

Surface Behaviors

It is important for parents to be keen observers of their child's behavior. Often the behavior on the surface (what can be observed) is the result of an underlying issue.

Surface behaviors can also be the result of:

- skill deficit
 - the child did not learn a particular behavior, e.g., daily life skills like eating at a table
- cultural difference
 - what is problematic in one culture may be acceptable in another
- difference in parenting style or tolerance level
 - some parents enjoy screaming children running through the house, others do not.

Surface behaviors are not always as apparent as *externalizing* behaviors like verbal aggression or defiance. Some children may suppress their feelings and exhibit *internalizing* behaviors.

Internalizing Behaviors

Internalizing behaviors are often overlooked but are nonetheless worrisome. They are typically inward behaviors.

The child with internalizing behaviors might be described as:

- withdrawn
- lonely
- overly quiet
 - self-reliant and never needing to be told how to do things
- anxious
 - afraid to fall asleep
 - clinging to caregivers
 - avoiding adults
- very compliant
 - always smiling and never angry
- socially withdrawn
 - uninterested in friends, family, or activities
- experiencing physical complaints

In severe instances, the child might be:

- depressed
- bulimic or anorexic

Externalizing Behaviors

Externalizing behaviors are hard to miss. They can be disruptive, even harmful and frequently are directed at other persons or things. Hyperactivity is a common externalizing behavior.

Other externalizing behaviors might include:

- lying
- defiance or disrespect
- verbal aggression
- physical aggression
- tantrums
- property destruction
- stealing
- curfew violations
- running away

It is very important for parents to monitor both internalizing and externalizing behaviors in order to understand the underlying issues. The Behavior Tracking handout can help parents track these behaviors.