

Reducing Problem Behavior

Positive Behavior Supports

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All Behavior is Functional

- All behavior serves a function.



Get something I want

Escape/avoid something unpleasant

Express pain, frustration, overload

Communicate need/want

Regulate arousal level



- Identifying the function the behavior serves helps us understand how to decrease unwanted behavior and strengthen more desirable behavior.

All Behavior is Communication

What is child **communicating**?

1. I can't handle this!
2. I want that!
3. I am bored!
4. I am overwhelmed!
5. I want attention
6. This is too hard!
7. I feel pain!
8. I am excited!
9. Please help!

What **function** does it serve?

1. Escape or avoid something.
2. To obtain something.
3. Obtain stimulation.
4. Escape stimulation.
5. Obtain attention/interaction.
6. Escape/avoid difficult task.
7. Mask or communicate pain.
8. Regulate nervous system.
9. Seeking assistance.

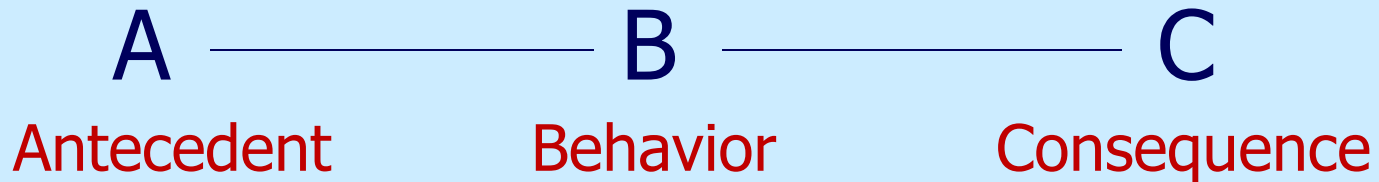
Identifying Function of Behavior

To identify the function of behavior you have to clearly identify the conditions under which the behavior is occurring.

1. Analyze the conditions occurring just prior to the behavior (antecedents) and,
2. Analyze the immediate effects, reactions to, and changes in conditions immediately following the behavior (consequences).

Keep a log of the situations under which the behavior occurs. What is occurring, where is it occurring, who is involved, how often is it happening, etc?

Functional Analysis

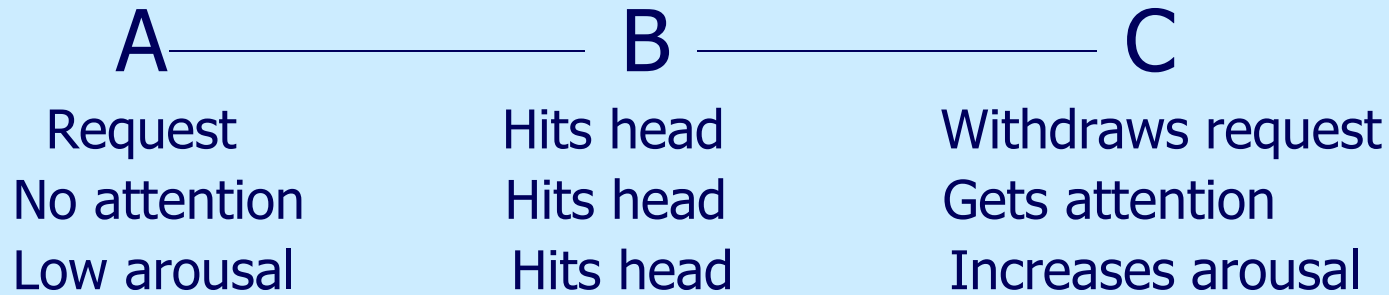


Define the conditions surrounding the behavior.

Antecedents: Who, what, where , when?
What is triggering the behavior?

Consequences: What effects (payoffs) does
behavior lead to? How do
others react?

Examples



Three common Functions:

1. To obtain something (attention, event, object)
2. To escape or avoid something (request, event, stimulation, etc.)
3. For self stimulation: to increase arousal level, or provide calming stimulation.

Identifying Triggers/Antecedents

- Conditions occurring prior to behavior.
- Stimulation level, interaction patterns, type of demands, time of day, people involved, etc.
- Who, what, where, when?
- Compare with known vulnerabilities (sensory, cognitive, social) of child.
- Avoid or modify conditions or build in added support.

Common Antecedents/Consequences

Antecedents

Too much noise!
Ask to do something
Request to stop
Tell him NO
Task too difficult
Lack of activity
Lack of attention
Change/transitions
Can't communicate



Consequences

Escapes/stops stimulation
Get out of doing request
Allowed to continue
Was able to get it anyway
Able to avoid difficult task
Creates stimulation
Gains everyone's attention

Reducing Problem Behavior

Eliminate or modify the triggers that set off the behavior. Build in positive supports to help reduce the likelihood that behavior needs to occur.

Try to minimize the reinforcing consequences (payoffs) that maintain the inappropriate behavior.

Identify and reinforce a more appropriate, alternative behavior that serves the same function as inappropriate behavior. How do you want the child to act under these conditions?

Make it more rewarding to use the appropriate behavior than the inappropriate behavior

Reducing Unwanted Behavior

- Identify the triggers producing the behavior.
- Build in added supports to lessen triggers.
- Reduce the reinforcing consequences that maintain the behavior.
- Identify the function the behavior serves.
- Develop a more appropriate behavior (that serves the same function), to replace the inappropriate behavior.
- Practice, preview and review replacement behavior.
- Watch for prime times; intervene early and cue/redirect to replacement behavior.
- Reinforce heavily for choosing desirable response.
- Keep it positive and supportive if possible.

Dealing with Triggers (Antecedents)

- **Eliminate the trigger:** If possible and/or appropriate, eliminate the conditions that lead to the behavior.
If certain tasks lead to acting out, eliminate the tasks.
- **Modify the trigger:** If you cannot eliminate the trigger, can you modify it to reduce the negative impact it is having.
Can you modify the tasks to make them less stressful?
- **Build in added supports:** If you cannot eliminate or modify the triggers, what support or assistance can you give the child to help them cope with triggers.
Can you add extra assistance to make the tasks less stressful?

Teach Replacement Behavior

- Identify function of behavior.
- Identify a desirable alternative behavior that serves the same function.
- Have child practice alternative when calm.
- When trigger occurs direct child to alternative response.
- Make replacement behavior more effective than inappropriate behavior.

When presented with a task that is too hard for the child, teach him to ask for help, rather than throw the materials

“What do you want me to do?”

- Often children have only one way of expressing anger, frustration, confusion, etc.
- How do you want child to respond?
- Teach a new, more effective response.
- What is child trying to communicate; teach better way.

Try not to suppress a negative behavior without replacing it with a more functional one.

Possible Substitutes

Anger/Frustration

Talk with adult, leave event, hit pillow, deep breathing/relaxation, physical exercise, problem solve, etc.

Escape/Avoid

Raise hand, say “no”, break card, walk away, ask for assistance

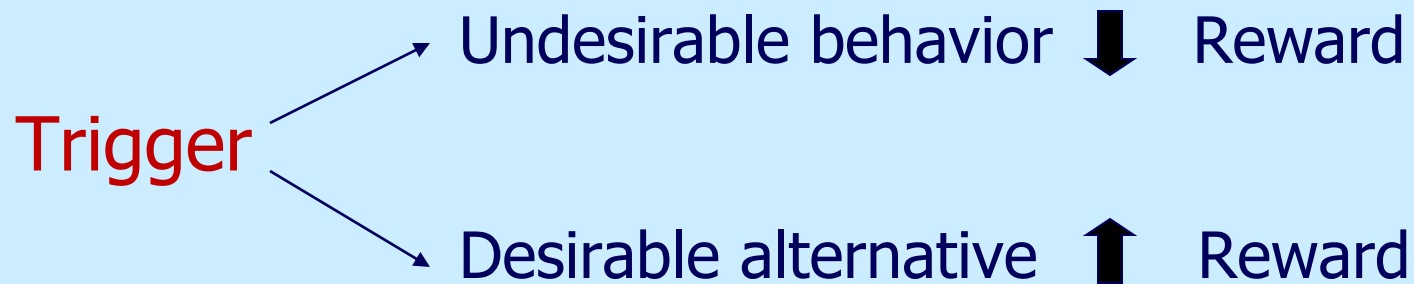
Obtain Something

Raise hand, touch person, point, picture board, ask for assistance.

Self Stimulation

Fidget toys, filler activity, substitute activity providing same stimulation.

Teach Replacement Behavior



- Remove or lessen effect of undesirable behavior.
- Prompt and reward desirable alternative.
- Make replacement behavior much more rewarding (effective) than undesirable behavior.

Stay Positive, Supportive, & Proactive



Build in the supports to maximize success!

Focus on the positive.

Block, ignore, redirect negative behavior.

Make it fun and rewarding!

Practice, Preview, & Review !

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Practice

Once desirable behavior is identified you must teach it, role play, and practice it.

Preview

If possible preview the desired behavior) just before entering the situations that trigger the unwanted behavior.

Build in added assistance to help child choose the right response during the situation. Reinforce heavily.

Review

Following the event, review how well it went, building on the positive.

Reinforcing Appropriate Behavior

- The single strongest method for reducing problem behavior is to strength more appropriate behavior.
- Once more appropriate behavior has been selected, taught, and practiced, ensure that it is more rewarding (has greater payoffs) then the unwanted behavior.

Differential Reinforcement

- Selectively reinforcing either the absence of negative behavior, or presence of positive, alternative behavior.
- Remove reinforcement for negative behavior and selectively reinforce positive behavior

Reinforcing Absence of Behavior

- (DRO) Differential reinforcement of other behavior

Example: John was given a star on his chart once every hour for not hitting anyone.

- (DRL) Differential reinforcement for lower rates of behavior

Example: On a typical day, John will hit someone seven times a day. Teacher gives John a choice of reward if he hit someone six or less times a day. Over time she gradually lowered the number to 5,4,3,2,1,0.

Reinforcing More Positive Behavior

- (DRA) Differential reinforcement of alternative behavior.

Example: Sue's teacher decreased yelling out in class by reinforcing Sue for raising her hand before speaking.

- (DRI) Differential reinforcement of incompatible behavior.

Example: Tom's teacher reinforced Tom for having his hands in his lap to reduce "hitting of head".

Four Primary Questions

- What is the child doing wrong?
- Why is the child doing it?
- What do you want the child to do?
- Why should child do it?

Types of Reinforcers

- Liquid/edibles
 - Tangibles (toys, favorite objects, etc.)
 - Socials (praise, high five, 1 on 1 time)
 - Activities (watching TV, computer time)
- Premack Principle
- Any behavior/interest can be used as a reinforcer, even the negative behavior itself.

Delivering Reinforcement

- Identify reinforcers to use; vary them often.
- Keep contingencies very clear and concrete.
- Give reinforcer immediately following behavior.
- Reinforce after each occurrence at first, fading later.
- Always pair concrete reward with praise.
- If reward can not be given immediately, use tokens, star chart, etc.
- Use visual cues (e.g. picture sequence) to increase understanding.

Picture Reinforcer Menu

- Allows child to see the options.
- If child chooses their own reinforcer, it lessens chance of satiation.
- Use a Velcro board to show what reinforcers are available for that time.
- Have child pick reinforcer before event. keep picture in view to remind child of what they are working for.

Understanding Contingencies

- Keep it simple, easy to understand
- Make expectations very concrete, literal, and clear.
- Clarify, verify, preview and review.
- Use visual representations (pictures) to understand/preview contingencies.
- Build in supports to maximize success.

Common Discipline Procedures

- Redirection
- Social Disapproval
- Time out
- Loss of privileges

Redirection

- Intervene early
- Block, ignore, redirect, and reinforce.
 - a. Block with minimal attention.
 - b. Redirect to positive behavior.
 - c. Reinforce immediately.
- Focus on what you want the child to do.
 - a. Keep attention focus on positive behavior
 - b. Make minimal reference to the negative
 - c. Practice, practice, practice!

Social Disapproval

- Social disapproval consists of firm communication that behavior is unacceptable (e.g. “no hitting”) paired with facial expression of displeasure.
- Procedures:
 - 1) Interrupt behavior.
 - 2) Establish eye contact
 - 3) Firmly tell person “NO __” or “STOP __”.
 - 4) Show obvious displeasure.
 - 5) Keep statement short and clear.
 - 6) Redirect without counseling/negotiating.

Time Out

- Negative behavior results in removal of positive reinforcement for a specific period of time.
- Types of time out:
 - 1) Briefly removing reinforcer from person (e.g. remove toy for 30 seconds).
 - 2) Removing person away from, but in view of, the reinforcing activity (e.g. chair time out).
 - 3) Removing child away from reinforcing area (e.g. bedroom, hall, etc.)

Time Out

- Implement matter-of-fact Do not argue, scold, or negotiate.
- If possible, intervene early, provide quick warning and redirect.
- Provide short, firm “No hitting, go to (room, chair, etc.)”
- From that point on, provide no further verbal attention. Lead child to area of time out. Minimize all other attention and other rewarding activity.
- Time out does not have to last long, several minutes is usually good enough for young children. Children on the spectrum have difficulty with extended time.
- If not calm after time elapses, wait until calm for a minute.
- Be prepared for all out war!! Ignore all negative behavior.

Response Cost/Loss of Privileges

- Losing something as punishment for behavior.
- Favorite item taken away, loss of computer time, etc.
- May be more punishing for parent than child.
- Procedures:
 - 1) Make sure child understands specifically what they did wrong, what is being taken away, and when it will be given back.
 - 2) Use picture sequence to preview and review.
 - 3) Make sure to remind them of contingency and the expected behavior.
 - 4) Remember, the longer the delay in loss of privilege to the behavior, the less association it has.

GENERAL STRATEGIES

Common Themes Underlying Anxiety

- Sensory overload
- Inability to regulate dynamic systems.
- Uncertainty creates severe anxiety.
- Rigid, inflexible thinking
- Strong need to control
- Inability to engage with others
- Resistance to follow lead of parents
- Co-existing disorders-ADHD, Anxiety, Depression

Demands of Daily Routine

- Demands of routine; too fast, too much, too hard.
- Transitions between events are difficult.
- Difficulty understanding rules, roles & expectations.
- Need rigid schedule that is familiar and predictable.
- Avoids novelty, change, and uncertainty.
- Problems organizing time, schedule, and materials
- Difficulty shifting gears.
- Unstructured social time causes stress.

Please make my day predictable & understandable!

Melt Downs

- Remove demands and lower stimulation.
- Slow down and lower your voice.
- If possible remove child to "safe area".
- Stay supportive "Its ok, you are safe."
- If receptive, calm with deep pressure.
- If not, back off and allow child to rebound.
- Do not counsel, scold, or give advice.

Aggression, Self-abuse, Tantrums

- Identify antecedents and reinforcing payoffs.
- Proactive strategies to lessen stressors.
- Teach alternative, replacement behaviors.
- Reduce reinforcing payoffs of negative behavior.
- When triggers/behavior occurs, intervene early.
Block, ignore and redirect to replacement behavior.
- Focus on “what you want child to do!” and reinforce heavily.

Self Stimulation

Hand flapping, finger flicking, spinning objects, rocking, twirling, etc.

Purposes:

- 1) Lack of activity, boredom.
- 2) Block out over-stimulation.
- 3) Modulate arousal level.
- 4) Calm self when agitated.
- 5) Help cope with chaos and uncertainty.

Self Stimulation

- Self stimulatory behaviors serve a strong regulatory function for the child.
- Focus on shaping participation in other constructive activity.
- Substitute replacement behavior that serves same function (sensory need).
- If needed, prompt behavior that is physically incompatible with stemming.
- Teach where and when stemming is allowed.
- Encourage physical activity.

Compulsive/Ritualistic Behavior

- Compulsive behaviors are often internally driven by anxiety and difficult for child to control.
- Ritualistic adherence to routines are often driven by need for sameness.
- Provides some structure to the chaos.
- Provide structure and predictability to routine.
- Identify and lessen stressors eliciting behavior.
- Teach functional alternative replacement.
- Teach flexible thinking,

Fixations & Pervasive Interests

- Use the child's interests to engage him and develop strengths.
- Become involved in areas of interest and teach relating skills.
- Gradually shape other interests off main interest.
- Incorporate child's fixations into new learning to increase motivation.
- Use opportunity to engage in interests to reinforce other activity.
- Reduce amount of time in fixations by providing private time for them.

Exaggerated Fears

- Exaggerated fears are common.
- Try to identify source of fear.
- Graded Exposure to feared event.
 - Make hierarchy of least to most anxious events.
 - Provide graded, non-punishing exposure.
 - Reinforce coping strategy during exposure.
- Teach control over feared item. If child learns to control the item it lessens fear of it.

Oppositional/Defiant Behavior

- Usually very rigid, inflexible thinking.
- Often strong sensory difficulties.
- Strong need to control to lessen chaos and confusion.
- Commonly associated with high anxiety and depression.
- Fearful of following lead of another.
- Lack of boundaries and structure to routine.

Oppositional/Defiant Behavior

- Proactive strategies to lessen overload, confusion, and performance anxiety.
- Remove reinforcing payoffs for noncompliance.
- Provide clear and consistent boundaries, expectations and consequences.
- Teach child to trust following your lead.
- Start simple, build gradually, and strengthen feelings of competency.