

the support staff were able to “act blind” for a moment, she would cease. Once staff began engaging her in a stimulating activity schedule, these behaviors were greatly reduced.

- One man would “nitpick” with support staff about the rules of his group home. When a support person negotiated with him, his episodes of nitpicking escalated to twenty per day. Staff resolved the problem by asking him to write down any concerns and bring them up at 6:30 p.m. That after-supper appointment provided him a chance to present all his concerns.
- One person who engaged in socially disruptive, attention-seeking behavior required positive redirection. When prompting him to respond to positive direction, support staff learned not to expect an immediate response. They used the “dit, dit, dit” method, and gave him three opportunities to respond.



The Dit-Dit-Dit Method

- The first positive direction allows the support person to gain the individual’s attention.
 - The second provides him with a reminder and lets the direction sink in.
 - The third is for good will. It allows the individual time to save face and get ready to respond.
- Giving three positive directions accepts the person’s right to test the support person. It also establishes the support person as one who knows the limits, is able to communicate the expectations, and is willing to persist and pass the test.
 - If the function of a person’s behavior is to seek attention, this method provides the attention in a directed manner. Remembering to give three positive directions limits support staff’s tendency to say, “Stop that!”—a response that pays attention to the negative behavior.
 - What about a fourth dit? A person’s disruptive behavior may gain momentum and persist beyond three prompts to positively respond. He is likely to be either “stuck” in perseveration and needing more help to shift focus, or trying to control a situation with disruptive actions. A greater degree of structured intervention may be required.

Task avoidance. Task-avoiding, attention-seeking behaviors can prove very functional for a person who experiences anxiety.

- Acknowledge the possibility that the person feels threatened by the task, and work to reduce his anxiety.
 - Make the task relevant.
 - Break the task down into simpler components while increasing positive feedback.

Proposed Guidelines

Recommendations for support staff's giving nurture and affection, and responding to expressions of nurturing and affection.

Guidelines for support staff offering nurturing and affection to individuals

Actions should be:

- Natural and spontaneous in the manner of one loving family member to another
- Considerate of the individual's age and physical maturity, but appropriate to his or her functional level and emotional needs
- Relevant to each situation, while regarding each person's specific requirements
- Considerate of individual differences between support staff. (In any family, not everyone likes to spontaneously give affection in the same manner.)

Guidelines for responding to an individual's expression of affection toward support staff

- Support staff should acknowledge an individual's desire to express affection.
- The person receiving services should be given guidance to make his response in a form that is most acceptable in a community environment. (For example, some mature individuals will offer a full-frontal, standing hug. One alternative could be to provide nurturing physical contact by sitting beside him with an arm around his shoulder.)

Every agency and its support staff should reach their own consensus about issues of affection when programming a response to this type of attention-seeking behavior.