

An Empathetic Approach: Understanding “Challenging” Behavior

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Overview of Training

- Introduction
- Caring about empathy
- Challenging behaviors
- Expectations
- Positive characteristics
- Feeling Sense
- Challenging behavior activity
- Personal perspectives
- Solutions



Introduction

- Why should we consider an empathetic approach?



Caring about Empathy

- A variety of possibilities may underlie many of the behaviors that challenge us the most.
- Are we all adequately trained to address challenging behaviors?
- In human services work we have choices to make.
- Individual and/or Agency decision-making sometimes is incongruent with the root cause. Then we can accidentally make things worse.

An Empathetic Approach



Developing Expectations

Empathy and
Responsibility

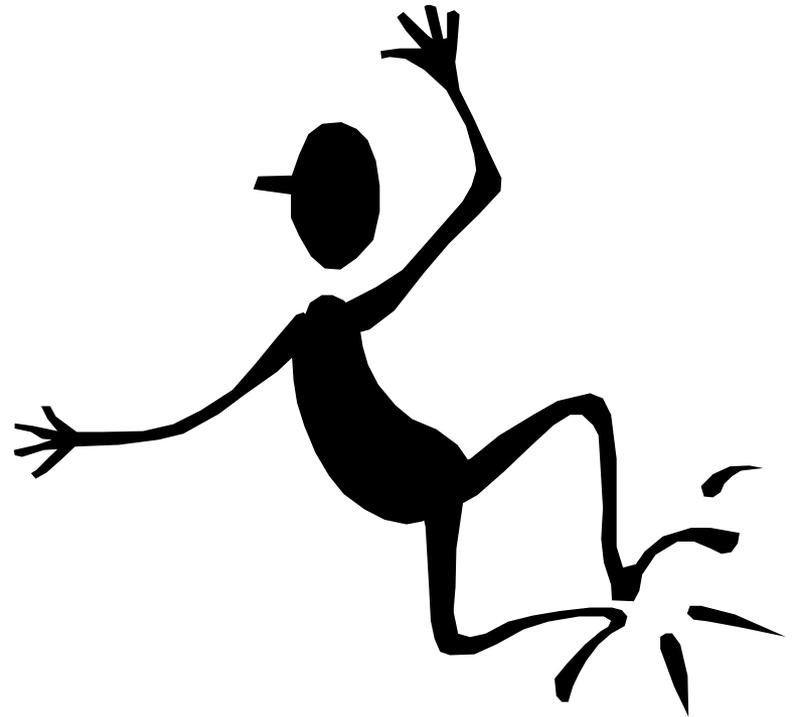
vs.

Consequences and
Punishment

- How are my expectations informed by my own experiences?
- What is my purpose?
- What does the person want?
- What will someone learn from my approach?

Identify Positive Characteristics

- Who have you been inspired by?
- Who is your role model?
- What are their characteristics?



Using our Feeling Sense

- What are your feelings when you encounter someone with “challenging behavior”?

Choose a “Challenging” behavior:

- Brainstorm all the possible root causes for this behavior



Let's make a list of challenging behaviors:

Behaviors we see in people:

AGGRESSION

SIB

crying

CURSING

"NONCOMPLIANCE" sexual acting out

medication refusal

SMEARING FECES

screaming

"MANIPULATION"

eloping

RECTAL DIGGING

spitting

ARGUING

biting

compulsive behavior

Root causes of “challenging” behaviors:

- Detachment
- Helplessness, Power/control issues
- Cognitive distortions, especially around self-esteem
- Anxiety (fearful, avoiding)
- Safety Issues
- Communication

Root causes of “challenging” behaviors:

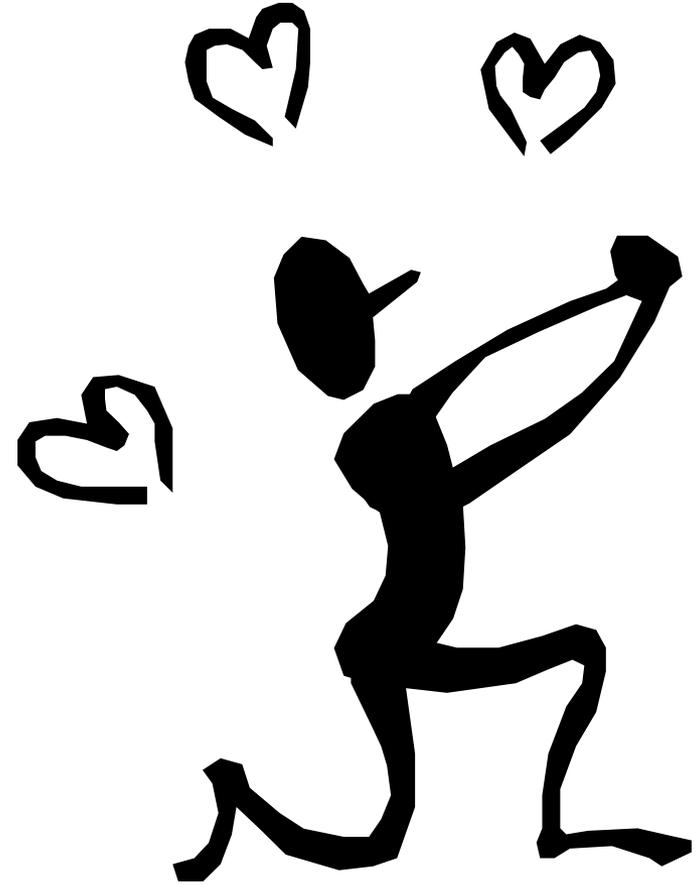
- Symptoms of a medical conditions
- Re-enactment (acting as if ...)
- Flashbacks (seeing/hearing things)
- Symptoms of mental illness

A Personal Perspective

- Identify reasons why you might feel the way you do when you are challenged
- Compare with the root causes

Empathetic Solutions

- Develop solutions for everyday practices for the challenging behaviors based on the root causes.



Protective Factors

- Experience of being loved
- People who are responsive and care about safety
- Sensory system integration
- Being Seen, heard, and known
- Communication
- Connected to a community
- Worldly perspective/Dignity of risk

What is the Best Way to Support a Person?

Everyday Approaches

- Strengths Based
- Positive Approaches
- Empathy & Compassion
- Trust
- Relationships
- Power & Control
 - Choices & Decisions
- Personal Resources
 - Self Confidence & Esteem
- Body Memory
 - Massage, yoga, meditation

Clinical Approaches

- Biographical Timeline
- Triggers
- Telling the Story
- Physical Health Assessment
- Therapy
 - EMDR
 - Cognitive Therapy
 - Others ...
- Integrated Support Groups
- Medication

Healing through Life Experiences

- Basic needs: Home, Love, Nutrition
- Emotional, physical, social, intellectual, psychological, sexual
- Relationship to self
- Relationship to others



Healing through Life Experiences

- Physical Exercise
- Breathing
- Creative Arts
- Somatic
- Laughing
- Meditation



Breathing Exercises

- Focus
- Concentration
- Muscle development
- Balance
- Oxygenation
- Sensory integration
- Affect regulation
- Relaxation
- Releases toxins held in body
- Self massage
- Type of meditation
- Brain response regulation

■ (Hanson, 2009)

The Social Therapist

- Inspiration
- Education
- Modeling
- Mentoring
- Community
- Celebration



Do events of the past influence
present behavior?



Questions?

