

Understanding & Supporting Behavior

A Brief History:

In the past, we thought that the activities people engaged in and the places where they lived, worked and played didn't have anything to do with their behavior. Behavior plans relied almost entirely on consequences like rewards and punishments.

We made people with disabilities "earn" the right to go to regular schools, to have real jobs and to live in their own homes. We told people with severe disabilities and their families, "Your behaviors and skills have to improve first, before you can do these things."

Things We've Learned about Positive Behavioral Support:

Environments have a lot to do with behavioral, social and communication development. What people are doing, where and with whom they spend time have a lot to do with their behavior.

All behavior has a communicative purpose. All behavior is communication. By "listening" to what the behavior is saying, we can discover the reason why the behavior is happening. Behaviors are strategies people use to get their needs met. Part of our job is to figure out which social/communicative behaviors currently "work" best for the person.

We should try to "smooth the fit" between a person and his or her environment by identifying "triggers" in the environment that set the behavior off and removing those "triggers" as much as possible. We also need to identify each person's learning style. Does the person learn best by what they hear (auditory)?; by what they see (visual)?; or by actually doing the activity (kinesthetic/motor)?

We should focus on teaching replacement behaviors and skills as an alternative to the problem behavior, instead of trying to 'get rid of challenging behaviors.'

(Mesaros and Shepard, revised 1999)

We should also understand and support the people we work for, rather than judge them and try to control and change their behavior.

BEHAVIOR IS COMMUNICATION

■ Important Values in Promoting Positive Behavior Change

In order to support positive behavior change, there are questions that the DSP should ask each day:

■ Participation

- Are there opportunities for participation (even if only partially) in a variety of community and social activities?

■ Friendship

- How many friends does the person have?
- Are there lots of opportunities to interact with and meet people (including people without disabilities who are not staff)?

■ Relationships

- What opportunities do people have to be “givers” in a relationship?
- How are people recognized for their individual gifts and talents?

■ Interdependence

- How are we supporting people to get connected within their communities?
- What types of natural supports exist in people’s lives?

■ Independence

- What skills are people learning and are they able to have personal privacy, especially at home?

■ Meaningful Activities

- Are people provided with purposeful activities in meaningful (real) situations? We shouldn’t be asking people to do “busy work” that has no real reason or purpose.

- **Motivation**
 - Are the activities people engage in motivating and interesting to them?
 - What happens when they are not engaging in the behavior that is described as "challenging?"

- **Choice**
 - How much choice do people have throughout their lives?

- **Respect**
 - How are people's routines and choices respected?
 - How well do we listen to the people we support?

Mesaros & Shepard, Revised 1999

HISTORY OF BEHAVIORAL TECHNOLOGY

- | Traditional | Current |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|
| ■ Maladaptive | ■ Positive Behavioral Supports |
| ■ Aberrant | ■ Different |
| ■ Deviant | ■ Different |
| ■ What | ■ Why |
| ■ Manage | ■ Support |
| ■ Modify | ■ Understand |
| ■ Control | ■ Accommodate |
| ■ Aversive | ■ NOT |

PERSON VERSUS REPUTATION

- What is the difference?
- What is our frame of reference?
- A different way of thinking?
- People with severe reputations tell us more about what is wrong with our system than what is "wrong" with the individual
- Many people with severe reputations share modest but essential lifestyle choices that are not being met

SYMPTOMS OF A SYSTEM WITH ISSUES

- Blame the individual rather than the system
Example: What do we do when a disruption in placement occurs following a “behavioral incident”?
 - We have a meeting (measure growth in fame or reputation by the number of people in meeting)
 - We look at the person’s label
 - We call in the “experts”
 - We add new labels
 - We develop more sophisticated, more controlling behavioral programs
 - We add more staff (24-7 shadows)
 - We ultimately place people with anyone who will accept them
 - We repeat the process over and over
 - We review past failures and plan for the next one
- Fail to learn from past mistakes
- Contribute to the reputation rather than dispute it

SO, WHAT DO WE DO?

- Start with the individual: LISTEN
- Shift our investments
 - Spend more time getting to know the individual and less time locating an intervention/program
- Participate in “person-centered planning”
Definition: A process for planning that is rooted in profound respect for the individual.
 - Designed to discover the individual’s choices and help honor them in all we do
 - Models: Personal Futures Planning, Essential Lifestyles Planning, McGill Action Planning System, etc.
 - Understand the “non-negotiable--strong preferences--highly desirables”
- Participate in problem-solving when issues arise
 - What is the person “telling” me?
 - What accommodations might be made available so that others will understand?
- Common sense, not repealed wisdom
 - What do they want and how do I help them get it?

TEN THINGS YOU CAN DO TO SUPPORT A PERSON WITH “DIFFICULT BEHAVIOR”

- 1** Get to know the person
- 2** Remember that ALL behavior is meaningful
- 3** Help the person to develop a support plan
- 4** Develop a support plan for the person’s supporters
- 5** Don’t assume anything
- 6** Relationship makes all the difference
- 7** Contribute to a positive identity for the person
- 8** Instead of ultimatums, think choices
- 9** Help the person have more fun
- 10** Help establish a good working relationship with the person’s primary health care provider

BEHAVIOR

A

is a physical reality which can be counted or timed

B

is observable and measurable

C

is not judgment or descriptors such as:

“hyperactive”
“aggressive”
“rude”
“disrespectful”
“out of control”
“inattentive”

D

occurs for a purpose

PROBLEM - SOLVING PROCESS

Step 1

Define behavior

- What do you see?
- What do you hear?
- What do you feel?

Step 2

Analyze behavior in context/collect data

Antecedents

- What is the location?
- Specify persons present/proximity
- What time does the behavior occur?
- Describe the specific task
- List materials utilized
- How are instructions presented?
- What response is required?

Behaviors

- Obtain baseline measurement of frequency, intensity, duration

Consequences

- How do you and others respond? (eye contact, facial expression, vocal tone, vocal intensity, physical proximity, physical action)
- How do peers respond?

Step 3

Generate hypothesis of purpose--sensory, escape, tangible, attention--(Why do you think it occurs?)

Step 4

Define desired behavior (What is expected from the individual?)

Step 5

Communicate expectation to the individual, (verbal, visual, modeled, peer reinforcement system)

Step 6

Develop intervention package; identify reinforcers and consequences

Step 7

Implement interventions

Step 8

Continue data collection

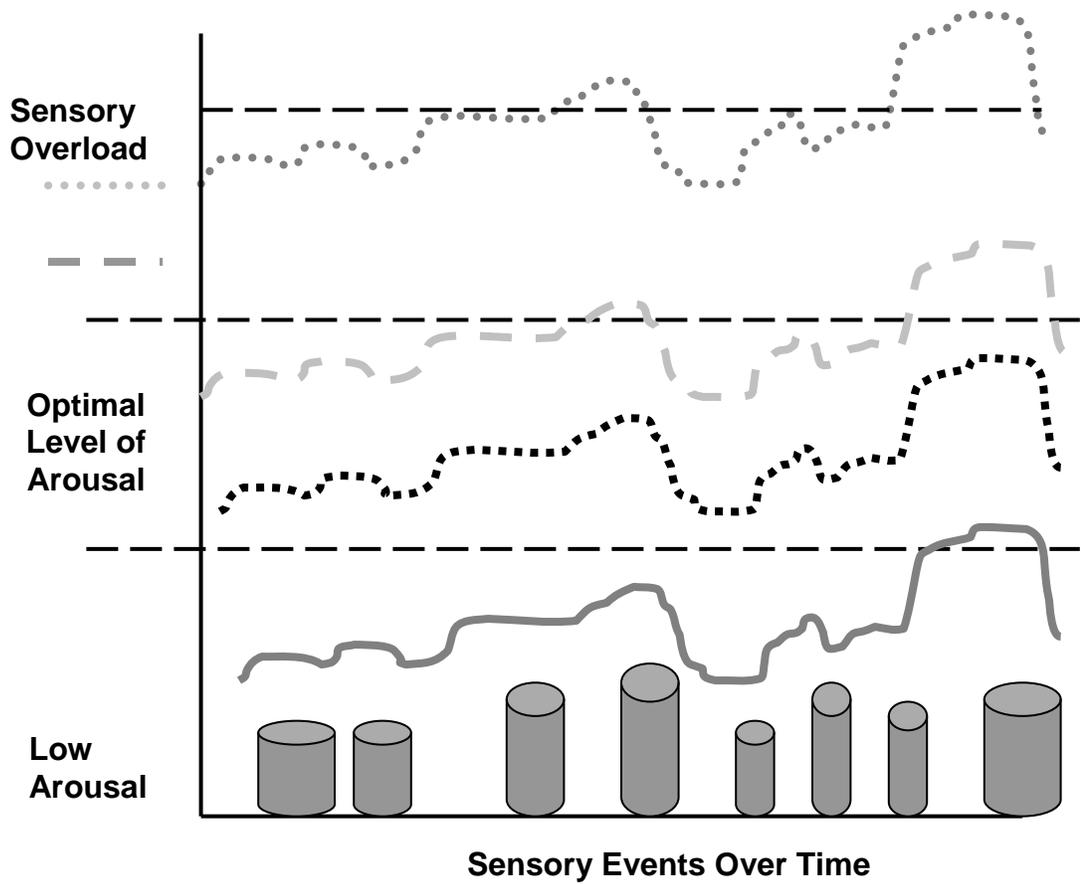
Step 9

Review data periodically to determine effectiveness of strategies as necessary

Step 10

Continue (if successful) or repeat steps 2 - 9

AROUSAL CHART



Key:

..... Child with sensory overload or sensory shutdown

----- Child who is sensory defensive

..... Child with a non-defensive system

———— Child who is under-responsive or has poor registration

USING THE MOTIVATION ASSESSMENT SCALE IN PLANNING INTERVENTIONS

FUNCTIONAL COMMUNICATION TRAINING:

Verbal, adult directed replacement behaviors:

SENSORY	ESCAPE	ATTENTION	TANGIBLE
"I can do this later." "I can do this in my room." "I can't do this here." "I want...(activity or toy that supplies similar sensory input)"	"I want a break" "Help." "May I do different work?" "This is too hard." "This is boring."	"How am I doing?" "Am I doing good work?" "How was I?" "Did I do okay?"	"I want...(tangible)" "Give me...(toy or food)" "May I have...(toy or food)?" "Can I be...(activity or privilege)?" "When I finish my work, can I go there?"

Non-verbal, adult-directed replacement behaviors:

Picture of activity that provides sensory input. Point to area of room where behavior is permitted. Sign for object that provides sensory input.	Sign for break. Sign for help. Push away work.	Raise hand. Gentle tap on hand. Eye contact. Sign for "let's talk."	Point to item or place where item is kept. Point to picture of desired item. Sign...(item name). Take adult by hand and lead to place where item is kept.
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Peer-directed replacement behaviors:

(None)	Move away. Ignore. Request help from adult. "Leave me alone." "I don't like that."	"What are you doing?" "May I play/watch/help?" Initiate activity. "Hey, man!"	"May I have a turn?" "Please." "Can I share?" Trade toy or food. "I like your..."
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DIFFERENTIAL REINFORCEMENT PROCEDURES:

SENSORY	ESCAPE	ATTENTION	TANGIBLE
Reward is time to engage in sensory motivated behavior. Situation might be a location where sensory behaviors are permitted. Teaching consequence might be a 15-second break--little or no teacher attention.	Reward is time away from demands or unpleasant tasks. Situation might be a location where no demands are placed on the person. Teaching consequence might be a 10-second break--little or no teacher attention.	Reward is time with a significant adult. Situation might be one-to-one time or a central location where frequent attention can be given (high attention seat). Teaching consequence might be 5 seconds of praise.	Reward is access to preferred toys, foods or activities. Situation might be a special time with tangible rewards or a location where tangible rewards are freely available. Teaching consequence might be 15 seconds of play with toy.

(Source: Westchester Institute for Human Development/UAP, Positive Strategies to Support Behavior Change, 5/93.

BEHAVIORS THAT UNDERMINE RELATIONSHIPS

1

Screaming in anger

2

Ignoring/Neglect

3

Giving physical or emotional pain

4

Criticism of an individual or his/her family by ridiculing, blaming, teasing, name-calling, threatening or using frightening or humiliating punishment

5

Discussing an individual's behavior in his/her presence

REASONS PEOPLE USE PUNISHMENT

A

Child rearing

B

Literature

C

Expert consultation

D

Myth of effectiveness

E

Human responses to “challenging” behavior protection
(emergency intervention) anger/aggression/emotion

PROBLEMS WITH USING PUNISHMENT

- **There is a host of problems in using even mild punishment:**
 - It can produce social withdrawal (punishee avoids punisher).
 - It can produce aggression (punishee may aggress against punisher or third party).
 - It can produce emotional side effects (shyness, unresponsiveness, etc.).
 - It can become “addictive” to the punisher, particularly because it often has immediate though short-term effects.
 - It does not eliminate behavior, but only suppresses it, especially if an alternative or replacement behavior is not taught.
 - It does not build replacement behaviors.
 - It is often only temporary. When punishment is stopped, the behavior is likely to return, perhaps in a worse form than before punishment began (recovery; rebound).
 - It can inhibit behaviors other than those being intentionally punished.
 - It can be very situation-and person-specific in its effects.

- Remember, reinforcers and punishers are determined by how they affect behavior. Because a learner appears to like or dislike something (or because we think he/she should) does not necessarily make it a reinforcer or a punisher. When punishment is stopped, behavior typically returns to its previous strength. This is known as *recovery after punishment*.

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(Source: Taken from Donnellan, Anne M., LaVigna, Gary W., Nagri-Shoultz, Nanette, and Fassbender, Lynette, *Progress without Punishment*, 1988)



Included Resource Material

- *10 Things You Can Do to Support a Person with Difficult Behaviors* - David Pitonyak (6 Pages)
- *An Absence of Influence* - David Pitonyak, (4 pages)
- *Questions and Answers about Persons with Developmental Disabilities, Challenging Behaviors and Positive Behavioral Supports* - (3 Pages)
- *Functional Analysis* - Adapted from *Progress without Punishment* (5 Pages)
- *Bibliography and Supported Readings* - (3 Pages)