

# **Behavior IS Communication: Addressing Severe Challenging Behaviors**

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## **Acknowledgments**

- **Project PREPARE**
  - Colvin, Kame'enui, & Sugai (1990-1995, OSEP)
- **Effective Behavior Support Project**
  - Sugai & Horner (1995-1998, OSEP)
- **Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions & Support**
  - Sugai & Horner (1998-2003, OSEP/SDFS)
  - UO, UK, KU, MU, USF

[www.pbis.org](http://www.pbis.org)
- **Parents, students, educators, researchers**

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## **Objectives**

- 1. Participants will gain tools for understanding complex challenging behaviors**
- 2. Participants will learn how to translate their understanding into effective behavior plans**
- 3. Participants will problem-solve around students who display severe challenging behaviors**

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## **Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)**

- PBIS refers to the application of positive behavioral interventions and systems to achieve socially important behavior change.**
- Proactive and preventative rather than reactive and punitive interventions**

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# PBIS Assumptions

- Human behavior is affected by behavioral, bio-behavioral, social, and physical environmental factors.
- Much of human behavior is associated with unintentional learning opportunities.
- Human behavior is learned and can be changed.

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## Designing School-Wide Systems for Student Success

### Academic Systems

#### Tertiary Individual Interventions

- Individual Students
- Assessment-based
- High Intensity

#### Secondary Group Interventions

- Some students (at-risk)
- High efficiency
- Rapid response

#### Primary Interventions

- All students
- Preventive, proactive

### Behavioral Systems

#### Tertiary Individual Interventions

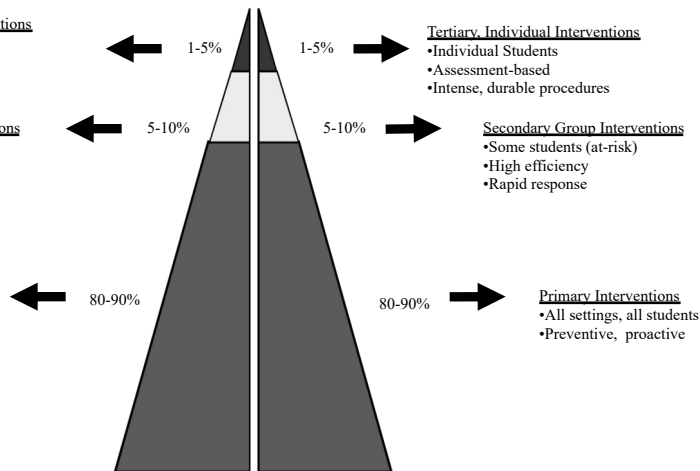
- Individual Students
- Assessment-based
- Intense, durable procedures

#### Secondary Group Interventions

- Some students (at-risk)
- High efficiency
- Rapid response

#### Primary Interventions

- All settings, all students
- Preventive, proactive



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## **GIVEN**

**Educating individual students with significant problem behaviors requires highly individualized, specialized, & intensive behavioral supports.**

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## **Severe Challenging Behaviors**

- **Aggression to Self (SIB)**
- **Aggression to Others**
- **Aggression to Property**
  
- **Stereotypic Behavior**
- **Other Maladaptive Behaviors...**

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## **What seems to be the Problem?**

**Brainstorm a list of “challenging behaviors” you have observed, or that you are currently concerned about.**

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## **A Note on Self-Injurious Behavior (SIB)**

- **Behaviors which cause injury or tissue damage to the individual who is engaging in those behaviors.**
  - Hand to head
  - Head to object
  - Self-Bite, scratch, skin-pick
  - Eye-press, eye gouge

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**If it looks like a duck, and  
quacks like a duck, it might  
NOT be a duck.**

- **Some behaviors that look like SIB may not cause tissue damage... may not be danger to self... may not present substantial risk.**
- **Treatment, however, may be similar as to SIB**

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## **Behavior is Communication**

- **Communication is both sending and receiving of information**
- **Non-verbal students use gross motors as expressive communication**
- **What are you trying to tell me?**
- **Implications for “talkers”**

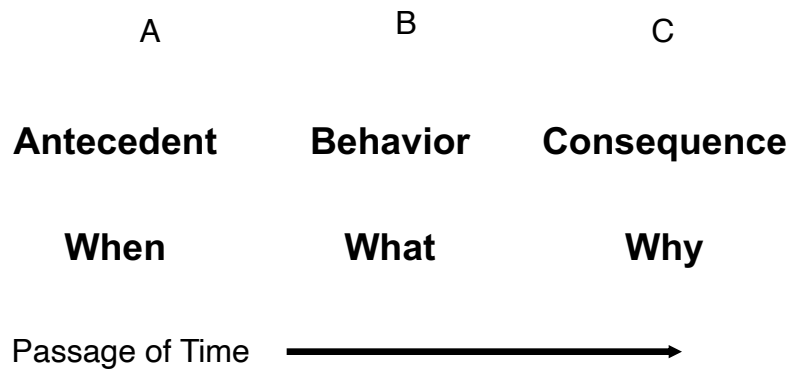
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# Basics

- **Behavior (what)**
  - What the student does
- **Antecedents (when)**
  - What happens before to “trigger”
- **Consequences (why)**
  - What happens after to maintain

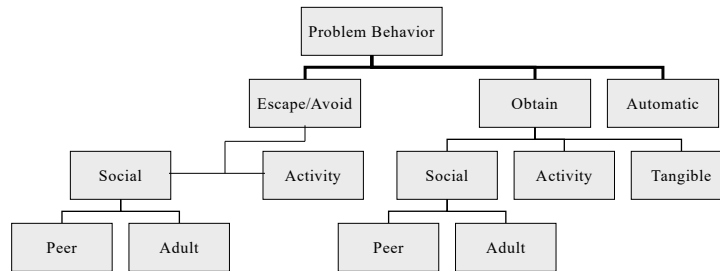
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# Behavior and the Environment



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# Three Functions of Behavior



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# Understanding Behavior Problems

1. **Negative Reinforcement Hypothesis**
  2. **Positive Reinforcement Hypothesis**
- **Sensory Stimulation Hypothesis**
  - **Communication Intent**

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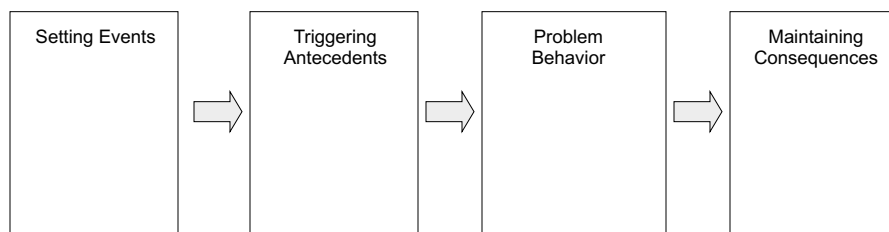


# Setting event

- **Factors that make problem behavior worse (more likely to occur, more intense)**
  - E.g., *illness, fatigue, social conflict, change in routine,.....*
- **Factors that change value of current reinforcers**
  - E.g., *verbal praise less effective, peer attention more influential, escaping work more desirable....*

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## Testable Hypothesis

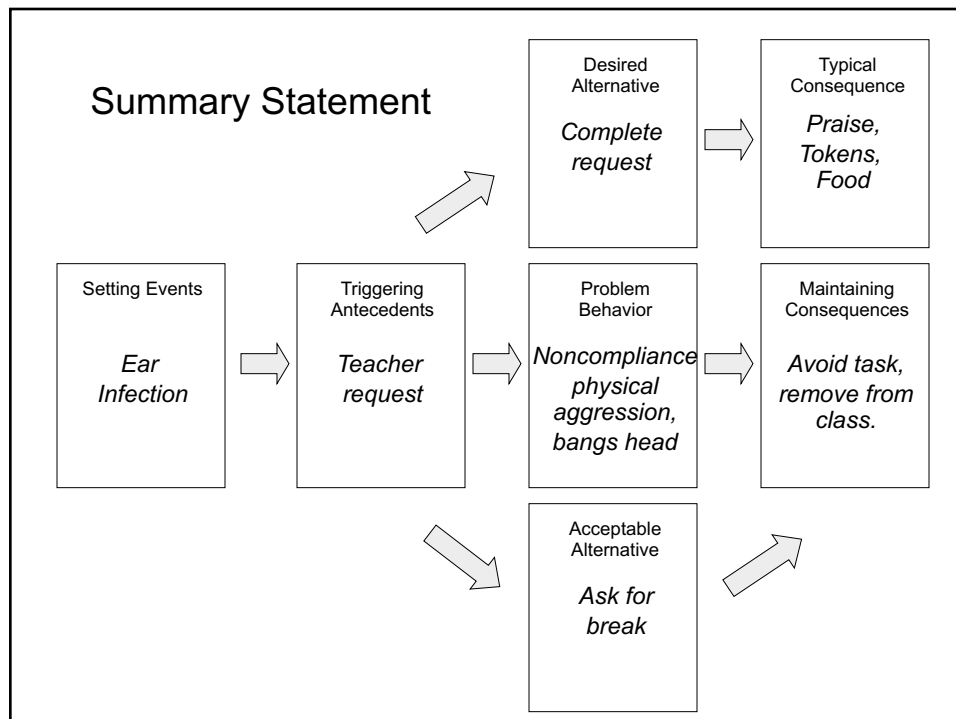


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**If that's true... what should we do?**

**Think Functionally and Make a Plan**

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# **Deciding on Interventions**

**Two types of problems:**

- 1. Can't Do**
  - **Teach, Remind, Practice**
  
- 2. Won't Do**
  - **Motivate, Encouragement and Discouragement**

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# **Teach and Reinforce**

- **Pick replacement behavior**
- **Teach**
- **Provide reinforcement for functionally equivalent alternative behavior**
- **Student gets (consequence) what he/she wants for doing (behavior) what you want.**

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# **Functional Equivalence and Functional Communication Training**

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## **Functional Equivalence**

- **Two or more behaviors that serve the same “function” or purpose (i.e., produce the same maintaining consequence or outcome).**
- **Therefore, they are equivalent to each other**
- **A.K.A.... Response Class: members serving same function**

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## **Considerations in Choosing a Communication Form**

- **Choose form more efficient than problem behavior**
  - Consider effort, immediacy, and consistency of “pay off”
- **Choose a form that is appropriate for learner and contexts**
  - Already in repertoire?
  - Easy to learn
  - Easily interpretable
  - Initially teach general communication forms

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## **Develop behavior support plan.**

- **Tactics for**
  - discouraging problem behavior,
  - teaching & encouraging desirable & acceptable replacement behavior,
  - preventing & responding to emergency/crisis situations, &
  - monitoring implementation effectiveness
- **Emphasis on manipulation of (a) behaviors, (b) antecedents, (c) consequences, & (d) setting events**

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# **Exemplary Treatment of Severe Problem Behavior**

(Sprague & Horner, 1999)

- 1. Remove or change antecedent stimuli**
- 2. Provide competing reinforcement for desired behavior**
- 3. Provide competing aversive consequence for problem behavior**
- 4. Functional Communication Training**

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## **Guidelines**

- **Design antecedent strategies to make triggering antecedents ineffective.**
  - So they no longer serve as triggers.
- **Design behavior teaching strategies to make problem behaviors inefficient.**
  - So more acceptable behaviors are easier to do.

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## Guidelines

- Design consequence strategies to make maintaining consequences irrelevant.
  - So they no longer are present or
  - Are less reinforcing.
  
- Design setting event strategies to eliminate or neutralize effects of setting events.
  - So they have less impact on routines & reinforcers.

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## Plan for Crisis

- When behavior is already causing injury (danger to self or others) then plan for worse case scenarios.
- Set criteria for discontinuing set intervention plan.
- Purpose of crisis plan is safety.

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## **Big Ideas**

- **Choose alternative behaviors that are functionally equivalent**
- **Problem behaviors often have communicative intent**
- **Teach alternative communication forms**
- **Always consider efficiency of alternative responses**

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