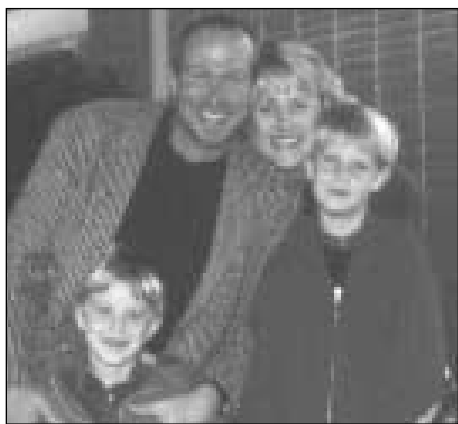


# *Making it happen*



PARENT TRAINING  
ON BEHAVIOR  
MANAGEMENT



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# Introduction

Harbor Regional Center (HRC) offers a skills development training program that can help you deal more effectively with your child's behaviors. The program is called "Parent Training on Behavior Management" and it offers parents several different ways to learn about behaviors and how they can be changed.

The goal of the behavior management program is to help you help your child develop the kinds of behaviors he needs to get along better in the world. Since parents play the most important role in a child's development, the goal of behavior management training is to help the parent become the child's primary teacher in developing appropriate behaviors.

Parent training on behavior management focuses on helping the parent help a child learn new behaviors that he is having a difficult time learning. For example, the child may be having a hard time with toilet training, or he may frequently refuse to comply with a parent's requests.

Behavior management training may also focus on helping parents reduce and eliminate undesirable, or "challenging" behaviors in their child. A few examples of challenging behaviors are temper tantrums, fighting, or self-injury.

## Section 1

# Section 1

While HRC's behavior management training is intended to help parents work more effectively with their child with a disability, the skills they will learn in the program can be used with any child. This is because the training deals with basic principles of behavior that apply to all children. Behavior management training focuses on topics such as:

- a. how behaviors are formed in the first place;
- b. what purpose the behaviors serve for the child; and
- c. how people's reactions to a child's behaviors can make the behaviors more likely to occur again in the future.

**EXPECTED OUTCOME OF TRAINING.** The expected outcome of behavior management training is an increase in parents' skills that will lead to:

- a. an increase in the child's desirable behaviors, and

b. a reduction in the child's undesirable behaviors.

When this outcome is achieved, parents will see an improvement in their interactions with their child, and their home environment should become more positive for the whole family.

The behavior management training program provides valuable support to families in two ways:

- a. first, it helps parents deal with the behaviors that are currently causing difficulties for their child or the family;
- b. second, it gives them the skills to deal effectively with behaviors that may develop in the future.

In other words, the training gives parents a set of tools (behavior management skills) that they can use, now and later, as they need them.

# Section 1

# What's

Because different people learn best in different ways, a variety of approaches have been developed at HRC to help parents learn behavior management skills. These approaches include:

- a. a structured weekly parent training class;
- b. in-home behavioral assessments;
- c. one-on-one, time-limited consultation with a behavioral expert;
- d. parent support groups; and
- e. structured groups focusing on specific behavior problems.

## Section 2

Usually, parents are asked to become involved in a group activity before the center purchases the services of a behavior expert for one-on-one assistance. The group experience is a good way for parents to judge the level of commitment that will be needed for them to be successful in implementing a behavior management program with their child.

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# The menu

**THE TRAINING CLASS.** The major component of the HRC behavior management program is a weekly training class, extending over several months, where parents learn about the principles of learning and behavior and how to apply them. The classes are taught by an expert in behavioral training, they are two hours long, and they involve from 6 to 20 parents. The training is based on the following principles:

- a. Behaviors are learned. They usually come about because they satisfy some physical or emotional need that the child has.
- b. These behaviors become habits. They keep happening because of the way parents and children interact with each other.

## Section 3



- c. Behaviors and habits can be changed. Successful change requires that we understand what we do and change the way we respond to one another.

Trainers help parents learn how to carefully observe their child in order to understand why (i.e., in what situations) the child does the things he does. The parents are then taught to apply the principles of learning to help the child reduce his dependence on the challenging behaviors and develop more positive behaviors in their place. Sometimes it is necessary for parents to change some of their own ways of reacting to or interacting with their child before the child can develop new ways of responding.

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## Section 3

# Section 3

The class gives parents the opportunity to discuss with one another, and with the trainer, their experiences using the newly learned behavior management techniques. By the end of the class, if parents have consistently practiced at home what they learned in the classroom, they will find themselves with a set of behavior management skills that they can use in any setting with any child.

## EXPERT HELP IN ANALYZING BEHAVIORS AND DEVELOPING MANAGEMENT PLANS.

Parents may receive expert, individualized help observing and analyzing their child's behaviors. A behavioral expert conducts a full assessment of the family that includes a structured interview with the parents and an in-home observation. The assessment is intended to help the parents and the behavior expert identify and target troubling behaviors. The behaviorist and the parents then work together to develop ways to

intervene with the child's behaviors. Parents may have the option of consulting with the behaviorist over a specified period of time as they work to implement these techniques with their child.

**PARENT SUPPORT GROUP.** A behavior management parent support group meets at the regional center twice a month throughout the year. This group is facilitated by a behavior expert, and parents are free to attend at any time. At these sessions parents may share with other parents their experiences managing their child's behaviors, talk about what has worked and what has not worked for them, and get guidance and feedback from the expert facilitator.

# Section 3

# Section 3

**SPECIAL TRAINING GROUPS.** When a specific behavioral challenge is of concern to a significant number of HRC parents, the regional center may organize a parent training group to deal specifically with this kind of behavior. For example, the center regularly supports a group dealing with toilet training. In this group, an expert in behavior management teaches skills specifically focused on the development of toileting behaviors. In these and other “theme” groups, parents have the advantage of access to the expert trainer as well as access to other parents who are dealing with similar concerns.

Parents seeking help with a child's behaviors may have an opportunity to engage in one or all of the above options. Some parents, for example, may choose to take the classroom training, receive consultation and ongoing support from the behavioral expert, and attend the bi-weekly support group. Other parents may decide only to attend a parent group dealing with toilet training. Still others may request just the one-to-one consultation with the behavior expert. Obviously, the more time parents give to the training activities – whether in the classroom, in a group, consulting with an expert, or practicing at home – the more likely it is that they will be able to effectively implement the behavior management techniques with their child.

## Section 3

# What do you

Several things that parents can do will help improve their personal outcome in behavior management training.

**GIVE IT ENOUGH TIME.** The focus of all HRC behavior management training is on equipping the parents to manage their own child's behavior.

In other words, our goal is to make parents into experts. This cannot happen without a significant commitment on the part of parents to devote enough time to practicing at home the skills learned in the classroom, in the group, or from their consultation with the behavioral expert.

The most significant factor in ensuring the success of behavior management is consistent application by parents of the behavioral principles over time.

## Section 4

**SHARE THE RESPONSIBILITY.** It is usually better for more than one person to work with a child on behavior management. More importantly, it is critical that all adults having significant contact with a child consistently apply the same behavior management techniques. Therefore, if the family is a two-parent family, it would be best if both parents could participate in the training. For single parents, an adult “buddy,” a relative, or a friend may help out by joining in. Behavioral approaches can also be shared with the child’s teacher, babysitter, etc., in order to increase consistency of interactions among all adults with whom the child has frequent contact.

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## Section 4

**GET HELP FOR OTHER PROBLEMS.** If you are experiencing a personal problem in addition to your child's challenging behaviors, you are more likely to have success with behavior management training if you also get effective help for this other problem. For example, if you are feeling overwhelmed or depressed, or if you are having difficulties in your relationship with your husband or wife, you will probably find that behavior management services support some, but not all, of your needs. You may also find that your personal problems act to limit the effectiveness of the training. In such situations, it would be helpful if you could seek the support of a counselor, minister, or other professional to deal specifically with the personal problem. Your regional center counselor can assist you in finding the right professionals for this purpose.



# A final note

The skills you learn in behavior management training can make a big difference in the lives of you and your child. You will be able to help your child learn the behaviors necessary to develop more positive relationships with people around him and to better ensure his health and safety. Finally, you will give your child the ability to engage in a broader range of activities typical of persons without a developmental disability.

For behavior management training to be successful, however, parents must be willing to accept the responsibility for implementing the necessary management techniques consistently over time, in the home and in the community. Some parents will find that other priorities in their family life prevent them from being ready to do what is necessary to ensure successful behavior management training. They may find, for example, that their jobs or other responsibilities outside the home make it impossible for them to devote the time and attention needed to consistently implement behavior management techniques with their child. Other parents may not want to maintain the rules and limits that must be sustained to get behavior change over time. Still other parents may believe that the effort required to achieve and maintain change over time is too extreme and interferes too much with their family's lifestyle. In cases like these, parents are advised to put off their participation in the training and reconsider it only if they feel they have the time, the support, the commitment, the personal energy, and the strong desire required to achieve success through a behavior management training approach.

## Section 5



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