Children in early childhood programs come to school each day with varying degrees of preparedness. And that preparedness can change depending on what is happening in the child's family before coming to school each day. For that reason, early childhood professionals must consider many possibilities when a child is exhibiting out of bounds behavior. Reflecting on the motivation behind the behavior, or the influences on the behavior, is essential to establishing and maintaining a healthy classroom experience for each child.

Considering the outside factors influencing a child's behavior, and not assuming the child is challenging the teacher's authority, are key to helping a child gain the appropriate skills to manage behavior. Stepping back and reflecting on a few potential influences can be the difference in either escalating a situation between a child and teacher, or creating an opportunity to work together to influence a child in a more positive manner. Perhaps consider how you would feel if you were a child in any given situation – adults may seem all powerful to children. **Tips to consider may include:**

1. **Make sure they the child's basic needs have been met:**
   a. Adequate sleep
   b. Well nourished (Has the child eaten that day, is the child hungry, even after eating?)
   c. Medical concerns (Are there problems with vision, hearing, and general physical health?)
   d. Emotional state (Does the child seem upset or unhappy upon arrival?)
   e. Sense of safety (Is this a new school environment, causing fearfulness, and separation anxiety?)

2. **Be aware of what might be happening at home, such as:**
   a. Family conflict (based on what you have observed, or what the child may have said in conversation)
   b. Illness/death of family member
   c. New baby
   d. Moving
   e. Homelessness/unemployment
   f. Language differences

3. **Communication**
   a. Does the child have an effective/appropriate way to communicate with parents, teachers, and peers?
   b. If the child uses a communication tool (including visual), is it consistently used in all school and home activities, including: classroom, bathroom, lunch, special school activities, and outdoors?
   c. Are communication efforts being responded to, even if the child's skills are not advanced?
   d. Does the child demonstrate frustration when trying to communicate with children or with adults?

4. **Consider home/school consistency**
   a. Are there different cultural expectations for behavior from home and school? (Rules, boundaries /limits)
   b. Do you know the family's preferred method of discipline as compared to the school's method?
   c. Is use of technology greater at home than school? (Time spent on TV, iPad, phone, etc.)
   d. What is the family's pattern of interaction with the child? (Hands-on, or more directive?)

5. **What teachers can do**
   a. Be responsive to what the child is trying to communicate.
   b. Reflect on all that may have gone on at home before the child comes to school.
   c. Observe the child's interactions to determine if specific activities are problematic and what interventions may work best.
   d. Communicate with the family and develop a plan to work together to resolve behavior issues.
   e. Ensure that classroom teachers/adults are communicating acceptance and love to the child. Children are perceptive and respond to emotions – even subtle ones.
   f. Try not to take challenging behavior personally – a child's behavior is not always what it seems!

Sources: https://www.childrenscolorado.org/conditions-and-advice/parenting/parenting-articles/what-children-need/   Maslow's Hierarchy of Need