Responding to Infant-Toddler Persistent Challenging Behavior

Woman: Places, everyone. Are the lights ready? Three, two, one.

Mike Browne: Ooh-whee! Estoy aqui, estoy listo. I am here. I am ready and let's rock and roll!

Becky Sughrim: I'm ready, too!

All: [Singing] "Teacher Time." "Teacher Time." "Teacher Time." "Teacher Time." "Teacher Time." "Teacher Time."

Mike: Hello everyone. Welcome back to another episode of Teacher – we made it.

Becky: We made it.

Mike: We made it to the next one. We weathered the storm, rain, turbulence on flights to be here for our final infantile episode of Teacher Time. Not the final one of the series, because there's also a preschool one coming up next month. But we are here. My name is Mike Brown. My pronouns are he/him. And I'm joined by the fabulous –

Becky: Becky Sughrim, and my pronouns are she/her.

Mike: And we are from the National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching and Learning. We are so excited to be here once again with you today. Today we've been focusing on positive behavior supports this entire season of Teacher Time. And so far, if you remember, we have talked about the importance of relationships, how to support emotional literacy, problem-solving and relationship skills. And today, we're going to discuss a very fun topic, at least I think it's fun and exciting around how to respond, prevent and address persistent challenging behaviors with infants and toddlers.

To get us started, I would like to call our attention to the viewer's guides. You will find it in the research widget. And as you all already might already know, that was a tongue twister, right, this season our viewer's guide is a viewer's guide from birth to five, includes specific age group information for infants or toddler and preschool children. It's packed full of information about development, teaching practices, helpful, quick tips, handouts, and reminders that you can cutout and post in your learning environment. There's also a resource list. You can download the guide and use it for our time together, for taking notes, for reflecting, and planning how to use your teacher time practices in your settings. And of course, please share the viewer's guide with your colleagues.

Becky: Yes, please share. And if you haven't joined us for Teacher Time before, you might have notice that our regular segments look a little bit different today. Our focus on equity, small change big impact, and Neuroscience Nook are all going to be integrated throughout the webinar.

During our time today, we're going to be talking about positive behavior supports and what strategies at the top of the pyramid look like. We're going to take some time to define challenging behaviors. We're going to talk about form and function and how we can use the behavior equation to create a behavior support plan. We're also going to discuss the important partnerships we have with families and those we work with. We're going to promote your wellness and all about you. And we will wrap up our time as we always do with The Bookcase and our lovely librarian Emily where we connect our topic to books that you can share with children and families.

Mike: Let's begin by checking with using our famous Teacher Time Tree. Enter into the Q and A which number creature you most relate to at the moment. I am feeling like, I'm feeling like number one today. And I was inspired by some children I was supporting in a classroom recently, and they were hanging from a tree branch. I started, actually I was inspired, and I was like, I'm going to do some aerial silks.

Becky: OK.

Mike: Like Cirque du Soleil.

Becky: Yeah.

Mike: And I've been incorporating silks into my environment with the children. Like number one if you look at it, that's how I feel when I'm hanging from those silks where I'm like my face is like this, and my body is like that. That's how I'm feeling today.

Becky: Oh cool.

Mike: Because I'm sore and I'm tired.

Becky: Thanks for sharing, Mike. Trying something new. Let's see. I'm feeling – I feel like I was having a hard time selecting one today where I kind of wanted to pick a combination where I feel like a lot about 20. I'm excited to be here. I'm feeling on top of the world. We're together. We've got this great team of support in the Q and A. And feeling like number five where I could take a nap. Get some extra sleep. Let's see. We've got a lot of activity in the chat. We've got, or in the Q and A, excuse me. We've got an eight and a 10, feeling like 11.

Mike. I see a one. Are you doing silks too with me?

Becky: Wonderful. Keep those coming in, and our Q and A team will push those out so everybody can take a look and see how everyone's feeling. Thanks for joining us today. We have been focusing on positive behavior supports this season and social-emotional development, which as you already know, is one of the domains in the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework. The practical strategies we're going to be discussing today will be focusing on several goals within the social-emotional development domain that you can see highlighted here.

Let's check in about the pyramid model. And this season we've been working through the pyramid model. And just as a refresher, the pyramid model is a positive behavior support or PBS framework for proactively addressing the social and emotional development and challenging behaviors of young children. And this framework offers a continuum of evidence-based teaching practices that are organized into three tiers of support.

The first tier of support is where all children need nurturing, responsive relationships, and a high-quality support of environment. And then some children will need these second tier supports such as social and emotional teaching strategies. And then for a few children whose behaviors persist despite previous tiers of support in place, an intensive and individualized intervention plan is needed to understand, address, and prevent the behavior, which is what we're going to be focusing on today.

And a key aspect of responding to addressing, preventing challenging behavior in the learning environment is ensuring that all strategies within the first two tiers of the pyramid are in place. Please check out our past Teacher Time episodes this season to learn more about teaching practices within these tiers and check out your viewer's guide to learn more about the pyramid model and find resources from the National Center of Pyramid Model Innovations or NCPMI in the resource list.

Mike: You're going to hear this a lot. Type into the – use that purple widget, the Q and A widget, share with us, give us your thoughts, what's coming up for you, your aha moments, your questions. We'd love to hear from you. Using that purple Q and A widget, type in one word that describes the feeling that comes up for you around challenging behaviors.

For me, one word that comes up for me is kind of ironic, but it's exciting. I mentioned this earlier. I've worked with a lot of children and probably can't remember half of their names, but the ones that I remember the most are the ones who are the most challenging. And those are the ones with the big emotions, the one who refuse to sleep at nap. The ones that probably gave me a couple of gray hairs. And those were the fun ones. Those are the ones who needed the most love at the end. When I think about challenging behaviors, I'm excited because those are the children we really want to work with and support and uplift and give us all our love. What about you?

Becky: I love that, Mike, yes. You know, my thought was curiosity. Like wondering OK, what's going on. What's the meaning behind this behavior. How can I adjust my practice to better support you? I think I saw that come through in the Q and A, there are so many words coming through.

Mike: I see frustrated, puzzled.

Becky: Rewarding. Hopeful.

Mike: Being a detective.

Becky: Patience.

Mike: That was more than one word, but we'll allow it this time.

Becky: Yeah, yeah. Overstimulation.

Mike: Relationships.

Becky: Relationships? Yes, it always come down to relationships. So many great words. Keep them coming in. And thank you for sharing those words with us. And we, again, we've been focusing on positive behavior supports this season or PBS. And as a refresher, this is a positive approach to preventing and addressing challenging behavior. Or behaviors that adults find challenging. And we're going to be differentiating between those two things, challenging behaviors, and behaviors that adults find challenging throughout the webinar.

And the number one thing to remember is that PBS is proactive. We are proactively thinking about ways in which we can prevent challenging behaviors from occurring. And at the heart of PBS is the recognition that challenging behavior is communication and is used to communicate many messages. Like, "I want to play with them." Or "I don't want to wash my hands right now." Or "I'm not really feeling great today." Or "I'm so excited."

And educators can be their best detectives. And together with families uncover what the child is trying to communicate through their behavior and teach the child more effective ways to communicate. We're going to be thinking about responding, preventing, addressing persistent challenging behaviors today. And we're going to be focusing on three big ideas. And the first is understanding the behavior where we're going to think more about reviewing, reflecting and building resilience which is going to help us pause and think about influences on a child's behavior and adult perceptions of the paper. Think about like being that detective that came through the Q and A.

And then we're going to provide information on how to develop a behavior support plan through observation and partnering with families. And connection and collaboration with families is so necessary to do early on into this process. And then finally for a behavior support plan to be effective, the intervention and teaching supports must be tailored to match the child's developmental level, preferences and unique needs.

Please check out your viewer's guide for a list of possible ways to provide individualized teaching supports. And each of these three key ideas is going to look different. We know it's going to look different for every single child since we're thinking about intensive individualized supports. We also know it's going to look different for infants and toddlers. As we discuss each topic or each key idea, we're going to make note of what they may look like in the two different age groups.

Mike: You know what? We know that understanding and responding and addressing and preventing challenging behaviors takes a great deal of intentionality, emotional awareness, self-regulation, and that's a lot of work. It's important to remember you're not alone in this. There is a whole team of people to support you in this work. We're here today to ensure that we are a team in this work, collaborating to support each other and the infants and the toddler and the families that we work with.

Let's jump in into ways we can understand a child's behavior. It's adults who ultimately decide what behaviors they expect in the learning environment. And based off of those expectations we name when a child's behavior is challenging. It's very important to know that defining a behavior as quote/unquote challenging is influenced by the adult culture. It's influenced by our beliefs and our biases.

In addition, we need to consider how the child's temperament, their home environment, their cultural norms, influence their behaviors. Some tips to consider when determining if a child's behavior is alarming and in need of intensive support, I'm going to give it to you first.

Becky: Yeah, or to go through these three steps.

Mike: Yeah.

Becky: Which we're going to do together.

Mike: Exactly.

Becky: It's a team, like a team. We're never alone. First is we want to start with review where we want to consider the universal practices that all children need.

You might in this section ask yourself OK, how have I worked to establish a trusting relationship with this child and the family? How am I supporting the child to understand and regulate emotions? What are my, are my expectations developmentally appropriate? And is there anything outside of the child's control impacting their behavior? You know, could this child be sick? Could they be tired, hungry, uncomfortable, overstimulated? Asking all of those questions will help us review.

Mike: And then we want to reflect on our values, our own thoughts, and our own feelings about the behavior. I imagine we might ask questions and reflect on questions such as why is this behavior challenging for me first of all? And then why is this behavior challenging for other children? And I think the most important question I love to ask personally is, am I frustrated with the behavior, or am I frustrated with the child? Because those are two different things. Lastly, another question that I might ask myself is there something about this child's cultural norms that are different from mine?

Becky: Such great questions to ask. And then our final step is about building resilience. And we want to observe and think about and intentionally plan responses that build resilience in ourselves. And we can do this by asking questions like how does my typical response to the

child's behavior make me feel? What steps can I take to calm myself when I start to feel set off by a child's behavior? And who can I go to for support? Like asking a colleague to fill in while I take a deep breath. Or asking a coach to come and observe my interactions with this specific child or during a specific time of day. And how is my typical response impacting the pattern of the child's behavior on the relationship with the family? We want to make sure that you also, again, check your viewer's guide for more questions that can help us think through these three steps.

Mike: And I think that's something that we can use especially when we get questions like, or behaviors such as a child is throwing things or biting. We're going to get more into that, maybe more tools. Stay tuned. We're here all day.

Becky: Yes.

Mike: Or at least the next 40 minutes. Going back to the question I asked before. Like is this behavior challenging for me, or is this challenging for the child and the children in my environment? With questions like this, perhaps we can start to see that some behaviors we are witnessing are things that we as the adults find challenging.

We have all been there before and experienced this. We have had things in which has pushed our buttons, that has taken us to our wit's end, and alright, the hot topic issues. These behaviors can lead to some challenging behaviors from adults like suspension or expulsion or the rise in child incidences which are all adult behaviors in response to the child's behavior that is challenging to the adults. It's important to be very intentional in reflecting on our biases and asking ourselves why, why is this behavior challenging to me? How do I think a child should behave. And then why do I think that?

Becky: Yeah. And this is also a really great time to circle back to that bottom of the pyramid. Thinking about those nurturing relationships. When hot-button behaviors come up, we might be tempted to jump straight to the top of the pyramid. And we really want to encourage you to check in with your relationship with the specific child who is engaging in a behavior that you find challenging. Maybe, this is a time to add in some more positive feedback or encourage the child, play with the child and make deposits into that child's relationship piggybank.

We want to think about intensive interventions and challenging, when we think about intensive interventions, excuse me, and challenging behaviors, it's important that we have a shared definition. We know where to start. What one person sees as a behavior that is challenging might differ from what another person find challenging. It's important to talk about this with others we work with since our beliefs, values, and experiences shape how we view behavior and how we respond to it.

The definition of challenging behaviors from NCPMI is any repeated pattern of pattern that interferes with or is at risk of interfering with the child's optimal learning or engagement in pro social interactions with peers and adults. You might be wondering, what do behaviors look like that are challenging behaviors according to this definition? Or are top of the pyramid kind of

behaviors are behaviors that need individualized support plans. And it's really not necessarily what the behavior looks like. It's to what extent the behavior interferes with learning, participation, or safety. If a child is biting, and bites every few days, and they're 2 1/2 years old, we're probably not going to create an individualized plan. This is something we might expect from a toddler. Toddlers are curious and learning through sensory.

And if the toddler, but if the toddler is biting multiple times per day and it's interfering with their peer relationships, and we're doing a lot of consistent supporting, and we have a nurturing relationship with the child, then we want to develop an individualized plan.

As most of you know, especially those that work with toddlers, if we thought we had to develop a behavior support plan for every child who bites, we'd be developing a lot of behavior support plans. It's a normal thing that happens during toddlerhood. And it's really that the child's behavior is persistent and hasn't decreased. Or maybe it's even increased in response to tier one and tier two interventions from the pyramid model. And that's what prompts us to develop an individualized plan.

Mike: Now that we have that shared definition from the National Center of, they're testing me here, National Center of Pyramid, oh, OK, we'll get it later. I think it's in the chat. Anyways, we're going to look at a form, let's talk about form and function.

We know that all behavior is communication. The first step to understanding what the child is trying to communicate it's to think beyond the form of the behavior and examine the function of the behavior. The form is what the behavior is. It's what's happening or what the child is doing in the moment. As we've seen, it could be hitting or it could be spitting, pushing. It could be reaching. It could be crying. It could also be pushing someone away or maybe the arching of the back like we're seeing in this photo right here.

The function is the purpose of the behavior or the message within the behavior. It's basically what the child is trying to communicate using that behavior. We want to think about what the child is getting from the challenging behavior and how the behavior is serving the child. Some possible functions might be to obtain an object, to get attention, to obtain sensory input, to get attention, to get help, to avoid an activity or a request. To avoid sensory input, to avoid a change or transition.

Once again, it's important to look beyond what the behavior looks like or the form and understand the function of what the behavior is communicating. And if we only address the form of the behavior, the behavior will most likely continue to persist. We want to think about the function and what message the child is trying to communicate so we can teach them in a new more prosocial behavior that communicates the same message as a challenging behavior and gets their needs met. And I remember it's the National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations. I remembered it.

Becky: Yeah, thanks, Mike. Let's think about — thank you for talking through form and function. We're really, again, thinking beyond the form and focusing on the function. And one way we can better understand the function of a challenging behavior is to solve the behavior equation. And the behavior equation has three components to it. The antecedent, it's what happens before or sets up the challenging behavior. We have the behavior, what does the child do. Then we have the consequence, what happens right after or what's the response or feedback that the child gets from the behavior.

And when you look at this information, each time the behavior occurs, you can make a guess as to what the possible function of the behavior might be at that moment. Then you want to look across occurrences of the behavior to see if you can identify a pattern that can help you identify what the potential function of that behavior is. An easy way to remember this equation is that it's ABC. The ABCs will help us to produce our very best guess or a hypothesis about what the function of that behavior is. And this helps us to understand what the purpose that the behavior is serving for the child. And a key piece to the behavior equation is observation.

Let's talk a little bit more about that. And one of the tools we can use to help us solve the behavior equation is collecting ABC data. And this will give us more information about the behavior. Most importantly, what's happening right before and what's happening right after. And this is going to help us create and form that hypothesis about the possible functions of the behavior.

We can collect ABC data by using an ABC observation card like the one you see on your screen. And you can also find this handout in your viewer's guide. And we encourage you to make copies of the blank observation card and use them in your learning environment to collect ABC data on each occurrence of the behavior until you have enough information about the behavior to help you form a hypothesis about the function.

As you're preparing yourself to observe, we want you to remember to focus on the facts and write down things exactly as you see them happening. Let's walk through an example of what we might see in a toddler classroom. But first, we need to give a little bit of context for this observation. In your learning environment, Sonya is almost three. And she has been biting frequently during choice time. And you have noticed that it's impacting her peer relationships, and her family is concerned. You sit down, you're ready to observe, and here we go. The antecedent. You see that right before the behavior, Sonja was playing at the cash register in the dramatic play area and Baruch was using the pretend debit card. And Baruch pulled the pretend debit card away from Sonja and closer to himself.

Then you saw the behavior in which Sonja scratched Baruch's arm and went to bite his hand. And after this happened, the consequence Baruch dropped the card. Sonja picked it up and began playing with it at the cash register. Now we want to think about what was Sonja trying to communicate when she bit Baruch? And a possible function, as you may have noticed, could be that Sonja wanted the toy Baruch had. She wanted to obtain that toy. And an important note to remember is that it's key to observe the behavior multiple times in order to create your best hypothesis of the function.

As you will see in your viewer's guide, the ABC data collection card has two cards on one page and another example of data collection of Sonja. We also want to say an important note here about infants,that infants are at such an early stage of social-emotional development that there might be a behavior that's developmentally appropriate or not unusual for an infant to use even if or when it pushes your button. Today, we are focusing on behaviors that are so persistent and happen with such frequency and intensity that they interfere with the child's learning or participation or the learning or the participation of others. I'm going to send it to you, Mike.

Mike: I think we skipped one, but, no, I think that's alright. Let's hear from the homie, Aaron Franco-Ross, a coach support specialist from Cultivate Learning at the University of Washington about how we can use the behavior equation when working with infants. And as always, as you're watching, type into the purple or use the purple Q and A widget, what's coming up for you. What do you see? What do you notice? What are you feeling? And then we'll have a discussion around it later.

Becky: Sounds great.

[Video begins]

Aaron Franco-Ross: Well, something that rang true for me, I have a one-month-old at home, and sometimes the loud cry or the immediate need for support is jarring. It's frustrating. You don't necessarily know exactly what you need to do to provide them what they need. I recognize in my own self that causes anxiety or stress or frustration. And I know my infant can feel that, can experience that. I need to learn that when I have that stimulus, that trigger, of the crying of the distress, that I need to give my child calm, and I need to present with my child with a calm parent at that moment.

And that means that I have the things that I need to support them as quickly as I can and that I'm observing to see what are the rhythms of their day that they might need that kind of support. And that I am preventing some of those distressful moments as much as I can. Because for an infant, that's very helpful, when they have that consistent care. Their behavior or their expressions never rise to the top of the pyramid. Their communication really is at the base.

Now there are times when an infant teacher may begin to file away potential red flags for development, and you would want to make sure that you are screening for some of those when it becomes appropriate. But distressed communication or frustrating behavior from an infant is always communication. And it's something, it's our task to interpret. It's never our task to consider that as being anything that is other than typical.

[Video ends]

Mike: Thank you, Aaron. Even though he's not physically with us. Using that purple Q and A widget, type in what did you hear, what's coming up for you. And I think the fist thing I heard was that he said notice our adults' feelings. What's coming up for us first. And then notice how infants can also feel them too. Another thing that was coming up for me that I heard was around doing what we can to set ourselves up for success. For example, to successfully respond to an infant need, make sure all the supplies are clean. Make sure they're all ready to go.

Becky: Yeah, totally. I'm hearing that infants needs are very focused at the bottom of the pyramid. Thinking those nurturing relationships, that supporting environment and they don't ever rise to the top, the top-top. None of those instance of interventions. It's important to always, I'm also hearing him say that it's always important to connect with the family first. And support the family in reaching out to their pediatrician. When necessary or if concerns arise.

I'm seeing a number of things coming through the chat. Helping us learn ways to keep ourselves calm, especially if we know that crying is a pinch point. Crying is supposed to be alarming. It's supposed to grab our attention and say I need some support here. I'm also seeing lots of things come in through the chat that I'm having a hard time keeping up with. Operation is key.

Mike: Take into consideration what the child's day looks like if there's any change in schedule. Pick up, drop off, they didn't sleep. Let's see, learning to stay calm. Reflection in parenting. So many great stuff, keep them coming in.

Becky: So many good things.

Mike: Now that we have an hypothesis of a possible function of the challenging behavior, we can then start to think about and create individualized behavior support plan. And remember, you don't have to do this part alone. You've got us. You've got each other. You've got TikTok. I don't know what's up.

Becky: My parents.

Mike: Yeah, my parents. You can connect the family. You can collaborate with other adults if you work with multiple adults in your learning environment. And of course, you can always reach out to your coach or manager or anyone in your support system. There are three very important components of an individualized PBS plan. Planning for and using individualized strategies to prevent the behavior. Planning to select and teach a new behavior for the child to use in place of the challenging behavior. And intentionally responding or intentionally planning and using strategies to respond to the child's behavior.

In this first component, we see on our left prevent, we will select and use individualized strategies and supports that will make it less likely that the child will need to use the behavior to communicate. These prevention strategies should be chosen based off the information we collected about that, I always mess this word up, how do you say that word?

Becky: Antecedent.

Mike: Antecedent, there you go, of the behavior during the ABC data collection process, the situations, the activities, or events that happen right before the behavior. Prevention strategies are usually changes or additions to the environment or are interactions with the child. Some examples are to let a child know about a coming transition, either verbally or with the visual support. You can use a timer, offering children choices. Or changing how a material is used. And prevention strategies also include staff zoning, adjusting the order of activities within the daily schedule and organization of your learning environment.

Becky: Thanks, Mike, for thinking us through prevention. Thinking about teach is our next component. And here, we also want to look at our ABC data and what we've identified as the potential function of the behavior.

We want to select a new prosocial or more appropriate behavior that will meet the same communicative function as the challenging behavior. And we call this replacement scale. And for the replacement scale to be effective, it should serve the same function and meet the same need for the child. It should be easier for the child to use than the challenging behavior and be more effective at getting their needs met.

And a critical part of the teach component is not only to teach the replacement scale, it's also to intentionally plan when and how you'll teach the child to use the new behavior. We want to model and use individualized teaching practices to teach the child to use the replacement behavior. We want to collaborate and communicate with the family about how the replacement behavior, oh about the replacement behavior and how and when to teach the replacement skill or skills. And we want to provide many instructional opportunities throughout daily activities and routines to support the child to learn this new skill.

And as a part of this individualized instruction, you may develop and use instructional materials such as visuals or communication supports. And as you provide instruction on the new replacement scale, we encourage you to carefully observe and take note of changes in the child's skills or behavior to ensure that your instruction is effective. I again want to put in the viewer's guide there that there are more ideas to consider when thinking about in teaching replacement behaviors in your viewer's guide.

Mike: And the third component is how to respond to the child's behavior. When we think about responding, we want to think about responding in two different ways. First, we want to plan how we'll respond when the child uses the new replacement behavior. If this child is going to learn to use this behavior in place of the challenging behavior to meet their needs, we want to maximize reinforcement for the new behavior. We want to make sure it, well, it works, for the child to meet their needs.

If the new behavior isn't as effective in getting the child's needs met as the challenging behavior was, well, the child isn't likely to learn and use a new behavior in place of the old one. That's number one. The second one is the other response you want to think about is how are we going

to respond if the child does engage in the challenging behavior? We want our response to the old behavior to show the child that behavior no longer works. And support the child in using the new replacement behavior.

Becky: Now that we have talked through those three pieces, prevent, teach, and respond, let's walk through what a behavior plan might look like. And as you can see at the top of our behavior plan, we see a summary of the ABC data that's been collected. And there is a box where in the middle where we can put possible functions of behavior. This is when we're thinking like, we've looked through many occurrences of the behavior, and we've summarized many different collections of ABC data. And then below that, we have the sections that say prevent, teach new skill, and respond. There is also a handout for you of this in your viewer's guide that you can copy and use in your learning environment.

And now let's think back to our example of Sonja. Based on all of our ABC information that was collected during the data collection process, the team looked for patterns in Sonja's behavior and created this summary of the ABC data. We're thinking that antecedent of the patterns that came up for antecedent is that when another child reaches for, takes or is playing with a toy that Sonja wants, we see that Sonja screams, scratches, grabs, or bites. And the pattern in consequences is that the other child drops the toy, cries, or walks away. And Sonja picks up the toy and plays with it. A possible function of this behavior is that Sonja screams, scratches, grabs and bites to obtain toys and materials.

We, to create an individualized behavior support plan for Sonja after multiple ABC data collections, the team will select prevention, teaching and response strategies that are directly based on this summary of the behavior equation. The first step is to select prevention strategies knowing that the antecedent for Sonja's biting is when a friend or another child reaches for, takes or is playing with the toy that Sonja wants.

Based on this information we have about the antecedent, some strategies for Sonja for prevention might be to have multiple items of Sonja's favorite toy. To have a visual reminder of safe body in the play area. Or use a timer for turn-taking. Next is our teach section. And knowing that the potential function of Sonja's biting is to get a toy. And we want to think about what replacement skills might the team select to teach her. And we want to remember that a new skill should meet the same need as the challenging behavior.

Based on the hypothesized function that Sonja's biting is to get a toy or an object she wants, the team is thinking about teaching Sonja how to use an open hand gesture. When a peer takes or tries to take a child's toy, we will teach Sonja to have an open hand gesture so that she can ask for that toy in that way. And since this is a new skill for Sonja, the team will plan many opportunities to teach her to use the skill throughout the day.

Now, let's talk about responding. And when we think about responding, we want to think about two different types of response. How we're going to intentionally respond to the use of the replacement scale and to the use of the old challenging behavior. The team thought about when Sonja has, by its source, screams or grabs or scratches, we are going to respond by gently

removing the toy from her hand and placing it out of her reach. And then prompting her to use the open hand gesture. Making this behavior no longer effective.

And then when we see that Sonja is using the replacement scale, we're going to praise her for asking for help and give her access to that toy that she wants. Making it effective. And again, infants are at such an early stage of social-emotional development that the prevent, teach, and respond behavior support plans are not intended and were not created to be used with infants. These plans can and should be used with children over the age of two. Oh, this is you, Mike.

Mike: I know I was practicing antecedent in my head over and over again. But yes, I do have this slide. Let's watch what we're teaching replacement behavior might look like with an older toddler, I was practicing antecedent and then I forgot how to say older. Older toddler, and of course, use the purple Q and A widget to let us know what's coming up.

[Video begins]

Educator 1: What, go Noel! Go, go, go! You didn't ask Sylvan to move his hand.

Child 1: Move your hand.

Educator 1: Here Sylvan, let's move our hand. Baz wants to put it down. Thank you for using your words, Baz.

[Video ends]

Mike: The first thing that I noticed, to get us started, use the purple Q and A to let us know what you saw. The child in the stripes attempted to move the child in the red sweatshirt hand a few times when they wanted its turn with the toy.

Becky: Yeah. I noticed that the educator was very calm and prompted the child to make a verbal request in place of using their hands, move the other child's hands off the track.

Mike: The child used a replacement skill by repeating the adult's model.

Becky: And then the educator, I also noticed that the educator reinforced the child's use of the replacement skill by helping the child in the red move their hand. And this made the behavior effective for allowing the child's turn with the toy. It's, and, supporting the use of the replacement skill, using a verbal request. This worked for the child.

Mike: Exactly. We saw calm in the chat. I also noticed as more things come up, especially I saw positive interaction. The educator also provided specific verbal feedback to the child. I don't know if you heard it but they said, thank you for using your words.

Becky: Yeah, and this interaction, the educator is also modeling turn-taking and building turn-taking skills in the child, the appear to be younger child in the red sweatshirt. Modeling this

interaction. They're getting to see, OK, this is how I can ask for a turn. This is what turn-taking feels like.

Mike: Love it. Let's see what's happening in the chat. We have use of verbal requests. The child wanted to move the other child's hands, but the educator insisted on helping get the child a choice of words. I find that children love to hear the praise once they completed a task. Absolutely.

Becky: Yeah, totally getting that validation of like yeah, you did it. Uh-huh. Let's start thinking about the basics and strategies for responding to persistent challenging behaviors. And the basics are a collection of strategies that can be used in any setting with infants and toddlers. And the Teacher Time basics are behavioral expectations in advance, attend to and encourage positive behavior, scaffold with cues and prompts, increase engagement, change, or add challenge and specific feedback.

In this season of Teacher Time, we have been focusing on two letters of the basics for each episode. We hope that you have joined us for all of the webinars this season. And if you have missed any of the previous webinars, you can access the recording on push/play. Today, we're going to provide examples of A, attend to and encourage positive behavior, thinking back to the bottom of the pyramid for those nurturing relationships. And I, increasing engagement to respond, prevent and address challenging behaviors.

Mike: To understand an infant's cues and provide responsive care to behaviors adults might find challenging like persistent crying, educators must build relationships with infants and the families. One way to do this is by tending and encouraging positive behavior through noticing and naming infants and family strengths and making deposit into that infant's piggybank that you mentioned earlier. Check out the individualized teaching support section of the viewer's guide for more information.

What we know is that children who are displaying challenging behaviors often are receiving less positive attention. We encourage you to reflect on a toddler whose behavior is challenging to you right now. Take a moment, maybe take some time afterwards on your planning time to think about 10 strengths of a toddler in your environment who's a little challenging and then write them down on the focus on equity section of your viewer's guide.

And then the next step after that, it's then communicate with strengths you see to this child throughout the entire day that piggybank that we're talking about. And this can help shift your perspective of the child as well as feed, fill the child's relationship piggybank by engaging in positive interactions. One way you can do this is by saying out loud when you see a child engaging in positive behaviors. To look intentionally for moments to let the child know you see them and you care about them.

Becky: Yes. Let's take a look at what this might look like in a toddler classroom. Let's see an example of encouraging positive behaviors and adding to a child's emotional and relationship

piggybank. As you watch the video, please share again in the Q and A how you see the educator building a nurturing relationship with this child.

[Video begins]

Educator 2: Let's come climb on the climber over here. This is where we climb. See, up here. Do you want to climb up there? There you go. Good job. Down the slide. You went up the climber and down the slide. Good job. Good job.

[Video ends]

Becky: You know, Mike, one of the first things I notice about this clip is how much warmth is in the educator's voice.

Mike: Yeah, we don't talk about the tone enough, I think. It's not just the words that you say but how much love do you feel as you're expressing that.

Becky: Yeah, totally. And I also notice that the educator commenting on exactly what the child was doing. She was very specific and factual about it. You climbed up the stairs and down the slide.

Mike: And then the educator, going back to that warmth it was just enthusiastic. I felt like they enthusiastically commented on the child's positive behavior.

Becky: And one of the things I noticed too at the start of the clip, the educator was saying, this is where we climb over here. Which toddlers are very curious climbers. It's not unlikely to have a toddler climbing on different pieces of furniture in the learning environment. It makes you wonder, was this toddler climbing in a different part of the learning environment. And the educator provided support for the specific child by taking them to this place where it was safe to climb.

Mike: Things are coming up in the chat. The educator put words to action, redirection, positive supports. Helping them make – I think we have a video playing somewhere in the background. We'll take care of that. But anyways let's talk about how we can increase a child's engagement when they are persistently expressing that challenging behavior.

Once again, again, prevent, teach, and respond support plans are not necessarily intended to be used with infants. They were developed to be used with children over the age of two. And we can increase an infant or young toddler's engagement in the learning environment by looking at our own behaviors and how we are responding to a child's cues and meeting their needs. With infants and young toddlers, we can use the behavior equation to really help us take a step back. See how our behavior is impacting the child since we are very intentional educators here. We can look for patterns and see if there are changes that we need to make so that we are provided more responsive care.

And if you have slightly older toddlers who are engaging persistent challenging behaviors, they might be struggling to engage with their peers or the learning environment. One way to increase engagement is to create and consistently follow a behavior support plan. Having prevention strategies in place and teaching the toddler replacement behaviors will support the toddler in engaging more fully in the learning environment.

Becky: Yeah. Now we have another opportunity to hear from Aaron Franco-Ross about how using a behavior support plan can increase a child's engagement. Let's watch this video.

[Video begins]

Aaron: Is sometimes our reflex as a teacher is to pull the child out of that situation. To move into a different space or different center or a different area of the classroom. Where that's not going to happen anywhere. And yet, what we would want to do is to be there two minutes earlier and prevent the escalation and help them move through that.

And maybe we're the only ones who know what could have happened. Because they were able to successfully move forward and push through and to learn. And I think that's a concept that I really think is important. That we interrupt their learning when allow behavior to escalate so much that they need to then move away from that area. And to disengage.

[Video ends]

Becky: I love hearing from Aaron. And one of the things that I heard in this clip is the importance of prevention. Those, that prevention column in the behavior support plan. Thinking about those antecedents that we can support increased engagement by really thinking about those. Also think about supporting the child in moving through the interaction and using the replacement behavior. Being there with them in the moment. Helping them use that replacement behavior like we saw in our video.

Mike: And then when you think about the response responding to the replacement behavior. We're the only one, we're the only one that know what could have happened. Letting a behavior escalate so much causes interruption to the child's engagement, learning and play.

Becky: Yes, yeah. Just seeing some things come in through the chat prevention and intervention. Thinking prevention strategies and then being there to support the child move through the interaction.

Mike: Let's watch another video of what teaching a replacement skill might look like. Once again, share in the purple Q and A how you think this would support toddlers when increasing engagement with peers and in the learning environment.

[Video begins]

Educator 3: Let's, soft touches. Soft touches. When we touch our friends, we're giving soft touches. OK? Let's count our friends again. We have one, two, three.

[Video ends]

Mike: And of course, if you're looking to access any of these materials, all of this content is in the viewer's guide or in your NCPMI modules for trainers. Things which I noticed right away was the educator teaching a replacement behavior with gentle touches, with a small group of children. And maybe I'm thinking this happened during small group time.

Becky: Yeah, it was outside of a time when the challenging behavior was arising. It was during a small group time where an informal gathering happens during toddler classrooms. And the educator modeled this skill with two of the children. And she modeled the skill to the children, excuse me, and in addition to that verbally was giving information.

Mike: And did you see when the child that was in the educator's lap then reached out and grabbed, well not grabbed, but get the other child's hand to help them practice soft touches.

Becky: Yeah, at the end. She had it modeled for her, and then the child needed to model it too. And I also noticed how the educator used positive language in a calm and casual tone to encourage these gentle or soft touches.

Mike: Do we have time to read one thing from the chat?

Becky: Oh yes, yes.

Mike: Let's see. Let's pick a good one. They're all great ones. We have soft touches for our friends. I like the way the educator taught positive behavior instead of we do not. That's a very negative and harsh tone for children.

Becky: Lots of great comments coming in. Thank you.

Mike: Partnering and working together with families to identify prevention and support strategies is an essential part of this process. Creating a behavior support plan in partnership, in partnership, I can't stress that enough, in partnership with the families significantly increases the likelihood of success.

And we want to approach this partnership with open curiosity and respect. Some tips to keep in mind while working with families are, focus on child and family strengths. Respectfully discuss concerns. Avoid placing blame on the child or the family. Be positive and be reassuring. Ask families for their perspectives on the challenging behavior and be open to understanding different viewpoints.

And when you're discussing with the family, discuss how they would like to help develop and implement the plan in partnership. Consider and honor the family's culture and their values. Be understanding on constraints of the family's involvement. Maybe there's a lot of time commitments that they already have and a lot of stress. And if there's an agreement that professional specialists are needed, discuss, and provide information about what the process could look like.

Let's turn our attention back to you. Our ability to prevent and address challenging behaviors start with our ability to center ourselves by noticing and observing what's happening with as little judgment as possible. And if you've been with us for all of our webinars, you can always find on demand, you saw us go through a variety of different self-regulation and centering strategies, 4-4-8 breathing, color visualization and body scan. We hope that you pick one of these strategies that works best for you.

You can find the cutouts for all three of these regulation strategies in the all about you section of your viewer's guide. Another resource is the Eight Dimensions of Staff Wellness on the ECLKC website, which you can find a link in the resource list in your viewer's guide.

Becky: Thank you so much, Mike. And we, just for thinking of everyone's wellness and honoring everyone's time, we're going to go ahead and put our book Case Segment with our Teacher Time librarian Emily on My Peers. Check out our My Peers community to see all of the different books that Emily created for us. And check out your viewer's guide because there are two different lists for thinking about working with infants and thinking about working with toddlers. We just want to say thank you so much for joining us for all of the infant toddler episodes this season. And we hope that you will join us next month for responding to persistent challenging behaviors in preschool on May 4th.

Mike: I'll be there. Will you?

Becky: Yes, I'll be there.

Mike: We hope to see you all there. Once again, thank you everyone for the love, support, for your work with toddlers and infants in your learning environment. Remember, you are not alone, and you can always holler at us on My Peers or whatever platform that you decide.

Becky: Thank you so much, and we can't wait to see you. Until next time.

Mike: Thank you, everyone.