

Ep #87 Why children act up: Part two

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This is episode 87. Let's begin.

Smarter Parenting welcomes you to our podcast series, The Parenting Coach for ADHD. Here to heal and elevate lives is your Parenting Coach, Siope Kinikini.

Hello, my friends. How are you? I hope you're doing well. I am doing great. And today we are continuing our discussion on the [ABC's of Behavior](#).

If you haven't listened to the previous podcast, I highly recommend you go back and listen to it. There we explain what the ABC's of Behavior are. Why it's important. And the benefits of using the ABC's of Behavior in identifying behaviors that need to be corrected. Now, for those of you who are listening to this podcast first, I'll give you an overview. Why? Because I love you and I care, and I want you to be right with me as we continue to look at some of the questions you have about the ABC's of Behavior.

[Ep #86 Why kids act up: Part 1](#)

So, I'm answering very specifically a couple of questions that have come up during coaching sessions about the implementation of approaching a child's behavior through the ABC's of Behavior.

Now, for those of you who are listening who are new, let me go over it. And for those of you who have listened to the previous podcast, I'm going over it again. Why? Because repetition is a super great thing. And repetition helps us really comprehend and cement the information that we are trying to absorb and understand. So you will benefit from hearing it again. In fact, I benefit from talking about it again. [Now, the ABC's of Behavior are a way that we can look at the big picture of what's happening with your child.](#)

Now, A, B, and C obviously are the first three letters of the alphabet. But each of these letters stand for something in this approach. A stands for antecedent. B stands for the behavior. And C stands for the consequence.

So, when a parent steps back and they notice a behavior of a child, the ABC's of Behavior help them look at what was going on before the behavior happened. What are the antecedents to that behavior? It could be anything really. And then they look at the behavior itself, and then

what are the consequences to that behavior? Do the consequences reinforce the child behaving the same way in the future or changing the behavior in the future?

Okay. So again, a lot of parents approach behavioral issues by just focusing on the behavior. Laser-focused on just behavior. That would be a huge mistake. Take a step back, use the ABC's of Behavior. What happened before this behavior? Now, for younger children, it's usually a short time before. What happened five minutes before the behavior? What happened 10 minutes before the behavior? For older children, you can expand what the antecedent could be to days even. What happened yesterday that caused this behavior today? But you want to keep in mind that something is occurring before this all happens and the behavior manifests, and then you can focus on what you can do.

Now, if you can determine what the antecedents are, if you can determine what are the things that are happening before this behavior occurs, then you can start to address it and fix it before it even escalates to the behavior point.

Can you see how beautiful this is? [Because you are given the opportunity to address negative behaviors in a more positive way, by having a larger framework to work in and a larger time span to work in. Super, super great.](#)

Now, the ABC's of Behavior also work for positive behaviors. What are the antecedents to positive behaviors? What are the good things that are occurring if my child behaves in a positive way? And then what are the consequences that we can implement in order to help them repeat that behavior?

Now in this step, as we're talking about the ABC's of Behavior, consequences could be positive or negative. What is the result? That's what we're looking for. What are the results of the behavior that will continue to increase positive behavior or decrease the negative behavior? [So that, in a nutshell, are the ABC's of Behavior.](#) Antecedent, behavior, and consequence.

Now, the question that I'm going to answer today stems from a coaching session I had yesterday when we were discussing the ABC's of Behavior. So while I was talking to this parent about the ABC's of Behavior, the parent was unable to determine what the antecedent is. And the question came up, "What if the behavior just occurs randomly? I have no idea why the child just explodes, but the child explodes all of a sudden and I don't know what to do. I have no idea how to proceed. It just is really out of nowhere, like nothing is happening beforehand and then boom, behavior, and I have to deal with that behavior."

I talked to this parent about some very specific things, but I also flipped the script. So while we're discussing some of the things that parents should consider in understanding this kind of explosive behavior that sometimes occurs with very little clues for antecedents, I'm also going to discuss flipping the script and using the ABC's of Behavior on yourself as a parent. I'm super excited about this. I don't know if you can tell, but I am.

So one of the things that I wanted the parent to look at as we're looking at these behaviors occurring, the negative behaviors, explosive behaviors that are happening, is we have to also anticipate everything that's happening in the child in the antecedent.

So with this parent, I said, "Okay, well, if you cannot determine what the antecedent is. It's not apparent to you, let's explore even wider and talk about some deeper things that are happening in the home and with your child." And she was completely open to that. So we started off with five things. Now, the five things that we're talking about are things that I want all parents to consider when they are trying to evaluate exactly what is causing the outbursts to occur.

Now, this excludes if your child has gone through a traumatic event in the past. If your child has gone through a lot of trauma in the past, they're going to need some professional help to deal with that as you continually work with them. However, you can eliminate some of the guesswork by taking into consideration the five things that I'm going to tell you to consider.

Okay. The first one is sleep. How much sleep is your child getting? It sounds a little cliché because we all know that sleep is super important, but for children, it is especially important for children. It helps with their development. It moderates their mood. Their ability to get rest and to deal with the rest of the world is super, super important. So are they getting enough sleep for their age? Are they getting good rest for their age? Are they restless? Be aware of those and take those into consideration as well.

The second thing was diet. What kinds of foods are your child consuming? Are they heavy into sweets and heavy into things that change their blood sugar level? Are they consistently consuming foods that are not helpful for managing their behaviors or is their diet pretty stable? Consider that. Are they drinking enough water? These irritations that happen because of hunger. We've all been hangry, which is the term that we use as adults. When we are hungry, it incites us to be angry. Well, children are the same way. Are they getting enough nourishment in order to regulate what's happening in their moods? This could also be a cause for just these outbursts of behaviors that you are experiencing.

The third thing, are there other disabilities going on? Now, has your child been tested for certain issues? Take into account ADHD and the inability to maintain focus and attention if they're highly impulsive. If they're highly hyperactive, we take that into consideration in our approach with the ABC's of Behavior.

So if we cannot determine that something's happening right before, maybe something's happening in split seconds before the behavior occurs. Maybe it's happening super quickly and we just don't notice it.

And then taking into account that our interactions with our child need to adjust for any disabilities that may be there. You'd be surprised how many parents don't realize their children

are struggling with a disability until someone else points it out to them. And then they go and have their child tested and then they discover something's wrong. And then there are many, many more parents who realize, "Hey, something's not right, but we can't figure it out." And then they go through the gamut of trying to figure it out over time. So be patient, be patient with yourself and with your child and just understand maybe something else is happening here that's causing these behaviors to happen. Don't worry. I'll tell what you need to do if that's the case.

The fourth thing to consider is environment. What's happening in the environment around your child or the environment of where they're at. A tantrum in a store, for example, is very different than a tantrum at home. Now, they may look the same, but the stimulation that is around them in those environments could cause outbursts to happen in very different circumstances. So be aware of what's happening around your child. What's happening around your child?

And then the fifth thing is interruptions. Anything that is interrupting the flow of your child's mood or state or schedule can be something that they react to. Children like structure. They really do. And they function better when there is a structure. When there is no structure in there and everything is up in the air, your child is constantly having to adjust.

Now as adults, we can adjust a lot easier than children. However, when there is not that structure that's in place and interruptions happen, your child can misbehave and you can have some behavioral issues there.

So keep those five things in mind, sleep, diet, disabilities if there are any, environment, are you providing a structured environment? But also the place where they may be, and then interruptions to that environment. Behaviors like tantrums and crying out and throwing fits. They're often ways that children are trying to communicate something that they're unable to verbally communicate or to have you understand.

And when they learn that that's a way that they can behave, it can also become a manipulation on their part to throw a tantrum in order to get what they want.

So just understand a tantrum is another way for a child to communicate with you that something is not going the way that they expect or want. And we want to teach to that to say, "Hey, tantrums, that's not the way to go. We do not want to focus on you having a tantrum in order to communicate that you need some adjustments or you need some consideration for certain things." So be super, super aware of that. All right. And then if you cannot determine what the antecedent is, if it becomes super difficult, keep in mind those five things.

Are they getting enough sleep? Are they on an appropriate diet? Is diet making things more difficult for them? Disabilities that they may already have or challenges that they may have. Environment, what's happening in the environment around them at the time? And also the environment that you set up and structure for them. And then interruptions. Anything that's

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disruptive to their flow and their life is going to cause some discomfort and may manifest in outbursts of behavior. Great. Consider those things.

So we considered that in our conversation. And as we were working through discovering what it was, we did notice that sleep and diet were issues that the child does have ADHD. And then we talked about structure in the home.

So there were certain things that the parent could implement in order to help shape the child's behavior to be more positive. So the tantrum behaviors just didn't pop out of nowhere, according to this parent. The last part of us discussing this was focused on flipping the ABC's. Instead of focusing it on the child is to focus it on the parent and their reaction to behaviors.

So what are the antecedents to addressing a behavioral issue with a child? What is the behavior the parent is going to implement to address that negative behavior from a child? And then what is the resulting consequence of that? Is the behavior the parent exhibiting going to fix the problem or exacerbate the problem?

Once we were able to turn the mirror and actually look at it as a parent and apply the ABC's to the way a parent approaches negative behaviors or any behaviors from their children, it caused this parent to actually be more aware of their state of mind and where they're at.

[And in the meantime, we were able to go through the response that the parent has to the tantrum behavior, which is highly frustrated and really in their face and trying to get them to change and fix things.](#) We were able to also ask the questions of the five things that the parent has to consider in their approach to the behavior for the child. Is the parent getting enough sleep? Is the parent's diet supportive of a healthy lifestyle that would help them regulate their mood?

Are they hungry? Are they hangry? Any disabilities that the parent may have or challenges that the parent may be struggling with? The environment. What's happening around at the time that the negative behaviors are happening? And then interruptions to their daily life, how does the behavior interrupt their life as a parent?

I cannot tell you how deep this conversation went because it went super deep you all. It went very, very deep. As we started to look at the parent and start to ask these questions, it's one thing to project this out to your child and try and fix the behavior. It's another thing to turn the mirror and project it on yourself and then do some real work, some inner work into your own parenting style and skills.

While we discussed this, we discovered that there were areas that needed to be fixed as well. And kudos, kudos, kudos to this parent for being able to take in that feedback and really do the work inwardly in order to help their child. Parenting is as much about the child as it is about the parent. There's a lot of work that goes into a child, but there's a lot of work required by the

parent in order for that to happen. And getting a parent to recognize in what areas they can improve can be a difficult thing to do. Turning that mirror and looking at truth, looking at the truth can be a hard thing. But I have to congratulate this parent on being able to flip that.

And what we noticed during this discussion was that there was give and take. There were things that the child needed to fix, absolutely. But there were also things that were within the power of the parent to change in their own approach to the negative behaviors to be sure that everything was fixed.

So, the goal ended up helping the parent set some very specific goals on diet and on sleep and hydration. Being sure that they were aware of how interruptions into their day affected them. Being aware that when they're interrupted because they have things they want to do throughout the day, they are already approaching the child in a space of negativity and anger and frustration. And then giving permission for the parent to say, "Okay, this is an interruption. This is a speed bump in my day. This is not a wall. I'm not crashing into a wall and stopping. It's a speed bump. I can get over it. And then I can move on with what I need to do."

Powerful discussion about being able to do that, about being able to recognize a parent's potential and their ability to work through these difficulties. If there's anything that I emphasize with parents is that there is work, inner work that parents need to do when they're working with their children. There's inner work that needs to be done. And there's outer work that you focus on with your child's behavior. And doing both is necessary for success. You have to be able to look at yourself and the way you're approaching your child and then make alterations as necessary to do that.

This is the type of stuff that really makes me fired up and excited. When I get a call from a parent who is looking for some very specific answers to a child's behavior, and we can go in-depth this way, this is what fires me up. It makes me excited for what it is that I'm doing here.

Because if we can help this whole process of parents being able to be introspective and implement these things with themselves in order to manifest it with their child, then we've won. We've absolutely won. The work of changing children's behavior is as much internal for the parent as it is external for the child. So kudos to this parent.

I'm super excited to follow up and find out in what ways these changes that we've implemented are working and this ability for this parent to recognize, "Hey, I have an interruption in my day. I'm going to approach this tantrum with love and with compassion in helping my child rather than in anger and added frustration because that actually compounds the problem."

You have the frustration of the child, and then you have the frustration of the parent on top of that. Most people are just completely unaware of the complexity of the skills that are found on the Smarter Parenting website. The ABC's of Behavior is a fundamental skill and it's actually the very first one we have parents look at and understand.

And when they're able to really grasp how powerful it can be and the depths that you can go with it, they are astonished by it. It seems simple on the surface, but like an iceberg, what you see is only the top layer. There is so much more underneath and there's so much work that is involved in helping that progress along.

Seriously, all of the skills can go super, super, super deep. If you call in and we do an individual session, we'll go as deep as you can go because that's where the changes are going to happen.

Now, I just want to go over the five things that you should be considered above. If you cannot determine what the antecedents are, take into consideration the following.

Sleep and rest. If your child is able to get enough sleep.

Their diet. Are they getting the nutrition that they need?

Any challenges or disabilities that they may have that you are unaware of or that you suspect or that they do have and that you know. Approaching it in an inappropriate way.

The fourth thing is the environment in which they find themselves in and the environment that you create.

And then interruptions, okay? Interruptions into their perception of what the day should go like and interruptions into your day and what you think it should go like.

Take into consideration those things as antecedents and figure out exactly what you can do to tweak it. Being able to step back into the big picture of the ABC's of Behavior is going to be paramount for your success as a parent.

It's going to be paramount for your ability to see everything. Remember your child is functioning on a moment-by-moment way. That's the way that they function. They function moment to moment to moment. You as a parent have the ability to step back, look at the big picture, and then make adjustments. This gives you so much more power. Instead of focusing in on just one aspect of the behavior, you're able to look at the big picture and see how you can change things around.

You can totally do it. [I advise you to sign up for coaching if you haven't.](#) Your first session is a free session, and let's talk. Let's really get deep into these skills and help you as a parent with your child and help your child at the same time. All right. That's it for me this week, and I will see you again next time. All right. Bye.

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