

Supporting Our Children: Behavioral Strategies

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Who am I?

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- Educational and Behavioral Consultant
- Board Certified Behavior Analyst
- Certified Trauma Professional
- Safety Care Trainer
- Owner of Upstate ABA
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Objectives for Training

- Functions of Behaviors

- Supports Per Function

- General Behavioral Supports in the Home

What behaviors have you seen?

Guess what....

They all served a function.

Behaviors is communication

4 Main Functions to Behavior

Sensory

Escape/Avoidance

Attention

Tangible (access to)

Control-Not fully adapted by specific applications of science

Sensory

- When “a person’s own movements/actions feel good to that individual”-Graves, 2018
- Provides automatic reinforcement
- Internal reinforcement, that we are not likely to understand at all times
- Examples of behaviors:
 - Self-touching
 - Twirling hair
 - Rocking
 - Stimming behaviors
 - Deep pressure- OT/PT

Over-stimulation/Under-stimulation

- Too loud of an area
- Too many people
- Too light or too deep of skin contact pressure
- Seeking noise/response
- Some children are sensory seekers while others are avoiders and some are a mix of both, finding the balance is the hard part and is best completed by an OT.
- Sensory behaviors can be one of the hardest functions of behaviors to extinguish, but can easily be shaped!

Supports for Sensory Behaviors

- Consult with OT (as needed- especially for sensory seekers)

BASIC TIER 1 STRATEGIES

- Dim the lights or place coverings over them
- Access to noise cancelling headphones
- Focus on voice level of all children (create a system that works for you)
- Provide movement
- Determine a calming, safe space
- Access to specific materials: weight blankets, fidgety
- Aware of senses within environment (sounds, smells, people, etc)

Escape Behaviors

When something triggers an individual to engage in behaviors to escape and/or avoid/delay an activity from starting.

- Triggers can be known and unknown

Common Triggers:

- Demands being placed (academic and non-academic)
- Participation in non-preferred activity
- Request to work with sibling
- Each trigger specific to child

Escape Behaviors

Examples:

- Running out of the room, or around the room
- Falling to the ground
- Putting head down (non-compliance)
- Throwing items
- Property destruction
- Shutting down (non-responsive)
- Verbal arguments
- Physical Behaviors
- Bathroom/Bedroom breaks
- Ignoring
- On their technology

Escape Behaviors

These behaviors involve extinction. When the goal is extinction you gradually work towards it while also teaching the children how to self-regulate and providing replacement behaviors.

You cannot expect them to just stop without teaching them

1. Coping strategies
2. Replacement behavior (often in the form of appropriate communication and modification of work) It is a team approach - Collaboration is key
3. Model Appropriate Behavior

Escape Behaviors

What we can do

Consistency with expectations

Follow Through on Plans

Offer Assistance

Avoid Power Struggles/Choices

Pre-sets

Visual Schedules

Limited Language

Structured Choices

Flat affect

Self-regulation

Collaborative Planning w/child

Reinforcement System

Teach replacement Behaviors

Redirect them

Attention Behaviors

The wanting/needing of attention (adults, peers)

Common Triggers:

- Interacting with another child or adult
- Not understanding the directive
- Too many steps in the directive
- Task too long
- Diagnosis
- Fellow Siblings
- Transitions
- Independent tasks

Attention Seeking Behaviors

Can look like:

- Calling out
- Touching items
- Touching others
- All over the house
- Not engaged in activity
- Rolling on ground
- Running around (game play)
- Property Destruction
- Verbal & Physical Behaviors

Remember negative attention is attention (correcting a behavior)

Attention Seeking Behaviors

These behaviors involve shaping-rarely do we want to put them on extinction. We need to teach them, when, where, and how to engage in appropriate communication and/or attention seeking behaviors. Some attention seeking behaviors will need to be put on extinction.

You cannot expect them to just stop without teaching them

1. Coping strategies
2. Replacement behavior (often in the form of appropriate communication and modification of work) It is a team approach - Collaboration is key
3. Modeling appropriate behavior

What can we do?

- Prompt to desired behavior (waiting your turn to talk, lightly tapping to interrupt)
- Limit the number of questions/statements (“you get 3 right now”)
- Request them to play in another area or away from peer
- Use reinforcement system to praise and highlight positive behaviors and replacement behaviors
 - Poker chip, visual smile, countdown
- Planned ignoring
- Work collaboratively with child
- Set parameters/ Choices
- Provide them a set time to talk and work with specific person
- Provide them with space and time if they are unable to wait

Tangibles

An individual wants access to a specific item, activity, and/or person.

Common Triggers:

- Being asked to stop preferred activity
- Seeing the item
- Perseveration on the item
- Denied access to what they want

Access to Tangible Behaviors

Can look like:

- Escape
 - Leaving designated area to get desired item
 - Leaving room to go to room desired
- Verbal behavior
 - Shouting
 - Screaming
 - Demanding
 - Crying
- Physical behavior
 - Grabbing items
 - Pushing
 - Hitting

Access to Tangibles

These behaviors involve shaping-rarely do we want to put them on extinction. We need to teach them, when, where, and how to engage in appropriate communication and/or gain the item. Extinction may be needed dependent on the behavior. These can also serve additional functions

You cannot expect them to just stop without teaching them

1. Coping strategies
2. Replacement behavior (often in the form of appropriate communication and modification of work) It is a team approach - Collaboration is key
3. Modeling appropriate behavior
4. Use first, then Language

What can we do?

- Clear Directions of when they will get the item-”First, then”
- Refer to our house rules
- Refer to reinforcement system
- Use a timer
- Model appropriate methods to ask for item
- Model how to deal with being told no- teach coping strategies
- Remove item from view
- Develop a visual for when they can have the item(s)
- Work on sharing
- Structured Choices

Multiple Functions

Behaviors serve multiple functions

They can start one way and turn into another function

Our reactions may maintain the behavior

We want to do our best to avoid power struggles- or else it can turn into all four functions of behavior occurring

General Behavioral Strategies

Behavioral Strategies

- Reinforcement Systems
 - First you do _____ then you earn _____
 - Poker chips, visuals, checklists, money
 - Start with high frequency reinforcement then fade
 - Be specific on what you are looking for or can do a caught doing good system
- Collaboration
 - Often underutilized
 - Dr. Ross Greene and Dr. Stuart Albon (The Explosive Child)
 - “Kids do well if they can”
 - Talk with them- develop plans- come up with strategies and scripts together
- Visuals
 - Create them, post them, reference them
 - Gestures can also be created

Behavioral Strategies Continued

- Environmental Control
 - Access to devices at certain times
 - Create an environment that assists with the goals
- Offer choice
 - Choice of when, where, how, and with whom to do the activity with
 - Choice of the type of activity
- Consequences/Punishment Systems
 - Natural and Logical Consequences
 - Breaks, not allowed to do it again, get hurt, loss of a preferred item, restorative conversation
 - Make sure the size of the consequence matches to the size of the problem- avoid progressive discipline

Behavioral Strategies continued

- Planned ignoring
- Praise
 - Be Specific
 - Praise child or others around them
 - 5:1 ratio
- Model the behaviors you want them to do or say
 - Language use
 - Interactions with others
- Create routines and procedures
 - Stick to them
 - Provide warnings prior to transitions
 - Be consistent
- Responding in the moment
 - Less is more (less talk, less movement, less engagement)
 - If you are dysregulated you cannot help to regulate them
 - Walk away

Questions on Behavioral Supports?

Executive Functioning Supports

What is Executive Functioning?

A group of skills that help individuals complete tasks/get things done

1. Higher level cognitive functions that help us to regulate our behaviors.
2. Developmentally-Based (Skills are acquired over time)
3. Brain Maturation
4. Impact of Environment
5. Important for success across all areas of functioning -academic, adaptive living and social skills.

Examples of Executive Functioning Deficits

- Difficulty with time management
- Difficulty with organization
- Difficulty with sustained attention
- Difficulty with initiation
- Difficulty switching paths/activities
- Difficulty remembering
- Lack of filter- say what is on their mind

Ways to support your child(ren)

-Step-by-step approach - help them to organize and plan

- Use visuals
- Share only one step at a time
- Model the steps

-Use tools

- Worksheets/schedules
- Computers
- Watches
- Alarms- Alexa
- Calendars

-Plan for transition time

- Do not rush
- Be specific on when things need to be done

Ways to support (continued)

-Avoid clutter

- Provide defined space for where things are to be completed
- Organize the space weekly

-Checklists

- Making in collaboration
- Review with them
- Allow them to add/edit

-Have set times to check-in

- Make part of the schedule

-Establish Routines

- Practice the routines
- Reinforce the routines

Ways to support (continued)

-Set time limits

- Provide enough time to get it done, but not too much time as they will procrastinate

-Explain the “why”

- Answer the questions they ask on “Why” they are being asked to do something

-Use rewards

- Rewards that are meaningful to them
- Have appropriate time response to provide rewards (do not make it too delayed)

-Implement self-monitoring systems

- A simple and clear way for them to self-reflect

Questions on Executive Functioning Supports

Increasing Appropriate Social Engagement

Ways to increase their social engagement

-Engage in activities that are interesting to them

- Talk to them about what they want to do
- Offer them choices
- Ask questions to them to help you know what they might be willing to try (especially the ones who say no to everything)

-Can pair reinforcement with trying new things

- Follow a first, then approach
- Collaborate with them
- Answer the “why” they have to do it

-Be a positive role model

- Have adult friends over or other peers have friends over
- Model what you do, how you talk to them, and how it was fun

Ways to increase social engagement (continued)

-Facilitate interactions with siblings and relatives

- Step in and model for them
- Address inappropriate behaviors

-Teach Empathy

- Model this
- Talk about this through different situations and scenarios- share your experiences

-Model Appropriate social skills

- Listening, waiting, sharing, turn taking, following directions, giving personal space, using manners
- Help them to understand non-verbal cues

Ways to increase social engagement (continued)

-Attend social groups

- Freedom first
- Make your own social group
- Sign up for town/city activities
 - Start small build up

-Focus on quality over quantity

- One or a few great friends are better than 100 friends

-Discuss positive friendship qualities

- Harder task for parents
- Share examples
- Reflect on previous experiences

Question on Social Engagement Supports

Model Problem-Solving Approach

5-step Approach

1. Define the problem
2. Gather information
3. Generate Possible Solutions
4. Evaluate ideas then choose one
5. Evaluate/Reflect

This is helpful for all scenarios

Questions, Comments, Concerns, or
Emotional Outbursts?