Why Does He Act Like That?

Understanding Behaviors and Why They Occur

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We provide early intervention services including speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, audiological services, listening and spoken language therapy, behavioral therapy, and special instruction to nearly 100 children ages birth to five across south Mississippi. All of these services are available at no cost to families.

Our mission is to provide high quality early intervention services while providing education to not only families, but also to students and professionals.
Functions of Behavior

• Problem behaviors are usually related to 4 main conditions (variants of the conditions may also occur)
  • Escape
  • Attention
  • Tangible
  • Sensory needs
Escape Function

• “I don’t want to do this”
• Often seen when a child is completing a task that is difficult. Think a puzzle and child who has poor fine motor skills.
• Provide a “first, then” prompt, offer choices, or alter the length of the task
Attention Function

• “Hey, look at me!”
• Obtain attention from an adult or peer
• Sometimes any attention is good attention.
• Provide positive reinforcement or attention before the behavior occurs.
Tangible Function

• “I want my toy!”
• Provides preferred activity or item
• Occurs when a preferred activity or item is desired
• Use a transition activity/object or increase accessibility
Sensory Needs

• “I love my musical and light up toy!”
• Provides stimulation to the pleasure zone in the brain.
• Can happen anytime, especially when anxious or excited
• Assist in redirection to more appropriate activities
So how do I eliminate the behaviors before they start??
Here are some ideas...

- Engineer the environment
- Use appropriate materials and activities
- Use appropriate directions and cues
- Do your students/patients know how to play?
Is the environment ready?

• Less is more (helps with minimizing distraction)
• Make changes to Specific Areas based on the Unit you’re teaching (you don’t have to change everything all the time)
• Be mobile to help keep kids in your area
• Have a variety of activities to guide your day
  • Rotate sitting activities with those that require more movement
• Section your therapy room/classroom based on the furniture you have in your room
  • Make big areas small
  • Fill open areas with stationary furniture and screens
  • Use screens to help minimize distraction
  • Ensure play areas have boundaries—limit toys in that area
Game changers for your room environment

From everyone’s favorite—
www.lakeshorelearning.com
Or just use what you have
Things to Remember

- Boundaries— for areas without seating, use colorful tape or small cushions to help designate where to sit
- Use visual cues to help remind students where they need to sit
  - Print out names, laminate, and place on back of chair
  - Helps with identification of name as well as learning “mine”
Are your materials appropriate?

• First, you need to understand the child’s language and attention levels.

• If your students are at a more concrete language level, use objects/manipulatives to engage and keep attention.
  • Let children hold items during story time.
  • Match objects children are holding to the story.
  • Use a flashlight to point out items.
  • Use books with tactile stimulation.
Get creative!

- Sometimes the materials that our kids need are not commercially available or are ridiculously expensive.
How are your directions?

- Establish eye contact
- Use directives versus questions
- Be descriptive
- Be in proximity of the child (within 3 feet)
- Neutral toned voice
- Wait 5-10 sec for compliance to be initiated
- Contingent praise (praised offered immediately with compliance)
Visuals

• Use of verbal instruction paired with visuals will likely be more effective than purely verbal instruction.
• Making choices
• Transitions
• Visual schedules
Classroom schedule for centers
Can you play?

- Children learn through play, preferably with peers
- Engage the child’s interest
- Use redirection when necessary
- Use language at the child’s level to teach them HOW to play
Concerns about play

• Restricted repertoire of play skills
• Little to no language during play
• Limited selection of play materials
• Ritualistic play
Reinforcement

- **Reinforcement** refers to the strengthening of a behavior so that it (the behavior) will be repeated.

- If a behavior is repeated or increases, then the reinforcing consequence is known as a *reinforcer*.

- **Reinforcement ALWAYS increases the behavior.**

- A + B = C

![Diagram showing the relationship between Antecedent, Behavior, and Consequence]
Categories of Positive Reinforcers

- Tangible Reinforcers
  - Material objects that have personal value
  - Easy for children to understand due to their concrete form
  - Can be difficult to decrease dependence
  - Most items are subject to satiation
Categories of Positive Reinforcers

• Social Reinforcers
  • Attention, praise, proximity, approval from other people
  • Given either verbally, physically (hugs, pats on the back), or through gestures (smiles, thumbs up)
  • Among the most powerful consequences available for initiating and maintaining behaviors.

• 4 Advantages
  • Easy to administer
  • Limitless supply
  • Can be given immediately after behavior
  • Considered Natural Reinforcers – consequences that people receive as a regular part of their daily lives.
Categories of Positive Reinforcers

- **Token Reinforcers**
  - Symbolic items that have value because of what they can be exchanged for.
  - Examples: Casino/poker chips, arcade tokens, tickets, STICKERS! etc.
  - Reinforcement is most effective when it is delivered immediately after the behavior. However, this is not always possible so the use of tokens provides caregivers with a tangible source to represent the actual reinforcer that will come at a later time
  - Can be exchanged for tangible or social reinforcers.
Steps for Setting Up a Reinforcement Program

• Identify something that your student is working for
• Make the rules:
  a) Completing the task
  b) Make sure the chart is a reasonable tool to use during the activity
  c) Make chart appropriate based on what we know our kids can do
Things to Remember with Reinforcement

- BE CONSISTENT
- USE TIME IN
Kids are Kids

The kids that we work with are kids first, diagnosis second!
Sources


• www.behaviorbabe.com/functions-of-behavior

• www.interventioncentral.org
Contact

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