

1st Mile: Know Your Child/ Know Yourself

What is the difference between normal and abnormal? Where is the line between eccentricity and Autism? moodiness and Bipolar Illness? blues and Depression? high energy and ADHD? learning difference and Learning Disability? The former should be nurtured, respected and celebrated; the latter should be understood, prevented, and treated. Distinguishing between *normal human variation* and *disorder* is important but often difficult.

A practical approach to helping individual children shifts the focus away from fuzzy discussions about “normal vs. abnormal” to simply consider: “Is there a problem?” The emphasis here will be day-to-day function. Even if there is a biological basis for certain behavioral styles and developmental differences, this has nothing to do with the severity of impairment. Just because a child has certain weaknesses does not mean that all situations and tasks will be problematic. Maybe your child’s profile fits with some personalities better than others. Maybe there have been effective accommodations. Maybe your child has been able to compensate on his or her own. The functional approach advocated here does not dwell on whether a child is abnormal and certainly not on whether anyone is to blame. We just want to determine if there is a problem and what to do about it.

What is it about your child’s developmental profile that explains his or her problem behaviors? What makes certain situations difficult for you and your child? What are your child’s relative strengths and interests? What makes some situations relatively easy?

Problem inventory: Start by making a list of problem situations and behaviors. Feel free to add to the list provided below. Parents should rate each item on the problem inventory with a 1 for little problem, a 2 for medium problem, and a 3 for big problem; depending upon the frequency, severity and duration of each. In other words, “how big a deal” is this? The problem inventory identifies targets for behavior management and serves as a baseline against which to measure the success of the *Parent Child Journey*. After implementing strategies from these 10 sessions, I will remind you to complete this problem inventory again and see how much progress you have made with your child.

Problem Inventory

Name: _____ Date: _____ Rater: _____

Circle best answer:

0= no problem; 1=little problem; 2=medium problem; 3=big problem

Problem Situations

HOME

0	1	2	3	Getting ready to go in the morning
0	1	2	3	Transitioning into the car
0	1	2	3	Riding in the car
0	1	2	3	Arriving home
0	1	2	3	Transitioning out of the car
0	1	2	3	Mealtime (circle: before, during, after)
0	1	2	3	Playing with other children
0	1	2	3	While using electronic devices (which ones? _____)
0	1	2	3	When asked to stop using electronic devices
0	1	2	3	During unstructured free time
0	1	2	3	When visitors come over
0	1	2	3	When visiting others
0	1	2	3	In public places (Which ones? _____)
0	1	2	3	With adult: (Which one(s)? _____)
0	1	2	3	With sibling: (Which one(s)? _____)
0	1	2	3	With babysitter: (Which one(s)? _____)
0	1	2	3	Homework (circle: starting, during, finishing)
0	1	2	3	Doing chores (Which one(s)? _____)
0	1	2	3	Getting ready for bed (washing, bathing, teeth-brushing, etc.)
0	1	2	3	Getting into bed
0	1	2	3	Falling asleep
0	1	2	3	Staying asleep
0	1	2	3	Other: _____
0	1	2	3	Other: _____

SCHOOL

0	1	2	3	Arriving at school
0	1	2	3	During class (Which one? _____)
0	1	2	3	In school hallways / bathrooms
0	1	2	3	Recess at school
0	1	2	3	Lunch at school
0	1	2	3	School field trips
0	1	2	3	With adult: (Name: _____)
0	1	2	3	Pick-up at school
0	1	2	3	School bus
0	1	2	3	Other: _____
0	1	2	3	Other: _____

COMMUNITY

0	1	2	3	Grocery store
0	1	2	3	Eating out
0	1	2	3	House of worship
0	1	2	3	Shopping
0	1	2	3	Neighborhood playground
0	1	2	3	Festivals
0	1	2	3	Outdoor events
0	1	2	3	Indoor events (concerts, movies, etc.)
0	1	2	3	<i>Other:</i> _____
0	1	2	3	<i>Other:</i> _____

Problem Behaviors

0	1	2	3	Actively defies/ refuses to comply
0	1	2	3	Loses temper
0	1	2	3	Argues with adults
0	1	2	3	Deliberately annoys people
0	1	2	3	Blames others for his or her mistakes or misbehaviors
0	1	2	3	Is touchy or easily annoyed by others
0	1	2	3	Is angry or resentful
0	1	2	3	Is spiteful or vindictive
0	1	2	3	Bullies, threatens or intimidates others
0	1	2	3	Initiates physical fights
0	1	2	3	Lies/ "cons" to obtain goods/ favors or to avoid obligations
0	1	2	3	Skips school
0	1	2	3	Is physically cruel to people or animals
0	1	2	3	Has stolen items of nontrivial value
0	1	2	3	Deliberately destroys other's property

Other problem behaviors and situations:

0	1	2	3	_____
0	1	2	3	_____

The QUICK SCAN

Now that you have a baseline problem list, it's time to figure out where these problems came from. The questionnaire below – “The QUICK SCAN” – guides parents through an analysis of their child's unique profile. The QUICK SCAN allows you to summarize how your child is “built”. It provides a “here and now” description of your child's development and behavioral style. This description of your child's profile will two important functions.

1. Understanding your child's profile will ***explain the source of his or her behavioral challenges***; that is, what is it about your child that interferes with engagement, understanding, motivation and/or ability that naturally leads to problem situations and behaviors.
2. Understanding your child's profile will allow you ***to customize your behavioral approach***; that is, modify your expectations, commands and tasks – in a truly individualized way – to ensure success.

So we will be referring to this QUICK SCAN throughout the *Parent Child Journey* to guide assessment and custom-design effective management strategies.

The QUICK SCAN is designed to be functional. This practical approach deliberately steers away from fuzzy debates about “normal versus abnormal”, “diversity versus disorder” and “difference versus disability”. After all, where is the line between eccentricity and Autism? Moodiness and Bipolar Illness? Blues and Depression? High energy and ADHD? Learning difference and Learning Disability? Such distinctions may be important in research and some types of treatment but such artificial categories often get in the way of individualized and effective behavior management. Children who share a diagnostic label are usually more different from one another than they are alike. Plus, most children have more than one important difference or diagnosis anyway! *Parent Child Journey* will help you move beyond specific diagnostic categories to a full description of your child's functional profile. With this here-and-now approach, we will try not to worry too much about the future. If we can make things better day by day and week by week, then the future will take care of itself. For the purposes of behavior management, I prefer to keep things results-oriented. Together, we will stick to practical questions:

- Is there a problem?
- Where did it come from?
- What should we do about it?
- How did that work?

Introducing the QUICK SCAN and Your Instruction Manual

The QUICK SCAN guides you through a detailed description of your child's profile within the following broad domains:

- Behavioral Style/ Temperament
- Sensory
- Skills
- Environmental

The Instruction Manual (for more detailed explanation and multi-modal fun): As you go through the QUICK SCAN, if you're not sure what something means, check out the Instruction Manual on-line at ParentChildJourney.com. Each Part of the Instruction Manual presents the QUICK SCAN in different ways; in words, pictures, music and graphs. I hope that you find this more detailed discussion and the multi-modal presentation helpful, interesting and fun. Whatever works best for you. Children have different ways of processing, learning, understanding and remembering. So do parents.

And so, Our Journey Begins

While working through the QUICK SCAN, you should begin to see your child in a new way. The QUICK SCAN is designed to be comprehensive but practical. Start by focusing on just one child. Once you get a feel for it, you can QUICK SCAN other children. You should QUICK SCAN yourself too. Ross Greene says, "Children do well when they can." Likewise, I believe, "Parents do well when they can." Just as it is important to understand the source of your child's behavior problems, it is also crucial for you to consider the source of your own difficulties. After completing the QUICK SCAN and beginning to analyze problems in these terms, parents often feel liberated. No more blame or guilt. According to this view, childhood behavior challenges are not the result of willful disobedience or poor parenting; rather, the natural outgrowth of developmental differences, stemming predictably from a problematic fit between the child and environmental demands. By understanding the reasons for problem behaviors, parents lay an important foundation for building effective behavioral strategies. This understanding puts parents and children well on their way to positive growth and change.

So here's the QUICK SCAN. Let's go!

THE QUICK SCAN

Child's name: _____ Age: _____

Rater's name: _____ Date: _____

Please circle the most appropriate number.

Behavioral Style / Temperament

Motor Activity level:

3 _____ 2 _____ 1 _____ 0 _____ 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____
High activity _____ Average _____ Low activity _____

Impulsivity

3 _____ 2 _____ 1 _____ 0 _____ 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____
Acts before thinking _____ Average _____ Thinks before acting _____

Attention Span

3 _____ 2 _____ 1 _____ 0 _____ 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____
Short _____ Average _____ Long _____

Initial Reaction

3 _____ 2 _____ 1 _____ 0 _____ 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____
Slow to Warm-up _____ Average _____ Quick to Warm-up _____

Adaptability

3 _____ 2 _____ 1 _____ 0 _____ 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____
Very inflexible _____ Average _____ Very flexible _____

Intensity of Reaction

3 _____ 2 _____ 1 _____ 0 _____ 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____
Dramatic _____ Average _____ Reserved _____

Usual Mood

3 _____ 2 _____ 1 _____ 0 _____ 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____
Unpleasant, serious, tense _____ Neutral _____ Pleasant, joyful, relaxed _____

Regularity/Predictability

3 _____ 2 _____ 1 _____ 0 _____ 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____
Low regularity, unpredictable _____ Average _____ High regularity, predictable _____

Sensory Profile

Hearing Speech

3 2 1 0 1 2 3
Tunes-in people talking Average Tunes-out people talking

Hearing Noise

3 2 1 0 1 2 3
Oversensitive *Sounds & noises* Undersensitive

Vision

3 2 1 0 1 2 3
Quick to notice *Visual stimuli* Slow to notice

Taste

3 2 1 0 1 2 3
Oversensitive *Changes in foods, hidden tastes* Undersensitive

Smell

3 2 1 0 1 2 3
Oversensitive *Odors* Undersensitive

Light Touch

3 2 1 0 1 2 3
Oversensitive *Sensitive to light touch, tickling, clothing texture* Undersensitive

Deep Touch

3 2 1 0 1 2 3
Avoids, dislikes *Physically close contact* Seeks, likes

Movement/Body Position in Space

3 2 1 0 1 2 3
Avoids *Moving, spinning through space (swing, seesaw, rides, heights)* Likes

Internal Body Awareness/Physical Symptoms

3 2 1 0 1 2 3
Over-reports *Symptoms of illness, not feeling well* Under-reports

Skills Profile

Fine Motor

3 2 1 0 1 2 3
Difficulty, avoids *Manipulating small objects* Ease, enjoys

Handwriting

3 2 1 0 1 2 3
Difficulty, avoids *Writing with crayons, pencils, markers* Ease, enjoys

Gross Motor

3 2 1 0 1 2 3
Difficulty, avoids *Running, jumping, climbing,
playing sports/athletics, dancing* Ease, enjoys

Speaking

3 2 1 0 1 2 3
Difficulty *Putting thoughts into words* Ease

Listening

3 2 1 0 1 2 3
Difficulty *Understanding spoken communication* Ease

Writing

3 2 1 0 1 2 3
Difficulty *Putting thoughts onto paper* Ease

Reading

3 2 1 0 1 2 3
Delayed *Reading skills* Advanced

Understanding Spatial Relations

3 2 1 0 1 2 3
Poor *Understanding puzzles, shapes, block design, maps* Excellent

Visual Arts

3 2 1 0 1 2 3
Poor *Drawing, crafts, painting* Excellent

Music

3 2 1 0 1 2 3
Poor *Musical ability* Excellent

Math

3 2 1 0 1 2 3
Delayed *Math ability* Advanced

Time Awareness

3	2	1	0	1	2	3
Difficulty, inaccuracy			<i>Estimating, pacing</i>			Ease, accuracy

Planning, Organization, and Implementation

3	2	1	0	1	2	3
Difficulty			<i>Planning ahead / strategizing / sequencing / preparing</i>			Ease

Social Skills

3	2	1	0	1	2	3
With difficulty, rejected			<i>Makes friends</i>			Easily, popular

Problems with physical health

3	2	1	0	1	2	3
Severe			<i>average</i>			None

Other Family, Environmental, or Life Stresses

3	2	1	0	1	2	3
Severe			<i>average</i>			None

Other Family, Environmental, or Life Stresses (experienced by child)

Circle best answer according to current impact:

0= no problem; 1=little; 2=medium; 3=big problem

FAMILY STRESSES

0	1	2	3	Death of parent
0	1	2	3	Death of other family member
0	1	2	3	Death of pet
0	1	2	3	Substance abusing parent(s)
0	1	2	3	Physical or sexual abuse of family member
0	1	2	3	Mental or behavioral disorder of parent or sibling
0	1	2	3	Disability of parent or sibling
0	1	2	3	Physical illness of parent or sibling
0	1	2	3	Addition of a sibling
0	1	2	3	Physical separation from primary caregiver
0	1	2	3	Change in primary caregiver
0	1	2	3	Primary caregiver does not speak language of community
0	1	2	3	Marital discord
0	1	2	3	Separation/ divorce
0	1	2	3	Parent dating
0	1	2	3	Re-marriage
0	1	2	3	Blended family
0	1	2	3	Domestic violence
0	1	2	3	Parent or family member with crime problem
0	1	2	3	Parent underemployed
0	1	2	3	Parent working long hours outside the home
0	1	2	3	Lack of support from extended family

CHILD'S PERSONAL STRESSES

0	1	2	3	Physical changes (e.g., weight loss or gain, acne, puberty, etc.)
0	1	2	3	Sexual/ gender identity issues
0	1	2	3	Physical or sexual abuse
0	1	2	3	Neglect
0	1	2	3	Foster care / institutional care
0	1	2	3	Adoption

- 0 1 2 3 Witness to violence
- 0 1 2 3 Chronic, long term, or undiagnosed illness
- 0 1 2 3 Disability (diagnosed or undiagnosed): _____
- 0 1 2 3 Not enough free time

PEER RELATIONSHIP STRESSES

- 0 1 2 3 Discord with peers (e.g., bullying, exclusion, etc.)
- 0 1 2 3 Not enough peers with shared interests
- 0 1 2 3 Loss of a good friend
- 0 1 2 3 Friends who are struggling
- 0 1 2 3 Social media stress

COMMUNITY STRESSES

- 0 1 2 3 Adjustment to a new and different culture
- 0 1 2 3 Social discrimination or isolation of family from community
- 0 1 2 3 Religious or spiritual problem

EDUCATIONAL STRESSES

- 0 1 2 3 Inadequate school facilities
- 0 1 2 3 New school and/or new teacher (circle)
- 0 1 2 3 Unexpected change of teacher or classroom (circle)
- 0 1 2 3 Does not get along with teacher(s)
- 0 1 2 3 Does not get along with classmates
- 0 1 2 3 Poor academic performance
- 0 1 2 3 Homework problems
- 0 1 2 3 Undiagnosed/unrecognized/unsupported disability

INADEQUATE RESOURCES

- 0 1 2 3 Food insecurity/lack of adequate nutrition
- 0 1 2 3 Homelessness or uncertain housing
- 0 1 2 3 Financial instability
- 0 1 2 3 Lack of adequate health care

ENVIRONMENTAL STRESSES

- 0 1 2 3 Unsafe neighborhood
- 0 1 2 3 Dealing with relatives
- 0 1 2 3 Exposure to upsetting news stories

0 1 2 3 Natural disaster

OTHER STRESSES

0	1	2	3	_____
0	1	2	3	_____
0	1	2	3	_____
0	1	2	3	_____

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How the QUICK SCAN explains the Problem Inventory

To see how the QUICK SCAN explains the Problem Inventory, let's consider the example of Timmy a 6-year-old boy.

Each morning, Timmy refuses to get ready for school. His "non-compliance" with the morning routine has been getting worse. His mother says, "Time to get up," then "Time to get dressed," then "Time to eat breakfast," then, "Time to brush teeth," then, "Time to get your backpack," then "time to go." Each step of the way, he knows what to do but he simply doesn't do it. Timmy acts like he doesn't hear his mother. Or he might start doing what he's supposed to do but then get sidetracked. His mother gets frustrated. She raises her voice. She tries to physically guide him. He has a tantrum. She gets more upset. The whole process is prolonged and very unpleasant. He's late for school. She's late for work. They're both demoralized.

Where does Timmy's morning problem come from and what can his mother do about it? The QUICK SCAN explains the source of the problem. The Instruction Manual (go to ParentChildJourney.com) suggests some individualized accommodations.

- QUICK SCAN: Timmy has short attention span and high impulsivity. This makes it hard for him to stay on track through the multistep morning routine. *Accommodations: Timmy's mom can break down the multi-step routine into single subtasks. She can also use visuals; such as, schedules, checklists or picture guides. And she can be sure to give plenty of immediate positive reinforcement.*
- QUICK SCAN: Timmy is inflexible and has a high intensity of reaction. This causes difficulty making transitions and keeping cool. *Accommodations: Timmy's mom can give warnings, extra time and plenty of empathy.*
- QUICK SCAN: Timmy is hypersensitive to touch which contributes to his over-reaction. *Accommodations: His mom can use non-physical means to engage and direct him; especially when Timmy is not expecting to be touched or when he is very emotional.*
- QUICK SCAN: Timmy has relatively weak fine motor skills making it a bit cumbersome to tie shoes and brush teeth. *Accommodations: Timmy can wear Velcro shoes and use an electronic toothbrush.*
- QUICK SCAN: The school program is heavy on work sheets so he anticipates trouble keeping pace with his classmates. He is nervous about going to school. *Accommodations: The teacher can reduce his written work load and allow him to dictate his answers.*
- QUICK SCAN: Timmy has difficulty with organization of language on demand. This makes it hard for him to "use his words" and calmly negotiate. So he defaults to having a tantrum. *Accommodations: Timmy's Mom can help him put his feelings into words.*
- QUICK SCAN: Timmy has very poor awareness of time passing. So when he thinks he's getting around to it, his mother thinks he's not making any progress at all. *Accommodations: Use a timer for each subtask.*
- QUICK SCAN: Timmy's mother is stressed at work and very anxious about arriving late. Her own high intensity of reaction and inflexibility causes her trouble; both at home and at the office. Her angry reaction to Timmy's non-compliance prolongs the morning routine. This allows him to successfully delay arrival to school. *Accommodations: Timmy's Mom might benefit from some counseling and better self-care.*