



PAUSE, ASK, RESPOND

PARENTS: BECOME A “BEHAVIOR HAS MEANING” DETECTIVE IN THREE STEPS

It takes time and effort to understand the intent of your child’s communication—but the payoff is worth it! Here are three steps that you can use to identify the possible meaning of your child’s behaviors.

1. PAUSE:

Before you respond or react to your child’s behavior, pause to think about the possible meaning of the child’s behavior. Think about what happened before the behavior.

2. ASK:

Use your detective skills by asking:

- What do I think my child is trying to tell me through this behavior? Do they want something? Do they need something?
- What do I know about my child that might help me figure out the reason that led to the behavior?

3. RESPOND:

Figure out the meaning of the behavior to meet the wants or needs that your child is trying to express. This response helps your child feel listened to, understood, and safe. Also, label your child’s behaviors, emotions, and expressions to support vocabulary development and promote children’s confidence in expressing themselves.

Children who are dual language learners may try to express themselves in both their home language and in English, and especially benefit from parents and teachers observing their behaviors, emotions, and expressions. Label your child’s behaviors in your home language to support their growing vocabularies and promote confidence in expressing themselves.