

TAGteach for Autism Course Part 3

Transcript

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Introduction to Part 3

Course Outline

- Tantrums
- Transition from Emotion to Behaviour to Observation
- Body Language
- Components of a successful tantrum-free environment
- Questions and Answers

Quick TAGteach Review

Before we get into Tantrums, I'd like to refresh our memories about the topics we've already covered.

This will get our thoughts primed for today's topic.

If you recall, in Webinar #1 we talked about:

- Tagteach basics
- Task analysis (kick ball)
- What is a tag point
- Criteria for the tag point
- Transition from emotion, to observation, to behavior

In Webinar #2 we watched a series of videos: A baby crying, a boy throwing a ball, handwriting practice, and Lear entering pool.

The purpose was to observe and label the physical actions the child was making, rather than to make a statement such as "That child is good," or "That child is bad." We want to get away from emotions and focus on behaviors—physical movements.

We also looked at a series of pictures to identify "toothy" smiles. As Theresa said, once we looked at those pictures we ended up asking ourselves, "What kind of toothy smile do we want? Upper teeth showing, lower teeth showing, or both rows of teeth showing." The goal of this was to fine-tune our observational skills.

We ended up by talking about how to use TAGteach to support a child during transitions with TAGteach.

For the critical School To Home transition, we discussed tag points such as Steps Out of Bus/Car, Foot on Smiley Face, and so forth.

Heavy doses of positive reinforcement during a transition help the child feel supported, and eventually she feels calm and confident.

Purpose of Review

Let's remember that transition we talked about in the first webinar. This is for parents, teachers and therapists to transition from thinking in emotional terms about a child's actions, to observing the child's behavior.

So, let's again think in terms of distinct physical movements that the child is making, breaking down tasks into the smallest possible steps (as in the handwriting video), and setting a tag point.

New Terminology

Tantrum

Just for information, lately in the autism community, people are making a distinction between "tantrums" and "meltdowns."

A tantrum is considered to be when a child cannot have something he wants or cannot do something he wishes to do. A tantrum is goal driven behaviour designed to persuade the adult in charge to give in to the desires of the youngster.

Meltdown

A meltdown is considered to be a response to being overwhelmed. Sensory overload is one way that being overwhelmed occurs, but becoming overwhelmed can happen in many other sorts of situations.

I think it's helpful to be aware of this distinction. However, it's a fine line between them, and I think they can overlap.

Click here to read an article on this topic:

<http://autismchaostocalm.com/got-autism-got-tantrums-heres-can-help-child/>

Managing Tantrums

These are the tag points I use to manage a tantrum. They are successful in calming the child in a gentle, supportive way.

They are:

- Quiet mouth
- Appropriate vocalization
- Hands still
- Feet still
- Exhales

Tag Point Criteria Review

Let's review the four tag point criteria

The tag point is the specific aspect of a behavior that is the sole focus of the student and teacher.

- What you want
- One criterion
- Observable
- Five words or less

There are four criteria for a tag point. It is very helpful to think about your learning goal in terms of these criteria because it will help you develop a simple, clear goal.

Determine whether the tag points below are Good tag points or Bad tag points by clicking and dragging the cards into the correct space. Remember, good tag points focus on what you DO want, have one criterion, are observable, are 5 words or less, and use objective phrasing (avoid **You** and **I**).

Video: Boy Tantrum

Okay, Quiet Mouth!

Let's practice with this video, tagging the behavior of quiet mouth, one of the tag points I use to manage tantrums.

Get out your tagger and tag when you see Mark showing Quiet Mouth (or just make a tally mark on a sheet of paper). Tell us in the chat how many times you saw this.

Video Discussion

Joan: *Cathy says ten, Shabata says ten, some agreement there.*

Martha: *I have eleven. And the video was 37 seconds long, so there were 11 opportunities in 37 seconds to give this child positive reinforcement. Every 3 seconds you can reinforce him, so that's a pretty strong statement.*

Joan: *Seany said 14 opportunities. The more we can reinforce, the better, right?*

Martha: *Sometimes it's a little tricky because the length of time that the child is quiet varies. They may only be quiet for a split moment, or they may be quiet for a whole second or a second and a half. It varies.*

Practice Observing

We are going to see three tantrum videos, as listed on this slide. These are real tantrums with real children with autism, and are not easy to watch. First we're going to see a video of a young boy with his father. The second and third videos feature a beautiful little girl, Isabella. Isabella's mother has given us permission to use these videos and is joining us for the webinar, so once again I would like to thank Helena very much.

In each video, we are going to look for opportunities to tag Quiet Mouth. As you watch the video, make a tally mark on a sheet of paper when you see an opportunity to tag Quiet Mouth. At the end of the video let's count them up and see how many instances of Quiet Mouth you saw.

Video 1 Discussion

Martha: *That was a 2 ½ minute video. We'll give everybody a few minutes to count up their tally marks. Please type them into the chat so Joan can tell us the results.*

Joan: *Kathy says 48. Shubata said 45. Seany said 47. These are very consistent.*

Martha: *Again, that shows that in 2 ½ minutes, this child could have been reinforced almost*

every few seconds, and had positive reinforcement. It would be interesting to see how things might have differed if he had had that kind of experience.

I know these videos can be painful to watch, but this is the reality for many of us.

Let's take a look at video #2 if we can. This is with Isabella. She is a little girl with severe

autism; she is nonverbal. This first video is very short. It's only 23 seconds.

Video 2 Discussion

Martha: *Let's wait and let Joan get that one rolling. (Voices on video). Let's watch it again because it goes fast. Would everyone please submit their tallies.*

Joan: *The counts were 9, 10, 11 and 12.*

Martha: *Yes, so again, in 23 seconds she could have been reinforced anywhere from 9 – 12 times. The opportunities are definitely there.*

We're going to look at Video #3. It's a longer one, about 2 minutes long. This is Isabella having a meltdown, and she's with her mom.

Video 3 Discussion

Martha: *So, once again, please submit your tallies of Quiet Mouth episodes. This was a more challenging situation; there was a lot more physical action on the part of Isabella.*

Joan: *Kathy says 62. Seany says 69.*

Martha: *Those are very high numbers, and I think it indicates that every child, when he or she is screaming, and this was certainly the case with my son Douglas too when he was little and had these kinds of tantrums, is that no matter who you are, or what you are, or what your situation is, after you scream, you have to breath in. You have to get more air to continue screaming, and that little micro-second when they have to catch their breath is a great opportunity to get that Quiet Mouth, or maybe we should call that Inhales. There are many, many opportunities to provide positive reinforcement to this beautiful little girl in the midst of this emotional crisis.*

Tag Points for Managing a Tantrum

These tag points work!

And these work for difficult cases.

I'd like to share with you a recent comment from Stuart Harder. Stuart recently retired, but he worked for years as a BCBA with the St. Croix River Education District in Minnesota.

He wrote to us to tell us:

"I worked with a girl last year whose rates of SIB were rather significant (tissue damage and bruising). I tagged quiet body and quiet voice to break into escalating frequencies that routinely resulted in full blown SIB. Loved the decelerations the TAGs produced."

Preventing Tantrums

With these tag points we can de-escalate a tantrum safely, effectively, and in a way that is gentle for the child.

Joan: *Sorry, I just want to ask you a question before we go on that I'm sure people are wondering about. What happens if you tag during a tantrum but the child is too upset to take the reinforcer. How do you handle that?*

Martha: *Oh, well that really doesn't matter. What I did with Douglas was if he was so upset that he couldn't accept the reinforcer I just piled them up on a table, and he would have a little stack of goodies accumulating there and he would go and get them afterwards. It doesn't matter if they don't accept the reinforcer. They're getting that*

signal. Especially if they've had a little bit of experience with TAGteach, they know that it means you're doing the right thing and the reward is coming. So it really works very well, and you don't have to worry about on-time delivery of reinforcement, they'll get to it. And actually, seeing the reinforcer piled up on a table can even be a better motivator for getting the child to calm down because hey, there's something great over there that he can get to.

The very first time I used TAGteach I had Douglas erupt into a tantrum and in twelve minutes I had him calmly sitting on the sofa and enjoying a little reinforcer, and he had had no experience with the tag and he learned it instantly in that twelve minutes of tantrum.

Joan: *OK, thank you.*

The real goal though, is to prevent tantrums

They are totally unnecessary.

They are deeply disturbing to the child and disruptive to a productive routine, whether in home or at school.

And it can be done!

Here are the principles of Tantrum Prevention that we will cover today.

- Tantrums should be rare
- Set up an environment to deliver success
- Monitor balance of failure and success
- Monitor demands - Make sure they are not TOO HARD, TOO MUCH, TOO LONG!
- Measure and keep track of time

- Bonus suggestions from Douglas

Body Language

We need to learn how to reach our child's body language.

Especially for kids with autism or other disabilities, they may be unable to communicate their emotions via speech.

Their only recourse is behavior.

It is our job to read our kid's facial expressions, as well as body language.

In fact, there was even a recent article on communication skills of children with autism that pointed out that people around them do a bad job of reading the faces of kids with autism. Apparently the lack of social skills goes in both directions!

We really need to study our child's body language, from the face to the torso to the feet, and look at how he or she is moving.

These are the clues that will tell us about the child's emotional state.

The questions that we need to ask are:

- What is the body language telling us?
- What is the facial expression?
- What is the pose of the body?
- What is the intensity level of feelings?

Distress Body Language

It's important to learn how a child indicates distress.

In your homework, we asked you to tell us how your child demonstrated distress.

We got really great information from Shubata, thank-you Shubata. She said here are some tell-tale signs for her son. So some happy behaviors he displays: smiling, relaxed arms and body, singing, chuckling, and following directions. For unhappy behaviors she has: a long face, looking agitated, frowning, shrieking, suddenly dashing back and forth and then crying, thumb and pointer fingers clenched, attempting to peel skin on his thumb, pushing someone away, and falling to the ground.

That's quite a range, and many of these are familiar to me too, Shabata. But he starts off with his facial expression and then ends off with stress indicators there.

Let's talk about facial expressions.

My son Douglas had a highly sophisticated and carefully calibrated set of facial and body movements to indicate distress. His facial communication is as follows:

- Concerned looks
- Furrowed brow
- Sad looks
- Angry looks,
- Sucked in cheeks
- Heavy breathing
- Scrunched up eyes or face

When a child has the scrunched up eyes or face, and is experiencing sensory overload, that's a warning sign too. It's time to stop and wait. Again, this is an opportunity to provide support. As soon as the child comes out of it, tag and reinforce!

Also, my son has the furrowed brow look. In another child, that first flash of discomfort could be a wrinkled nose, the tongue pushing against the cheek, a sigh, or another indicator. Observe your child or your student to figure out what his or her first facial distress signal.

If the facial communication didn't get attention my son accelerated to full body communication:

- One foot stamp
- Pawing the ground with one foot
- Heavy two-footed stomp
- Raspy breathing

And if I failed to take action at the earlier facial or full body warning signals, it was too late and guess what happened, we had the:

- Screaming
- Running
- Head banging, hand biting
- Escape
- Tantrum
- Anger, resentment

You have a horrible, painful situation to deal with.

Well, I'm happy to report that while we had a lot of these episodes in the early years now they are rare. And why? Because it rarely goes further than points one or two. As soon as I see the furrowed brow or sad looks, I stop, look, and listen, we work out what the problem is and try to address it.

Happy Body Language

We should also get to learn our child's body language for being happy.

When everything is going fine, Douglas lets me know. He gives lots of:

- Smiles
- Happy looks
- Signs "hug" or "love"
- Wants to keep going!

Your child's facial and body language is like a weather barometer.

Happy body language indicates clear skies and sunshine.

Distressed body language means watch out for the storm.

When you know how to read the body language accurately, you can take action!

Take Action!

As soon as you see the first facial distress indicator, take action!

- STOP!
- Let the child take a break
- Tag and reinforce all appropriate behavior
- Assess the situation
- Review tasks, demands
- Break them down further
- Increase or improve the reinforcement

A reminder, as we discussed in the first webinar, when you know about TAGteach, the “break” is not Lost time or Down time. During the “break” you can observe the child and continue tagging and reinforcing productive physical movements. This makes the break time equally productive for the learner, but in a different way.

Video Examples

Let’s look at another video!

Lear had the habit of just going into the fridge and looking for goodies when visiting at friend’s houses.

Instead of trying to block him, say NO, or empty the fridge we decided to teach him the skill of asking permission.

Saying NO to Lear is apt to cause a tantrum, so teaching him to ask, and then saying YES is a good strategy.

This is a good example of interrupting a behavior chain, by inserting a new behavior that is reinforced in the middle of the chain. Lear gets a plastic sea creature after every tag, then he gets to open the fridge and take a piece of melon.

Write down your observations and see how they compare with the observations of the webinar participants.

Video 1 Discussion

Joan: *Kathy says, “Oh no, Kerri’s mega-obsession ----- plastic sea creatures, ha, ha, ha. Did he get to keep them?” Yes, he did get to keep them.*

Jen says, “Calm, relaxed and positive.”

Shubata says, “Great video. Amazing how fast he learned and generalized.” She also said, “I like the creative use of a toy reinforcer.”

Joan: *When you are trying to change a behavior that’s been reinforced by itself – getting melon out of the fridge is a reinforcing behavior by itself – and we are not stopping him from doing that. Any time he wants he can go and open the fridge, so in order for us to insert another behavior into that chain we had to come up with a good reinforcer that we could use for that alternative behavior. We know that he loves sea creatures, so that was something even better than getting melon, for him.*

Martha: *Yes, you could see that on his face. His face just lit up.*

Joan: *Jennifer Shryock says, “Yes, you can see him thinking it through.” Yes, the wheels are always turning.*

Joan: *Kathy said, “Lear understood the structure of the game.” Yes, Lear is a frequent visitor here, so he’s been a TAGteach guinea pig for quite some time. You will see Lear growing up in the course of these videos. He definitely knows when we are going to tag and he understands exactly what works and how to make everything go to his advantage.*

Video Example 2

Here’s another video.

Lear was having trouble at school because he wanted to sit where another child was sitting.

He would ask politely for the child to move, but most times the child would not comply. This would make Lear angry and he would resort to force and/or yelling to take the other child's place.

You may need to turn up the volume to hear the discussion in which Lear explains how he interacts with other kids and the teacher when things don't go his way. (There's lots of yelling and pushing involved)

Video 2 Discussion

Joan: *Jennifer Shryock says, "This is a really great place to practice this much needed behavior." That's a good point. These kinds of role-playing things are really useful. It's very artificial at first because everyone is play-acting, but it gives the child an opportunity to learn and practice the behavior. If they've never done it before they can't be expected to just go and do it in a social situation or a real situation.*

Here's a question from Kathy. "So in the case of a child with little or no language, we would tag in the moment when we think they want that seat, instead of the role or the pretend play? How do we do this sort of thing when we can't do a role play?"

Martha: *I'd have to think about that. I can never come up on the fly with come up with these tag points; I have to mull it over. I think the thing to do would be to step back a little bit and make sure that there is lots of positive reinforcement in place for the productive behaviors that child already has. And if the child's already got a lot of productive behaviors and feels safe and is in a good situation, then it's not too hard to just say, "Johnny is sitting in the red chair. Why don't you sit in the blue chair?" And direct the child and tag the child for sitting in the blue chair. You could even make a promise, "Tomorrow you can sit in the red chair."*

Joan: *I think you can set up situations if a nonverbal child is going to be in a certain situation and things are going to happen in a certain way. You could still get some volunteers and set up a similar situation, and this might be a good place to use some targets. You could put a target on the other seat and teach that as a separate activity, so that they understand that it's a good thing to do to sit on this target. You could have 2 targets, and one person sits on one and that leaves the other one free for the child to sit on. So any situation that's going to arise, you could simulate it and try to figure out what to do, rather than waiting until it happens and then hoping for the best.*

Martha: *Right, right. That's a great idea.*

Joan: *Kathy says, "Lear became comfortable with getting what he wanted before moving to demands for new behavior. Love it!" Yes. That was a good strategy, to let him win a bunch of times and then change it on him. The main thing he needs to learn is what happens when someone says No, because that's when the problem arises. Then he can learn. We say, Yes, yes, yes," to him, then we tell him we're going to say No, so he understands it, that people can say No and he can still win in that situation.*

Joan: *Here's another comment from Shubata: She says, "My son usually wants the sofa to himself. His method is to act silly to make people leave. I need to pre-empt this. I need a tag point." She's asking, should she pre-empt him being silly, which is a nicer approach than Lear uses to get what he wants, but it's still a tactic for controlling a situation.*

Martha: *Let's talk about that some more at the end.*

Note that we did not get back to this question in the webinar. A suggested solution is below.

A solution to this problem would entail changing the child's attitude about having someone else on the couch. He will need to find it reinforcing to share the couch. One way to do that might be to use targets. Here is a suggested protocol:

Put a target (piece of tape, or cloth) on the couch: Tag point is sit on target.

Tag for this a few times. You could put the reinforcer on a table nearby so that he has to get up to get it, then he will have the opportunity to sit back down to practice this a few times.

Introduce another target on the other side of the couch, so now there are two. Sit on this one yourself and tag for "sit on target" when the child sits on his target. If this is too hard, you could use a large stuffed animal to sit on the other target. Reinforce and then get up so you can try again and so that he gets control of the couch. The child could remain sitting when you sit and get up and sit again, or he could get up and down as well. Tag when both of you are sitting at the same time.

If the child is able, he could tag when you sit on the target. This can be a fun game if the child likes to be in control of the tagger.

Increase the length of time you sit on your target while he is sitting on his, by 1 second at a time. Go back to a shorter time right away if he shows signs of being unaccepting of your presence. Once you are up to about 5 seconds, you could start varying the time you stay on your target. Sometimes 1 sec, sometimes 4, sometimes 2 etc, gradually adding in longer periods every so often until you are up to about 10 seconds consistently.

Next, try to add in reinforcement that is not food, but involves staying on the couch together. For example, games, songs, books, toys, electronics etc so that he finds the

time together on the couch enjoyable. Slowly introduce short periods of inactivity, or just watching TV.

Proceeding slowly in this way you should be able to change his attitude about sharing the couch, by building a positive association with having you on the couch. Repeat the process with other people to generalize this.

If you have Martha's book, read Chapter 10 on decreasing disruptive behaviors, especially the part about the "love the couch" program and territorial behavior.

Create a Tantrum-Free Environment

We are going to talk now about creating a successful tantrum-free, or at least a tantrum-rare, environment for your child or student.

We recommend that you start by running through the Status Of The Child Checklist. Is your child or student:

- Hungry?
- Thirsty?
- Hot?
- Cold?
- Happy?
- Angry?
- Tired or sick?
- Constipated?

After you run through the Status Of The Child Checklist, review your plan for the day:

- Assess child's skill levels
- Assess task demands

- Does the child have the skills to perform the task?
- Does the child value the reinforcers?

Ask yourself, does the child have the skills to perform the tasks he will be expected to perform?

Remember the video of Lear learning to ask permission before opening the refrigerator. He had to be taught this skill explicitly, and practice it.

I think with Shubata's son and the sofa, this would be something you could set up so he could learn a nicer way to share the sofa.

After you run through the Status Of The Child Checklist and Plan For The Day, decide whether changes or modifications may be helpful:

- Break the tasks down to the child's skill level
- Tag and reinforce correct responses
- Give breaks
- Reinforce child for productive behaviors during break

All of these are hard for us to do. When we work with our children we have an agenda and goals in mind. We want to help that child and we want to push the child.

We may also have time limits or schedules, and we as adults, feel pressure to achieve something during that time period. We discussed the problems of the “therapy hour” in the first webinar.

However, as hard as it may be, we have to go by the child’s clock. It is hard, in the beginning, to let the child “stop work” and wander about. But, when you consistently reinforce the child, you help the child feel “safe.” When she feels safe, and knows that she can leave the “work” setting whenever she feels overwhelmed, she is more likely to return to it – she’s not returning to a prison!

Monitor Balance of Failure and Success

As you go through the day or session with a child, please remember that generating responses takes much more energy and effort for a child with autism or another disability. They have to work much harder to do ordinary things.

- Reinforce correct responses lavishly!
- Monitor the child carefully and look for signs of fatigue or stress.
- If the child looks tired, STOP!
- Take a break.
- Tag and reinforce productive actions during break.

The goal, again, is to help the child feel safe, and to acknowledge how difficult these tasks can be for our kids with autism. And once again, with TAGteach, the break is just another opportunity to reinforce productive behaviors!

As you work with the child, monitor constantly to see that the child can happily and successfully participate in the tasks or activities set out.

You will see quickly if a demand is TOO HARD, TOO MUCH or TOO LONG, because the child will start to show stress indicators. Her brow will furrow, the breathing may become irregular, she will start to fidget, and eventually will try to escape.

As soon as you see the first facial stress indicator, STOP!

Re-assess, give the child a break, and tag for all productive actions during the break.

Measure, Keep Track of Time

Measure how long your child can work before the first negative reaction flashes across her face.

Count the minutes. Use timers. A Count-Up timer is good for this.

And then observe; can this child work for 2 minutes, 3 minutes, 4 minutes?

Children with autism are very sensitive to the duration of time, but you rarely hear people talk about this.

A child with autism may be able to work just fine for 3 minutes. Push her to four minutes and a tantrum erupts! The negative and stress reactions can escalate in a flash. One second everything seems fine, the next minute you have a meltdown.

Find the sweet spot where the task is right, the tag point is right, and the time is right for the child.

Respect the child's capacity. Set the tasks and the work schedule based on the number of minutes she can participate successfully and happily. Give her the security that she won't be asked to do too much for too long.

Use timers. Set it for 2 minutes, or whatever the time is, and stop when it goes off. Let the child take a break. Tag and reinforce her for productive actions during the break, the things we've talked about before (Eyes on Toy, Eyes on Book, Touches Block, Picks Up Doll, Eyes on Teacher).

This is not easy because we want to push that child. Initially, it will take time before she comes back to the table for structured activities. But eventually she will work for longer time periods.

Build a positive, trusting relationship. She should feel supported, and that she is not pushed beyond her capacity. When she can work at the pace that is right for her, you will have a tantrum-free experience!

Bonus Suggestions from Douglas

Now, Bonus Suggestions from my son Douglas

The following points are all things that I learned from Douglas.

He worked very hard to teach me. I was probably one of the dumbest learners around, because it took me years to catch on. He probably despaired that I would ever learn anything. Eventually, he got through to me.

So, I would like to share these lessons from Douglas.

#1: He likes to learn

- He wants to please.
- He wants his Mom, Dad, teacher to be happy.
- He hates having tantrums or being miserable.

#2: He likes choices

- Douglas taught me that CHOICE is very important.
- He likes to choose what to do first.
- He likes to choose his reinforcers.
- He likes to eat or take a break when he needs to.

#3: No Surprises!

This is a big important rule.

NO SURPRISES!

No surprise materials, no surprise demands, no surprise questions.

Unfamiliar demands are upsetting.

They are hard, different, and scary.

Don't spring something new on me.

Introduce new things to me with NO demand!

Let me get used to it slowly.

Here are some tag points for introducing a new task:

- Child looks at object
- Child touches object
- When you bring out something new, just let me look at it, touch it, and get used to it.

#4: Show me what you want me to do

Demonstrate!

Tag and reinforce me for watching you. Tag points are:

- Eyes on teacher
- Eyes on task materials
- Watch teacher write
- Watch teacher build tower

In the beginning with Douglas, even a new worksheet – although it was almost identical to a previous one – could set off a fear reaction.

This is where plastic sheet protectors came to the rescue. I put the worksheet in the sheet protector and let him look at it, then showed him how to draw or write the response, then he did it, with lots of tags and reinforcement. Over time this became less and less necessary and eventually he was fine with new worksheets and new materials. He had the trust that he would be helped, and that he would not have failure thrust upon him.

#5: Let me practice

Model the correct response.

Practice with me and make sure I can do it.

Tag me for each step THEN, ask me to do it.

PS. I really like being right.

This is the heart of the TAGteach method. Set the child up for success. Success is the best teacher.

The Big Secret!

Here is the big secret:

If I'm right all the time, I do more!

Wrap-Up

Here is a wrap-up of tantrum prevention. From the last couple of webinars we know about the transition from Emotion to Behaviour to Observation.

We Know:

- Behaviour is movement
- How to observe movement
- How to read body language
- How to break down tasks
- How to set tag points
- How to make sure tag points meet the 4 criteria

We Have To:

- Assess the child's skill levels and emotional status carefully
- Assess the task demands carefully
- Ask the child to do only what she is capable of doing
- Make sure the child experiences success!

We Should:

- Tag and reinforce lavishly
- Monitor the child's body language- it is your best guide
- Stop when the child displays a negative emotional reaction
- Respect the amount of effort needed for a child with a disability to do even a simple task

I think this last point is so important. Many times the child knows the answer, but it takes so much effort to produce the response. I think sometimes people mistakenly think a child doesn't know something, when in reality, the child can't pull together the sequence of actions to demonstrate her knowledge – she can't speak or can't indicate appropriately.

It takes work, thought and effort to prevent tantrums.

We may have to change routines, procedures or expectations, and this can be difficult.

We have to change our own behavior and this is always difficult.

But the rewards are so worthwhile!

You will end up with a happy child who is an engaged learner. That child will be able to do more and spend much more time on task.

Just a personal note. When I figured out everything Douglas had been trying to teach me, followed his signals, and did everything else, his learning soared. And he was perfectly happy to work really hard. He could sit down with me for 90 minutes straight, that's an hour and a half, and do math and reading and fluency practice and dozens of worksheets and he never budged from his chair. He loved it. And the tantrums disappeared.

This is how to prevent tantrums!

However, if you have the occasional outburst, you know how to handle it. The tag points for defusing a tantrum:

- Quiet mouth or appropriate vocalization
- Hands still
- Feet still
- Exhales

Questions and Answers

Martha: *So we're ready for a very short Question & Answer period. So if you have more*

questions please type them in the Chat to Joan.

Joan: *Theresa, do you have anything you'd like to say?*

Theresa: *No, I thought it was very self-explanatory.*

Joan: *I thought I saw a video of somebody have a tantrum in your car the other day. Was that you?*

Theresa: *Ha ha ha, 12 years of TAGteach and I destroyed it in one 10 second vine.*

Joan: *Kathy asked about recommendations about dropping to the ground as part of a tantrum. Her daughter drops to the ground during a tantrum.*

Martha: *Myself, when I have that kind of behavior just turn my back; I don't pay much attention to it. I would start tagging any behavior that would be a precursor to getting up. Or, just wait it out. You could tag Quiet Mouth, Appropriate Vocalization, or anything like that. Does she scream while she drops?*

Joan: *She says it depends on how much attention she wants. The more attention she wants, the bigger the tantrum is.*

Martha: *Well again, I think it's a transition. You go from one stage to the next. What happens over time if you keep reinforcing and putting a lot more reinforcement into the child's environment, you find that those things deteriorate slowly. The bad behaviors fade away. That certainly happened with us. They can have really dramatic behaviors, so I would say just make sure those behaviors aren't rewarded with parental attention or trying to pull her up to a standing position. I always kept my distance from my son, and that's what I think is one of the great things about TAGteach in managing tantrums. You*

can do it from across the room. You don't have to be close to the child. Many times what I would do is turn away; I would comb my hair over my face so it would look to him as though I wasn't watching him, but I could still see him. Whenever there was a more productive movement I could tag and reinforce that. I also had a magazine cover and I cut a little slit in it so I could hold it up to my face and it would look to him as though was looking at this magazine. I could watch him through my little peephole, and as soon as there was a productive behavior I would reinforce it.

Joan: *We need some photos of that, Martha!*

Martha: *Those are my little tactics. I had to watch him and make sure I knew what he was doing, and still be able to tag at the right moment. I didn't want him to know that I was observing him.*

More Question and Answer

Joan: *Seany says, "Sometimes when my daughter is having a meltdown the added stimuli of a reward overloads her. Can I just use the tag as a conditioned reinforcer for a brief period until my daughter is calmer? The stimuli of the reinforcer does not overload my daughter."*

Martha: *Oh, I think that's fine. What you can do is just put the reinforcers in a little bowl for her later. That action of you giving her the treat or the toy or whatever the reinforcer is, certainly that action could be disturbing to her.*

Joan: *What about not using any primary reinforcers?*

Martha: *Well, if that works, fine. TAGteach is all about what works. If it works, that's great*

because it means it's a really powerful reinforcer. You could give her something after she begins to calm down. When you're in the moment, you just do the best you can.

Joan: *Everybody likes your magazine trick.*

Martha: *Yes, you can rip off any old magazine cover from any old magazine and just cut a little slit at the crease.*

Joan: *We should start selling those in our store!*

Joan: *Thank you everybody for coming, and we will see you all next week.*

Martha: *The tantruming boy video was courtesy of The Autism Site. The Isabella videos were courtesy of her mother Helena. Many thanks to Helena and Isabella for that.*

The End

