

Responding to Problematic Behavior

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Functional Assessment

- Used to **understand** the purpose or function of a specific problem behavior.
- Team members **observe** the child and write down what happens before, during and after the child's challenging behavior.
- **Interview** teachers and family members about the nature of the behavior, what child might gain through the behavior, what predicts the behavior, etc.

Behaviors= Communication

All behaviors (adaptive or maladaptive) are a form of communication. The question is, what are our children communicating when they engage in problem behavior?

Developmental Delays:

Communication

- A child who has limited means of requesting preferred items/ activities, assistance, termination of an activity, or other forms of attention from an adult or peer often develop maladaptive behaviors as a way to compensate for their inability to communicate successfully.
- For example, the child who cannot tell you that he is done with his meal (termination of an activity) may engage in behaviors such as throwing food and utensils, crying, dropping to the floor, or running away from the table.

Problem Behavior Usually Serves A Purpose

- Functional assessment is used to identify the purpose of behavior
- Problem behavior may serve many purposes and may require many interventions. Thus, a behavior shown by one student may be maintained by attention while second student exhibits the exact same behavior in order to avoid something unpleasant.
- The goal of intervention is education, not just behavior reduction
- Intervention involves changing social systems, not individuals

Behavior Does Not Happen in a Vacuum

- Antecedents – events that set the occasion for a behavior to occur
 - Instructions
 - Introduction or removal of items
 - Teacher/peer attention (or lack thereof)
- Behavior – response that occurs
- Consequence – events that occur after a behavior
 - May make the behavior more/less likely to occur again
- Functions – contingencies maintaining a behavior

Factors To Consider In Assessing Causes Of Problem Behavior

GENERAL SETTING

Low level of
reinforcement

hot, noisy, crowded

INSTRUCTIONAL ISSUES

too difficult

pacing is too fast/slow

lack of variety

lack of choice

Factors To Consider In Assessing Causes Of Problem Behavior

Specific Factors That Occur Before Behavior (Antecedents)

introduction of new activities
unclear instructions
removal of reinforcers
too many demands
teacher asking student to wait
transitions

Specific Factors That Occur After Behavior (Consequences)

escape from difficult instructions
attention from teacher or classmate(s)
sensory feedback
tangible reinforcers

Theories of How Functions Work

According to behavior analysts, humans engage in behaviors for one of four reasons. Of the four reasons, two are mediated and reinforced through others in the individual's environment:

- socially mediated positive reinforcement (attention, tangible)
- socially mediated negative reinforcement (escape/avoidance)

While the other two are reinforcing in and of themselves

- Automatic positive reinforcement (self-stimulation)
- Automatic negative reinforcement (pain removal)

Theories of How Functions Work, con't.

- Behavior, even behavior that looks very similar, can serve very different functions. That means that the same behavior exhibited by different students may have different functions.

Socially Mediated Positive Reinforcement

- The consequence is the delivery of something by another individual following a behavior that increases the likelihood that the behavior will occur in the future:
 - Attention (hugs, conversation, smile, praise)
 - Activities (video games, board games, sports)
 - Tangible Items (food, seat on the subway, pen)

Socially Mediated Negative Reinforcement

- The consequence is the removal of something aversive by another individual following a behavior that increases the likelihood that the behavior will occur in the future:
 - Escape or removal of non-preferred demands
 - Avoidance or postponement of non-preferred demands

Automatic Positive Reinforcement

- The consequence results from one's own body movement or activities that produce a feeling that increases the likelihood that the individual will engage in the behavior in the future.
 - Self-stimulatory behaviors (e.g., hand flapping, rocking, mouthing, hair twirling, foot tapping)

Case Study #1

- Tom draws on everything. It appears that he enjoys/ is reinforced by the act of drawing and the finished product. Tom would draw on anything including worksheets, workbooks and text books.
- What is the function of Tom's behavior?

Case Study #2

- Dylan is presented with a packet of work to complete independently. Dylan begins to whine and refuses to work. He argues with the teacher and throws his work on the floor. His teacher says “It’s okay Dylan, I know this hard for you. Let’s take a break.” As a result, Dylan whines, argues, refuses to work and throws his work on the floor the next time he is presented with a packet to complete independently.
- What is the function of Dylan’s behavior?

Case Study #3

- Jill whines and cries. Mr. Smith goes over and rubs her back, verbally comforts her, and offers her a snack. Jill whines and cries more often in the presence of Mr. Smith.
- What is the function of Jill's behavior?

Selection of Tools

Types of Assessments

- Indirect Assessment
 - Checklists
 - Ratings Scales
 - Interviews
- Direct Observation
 - ABC Analysis

Indirect Assessment

Checklists and Rating Scales

- Forms that ask questions that point to the functions of behavior
- Also assesses events that may have occurred but nonetheless affects the response in question
- Advantages:
 - Easy to administer
 - Requires very few resources
 - Attempt to analyze environment for setting events

Motivation Assessment Scale

Name _____ Rater _____ Date _____

Behavior Description _____

Setting Description _____

Instructions: The Motivation Assessment Scale is a questionnaire designed to identify those situations in which an individual is likely to behave certain ways. From this information, more informed decisions can be made concerning the selection of appropriate reinforcers and treatments. To complete the Motivation Assessment Scale, select one behavior that is of particular interest. It is important that you identify the behavior very specifically. *Aggressive*, for example, is not as good a description as *hits his sister*. Once you have specified the behavior to be rated, read each question carefully and circle the *one* number that best describes your observations of this behavior.

QUESTIONS

ANSWERS

	Never	Almost Never	Seldom	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
1. Would the behavior occur continuously, over and over, if this person was left alone for long periods of time (For example, several hours.)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. Does the behavior occur following a request to perform a difficult task?	Never 0	Almost Never 1	Seldom 2	Half the Time 3	Usually 4	Almost Always 5	Always 6
3. Does the behavior seem to occur in response to your talking to other persons in the room?	Never 0	Almost Never 1	Seldom 2	Half the Time 3	Usually 4	Almost Always 5	Always 6
4. Does the behavior ever occur to get a toy, food, or activity that this person has been told that he or she can't have?	Never 0	Almost Never 1	Seldom 2	Half the Time 3	Usually 4	Almost Always 5	Always 6

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4. Does the behavior ever occur to get a toy, food, or activity that this person has been told that he or she can't have?	Never 0	Almost Never 1	Seldom 2	Half the Time 3	Usually 4	Almost Always 5	Always 6

5. Would the behavior occur repeatedly, in the same way, for very long periods of time, if no one was around? (For example, rocking back and forth for over an hour.)	Never 0	Almost Never 1	Seldom 2	Half the Time 3	Usually 4	Almost Always 5	Always 6
6. Does the behavior occur when any request is made of this person?	Never 0	Almost Never 1	Seldom 2	Half the Time 3	Usually 4	Almost Always 5	Always 6
7. Does the behavior occur whenever you stop attending to this person?	Never 0	Almost Never 1	Seldom 2	Half the Time 3	Usually 4	Almost Always 5	Always 6
8. Does the behavior occur when you take away a favorite toy, food, or activity.	Never 0	Almost Never 1	Seldom 2	Half the Time 3	Usually 4	Almost Always 5	Always 6
9. Does it appear to you that this person enjoys performing the behavior? (It feels, tastes, looks, smells, and/or sounds pleasing.)	Never 0	Almost Never 1	Seldom 2	Half the Time 3	Usually 4	Almost Always 5	Always 6
10. Does the behavior stop occurring shortly after (one to five minutes) you stop working or making demands of this person?	Never 0	Almost Never 1	Seldom 2	Half the Time 3	Usually 4	Almost Always 5	Always 6
11. Does this person seem to do the behavior to get you to spend some time with him or her?	Never 0	Almost Never 1	Seldom 2	Half the Time 3	Usually 4	Almost Always 5	Always 6
12. Does the behavior stop occurring shortly after you give this person the toy, food or activity he or she has requested?	Never 0	Almost Never 1	Seldom 2	Half the Time 3	Usually 4	Almost Always 5	Always 6

13. When the behavior is occurring, does the person seem calm and unaware of anything going on around him or her?	Never 0	Almost Never 1	Seldom 2	Half the Time 3	Usually 4	Almost Always 5	Always 6
14. Does the behavior stop occurring shortly after (one to five minutes) you stop working or making demands of this person?	Never 0	Almost Never 1	Seldom 2	Half the Time 3	Usually 4	Almost Always 5	Always 6
15. Does this person seem to do the behavior to get you to spend some time with him or her?	Never 0	Almost Never 1	Seldom 2	Half the Time 3	Usually 4	Almost Always 5	Always 6
16. Does the behavior seem to occur when this person has been told that he or she can't do something her or she had wanted to do?	Never 0	Almost Never 1	Seldom 2	Half the Time 3	Usually 4	Almost Always 5	Always 6

	Sensory	Escape	Attention	Tangible
	1. _____	2. _____	3. _____	4. _____
	5. _____	6. _____	7. _____	8. _____
	9. _____	10. _____	11. _____	12. _____
	13. _____	14. _____	15. _____	16. _____
Total Score =	_____	_____	_____	_____
Mean Score =	_____	_____	_____	_____
Relative ranking =	_____	_____	_____	_____

1996 v. Mark Durand, Ph.D

ABC Analysis

- Allows the teacher to record behaviors as they happen
 - Less possibility for inadvertent bias since behaviors are recorded
- Easy to complete
- Easy to analyze for patterns

ABC Analysis

- The ABC Contingency is Everywhere Everyday
examples of the ABC contingency in early childhood are vast and abundant.
- Some are adaptive and result in –easy access to reinforcement, –the development and/or maintenance of friendships, –further opportunities for learning and skill development, etc.
- Some are maladaptive and adversely affect –the health and safety of the child and others, –the rights of others, –the child’s ability to function successfully and develop friendships, –ongoing learning

Example of ABC

ABC of Adaptive Behavior

Antecedent	Behavior	Consequence
Difficult puzzle	Ana asks for “help”	Mother helps, Ana finishes puzzle
Full stomach	Max says, “I’m done”	Teacher excuses him from the table

ABC of Problem Behavior

Antecedent	Behavior	Consequence
TA sits with Billy	Steve pulls hair of student sitting next to him	TA sits with Steve
Teacher hands out math quiz	Joan throws paper to the floor and screams “I am not going to do this!”	Teacher sends Joan to the office

ABC Behavior Chart

Student Name: _____ **Grade:** _____ **Teacher:** _____

Date	Time/ class	<u>Antecedent/Trigger:</u> What happens RIGHT BEFORE the behavior of concern	<u>Behavior:</u> Describe what happened-detail the behavior of concern	<u>Consequence/Response:</u> What happens as a result of the behavior	Adult working w/child

Interpreting the ABC analysis

- Look for common themes
 - Antecedents – events that set the occasion for a behavior to occur
 - Consequences – events that occur after a behavior
 - May make the behavior more/less likely to occur again
- Do not make any causal inferences

ABC Behavior Chart

Student Name: _____ **Grade:** _____ **Teacher:** _____

Date	Time/ class	<u>Antecedent/Trigger:</u> What happens RIGHT BEFORE the behavior of concern	<u>Behavior:</u> Describe what happened-detail the behavior of concern	<u>Consequence/Response:</u> What happens as a result of the behavior	Adult working w/ child
2/22	10am/ Lang arts	Teacher giving assignment to class	Student yells : "Stop talking so loud"	Teacher tells him to listen quietly	TJ
2/22	10:15 Lang arts	Teacher correcting papers at his desk	Student yells: "Jerry what is your answer to number 3"	Teacher tells him to stop yelling out in class.	TJ
2/22	10:45 Lang arts	Teacher announces that it is time for a spelling test; hands out the test	Student: Rips up spelling test and yells out "I am not going to take this."	Teacher tells him he will get an "F" if he does not take the exam	TJ
2/22	12:00	Teacher asks students to line up for lunch	Student: Crawls over to the door and yells out "I forget how to walk."	Other students laugh at him.	TJ

Developing a Behavior Intervention Plan

- Have hypothesis
 - Escape, attention, etc.
- Develop plan based on functions
 - Integral part of BIP is to identify and reinforce an alternative acceptable behavior that serves the same function
- To assess effectiveness
 - Develop a system for collecting data
 - Data collection should now focus on the specific problematic behavior(s).
 - Continue to analyze the data
 - Make modifications as necessary

What is Included in the Behavior Support Plan?

1. Procedures for teaching new REPLACEMENT skills.
2. Strategies for RESPONDING so that new skills are maintained and acknowledged.
3. Strategies for modifying the curriculum, environment, activity, or interactions to PREVENT the occurrence of the behavior.

Replacing

- Teach alternatives to challenging behavior
- Replacement skills must be efficient and effective (work quickly for the child)
- Consider skills the child already has
- Make sure the reward for appropriate behavior is consistent

Possible Replacement Skills

- Ask for break
- Say “all done”
- Ask for help
- Ask for a turn
- Ask for a hug
- Use a schedule
- ID feeling & express
- Ask for adult intervention
- Use supports to follow rule
- Anticipate transition
- Say “no”
- Take turns

Responding

- What adults will do when the challenging behavior occurs to ensure that the challenging behavior is not reinforced and the new skill is learned.
- A good basic strategy is to redirect the child to use an alternative skill or a new skill.
- Make sure rewards for appropriate behavior equal or exceed the rewards for challenging behavior.

Examples of Responding

- Redirect child to use replacement skill.
- Praise/reinforce when replacement skill is used.
- State exactly what is expected.
- Cue with appropriate preventions strategy

Preventing

- Prevention strategies reduce the likelihood that the child will need or want to use the challenging behavior.

Prevention Strategies

- How can the environment be changed to reduce the likelihood that the behavior will occur?
- What procedures can I select that fit in with the natural routines and structure of the classroom or family?
- How can I build on what works?
- What can be done to help the child deal with or avoid behavior triggers?

Possible Prevention Strategies

- Offering **choices** using pictures or actual objects.
- **Safety signal** - providing a timeline (“5 minutes till clean-up”), use timer
- **Modify task length** – shorten group time.
- Select reinforcer prior to activity (“when you put the toy away, you can go outside”).

Preventing and Responding to Behaviors maintained by SOCIALLY MEDIATED POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT (Attention or Tangible):

- Create a rich, reinforcing environment and provide lots of attention (praise, smiles, hugs, tickles) for all appropriate behavior
- Teach an appropriate means of requesting attention (e.g., vocalization, ASL sign, PECS) and provide the attention contingent upon this new replacement behavior
- NEVER reinforce the problem behavior. In other words, IGNORE all instances of the behavior by not providing 1) eye contact, 2) verbal redirection/reprimand, or 3) physical contact.

Example 1: How Not To Respond

- Whenever Molly pulls her peers' hair during circle time, the TA, Susan, diverts her attention from the child she is sitting with, explains the classroom rules and how it's not nice to pull hair, and sits next to Molly for the remainder of the activity.
- One would hypothesize from this profile that pulling hair serves an attention function for Molly. Every time she pulls a peers' hair during circle she receives attention from Susan. Susan has inadvertently reinforced this behavior by providing attention every time it occurs.

Example 2: Positive ways to respond

- Provide Molly with lots of attention in the form of verbal praise, hugs, social gestures (thumbs up, smiles, high-fives) throughout circle time contingent upon non-occurrences of hair pulling
- Teach Molly an appropriate means for requesting attention from Susan and other preferred people in her environment. Because Molly is non-verbal at this time, teaching her to tap someone on the shoulder and/or vocalize and gesture or sign “come here” would be some functional means for Molly to gain the attention of others.
- Post “Classroom Rules” that includes “no hair-pulling” and discuss the rules only when the children in the class are behaving appropriately (i.e., not in response to incidents of problem behavior)
- When/if hair-pulling does occur, IGNORE the behavior COMPLETELY. Do NOT make eye contact with Molly, do not speak to Molly, and do not sit next to Molly. Be sure that the other child is free of Molly’s grasp and provide that child with lots of attention. Perhaps, teach this child to tell Molly to “stop it”.
- Note: With Attention seeking behaviors such as Molly’s, the teachable moments are throughout the day, NOT following the problem behavior.

Preventing and Responding to Behaviors maintained by SOCIALLY MEDIATED NEGATIVE REINFORCEMENT (Escape or Avoidance):

- Create a visual schedule, allowing the child the opportunity to anticipate future activities
- Create reinforcement contingencies wherein the child receives positive reinforcement in the form of a preferred activity, or tangible following completion of a less preferred or nonpreferred activity.
- Embed choices within less preferred activities
- Use a timer to indicate how long a child must engage in the less preferred activity before he can move on to a preferred activity
- NEVER allow the child to escape or avoid a demand!
- When appropriate, teach the child to request a break from a less preferred activity or teach them to appropriately refuse a less preferred activity

Preventing and Responding to Behaviors maintained by AUTOMATIC POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT (Self Stimulation):

- Provide an activity rich environment to reduce the likelihood that the child will engage in self-stimulation over play
- Provide activities that produce a similar reinforcing stimulation either non-contingently (i.e., free access), contingent upon appropriate behavior (i.e., only when the child is not engaging in the problem behavior), contingent upon work/task completion, or contingent upon non-occurrences of the behavior.
- Without telling the child to stop, reprimanding him, or giving him attention or tangibles, block the problem behavior (either physically or with equipment) to prevent the stimulation the child obtains from engaging in the behavior and redirect him to something else.
- Teach the child to engage in more appropriate means of self-stimulation