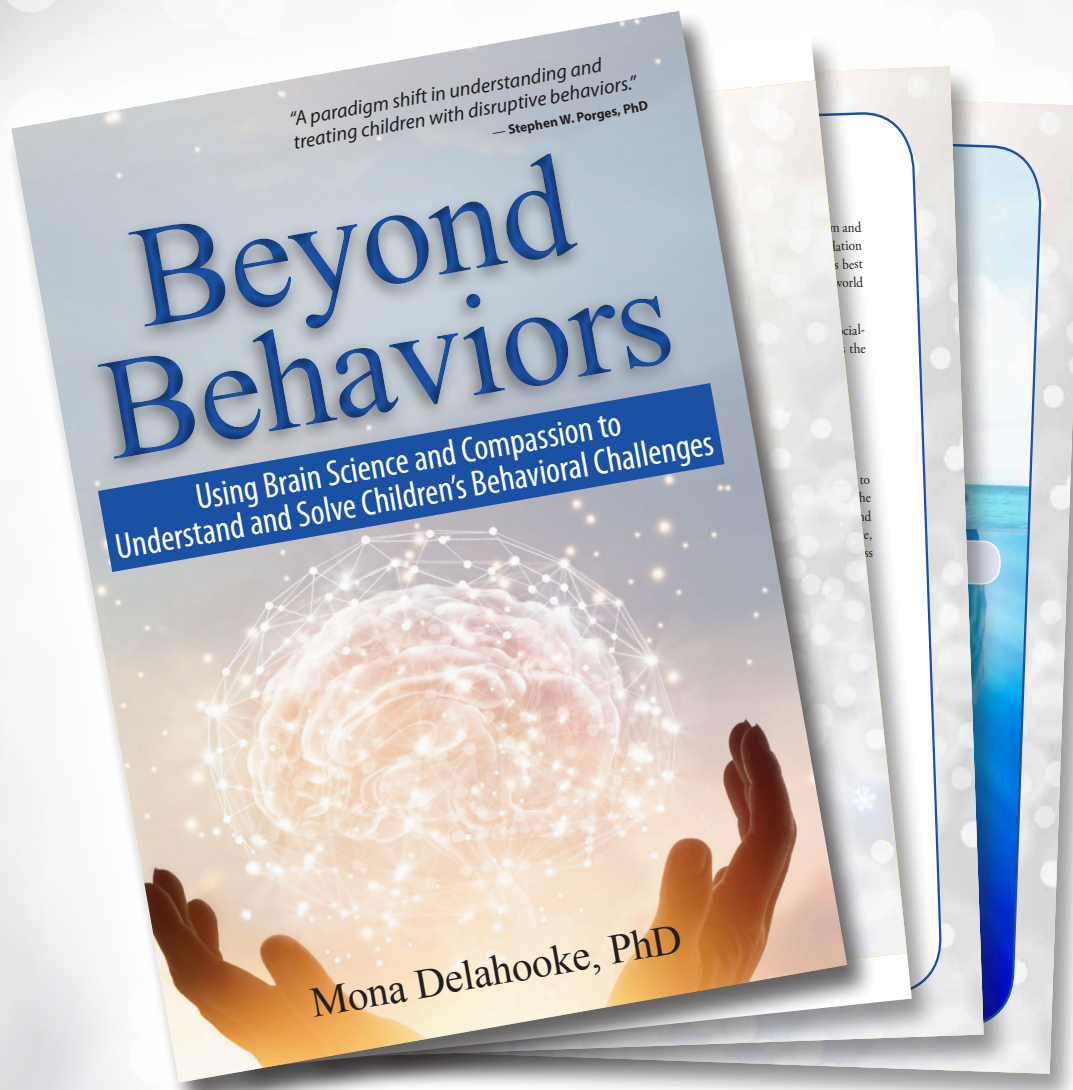


FREE

Challenging Behaviors in Children Worksheets



Neuroscience-based Effective Tools
and Strategies for Children

Introduction

Almost every day, teachers, professionals, and parents are desperately seeking answers especially when traditional strategies have failed them for how to help children who exhibit “challenging behaviors”.

That’s why we’ve created this set of worksheets filled with handouts and activities to help you and your clients identify the root of those “challenging behaviors.” These worksheets aim to provide a new context to understand behavioral challenges and offer a roadmap for making decisions based on each child’s brain and body. While research and knowledge about the brain has progressed exponentially over the past three decades, clinicians have barely begun to translate this understanding into practical use.

With this new comprehension of behaviors there is potential to change lives for the better, resulting in a more humane way of understanding, teaching, treating, and supporting children who are struggling.

The Foundation of the House

Process One: Regulation and Attention

The first developmental process is gaining the ability to be calm and alert. When a child is calm and alert, he can focus and attend to the world around him. Think of this capacity as the foundation of the house of social and emotional development. A house built on a strong foundation is best equipped for the storms it will face. If a child has a solid foundation of calm attention to her world and to the people around her, she will have a strong base for all future development.

The foundation is the most important part of the house. The foundation of a child's social-emotional house can be solid, flimsy, or something in between. And it's always changing as the child reacts to the demands of the environment.

Framing the House

Process Two: Engagement and Relating

Once a building has a foundation, workers carefully create a frame for the structure that is to become the house. This frame defines all that the house will contain, and without it, the rest of the house cannot be built. The same applies to the second social-emotional process: experiencing and engaging in warmly connected relationships. Think of loving relationships as the house's frame, within which growth happens. Along with the solid foundation of calm attention achieved in process one, relationships provide the support for growth according to each child's unique potential.

The Electrical Wiring

Process Three: Purposeful Emotional Interactions

Once a person feels comfortable, alert, and safe, she begins communicating with others. If the capacity for engaged, loving relationships symbolizes the house's framing, think of communication as the electrical wiring for the house. Just as household wiring allows electricity to flow to various parts of the house, gestures—including facial expressions and body posture—allow communication to flow between people.

The Rooms of the House

Process Four: Shared Social Problem Solving

Think of this process as the rooms and hallways of the house. Aided by the two-way flow of communication in Process Three, a child can now explore all the rooms in the house through social problem solving. Motivated by an idea, he can provide his caregivers with a series of nonverbal clues in order to reach his goal. The child uses a range of back-and-forth interactions to show, tell, ask, or otherwise communicate with others.

Decorating the House

Process Five: Creating Symbols and Using Words and Ideas

The foundation, framing, and wiring all support the child's ability to explore the rooms of the house. These abilities now propel the child to do something that truly opens up the world of creativity: use words and symbols. Think of this process as decorating the house. The child has new abilities that allow for adorning his world with words, descriptions, opinions, and pretend play. Now, instead of grabbing a parent's hand to get what she wants, a child can express her desire in a word or point to a picture to stand in for an idea. Now the child is able to use words, ideas, and his own awareness to describe and ultimately control his behaviors. When a child has a top-down structure to understand a bottom-up reaction, he can create meaning out of chaos. *The child is now beginning to connect internal sensations, feelings, thoughts, and emotions to words. This leads to the ability to understand one's own behaviors through top-down thinking.*

The Driveway to the World

Process Six: Emotional Thinking and Building Bridges Between Ideas

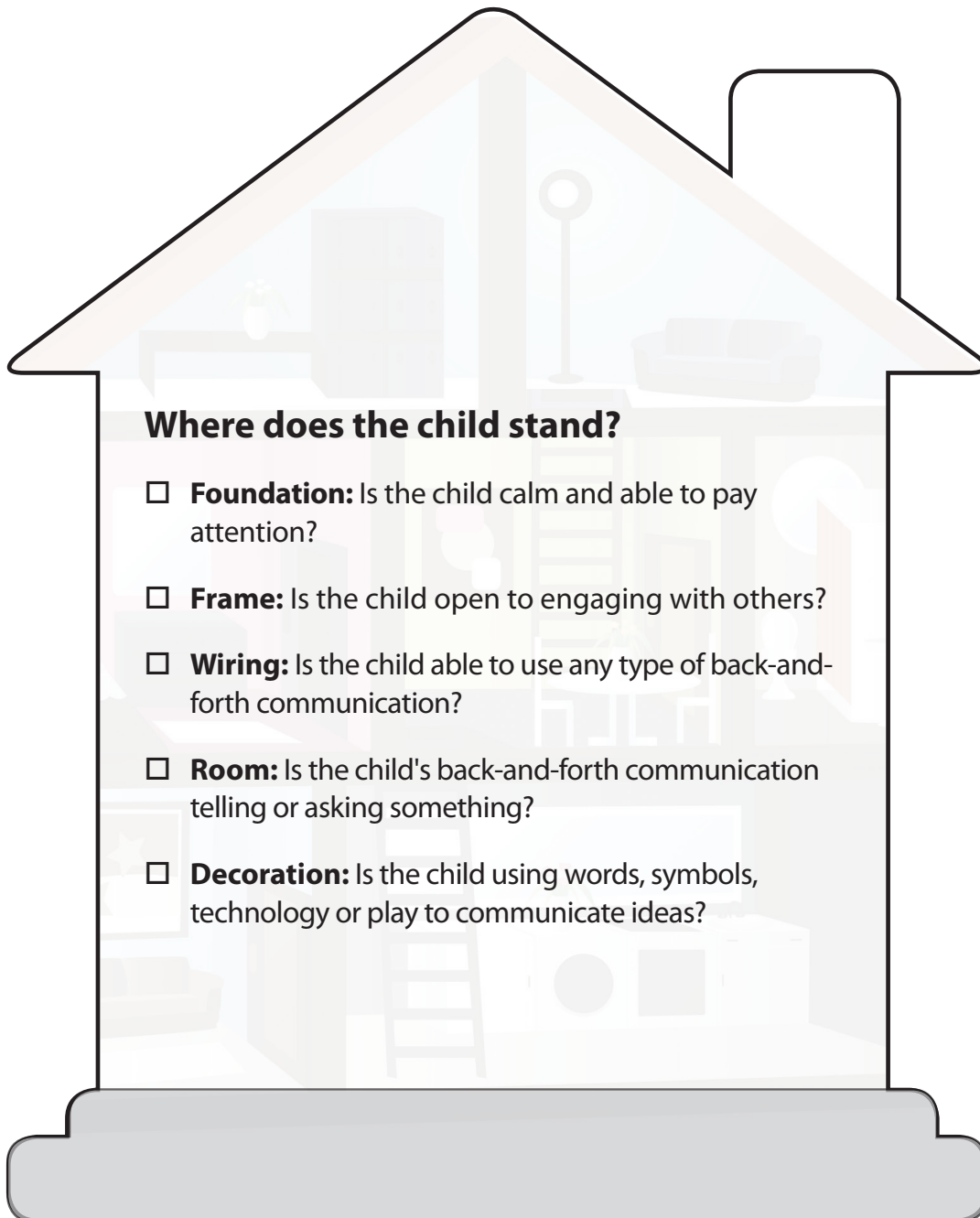
When a child can translate ideas and thoughts into words or symbols, she is ready for this important process. She can now begin to share her understanding of her own behaviors and motivations with others. Now she can organize her thoughts and emotions, resulting in the ability to think logically and build bridges between her own ideas and those of others.

Think of this new capacity as a driveway leading out from the house to the outer world. When the child develops the ability to answer both "how" and "wh" questions (when, what, why, where), she has developed the capacity to reflect simultaneously on her own opinion and somebody else's. Now a child can express opinions, engage in debates, and understand that others can have different opinions and thoughts.

Where Does the Child Stand?

How do you know where a child stands in regard to the house of social-emotional development? The key is to survey where the child is in the house's creation or construction at a given time.

HANDOUT

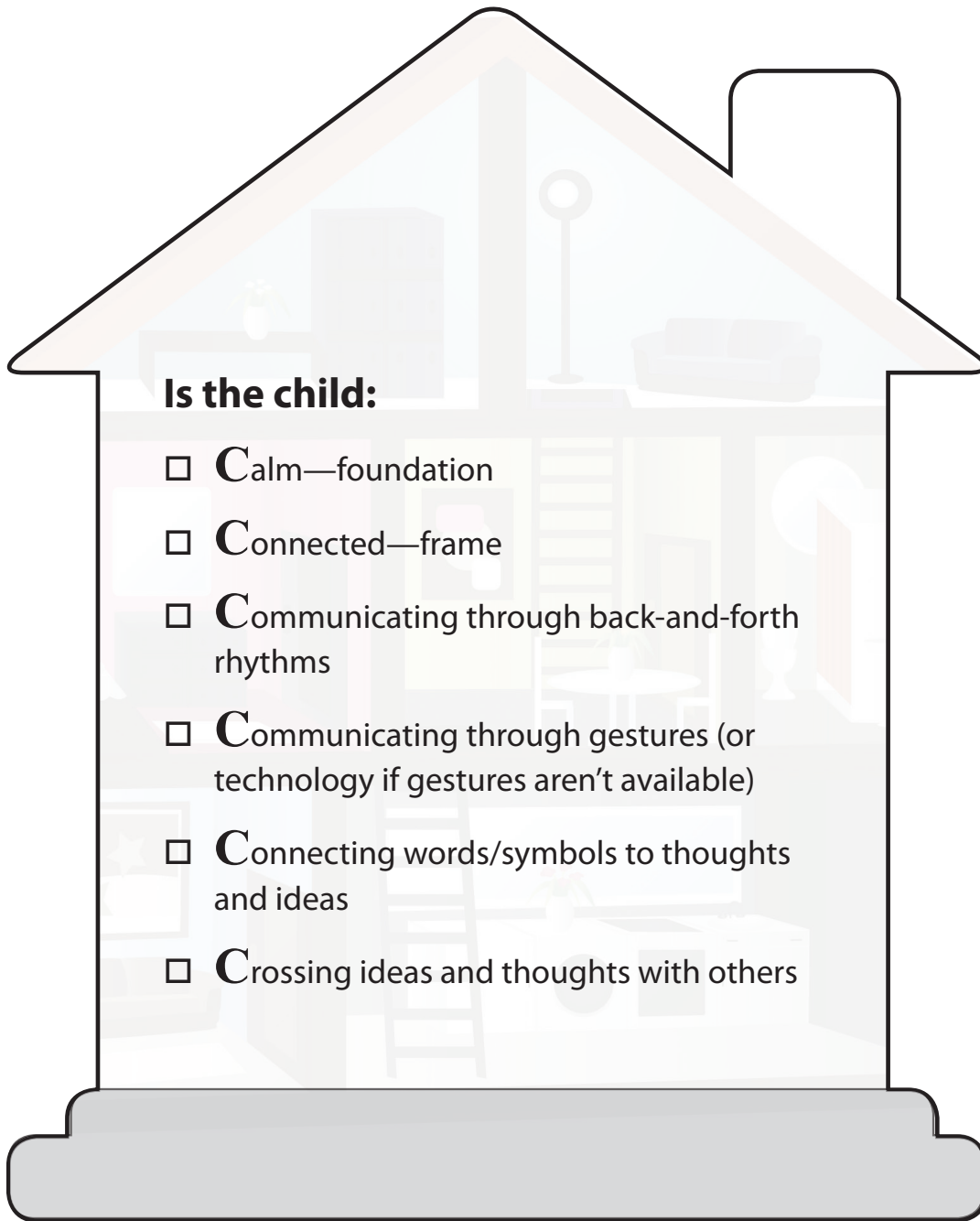


Where does the child stand?

- ☐ **Foundation:** Is the child calm and able to pay attention?
- ☐ **Frame:** Is the child open to engaging with others?
- ☐ **Wiring:** Is the child able to use any type of back-and-forth communication?
- ☐ **Room:** Is the child's back-and-forth communication telling or asking something?
- ☐ **Decoration:** Is the child using words, symbols, technology or play to communicate ideas?

- ☐ **Driveway:** Does the child use logical thoughts and understand that others can have different opinions and ideas?

HANDOUT



Is the child:

- ☐ **C**alm—foundation
- ☐ **C**onnected—frame
- ☐ **C**ommunicating through back-and-forth rhythms
- ☐ **C**ommunicating through gestures (or technology if gestures aren't available)
- ☐ **C**onnecting words/symbols to thoughts and ideas
- ☐ **C**rossing ideas and thoughts with others

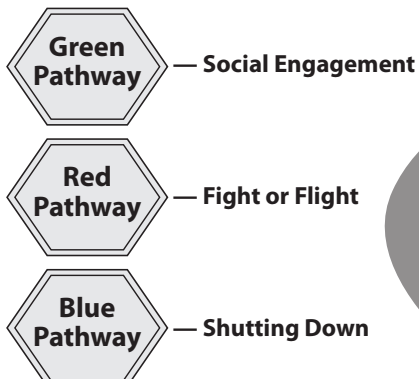
HANDOUT

House and Pathways for Child and Adult

What is your role?

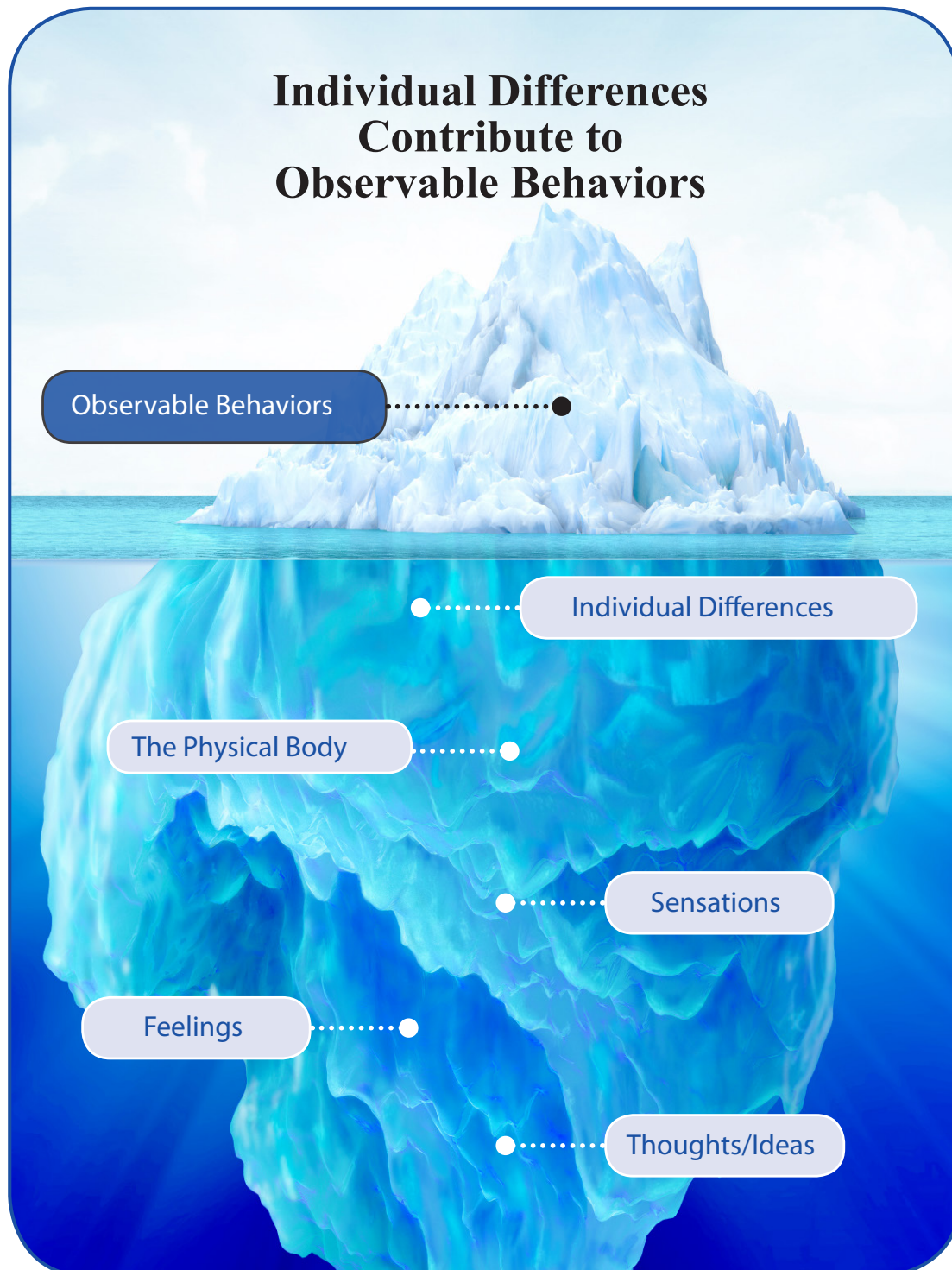
Parent/Caregiver____Teacher____Therapist____
Practitioner/Provider____ Other____

- ☐ **Foundation:** Ask what pathway is the child in?
Green__Red__Blue__
- ☐ **Frame:** Are you and the child warmly engaged?
- ☐ **Wiring:** Are you and the child communicating back and forth?
- ☐ **Rooms:** Is the communication fruitful?
- ☐ **Decoration:** Is the child able to describe feelings, concerns, or define the problem?



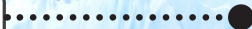
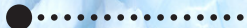
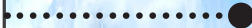
- ☐
- Driveway:**
- Are we building bridges towards a solution?

What exactly is an “individual difference”? Individual differences are the characteristics and qualities that shape how we take in and respond to the world around us, and are influenced by our genetics and our environment. This includes the way we experience processes in the body, sensations, feelings, and thoughts. The below image illustrates body-up individual differences that impact behaviors (such as hunger, blood sugar levels, and illness) from top-down influences (such as a conscious thought or idea).



_____’s Iceberg

What Happens When I’m Triggered



My Self-Care & Calming Strategies



WORKSHEET

Self-Assessment and Self-Awareness: Staying Calm—Adults

Let's consider our own triggers.

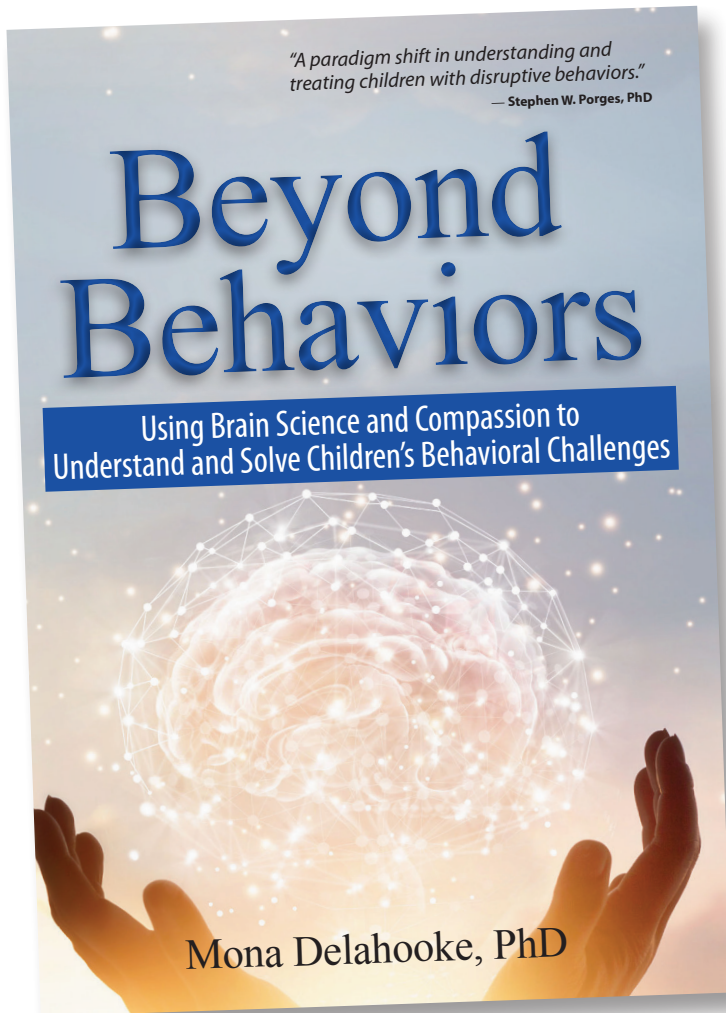
Think about behaviors that you typically go to when your child or the children you work with experience behavioral challenges.

Reflect and write down those factors in your history or current situation that may challenge your ability to stay in the green pathway:

Consider and write down your own personal triggers that can lead you onto a red pathway when you are managing a child's behavior:

These are some positive supports I can create for myself to counter such reactions:

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"I love this book. It will be one I give and recommend over and over. Beyond Behaviors is succinct, accessible, practical, science-based. And it's a game changer. My hope is that not only parents, educators, clinicians, and all helping professionals read it, but that it becomes required reading for professionals in training. It's time for us to use science-informed approaches to go beyond mere behaviors to support children and their caregivers, and this is the book to light the way."

Tina Payne Bryson, PhD, LCSW, Executive Director of The Center for Connection and co-author of the bestsellers *The Whole-Brain Child* and *No-Drama Discipline*

"Beyond Behaviors provides the basis for a paradigm shift in understanding and treating children with disruptive behaviors. Historically, educational and therapeutic models treat anti-social and asocial behavior as motivated and incentivized. In this accessible and beautifully written volume, Dr. Delahooke pulls the veil off this myth and replaces it with a neurobiologically-informed treatment model that provides insightful directives leading to effective outcomes."

Stephen W. Porges, PhD, Distinguished University Scientist, Indiana University, Professor of Psychiatry, University of North Carolina, and author of *The Pocket Guide to the Polyvagal Theory: The Transformative Power of Feeling Safe*

"As a developmental psychologist, compassion teacher, and autism mom, I can whole-heartedly say this book is brilliant. Traditional methods of shaping children's behaviors typically ignore children's emotional state, at great cost to the child's ability to learn, develop, and form secure relationships. This book provides concrete ways to help understand safety as the foundation for children's learning, working with — rather than against natural brain functions to maximize learning potential."

Kristin Neff, PhD, Associate Professor, Department of Educational Psychology, University of Texas at Austin, and author of *Self-Compassion: The Proven Power of Being Kind to Yourself*