

Frustrated Children

Speech therapy and behavior

COMMUNICATION IS HOW WE relate to our environment. When communication is hampered in some way, it will have an impact on our behavior. It is often overlooked as an explanation of behavior, especially with children.

Verbal communication is the most effective and frequently used mode of expression. Children with unintelligible speech, due to articulation disorders or speech apraxia, will demonstrate very different types of behavior after therapy. A preschool youngster who was unintelligible due to a severe phonological disorder frequently climbed on furniture to reach high cabinets in the kitchen and often grabbed things out of people's hands. He often appeared angry and frustrated. This shouldn't surprise us. He was a bright youngster who couldn't get his needs met via verbal expression, so he would get what he needed on his own. Unfortunately, this would put him in danger at times and angered those around him. After speech therapy, his personality and behaviors were transformed to the delight of his parents and the child himself.

Children with oral motor difficulties will act out due to frustration. They may not be able to express discomfort, fear or distaste of eating some foods, and be unable to tell their caregiver. It is not uncommon for a person who stutters to be angry or withdraw from his environment. Frustration can take different forms with people; sometimes they act out with tantrums or disobey instructions, other times they like to disappear and not be noticed. Those children who withdraw are the ones who often don't receive the help they need because they are so unobtrusive.

Autistic children or nonverbal toddlers are other groups that can undergo personality and behavior makeovers with speech therapy. As their verbal repertoire and level of understanding of their environment increase, their levels of appropriate behaviors increase.

There are numerous communication disorders that may affect behaviors. Look for warning signs of frustration. Try to assess why the youngster is having a tantrum, yelling or refusing to talk. There could also be behavioral difficulties due to sensory integration, coping and psychological reasons.

Behavioral therapists are also helpful to parents working through the challenges youngsters with disabilities often encounter. They can be helpful with potty training, hygiene rituals, bedtime and other behaviors that parents encounter at home and school. It is always a good idea to have the professionals working with your child in communication with school and family to create a consistent treatment program.

Parents don't need to suffer alone the behavioral problems their children may present. There are resources in schools and communities to help. The best time to learn the best ways to deal with your child's behavioral and communication needs is when she is young. Older children bring more difficult behaviors and this could exacerbate problems that were never dealt with correctly earlier.

