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PENFIELD
CHILDREN'S CENTER

Understanding Temper Tantrums

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BUILDING
BLOCKS

The logo for Penfield Early Pathways is a circular emblem. It features a stylized mountain range with a sun rising behind the peaks. Below the mountains, the text "PENFIELD EARLY PATHWAYS" is written in a clean, sans-serif font. The background of the slide is a vertical bar with horizontal stripes in shades of green, orange, red, light blue, dark blue, and teal.

Behavior Clinic

- Founded in 2003
- Outpatient mental health clinic serving children ages 0-6 years and their caregivers in Milwaukee County
 - In-home is the primary modality, during covid19 pandemic telehealth was added as an option
- Utilizes the Early Pathways treatment model
 - Developed through research with Marquette University dating back to the 1980's through present
 - Trauma-Informed Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) through a developmental lens

Temper Tantrums

Other terms parents may use:

- Outbursts
- Meltdowns
- Falling Out
- Throwing a Fit

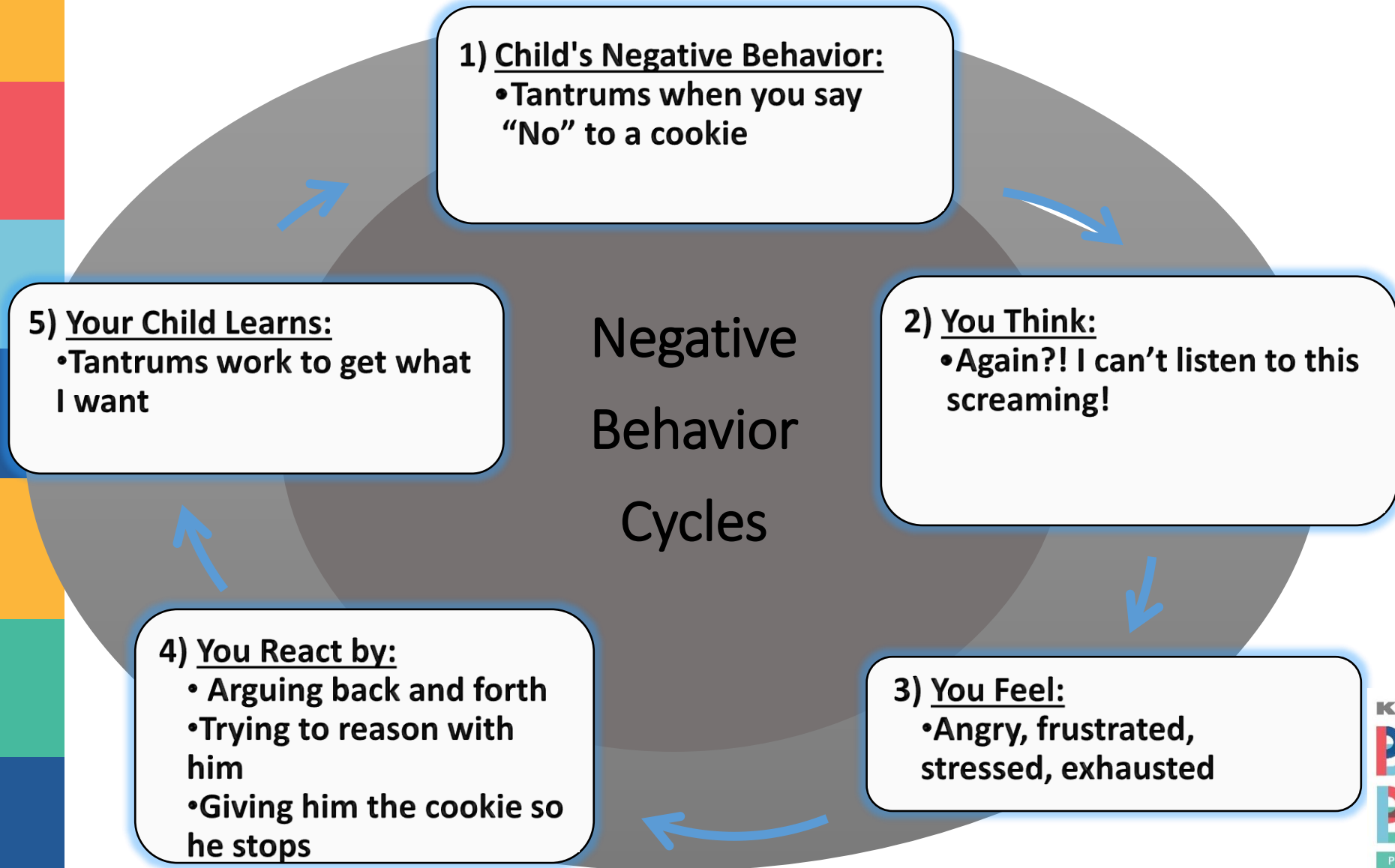


Disneyclips.com

What is a temper tantrum?

- Crying
- Screaming
- Talking back/negative language
- Falling to the floor
- Kicking/flailing
- Aggression
- Throwing items

Behavior Cycles



S.T.A.R.

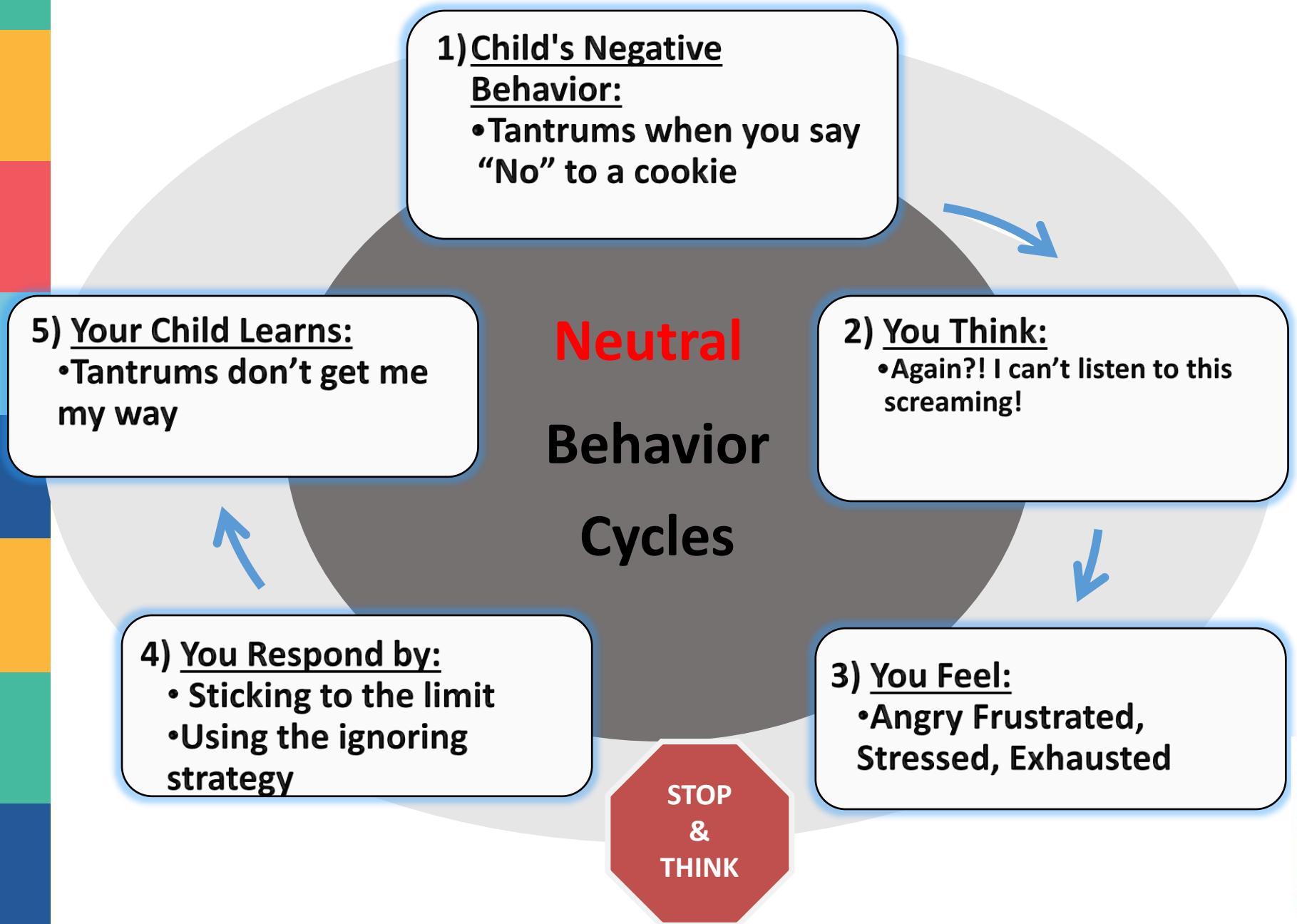
Stop-Before reacting to a behavior

Think-about the situation & about what you are feeling



Ask-are my expectations appropriate? Which response fits the situation? Am I ready to follow through?

Respond-using a strategy that will break the behavior cycle



Needs-Based

Why this type of tantrum?

- Communication
 - Low level of speech
- Physical state of discomfort
 - Hungry
 - Sick
 - Tired
 - Sensory needs

How should I respond?

- Prompt your child to ask appropriately
 - May need alternative forms of communication like gestures or picture cards
 - Provide an example: “Say milk” or “Say Can I have a snack?”
- Meet the need
 - Nap, snack, sensory breaks

Functional

Why this type of tantrum?

- Wants something
 - Not a need
- Trying to “get their way”

How should I respond?

- Ignore the tantrum
 - Limit attention in any way possible while maintaining safety
 - Use differential attention
 - Not reacting to negative
 - Responding to the positive
- Stick with the limit

Avoidant

Why this type of tantrum? How should I respond?

- Trying to avoid something
 - Want to “get out of” doing something
- Use immediate and consistent follow through
 - Hand-over-hand guidance to complete the task
 - Respond right away
 - Praise when the task is complete

Emotional

Why this type of tantrum? How should I respond?

- Strong feelings
 - Fear or sadness
- Reminders of a stressful event
- Not always able to identify the source
 - Seems “out of the blue”
- Provide comfort
- Use coping skills together
 - Take a “Time In” sitting aside with your child
- Maintain consistency with routine
- Track patterns to identify triggers

Why is sticking to limits important?

- Kids' brains respond well to predictability, this includes knowing what the limits are
 - Doesn't mean they won't try to push the limits
 - They might appear happier on the surface without the limit
- Kids' ability to curb their own impulses and plan ahead is low due to brain development at this age
- Lack of limits and follow through leads to MORE behavior in the future

Why does reasoning with my child not work?

- During tantrums your child's emotional center of their brain is running the show, the logical part of their brain is "shut down"
- Talking to your child during the tantrum may keep their focus on what is upsetting them rather than allowing them to calm down and move on
- Keep in mind: high intelligence does not automatically lead to more advanced emotional regulation
 - Meaning → your child may be able to articulate their emotions in an advanced way when calm, but emotionally they are still young and will react consistent with their age group

Will I see progress?

- Children vary on rate of improvement
- Expect progress to be “up and down” like a wave
- It may get worse before it gets better
- Some types require other interventions to improve
 - Needs based → may need speech or occupational therapy to address the root
 - Emotional → may need trauma/stress related mental health services to address the root
- ALL children have tantrums sometimes!
 - Not realistic to expect them to stop completely

Will I see progress?



Should I refer a child to Behavior Clinic?

- ✓ Lives in Milwaukee County
- ✓ Child's age is 0-6
- ✓ Caregiver has been informed & agreed to referral being made if not doing it themselves
 - ✓ For foster or kinship care the caseworker needs to be involved to obtain consent from legal guardian
- ✓ Caregiver has behavior or emotional concerns for the child, and/or would like to learn new responses to their child
 - ✓ Does not need to be a “clinical level” concern

How can I refer a child to Behavior Clinic?

- Call Penfield's Central Intake department and state that you would like to enroll in Behavior Clinic services
 - Claudia at 414-345-6309
- Professionals working with children can also fax a referral form, include Attn: Behavior Clinic
 - 414-344-7739
 - Contact me for a copy of our referral form
 - courtneyclark@penfieldchildren.org
- Is there a wait?
 - Yes, there is typically a waitlist
 - Around 8-12 weeks for English speaking, possibly longer for Spanish



For more information, please visit our websites:

penfieldchildren.org | penfieldbuildingblocks.org

