

When Behavior Is A Challenge



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Agenda

- Preference Assessment
- ABCs of behavior
- Functions of behavior
- Basic strategies

Finding the Motivation

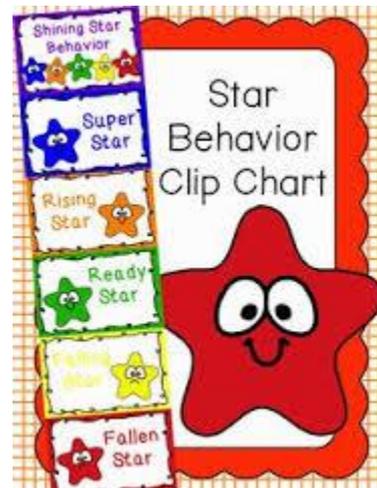
- Observe child in free time to see what they choose to do
- Ask or talk with the child
- Ask parent or other caregiver
- Use reinforcer questionnaire or survey
- Offer a choice
- Do a formal preference assessment

Preference Assessment



Changing Behavior

Understanding how to change your behavior to change their behavior



Common Challenging Behaviors

- Non-compliance
- Tantrums
- Disruption
- Property Destruction
- Aggression
- Self-Injurious Behavior (SIB)
- Elopement/Bolting
- Spitting
- Self-stimulatory behaviors

Contributors to Challenging Behaviors

- Language/Communication Difficulties
- Social Deficits
- Restricted Interests or Activities
- Emotional Difficulties
- Attention Problems
- Unique Cognitive Profile
- Sensory Processing Difficulties
- Biological/Medical Factors

Behavior is Communication

- Behavior is a form of communication
- Individuals with ASD may communicate through behaviors rather than words/gestures
- Behavior may be a response to the environment, not a deliberate choice
- Behavior may be due to sensory regulation difficulties

How we contribute to challenging behaviors

- We are inadvertently inconsistent
- We place the person in confusing, disorganized environments
- We misinterpret the behaviors of individuals with developmental disabilities
- We allow too much “down time”
- We show stress/anxiety

Caregiver role in this tantrum?



<http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x2ztb9q>

The ABC's of Behavior



ABC Model:

A = Antecedent(s)

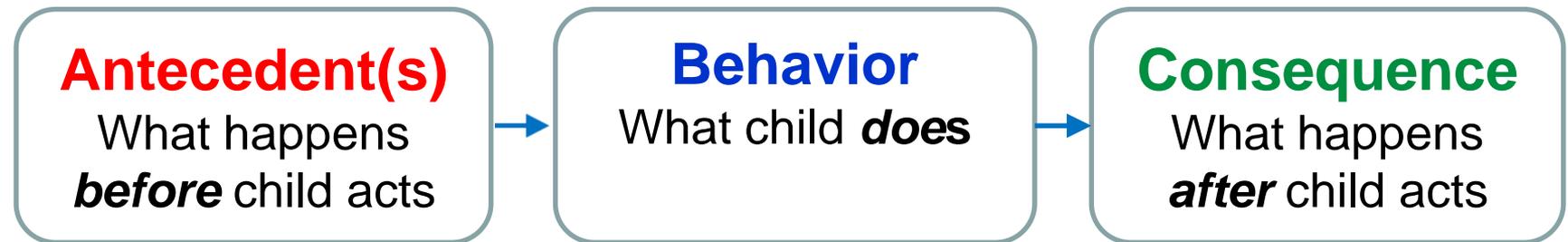
B = Behavior

C = Consequence(s)

Antecedents are events that occur immediately **before** the behavior

Consequences are anything that occurs immediately **after** the behavior

The ABC Model of Behavior

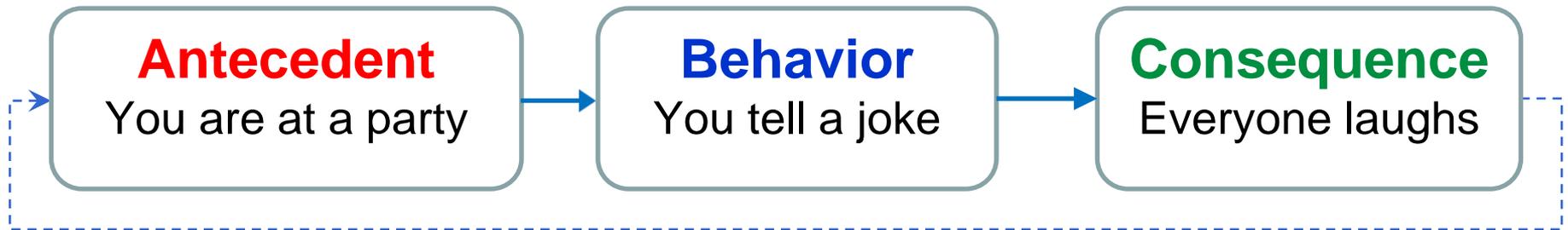


Mom says, "Pick up your toys"

Child screams and throws toys

Mom yells at child

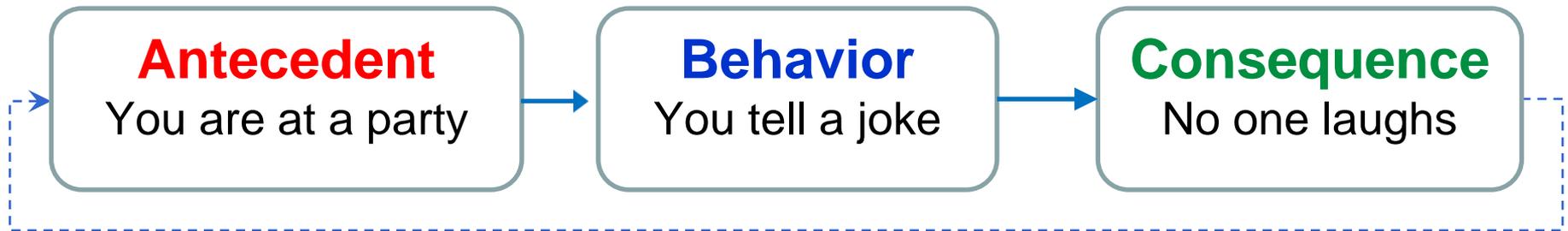
Example: Telling a joke at a party



Everyone's laughter (a positive social reinforcer) makes it more likely that you will tell another joke at this party and/or that you will tell a joke at a similar party in the future.

**Any behavior that is reinforced is
more likely to occur again.**

Example: Telling a joke at a party



The lack of laughter (i.e., people don't laugh at your jokes) will reduce the chances of you telling a joke (or at least that joke) in the future.

**Any behavior that is not reinforced
is less likely to occur again.**

“Rules” of Reinforcement

- Deliver immediately unless otherwise specified
- Remember that reinforcement is unique to each person
- Child must be motivated
- Vary often so that the child does not get ‘tired’ of them
- The need for reinforcement will depend on difficulty of task and person’s motivation

Reinforcement is NOT bribery

Bribery: Giving a person something pleasant before they show the desired behavior to try to persuade them to do that behavior

Reward: Giving a person something pleasant after they show the desired behavior (may or may not influence future behavior)

Reinforcement: Giving a person something pleasant after they show the desired behavior, resulting in an increase of that behavior in the future

Changing Behavior is HARD Work!!



Understanding Why?

- All behavior occurs for a reason – (ALL behaviors serve a function)
- We need to identify why a behavior occurs
- Once we know why it occurs, we can work to modify the behavior

There is ALWAYS a REASON!

5 potential reasons in fact!



Identify the Reason

M- Medical

E- Escape

A- Attention

T- Tangible

S- Sensory



Reason: Medical

First step:

Make sure there is NO medical cause for behavior before moving on to other reasons

Example: Child is pulling on her hair by her forehead and hitting the side of her head. She is unable to communicate verbally.

Reason: Medical

- Under-sensitivity to pain
- Stomachaches
- Constipation and other GI symptoms
- Headaches
- Toothaches
- Allergies
- Illness
- Seizures
- Sleep Difficulties

Behaviors that May Provide Clues to Medical Issues

- Sudden onset or change in frequency, intensity, duration, or form of self-injury
- Changes (especially regression) in skills, habits, routines (eating, sleep, toileting)
- Problem behavior that occurs during highly preferred events
- Problem behavior that occurs across settings, and activities with a wide variety of people

Reason: Medical

Intervention: Recommend follow-up with primary care doctor to determine if patient has an ear or sinus infection.

Potential medical explanations for behavior commonly found in children with DD:

- constipation
- seizure activity
- poor diet
- poor sleep
- poor hygiene



Reason: Escape

Child's behavior is related to getting out of or avoiding an activity or task

Example: Child aggresses against mother every day when mother says it is bathtime



**I'm not take
your stinkin'
bath!**

Reason: Escape

- Engaging in a behavior so the individual can get away from or avoid an activity altogether
- Examples:
 - Aggressive behavior when approached with difficult task
 - Crying when it is time to go into the store because it is too loud
 - Spitting out food when they do not like it

Non-Compliance

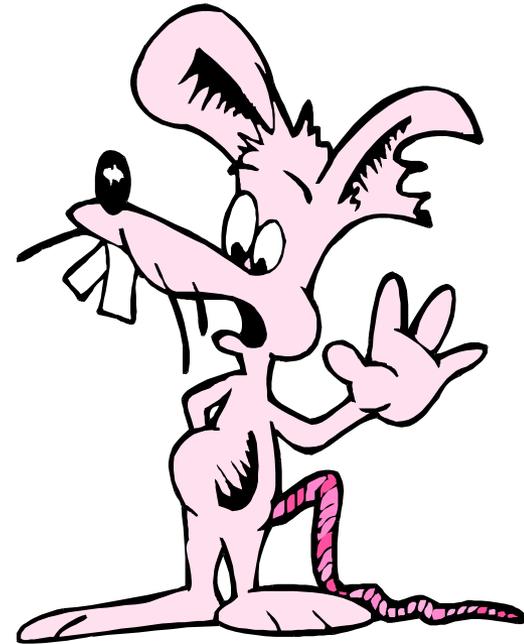
Won't do versus can't do

Won't do

- Lack of Motivation
 - Compliance Training
 - Reinforcement

Can't do

- Skill deficit
 - Task Analysis
 - Prompting



Questions for Escape-Maintained Behaviors

- What is the child escaping?
- Is the demand too challenging?
- Is the demand too boring?
- Is the demand centered around non-preferred materials?
- Is the demand associated with a certain type of stimulation?
- Is the demand social?
- Is the demand specific to a certain person?
- Does the demand go on for too long?

From Glasberg, 2006 p.117

What you can do: Escape

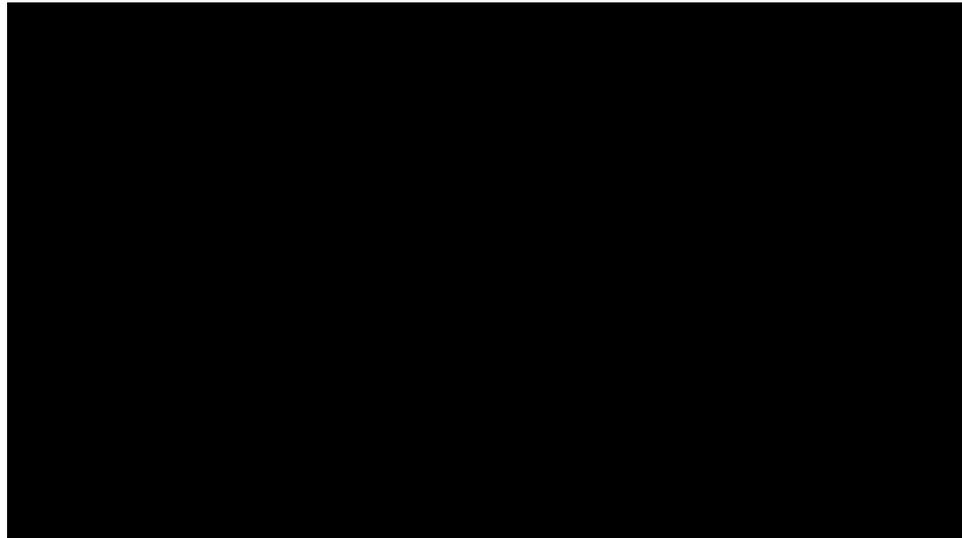
- Use visual supports
- Teach child to ask for a break or help
- Break down tasks
- Start small and gradually increase demands
- Start with successful tasks, gradually increasing difficulty
- Teach coping strategies for situations that are unavoidable

How you can respond: Escape

- Look closer at task – is it “just right?”
- Examine the environment
- Give breaks before behaviors occur
- Reinforce effort
- Avoid allowing escape for problem behavior
 - Reintroduce expected task
 - Make adaptations to task
 - Provide assistance as necessary

Function – Attention

Child engages in behavior to obtain any form of attention from caregiver or peers



Function – Attention

- This can be “positive” or “negative” attention
 - This can vary greatly to include eye contact, verbal responses, physical reactions or play
- *Remember- negative attention, reprimands, & redirections are still attention

Questions for Attention-Maintained Behaviors

- Will any attention do?
- Is it peer attention?
- Is it adult attention?
- Is it undivided attention?
- Is it high intensity attention?
- Is it physical attention?
- Is it a certain person's attention?
- How long can the child go between instances of this type of attention without exhibiting the behavior?

From Glasberg, 2006 p.116

What you can do: Attention-Seeking Behaviors

- Teach child to request attention (“Talk to me”, “Let’s play”, “Come here”)
- Make sure tasks are “just right”
- Teach child how to be engaged in independent activities

How you can respond: Attention-Seeking Behaviors

- Provide frequent positive interactions
- Use your attention to “reward” appropriate behavior
- Avoid verbal reprimands (“Don’t...”, “No”)
- Use positive verbal redirection (“Do...”)
- Use a neutral tone; avoid over-reacting
- Ignore minor inappropriate behavior when safe to do so

When to Ignore

When you think the child is looking for a reaction from you

Attention-seeking behaviors

Possible examples:

- Crying
- Whining
- Screaming
- Negative Statements



Differential Attention

- Used in conjunction with planned ignoring
- Attending to the behaviors you want to see
- The “catch” part of “catch ‘em being good”

“Catch” children being good:

Give frequent, specific, enthusiastic praise and nonverbal positive attention for desired behavior

- “Nice job using your walking feet in the hallway, Jacob!”

Put the praise together with a reinforcer the child has chosen (remember the preference assessment?)

- Offer praise and a tiny piece of candy (fade candy over time)



Planned Ignoring

- Purposefully look away from child and do not make eye contact
- Be silent
- Keep a neutral expression on your face
- Continue doing what you were doing
- Ignore every time behavior occurs
- Physically intervene if necessary but do not provide additional attention
- Praise child when he/she begins to comply (even if still having a tantrum, etc.)

Things to Keep in Mind with Planned Ignoring

- Maintaining safety is KEY!!
- You are ignoring the behavior, not the child
- Once you start ignoring, must ignore until challenging behavior stops
- Expect ignored behavior to get worse before it gets better



Function – Tangible

Child displays behavior to gain a preferred item or gain access to a preferred activity.



Example: Child aggresses on SLP → SLP takes child to sensory spot to calm down → child is more likely to aggress on the SLP again (to get to go to sensory spot)

Tangible

Engaging in a behavior to obtain a tangible item or access to a desired activity

Examples:

Hitting when a preferred toy is being played with by another child

Having a tantrum when told time is up on swing

Crying to obtain access to iPad

Aggression when requesting a specific snack and it is not available- he/she is told “no”

The check-out line at the grocery store... (we've all been there!)

Questions for Tangible-Maintained Behaviors

- What activities or objects does the child get from the behavior?
- Does the behavior occur when it's time to give up access?
- Does the behavior occur when the child needs to wait for access?
- Does the behavior occur when the child needs to share?
- Does the behavior occur when she needs to take turns?

From Glasberg, 2006 p.118

What you can do: Tangible-Maintained Behaviors

- Use visual supports
 - First/Then, Visual Schedule
- Use timers
- Be mindful of sequence of activities
- Teach child to request preferred items
- Teach child how to wait



How you can respond: Tangible-Maintained Behaviors

- Avoid giving child preferred items following problem behaviors
- If child requests item/activity that is not available, indicate when it will be available or redirect to items/activities that are available
 - ***Choices are incredibly important!
- Remind child what they are working for before problem behavior occurs

Function – Sensory/Automatic

Child displays behavior for sensory stimulation or sensory avoidance

Feels good - also referred to self-stimulatory behavior

Example: child repeatedly crashes his body into the floor



Things to Consider with Self-Stimulatory Behavior

- Child may “need” time to engage in this behavior
- Child may use self-stimulatory behaviors to escape/avoid tasks
- Child may use self-stimulatory behavior as play
- Child may get frustrated if self-stimulatory behavior is interrupted

What you can do: Automatic/Sensory

- Learn from what child is “telling” you that he needs and incorporate into session
- If cannot “stop” the bx, identify an appropriate time/place for bx
- Teach appropriate play/leisure skills



How you can respond: Automatic/Sensory

- Limit down-time; keep child engaged
- Find appropriate activities that provide similar reinforcing properties
- Block inappropriate behavior (if appropriate) & redirect to appropriate alternative
- Reinforce use of an appropriate alternative

Further Intervention

If your child is at risk for harming him/herself or others and the behaviors are above and beyond what you feel you can manage on your own, we encourage you to seek behavioral therapy services.

Summary

- Think function (reason)!
- Be predictable and consistent
- Never “take away” a behavior without replacing it with a more appropriate one
- Be patient - intervention often requires major changes, including changes in our behaviors toward our child

Thank you!

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