

**LISTENING GUIDE FOR
RESPONDING TO CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR IN PRESCHOOLERS
The FLIP-IT® Approach**

Four of the most common types of challenging behaviors:

- **Extremely active and impulsive:** the child has trouble engaging appropriately in activities and with peers
- **Is not cooperating:** for example, not cleaning up or not following directions
- **Acts aggressively:** hitting, throwing things, pushing, biting
- **Withdrawn:** not engaging in activities, playing at a distance from peers, hiding under the table

If a child is showing frequent difficult behavior during your time, be sure to first consider if the child is hungry, tired, or sick. Is there something difficult happening at home?

Apart from that, there are three reasons that often underlie challenging behavior. The child is trying to:

- **Avoid/escape** a situation or person(s): to escape work, an activity, or a problem situation that the child doesn't know how to solve
- **Get something:** either attention or an object
- **Change the level of stimulation** (think bored, not engaged)—think about circle time and the children who are touching others instead of engaging.

Example: Kicking

It helps to shift our thinking from trying to control behavior with “don’t do that” or “stop that,” and view these occasions as teaching opportunities—**teaching a child what to do**. Ultimately, in order to “stop that,” the child needs to learn a more positive way to interact in each situation. The child needs skills to **problem-solve, be flexible, and tolerate frustration**.

NOTE: page 2 of this handout provides an overview of the FLIP-IT® steps. If you’d like a fuller explanation with multiple examples of how to word what you say in each step, the Devereux Center offers a free PowerPoint presentation on FLIP-IT® that can be downloaded at: <https://centerforresilientchildren.org/dcrc-shop/flip-it/resources/>