

Communication: Missed Behavior or Missed Communication?
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Challenging behavior:

"Challenging behaviors (or problem behaviors) result in self-injury, injury to others, cause damage to the physical environment and/or interfere with the acquisition of new skills, and/or socially isolate the learner" (Doss & Reichle, 1991).

Communication: The way a learner lets you know he wants, needs or desires something.

Communication	Behavior
Form: Way to communicate	Form: Way to behave
Function: Reason	Function: Reason
Content: Something to communicate about	Content: Something that contributes to a specific behavior

What kinds of behaviors are considered a problem?

1. Destructive or disruptive behavior
 - Tearing up
 - Demanding
 - General attention getting
2. Non-Compliant Behavior -"I'm not gonna do it and you can't make me!"
3. Aggressive Behavior -"I will hurt, maim and/or kill you!"
4. BUTA- Bizarre behavior unexplained and unrelated to anything in particular!

Antecedent Strategies:

1. Teacher controls the opportunity not the child or the behavior.
2. Less overall disruption and chaos.
3. Education: New skills may be acquired in the absence of the frazzle that surrounds challenging behavior.
4. Opportunities may be created that interrupt anticipatory chains associated with challenging behavior.

What is meant by form and function?

The Form is the way the child behaves.

The function is the reason or the purpose that the behavior serves.

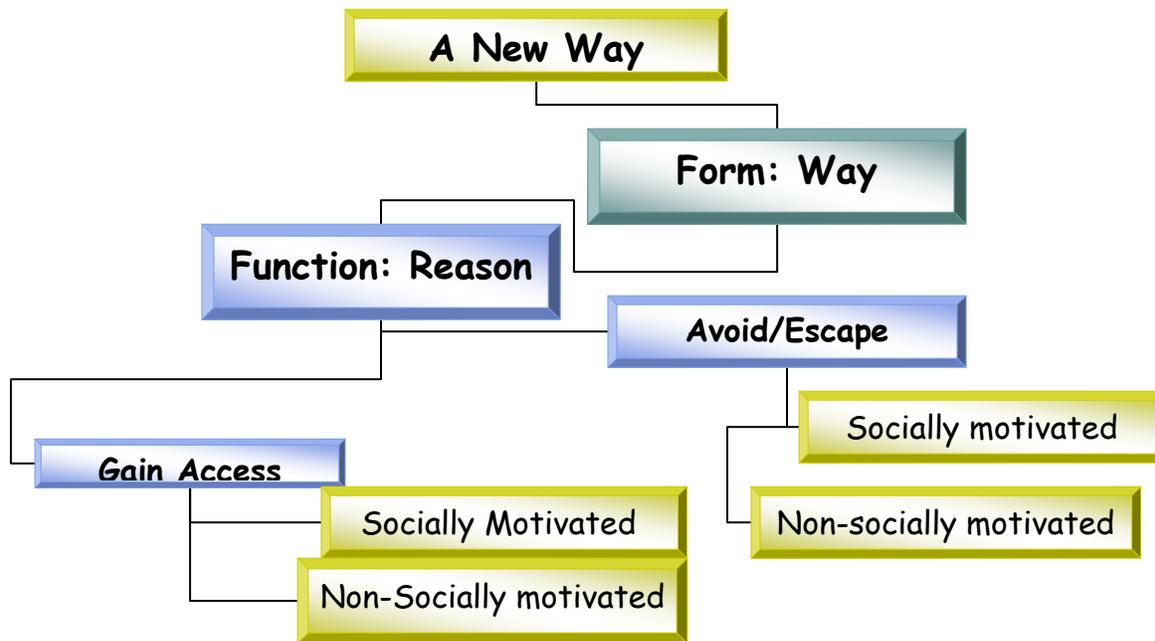
The functions that challenging behaviors serve for children can be categorized as those that are emitted to **avoid/escape** undesired outcomes and those that are emitted to **gain access** to desired outcomes.

These behaviors may be further divided into **socially motivated** and **non-socially motivated**.

1. Challenging behaviors that require the mediation of others in the environment are referred to as **socially motivated** challenging behaviors.
2. A child who engages in socially motivated challenging behavior may do so in order to gain **access to attention**, objects or activities, or to **escape or avoid** non-referred situations (attention, objects, events or activities).

Non-Socially Motivated Behaviors: Children who engage in non-socially motivated challenging behaviors do not require mediation from others in the environment. Their behaviors may serve the function of obtaining or escaping internal stimulation.

The Best Form of DISCIPLINE IS ALWAYS PREVENTATIVE



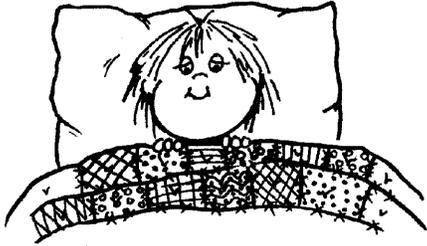
What is a functional assessment?

A functional assessment is the process of determining the relationship between events in a person's environment and the occurrence of challenging behaviors.

This process involves:

1. Identifying and defining the challenging behavior.
2. Identifying the events and circumstances regularly associated with the occurrence and the nonoccurrence of the challenging behavior.
3. Determining the social function or the purpose of the challenging behavior (Foster-Johnson & Dunlap, 1993; O'Neill, Horner, Albin, Storey, & Sprague, 1990).

When assessing behavior it is critical to determine the **setting events** that relate to the behavior. Setting events are conditions that occur concurrent with problem behaviors or are more distant in time and increase the probability that challenging behavior will occur.



Setting Events might include some of the following:

- Staff changes
 - Medication change
 - Slept more/fewer hours than usual
 - Showed symptoms of illness
- Demand situations increased
 - Chaotic environment
 - Surprise visits
 - Was aggressed upon by a peer
 - Temperature of environment too hot/cold
 - Had to wait a long time for something desired

Environmental manipulations (functional analyses)

An environmental manipulation assessment involves altering specific antecedents and/or consequences believed to be associated with the emission of a challenging behavior and then observing how these changes influence the likelihood that the child will engage in a targeted behavior.

Creating an Environment that is Proactive: Prevention is easier than finding a cure-

- **Placement-** Look at appropriate placement options. Sometimes an environment or situation can be too stressful for a child.
- **Curriculum-** The unwritten curriculum involves the consistent use of appropriate social skills. A child with poor social skills will not be easily accepted by his/her peers.
- **Materials-** Select materials, which encourage interaction and lessen the possibility of the child's reacting in a negative manner.
- **Keep rules simple.**
- **Make consequences natural and BE CONSISTENT!**

Keys to Success:



- Create a physical environment that promotes interaction
- Establish rules that guide behavior
- Provide materials that encourage persistence and attention
- Develop a routine that establishes transitions and routines.
- Be flexible!

Deciding When to Use a Communicative Replacement



When a teacher chooses to replace the challenging behavior with a communicative alternative, there must be general agreement that the function of the behavior was acceptable but the form used to achieve the outcome is unacceptable.

- **If the teacher chooses to teach a communicative replacement, he/she must ensure that the communicative replacement serves the same function as the challenging behavior.**
- **When replacing socially motivated challenging behaviors with communicative alternatives, the teacher must decide whether the child's communicative function will be reinforced.**

There are two types of Intervention Procedures:

1. Those designed to honor the function of the challenging behavior by teaching a communicative replacement
2. Those that are designed to enhance self-regulatory skills and DO NOT HONOR the function of a challenging behavior.

Strategies that honor the function of the challenging behavior

- ⇒ Rejecting
- ⇒ Request a Work Check
- ⇒ Request a break
- ⇒ Request attention
- ⇒ Request assistance
- ⇒ Request attention
- ⇒ Request item/activity

Strategies that do not honor the function of the challenging behavior

- ⇒ Pre-specified reinforcers
- ⇒ Choice making
- ⇒ Preferred item as a distracter
- ⇒ High probability request sequence and embedding
- ⇒ Tolerance for delay of reinforcement
- ⇒ Collaboration

1. Rejecting



A rejecting response is a communicative utterance that is produced to escape or avoid a person, object, or activity.

- An escape response occurs once an individual is engaged in an activity and wishes to withdraw from it.
- Once a history of escape has become associated with an event, a child may begin to anticipate the onset of the activity and attempt to avoid it.

2. Request a work break

A request for a break is a communicative intervention in which the child completes a portion of an activity and then requests a break. Following the break, the child returns to the activity. A request for a break may be accomplished by using spoken, gestural, and/or graphic symbols.



Suggestions to make this strategy work:

- Reinforce the absence of challenging behavior.
- Return to work from break time.
- Avoid chaining

3. Request for assistance

A request for assistance is a communicative utterance produced by the child in order to indicate the desire to have an individual provide him/her with help while engaged in a task.



- Access-motivated: Situations in which an individual requires assistance in order to gain access to a preferred item or an activity.
- Escape-motivated: Difficult task- Situations in which an individual requires assistance to speed escape from a difficult task is also excellent opportunities to request assistance.

Steps to teaching this strategy:

Step 1. Reinforce the absence of challenging behavior.

Step 2. Systematically alter the presentation of the provoking item/activity so that it more closely resembles the original provoking condition.

Step 3. Prompt the child to engage in the request assistance response.

Step 4. Fade instructional prompts required to produce a request for assistance.

Step 5. Make teaching examples less discriminable.

Step 6. Encourage more conditional use of requests for assistance.



Specific strategies for the classroom: **(STRATEGIES THAT DO NOT HONOR THE FUNCTION OF A BEHAVIOR)**

1. Pre-specified reinforcers

- Pre-specifying the reinforcer is a strategy in which, prior to engaging the child in the target activity, the child is told or shown what reinforcer she will receive when the task is finished.
- The purpose of the pre-specified reinforcer strategy is to increase the probability of task engagement and task completion while teaching the student more appropriate ways to gain reinforcement.
- The long-term goal of this strategy is to move the child from continuous tangible reinforcement to more conditioned reinforcers such as praise.
- Remember reinforcers are items or events that have been identified and verified as objects, activities, or types of attention that increase a child's behavior.
- This intervention is most commonly delivered as an if/then statement.
- In this strategy, the exact work requirement is specified (how much of the food must be eaten) as well as the exact reinforcer to follow (what the child can expect for dessert).

Why are pre-specified reinforcers effective?

Pre-specified reinforcers are effective because they ensure a continuous schedule of reinforcement. The child completes a task and receives the identified reinforcer for that child (i.e., escape from task, tangibles, attention).

Who would benefit from using a pre-specified reinforcer strategy? Pre-specified reinforcers are useful for children who engage in challenging behavior to:

- escape or avoid a requested task
- obtain or maintain attention
- In these cases, pre-specifying the reinforcers is likely to increase the desired behaviors.

2. Choice Making

- Choice making occurs when a child selects an item or activity from among two or more options.
- Choice making offers control and empowerment to all individuals but may be particularly important for some individuals while engaged in socially motivated challenging behavior.
- Choices can be positive reinforcers or actual tasks to be performed.
- Having opportunities to make choices is beneficial for most children.
- Among children who are motivated to escape activities or have a need to demonstrate control over conditions of engagement in activities, some children choose between two options because they are reinforced by being allowed to choose. If so, allowing the child to choose which option he or she would like to do first may reduce escape-motivated challenging behavior.
- Limiting the number of choices available may help children who have a difficult time choosing from a large array of options or children who are withdrawn.
- Offering choices throughout the day honors children's individual differences.
- With some activities, choice of when the child will engage in a non-preferred task can be offered.
- When a non-preferred task can be broken down into smaller steps to completion, the child may be

offered a choice of which step(s) he or she prefers to complete.

- If one-step requires more effort from the child than another does, he or she will choose the least non-preferred option in order to avoid the more non-preferred option.

3. Tolerance for Delay of Reinforcement



- ⇒ This strategy influences challenging behavior by cuing the child and providing reinforcement contingent on continued participation in a requested activity.
- ⇒ Thus, release from the activity, delivery of a preferred item, or delivery of attention (all determined to be reinforcers) will be granted only if the child continues to participate in a specified activity without engaging in challenging behavior.

When is it used best?

- ⇒ A tolerance for delay program may be used to address challenging behaviors produced to gain access to preferred items, activities, or attention.
- ⇒ Sometimes the item, activity, or attention cannot be delivered immediately, even though the child has requested in an appropriate manner. In these instances, the challenging behavior may occur between when the request occurs and when the object or attention is actually delivered.

Techniques to use when using this strategy:

- ⇒ **Delay cue and safety signal:** The **delay cue** is a verbal, gestural, or graphic signal given to the child to indicate that participation in the task is about to be terminated contingent on continued socially acceptable behavior.
- ⇒ The **safety signal** is a verbal, gestural, or graphic signal given to indicate the delivery or onset of

reinforcement (i.e., release from the task, delivery of a preferred item, or attention).

Delay Cues may be time related or task related.

- ⇒ **Time related delay cue:** Communicates that reinforcement will be delivered contingent on refraining from engaging in challenging behavior for a period of time (e.g., 3 minutes).
- ⇒ **Task related delay cue:** Communicates that reinforcement will be delivered contingent on a certain amount of task engagement with no challenging behavior.



4. Collaboration

- ⇒ **Collaboration is a strategy in which the responsibilities of an activity are divided between a child and another individual (peer or adult).**

⇒ **The purpose of collaboration is to increase the probability of task completion and permit earlier escape while delivering attention (a potential positive reinforcer) during engagement.**

Why is collaboration effective?

Collaboration is effective in reducing challenging behavior and increasing engagement in tasks because it decreases the task demands placed on the child

Who benefits?

- ⇒ obtain attention when asked to perform an activity.
- ⇒ escape from an ongoing activity.
- ⇒ avoid the demands of an activity completely.

Books that support social competence & positive behavior

Attachment

The Teddy Bear by David McPhail
The Kissing Hand by Audrey Shook
Tight Times by Barbara Shook
By the Dawn's Early Light by Karen Ackerman

Affiliation

Fluffy and Baron by Marci Twain
We are best Friends by Alike
Miss Smith's Incredible Storybook by Michael Garland

Respect for self and others

Edward the Emu by Sheena Knowles
Understand and Care by Cheri J. Meiners
Respect and Take Care of Things by Cheri J. Meiners

Self control

I ain't gonna paint no more by Karen Beaumont

Problem solving

Charlie Anderson by Barbara Abercrombie
Talk and work it out by Cheri Meiners (Free spirit press)

Initiative to try new things

Edwina the Emu by Sheena Knowles
He came with the couch by David Slonim

Acceptance of others who may be different

Susan Laughs by Jeanne Willis
Rolling Along with Goldilocks and the Three Bears by Cindy Meyers
A day's work by Eve Bunting
Flop Ear by Guido Van Genechten

A sense of 'safety'

When I feel Afraid by Cheri Meiners
The Horrible Kirk McCruel by Harriet Isecke

The ability to work in groups and alone

Join in and Play by Cheri J. Meiners
The magical mystical marvelous coat by Catherine Ann Cullen

A healthy sense of self

Good thing you're not an Octopus by Julie Markes
I like myself by Karen Beaumont
I love my hair by Natasha Anastashia Tarpley

List of Related Citations

Dr. Clarissa Willis

Baker, Jed E. (2003). *Social skills training: For children and adolescents with Asperger syndrome and social-communication problems*. Shawnee Mission, KS: Autism Asperger Publishing Company

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MacDonald, Lisa. (2000). *Learning interrupted: Maladaptive behavior in the classroom*. Retrieved from <http://www.mugsy.org>

McEvoy, M., Reichle, J., & Davis, C. (1995). *Challenging Behaviors in Young Children*. Minnesota Behavioral Support Project, University of Minnesota.

Van der Kolk, B., Perry, J. & Herman, J. (1991). *Childhood Origins of self-destructive behavior*. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 148 (1665-1671).