent or intense tantrums
- Pushing
- Hitting
- Biting
- Frequent throwing of things or knocking things down or destroying property
- Persistent refusal to allow or participate in activities
- Harm to self or others

Social Withdrawing Behaviors

- Pulling away while being held
- Rarely cooing
- Rarely babbling or talking
- Looking sad
- Not showing preference for caregiver
- Not making eye contact
- Whining
- Being overly compliant or avoidant with the caregiver
- Diminished efforts to use communications skills that have previously been used

Where Do The Sticky Notes Go?



Acting-Out Behaviors

Social Withdrawing Behaviors



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A Relationship Based Approach to Challenging Behavior

Responding to Infant and Toddler Distress



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Caregivers and Families

Focusing on the Child

- Makes us more likely to be able to respond with empathy to a young child's needs
- Helps us be more intentional about problem solving
- Will assist us in restoring the child's sense of well being
- Will enable the child to spend his emotional energy on development
- Will help us keep our own emotions in check

Responding to Distress

- Acknowledge distress
- Offer comfort
- Be attuned (in sync) to child's individual needs
- Help the baby/toddler achieve the understood intention
- Be developmentally appropriate

Video 3.2



clip 3.2

What Is My Perspective?

Partner Activity, Handout 3.7

1. I am Michael. What is my perspective?
I felt... (write down as many “I”
statements as possible)
2. I am the child playing with Michael.
What is my perspective? I felt...
3. I am the caregiver. What is my
perspective? I felt...



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A Relationship Based Approach to Challenging Behavior

Meaning of the Behavior



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Hypotheses

- What happened that caused the child to react with challenging behavior?
- What was the child experiencing or feeling?
- What has caused the shift in the child's pattern of behavior?
 - What happened before the behavior?
 - With whom did the behavior occur?
 - Where did the behavior occur?

Our Approach

- Reflective, rather than reactive
- Focus is on assisting child in getting needs met rather than eliminating the challenging behavior
- Goal is to help the child with developmental appropriate self-regulation so that developmental momentum is not slowed down or disrupted

Understanding Behavior is the Key

- Watching children – careful observation
- Behavior is a form of communication - children tell us their needs and wants
- Focus on the child. Ask “What is the child trying to tell me?” and “I wonder...”
- Create a best guess (hypothesis) and choose supportive ways to respond

Video 3.3 Katie and Muk



Activity: Small Group Discussion

- What information did you gather?
- What are the tip of the iceberg behaviors you see from Katie?
- What might Katie be trying to tell us? I wonder...



Questions to Ask About the Meaning of the Behavior

- What is the child experiencing?
- What is the child's perspective on the situation?
- What strengths can be observed in the child's development or behavior patterns.
- What, when, where, how and with whom is the undesirable behavior occurring?

Questions to Ask About the Meaning of the Behavior (cont' d)

- What is the child communicating that he wants or needs?
- What effect does the child's behavior have on others?
- What do others do or stop doing in response to the child's behavior?
- What is the meaning of the child's behavior?
- What do I want the child to do?

Parent Interview Questions

- What is your infant's or toddler's challenging behavior like for you?
- What have you done in response to his behavior?
- How do you feel when he acts this way?
- When and where does the infant or toddler behave in this way and what has typically happened before or after?
- Is this behavior new or has the infant or toddler been acting this way for some time?

Parent Interview Questions

(cont' d)

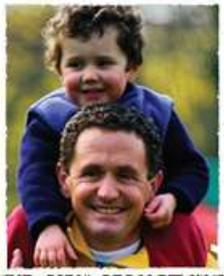
- Does the child act this way with others (e.g. father, grandmother or others) and what does that person say about the behavior?
- How do you think the infant or toddler feels when he is engaging in this behavior? Why do you think he feels that way?
- Do you have any ideas about why the infant or toddler is acting this way?

Parent Interview Questions

(cont' d)

- Have there been any changes at home that might help us understand how the infant or toddler feels?
- How have these changes affected your relationship with the infant or toddler?
- How has the behavior affected your relationship with the infant or toddler?

Wrap-up, Reflection and Action Planning



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Reflection

- What questions do you have about the material we discussed?
- What additional strengths are you able to recognize in your work and practices? In the children you care for? Families you help support?
- What strategies did you see or hear that might be useful in your role and work?

Activity: Planning for Change



- Use the handout to develop an action plan for yourself
- List three things you will do as you consider ways to create supportive plans for individual children



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Major Messages to Take Home

- It is important to understand that behavioral problems in infants and toddlers are very often the child's way of communicating emotional distress.
- A collaborative, reflective process leading to an understanding of the meaning of the individual infant's or toddler's challenging behavior followed by a plan of action is an effective intervention.
- A partnership with parents or other primary caregivers is an essential element of any effective intervention for infants or toddlers.