

## A Closer Look at Behavior Plans

Behavior problems are an issue most parents with young children face; however, for parents of children with Cornelia de Lange Syndrome (CdLS) it can be a constant battle. Oftentimes, children with CdLS struggle with behavior. They may be aggressive, exhibit self-injurious behaviors and can also be hyperactive. This may lead not only to troubles at home, but also in school.

Vanessa, mother to six-year-old Isaac, is very familiar with this topic. Isaac started having behavioral issues at age two and a half—around the time her second child was born. She began to notice that Isaac was aggressive and showing self-injurious behaviors like hitting, nail biting, and hair pulling. To this day, his behavior is an ongoing struggle.

“Isaac is non-verbal, although he is learning sign language. Due to his lack of communication, it’s very difficult to determine what the problem is when he begins to misbehave,” says Vanessa.

Luckily, Isaac has a paraprofessional who has known him since he was eight months old. Isaac has also had regular IEPs (Individualized Education Plan) since he was in preschool. With the combined effort of Isaac’s family and his paraprofessional, a behavior plan was implemented that has proven to make a difference.

Vanessa says that Isaac’s paraprofessional has been able to “grow with him,” which has helped in dealing with his behavior problems. She says that providing Isaac with the same paraprofessional for so long gives him consistency, which is critical in his behavior plan.

Sometimes Isaac’s behavior can be dealt with by simply giving him a timeout, and other times it requires complete removal from the situation. One element of his behavior plan is a one, two, three counting sequence. When Isaac begins to misbehave, he gets until the count of three to start behaving or else he gets a time out.

This counting sequence is usually put in place when Isaac’s behavior isn’t severe. When Isaac acts out physically, it leads to an immediate timeout. Vanessa says that a lot of Isaac’s behavior is attention seeking; therefore, removing him from the situation is one of the most effective ways to deal with his behavior.

While at National Family Conference, Vanessa was pleased to learn that removal is an effective element of a behavior plan for a child with CdLS. She also learned that including “social stories” before an event with high





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activity and many people—such as a birthday party—can help Isaac know ahead of time what happens at such events and how to behave appropriately while attending the event.

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