

Understanding and Improving Behavior-A Sensible Approach

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Rethinking Behavior

- You have the power to change the behavior of your children, clients or students.
- All people use the behavior that has worked for them in the past
- All the reinforcement (rewards) in the world won't change an individuals' s behavior if they don't have the skills.

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Behavior

- The function of challenging behavior is either to get something or avoid something. Sometimes those things are internal or can't be seen by others.
- Those behaviors need to be substituted with new behaviors that make the old one irrelevant, ineffective and/or inefficient.
- Just looking at rewards and consequences is usually not enough.

Rethinking Behavior

- Behavior is communication
- Success is more motivating than failure
- Humans are inconsistent
- Not about it being bad or good
- Children do well if they can

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Think preventively

- We generally want to come at things from the wrong direction, asking something like, "what should I do when my child hits?"

instead of....

- "How do I stop my child from hitting?"

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Get your heads around this

- It really isn't about changing the child. It is about changing the environment in such a way that the child makes different choices about their behavior (Shramm).
- And I add....If they can. I am in good company. Ross Greene is the one who says in his books, "Children do well if they can".

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The good news and the bad News

- We change the behavior of others, by changing our own.



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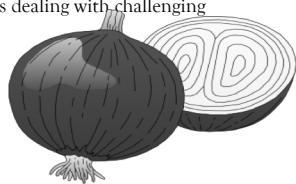
Know thyself

- Your own triggers
- How you deal with stress
- What you need to be effective
- Get assistance or support if needed
- Our own history with behavior
- Accepting our punitive selves

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Behavior

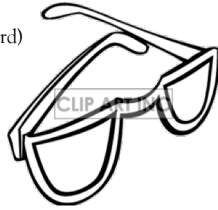
- You really need to understand a behavior before you try to get rid of it
- Behavior is like an onion
- You may think that the solutions I am giving take time to implement but so does dealing with challenging behavior



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Reading Glasses

- Motivation
- Proximity in time of prompt to reinforcement
- Ease of behavior
- Strong reinforcement (reward)



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10

Behavior Analysts

- Don't be fooled by folks who hide behind jargon or blame you if interventions don't work
- It should be a partnership and you should understand the process.

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11

emotion

- The F word
- Behavior doesn't always seem logical
- Anxiety driven behaviors



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12

Finding the function of behavior is the key!

- All behaviors have a purpose, or a function
- Every behavior serves a LEGITIMATE function – it is just the form that needs to be changed

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13

Functions

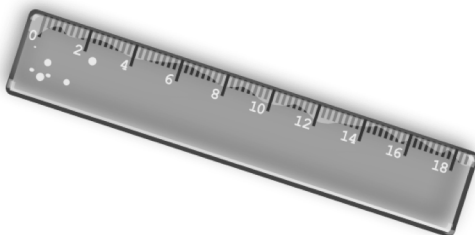
- To get something
- To avoid or escape something
- Because the behavior feels good and is reinforcing.
Sensory issues may impact this

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14

Short vs long

- Short term gains- pleasure, ease
- Long term benefits such as health. Prosperity, success



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Obtainment/Attention seeking

- ☐ Attention
- ☐ Reaction
- ☐ Food
- ☐ Control
- ☐ Pleasure
- ☐ Tangibles

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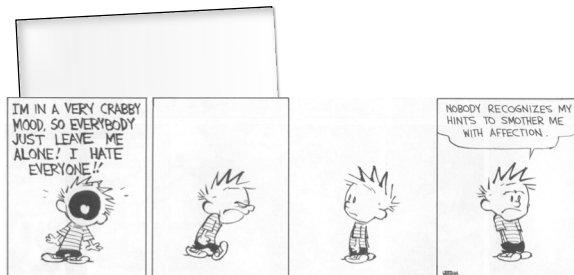
16

Be aware...

- ☐ We can accidentally reinforce behaviors of children when we reprimand
- ☐ We also may reinforce escalation of behavior
- ☐ We also may escalate waiting to comply

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17



Escape/Avoidance

- Escape
- Leave me alone
- Remove demands

Hint: Could be avoiding people, places, and tasks

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Escape/Avoidance intervention overview

The key to reversing the cycle of misbehavior for Escape/Avoidance is to make changes in routines and activities to make them less aversive from the perspective of the child. Provide for immediate success as well as frequent incremental successes. Most important establish a reliable system that the child can indicate a need to temporarily escape.

Adapted from C. Dahlquist & L. Chandler 8/98

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Automatic Reinforcement

- The act itself is the reinforcer
- Can be something that feels good
- Or it may provide relief or make you feel more "OK" like a ritual or compulsion

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Sensory regulation

Increase level of sensory input



Decrease level of input



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Become a Detective



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You need a plan

- No shooting in the dark (even though that sometimes works short term)



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Behavior

- Taking data
- Using the data to make decisions
- Changing behavior is a process
- Often it involves more changes in the environment including strategies than focusing on the child.
- The more predictable you can make the behavior, the better- 2 good questions to ask

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Danger, Caution

- You don't want to try to get rid of a behavior unless you understand it. You could cause a more problematic behavior.
- Don't play...

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Wack a Mole



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News Flash

- A behavior plan is a road map for adults (parents, teachers, staff members). It tells us if our interventions are working. If the number of problem behaviors is not decreasing, it is evidence that we have not been effective. It is not an excuse to blame the individual with special needs.



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The Three Most Important factors for Behavior Change

- Prevention
- Prevention
- Prevention

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Setting the stage for success

- Pre-correction
- Practice the replacement behavior
- Video modeling-no errors
- Remember, it is all about prevention!!

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Interventions

- Wait until you are ready to start a behavior change program.
- Have a plan
- Stick with it for a length of time and then evaluate it- not too short, not too long.
- If it is not working change it.

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Behavior changes through 5 methods

- Reinforcement
- Extinction
- Motivation
- Punishment
- Stimulus Control

Beware

- Things sometimes get worse before they get better
- If they do, believe it or not, it usually means that you are on the right track



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25

Changing challenging behavior

- Behavior is changed using proactive interventions that:

CHANGE THE ENVIRONEMNT

TEACH APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR

ACHIEVE THE SAME FUNCTION

(hint: the new appropriate behavior has to work just as or more effectively than the inappropriate behavior)

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Obtainment – Specific interventions

- Firmly redirect the child back to the task instead of allowing the child to distract you away from the task when they engage in conversation, arguments or negotiations.

“Tommy, I’ ll be glad to talk to you after you sit down at the table”

- Focus on reinforcing appropriate behavior instead of reprimanding or correcting inappropriate behavior. (Balance scale in your head)

Adapted from C. Dahlquist & L. Chandler 8/98

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Obtainment – Specific interventions

- Lengthy reprimands, negotiations, and explanations actually delay the task and reinforce the misbehavior. Use only necessary and critical words to redirect the child to the task.

- Remain calm and use neutral tone of voice.

- Tell child what to do instead of what not to do.

- Use a reinforcement system that provide external rewards for appropriate behavior.

Adapted from C. Dahlquist & L. Chandler 8/98

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Escape/Avoidance – Specific interventions

- Make activities and tasks easier, shorter, more successful or more interesting
- Intersperse easy tasks within more difficult tasks or Intersperse preferred tasks with non-preferred tasks
- Provide opportunist to make CHOICES in everything
- End on a positive note

Adapted from C. Dahlquist & L. Chandler 8/98

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Sensory regulation - Interventions to increase

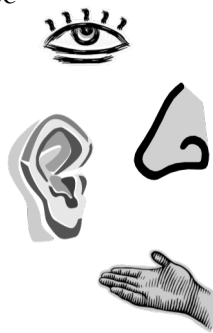
- Create opportunities for movement breaks
- Adapt movement to be functional!
- Decrease waiting times
- Increase stimulation level
- Preferential seating
- Break down long tasks



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Sensory regulation - Interventions to decrease

- Decrease level of stimulation
- Provide structure to all situations
- Provide educational prompts to “jump” start learner
- Reduce down time during free play
- Use quiet social reinforcement
- Provide menu of break opportunities
- Be aware of “high” sensory events or activities



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Trauma

- The child will feel threats even if they are not real but imagined.
- Don't isolate the child
- Help the child stay in the present.
- Food and drinks may help
- Calming smells
- The body feels it



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Reinforcement

- Kids need to learn when I act in this way by life is great and when I don't thing are really crummy. A drastic difference.
- What reinforces your child or a child you are concerned about?
- Based on their schedule, not arbitrary
- Motivation
- Deprivation
- Only counts if it is changing behavior

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TANGIBLE

- Tokens
- Stickers
- Trinkets



INTANGIBLE

- Praise
- Hugs
- Tickles
- Attention



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45

Shaping

- **Definition:** Reinforcing those various forms of a behavior that more or most closely approximate the target response, and continuing this process until the desired response is established
- Also referred to as **successive approximation**
- Once a behavior is shaped, it is at low strength and needs to be strengthened by reinforcement procedures

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- You can think about it as taking baby steps.



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67

Situational Management Strategies

- Antecedent control- remove seductive objects, deploy/relocate people, remove unnecessary demands, eliminate provocative statements and actions, rearrange the environment

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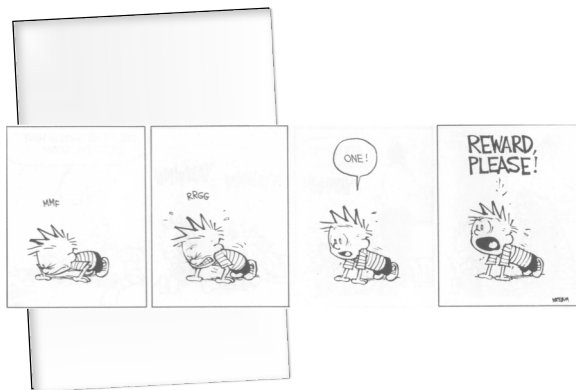
68

Differential Reinforcement

- Planned ignoring



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Punishment

- Punishment does not teach what to do next time
- Over use of time out
- Can hurt relationships
- It can make settings aversive
- NOTE- You can change behavior effectively without using punishment

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The devil is in the details

- Adults are stingy with reinforcement
- The schedule and amount can't just be made up
- Reinforcement schedules need to change over time



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62

Close is no



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Keep in mind

- Behavior does not change overnight
- Think proactively, not reactively
- This may involve you doing things differently. In fact, it is pretty much guaranteed.

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64

Strategies for Interacting

- Communicate effectively: be specific, make expectations clear, don't offer a choice unless there is one.
- Explain to child exactly the behavior you want to see, not what you don't want to see.
- Reinforce other children/siblings

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Tricks of the trade

- Have the child practice the desired behavior
- Make sure that mistakes are not part of the learned behavior chain
- Momentum
- Backward chaining

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Keeping Cool

- The hardest part of all of this



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In closing

- Take care of yourself
- Struggles and successes
- Questions???



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58

References

- The Tough Kid Tool Box by Jenson, Rhode and Reavis
- The Sensory Sensitive Child by Smith and Gouze
- Educate towards Recovery by Robert Schramm

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59

more

- Ross Greene: <https://www.livesinthebalance.org>

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60
