

Friendship Companion Training

Behavior

Observe

- A close ratio between the number of companions and friends with disabilities is encouraged.
- Companions who develop close relationships with specific friends with disabilities enhances close observations of both positive and negative behaviors and how to encourage the positive behaviors and avoid the negative behaviors.

Observe

- Think like a detective. Your observations are likely to show that positive and negative behaviors occur at specific times, with diet changes, with certain people or in particular environments.
- Learn to recognize the signs of increasing tension, anxiety or frustration that eventually lead to challenging behaviors. Often there is a ramping up, or escalation period. These signs may be subtle—red ears, a tapping foot, heavier breathing, higher pitched speech.

Be proactive; get to know the family and caregivers

- Ask the family and caregivers about your friends behaviors and common triggers.
- Find out how they respond to the behavior and how to redirect them.
- Communicate changes to the group's schedule, or if you will miss a meeting, to the families and caregivers so they can tell your friend in advance.

Be proactive; get to know the family and caregivers

- Families and caregivers are encouraged to be part of the Friendship group
- Families may choose not to participate and this is ok
- Caregivers with service provider should be required to remain with the group. They are paid to be there.

Avoid Triggers

- Determine the environments that trigger behaviors. Changing these environment can reduce behavioral episodes.
- Expand situations, relationships, places and opportunities that are successful
- Avoid situations (or people) that are triggers for challenging behavior
- Organize and provide structure (shampoo, rinse, repeat)

Avoid Triggers

- Provide clear and consistent visual schedules, calendars, and consistent routines so that the person knows what is coming next.
- Inform about transitions and changes. Recognize that changes can be extremely unsettling, especially when they are unexpected.
- Refer to a schedule and give warnings about upcoming changes

Avoid Triggers

- Use visual supports like pictures, text, and video. Visuals are best for visual learners, but they are also critical because they provide information that stays.
- Provide a calming room or corner, and/or objects or activities that help to calm (e.g. bean bag and objects to handle).
- Provide opportunities to regroup and can be helpful in teaching self-control.

Avoid Triggers

- Remove or dampen distracting or disturbing stimuli: Replace flickering fluorescent lights, use headphones to help block noise, avoid high traffic times, etc.
- If a friend has a treasure, don't lose it
- Pair companions appropriately. Some people may be more calming or connect with the person than others.

Use Positive Behavior Supports

Develop strategies to increase the behaviors you want to encourage. These will need to be individualized for each person. They can often be helpful in building a sense of pride in accomplishments and personal responsibility. This will reduce the anxiety that results in aggression or other behaviors.

Use Positive Behavior Supports

- Celebrate strengths and successes. Tell them what they do well.
- Respect and listen. Look for the things they are trying to tell you verbally or through actions. Do not brush aside their feelings or pretend to listen. Help give language to what they are feeling.
- Provide clear expectations of behavior.

Use Positive Behavior Supports

- Teach and interact at each persons learning level
- Give choices, but within parameters
- Use positive/proactive language: Use language that describes what you want the individual to do. Try to avoid saying “NO”, or “don’t.”

Managing a Behavior

- **Ignoring the behavior (extinction)** is often used when the behavior is used for attention, and is mild or not threatening. If the individual kicks to get a cookie (reward), ignore the kicking and do not reward by giving the cookie.
- When you first start to ignore a behavior it may increase the behavior. This is called an “extinction burst” and is very normal.
Stay the course.

Managing a Behavior

- **Redirection**, often supported with visuals, may involve redirection to an appropriate behavior and is often paired with positive strategies.
- If the person does not use words, have pictures available.
- Redirection can be a very powerful tool, giving you the opportunity to steer the individual into a situation that is more positive, or more manageable. It also helps to avoid or calm an escalating situation.

Managing a Behavior

Removal from a situation or reinforcement through a time out is often used for calming down opportunities.

The use of a time out can vary considerably, and to be most effective, it is important that it is done correctly. A time out is not just a change in location—it means the person loses access to something they find rewarding or cool. Observe to identify the rewarding motivators.

Managing a Behavior

Establish standards of behavior for the group that can be taught at the first group meeting and be used as a reminder throughout the year.

- Use the restroom before the meeting begins
- Quietly listen to others during prayer time
- Raise your hand to talk during lessons

Managing a Behavior

Be careful NOT to:

- Feed into the behavior by providing the desired outcome of the behavior
- Show disappointment or anger
- Lecture or threaten
- Physically intervene (unless necessary for safety, such as keeping the individual from running into the street or hurting another)