

## Creating a Plan - Where to Begin?

The goal in reducing challenging behaviors is to help the child so that he/she can have **greater joy** from participating in the program.

It is helpful to keep in mind that:

- Progress might be slow
- Some days may not be good days to work on new skills
- Athletes should feel very comfortable before being challenged
- Athletes have the right to their personal preferences - they may not want to do the skill AND doing the skill will not bring them greater joy

Working with young children or children who communicate differently (i.e.. non verbal) can sometimes make implementing this idea more difficult. It is easy to assume that we “know better” or have to control the behaviors of our athletes.

**Try shifting your mindset from controlling an athlete’s behavior to influencing it.**

### Tips on Creating a Plan

- Talk to the family first in an open and nonjudgmental way.
- If a child has a Behavior Improvement Plan in school or behaviorist already it may be helpful to start there.
- Remember every child is unique. Some athletes may require minimal supports, and some may require multiple. Some may require a small bout of planning and some may need plans in place for a while.
- It is important to be **consistent** with your plan. If it is not working, you should still continue with the plan through the session. You can change it for the next time if needed.
- Make sure your plan is **realistic**. If you plan on providing positive reinforcement for every positive attempt, you will need a coach available to give that encouragement. If the athlete needs a break from activity and needs to go for a short walk, who is going to escort the athlete?
- Make sure you are prepared to implement your plan. If you plan to give stickers out as a reward, you must have stickers with you.
- Think about ways that you might be able to change the routine or environment to avoid the athlete engaging in or acting out the challenging behavior rather than reacting to the behavior
- Revisit the athlete’s needs and the plan every few weeks. As the child develops you may be able to decrease the supports or you may need to change them a little.