BehaviorSpan Newsletter

May 2026

Clinical Corner

Motivating Operation (MO) is anything that:

1. **Changes how much your child wants something** (makes it more or less valuable), and
2. **Changes behavior** (makes a behavior more or less likely to happen to get that thing)

Why it matters:

- Prevents problem behavior before it starts
- Makes learning easier and more successful
- Responding more effectively in the moment

For example: If your child hasn't eaten in a while, food becomes *more valuable* → they're more likely to ask, grab, or get upset to get food. Hunger is an MO.

Everyday examples:

- **Sleep deprivation** → attention or comfort becomes more valuable → more whining/clinginess
- **Too much screen time already** → screens lose value → less motivation to earn them
- **Being told "no" often** → attention may become more valuable → more attempts to get a reaction

How to "establish" helpful MOs:

You're not creating motivation out of nowhere—you're **arranging the environment** so your child *wants* to **communicate or behave appropriately**.

1. Make access controlled (but fair)

Keep preferred items visible but not freely available

- Toy on a shelf → child is more likely to request it

2. Use small portions

Give a little at a time

- A few crackers instead of the whole bag → more chances to ask appropriately

3. Rotate toys and activities

Novelty increases motivation

- Put toys away and reintroduce later → they feel "new" again

4. Build in opportunities to ask for help

- Give a closed container → child needs help → creates communication opportunity

5. Limit (not remove) constant access

If something is always available, it loses value

- Balance is key—avoid frustration overload

One caution

Don't overuse MOs in a way that creates distress (e.g., extreme deprivation). The goal is to **encourage communication and positive behavior**, not frustration.

Reminders

Please take 5 minutes to complete this survey!

Upcoming Events

- May 4-8: Flower Crafts
- May 7: Abby Care Table at Drop-off (Denver)
- May 11-15: Fairy Tale Week
- May 25: Memorial Day (Closed)

Contact Info

If you have questions, please reach out to our **scheduling number**:

Phone: (720) 335-5613