CHAPTER 8

Behavior Support

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As we saw in Chapter 7, social skills can be directly taught when necessary. The key is to remember the Neurological Framework so we can find the teaching mode and sequence the child needs to put the skill into memory. We will now do the same thing with behavioral skills. We will begin by applying our neurological concepts to the topic of general behavior support in Chapter 8 and follow with specific interventions and cues for more serious situations in Chapter 9.

Applying Neurological Concepts to Behavior Support

As mentioned, skills critical to classroom function like compliance and following teacher-direction can be taught like any other curriculum objective. Some years we will need very little of this teaching, and other years, years that are more challenging, we will need to teach behavioral skills a great deal. Regardless of the variations from year to year, almost all children will need some sort of behavior support during the typical school year. And, like any other objective, the teaching techniques we use must meet the child's learning profile in order to be successful.

Learning-Cue Style and Behavior

The most important overall technique for assisting children with behavior skills is the same one we introduced for social skills. We must use the FULL Neurological Cue Sequence. For some reason, when it comes to discipline problems, we tend to use Verbal Cues almost exclusively. It is interesting that we do this because we would never do the same for any other objective in our curriculum. We know that hands-on learning and visual experiences are necessary for our teaching to be effective. But, when it comes to behavior, all of that seems to go out the window!

So, how do you begin to bring behavioral teaching down to the Visual and Physical Cue level? The easiest way is to use the same approach we used in Chapter 7 for social skills. For example, remember the technique introduced for teaching impulse control on page _____? In that example, we systematically taught children longer and longer durations of impulse control using play-based interventions like bubbles, block towers, musical instruments and finger-paint. These activities worked because they involved toys that naturally targeted the specific social objective we wanted.   We will now do the exact same process for our new behavioral skills. We will determine the Learning Style of our child and then find the natural activity or toy that will allow us to interact with them at that Cue Level. We will look at many examples of how to do this with behavioral skills as we move on through the next two chapters.

Processing Issues and Behavior

It stands to reason that if Learning Style is critical to behavior support then processing issues that impact this style will also be of equal importance. Now that we are familiar with problems like like Central Auditory Processing Disorder (CAPD), we should be able to see how easily these can be misconstrued as behavior problems. For example, a child with CAPD who is unable to process speech when environmental noise is present, will often look like they are purposely ignoring teacher's directions in a noisy classroom. If we do not take into account these processing disorders, we will be continually penalizing children for behavior responses they simply cannot control. This is why so many children with chronic behavior problems are later found to have processing difficulties. These children do not have the ability to use the visual, auditory and sensory information coming into their brains, so the verbal directions and visual examples of the teacher are not used well. The result is a child that is seemingly never paying attention, doing what they are asked or cooperating with their peers. It is up to us to break this

cycle by using the cues that will assist these children to process information. It is the only way we can expect them to possibly meet our behavioral expectations.

Learning Direction and Behavior

Learning Direction will be just as critical for establishing behavioral skills and dealing with problems. We now know that some of our children are Whole-to-Part and will learn skills through exposure to models and examples. These children will often pick up appropriate behavior by just being in our classroom. They sit in circle and hear us talk about keeping hands and feet to their own body, and in another situation, about sharing and taking turns. They hold these large examples in their mind and eventually work backwards and develop a list of the specific behaviors that are being expected of them. They will still need reminding and encouragement to actually use the information, just like any other child, but rarely will they need systematic instruction on the skill.

On the other hand, children who are Part-to-Whole will often need behavioral skills to be targeted, and in some instances, broken down into very small steps. As we have seen in previous chapters, these children need systematic and organized instruction to use the environment, play and learn social skills well. This need does not change because we are now examining behavioral situations. These children will also need these skills broken down and possibly taught to them over time.

This type of thinking may come as a surprise since we do not usually think of behavioral skills as part of our curriculum. They are something we just expect our children to do virtually on our own. That is not the case in the typical classroom, however, and the situation is sadly getting worse. Many of our children used to come to us with some level of behavioral teaching. They

learned to sit still, respect adults, differentiate a lie from the truth and other basic concepts in their homes and brought at least the beginnings of these skills into their school experiences. Many now seem to be missing these early lessons for some reason and it is falling to the classroom teacher to directly provide these skills. We can have many discussions on exactly why this is happening, but regardless of the origin of the problem, the reality is we must pick up the burden or our classrooms will be in turmoil.

Sequencing and Behavior

So, if we now have to teach some of these skills in school, at least to a portion of our class, how should we go about doing this? The answer lies in the Sequencing that we are now quite skilled at using. Unfortunately, sequencing behavior is a bit more challenging since it is very difficult to find these sequences in the literature. As mentioned before, we just have never really thought of "behavior" in this manner. This means we may have to brainstorm these sequences on our own. It is not really hard to do, though, if we just think back and use our two guidelines for constructing these sequences from Chapter 3:

1. <u>Define</u> what we are really attempting to teach
2. <u>Construct</u> steps for that skill from its very beginning and to its natural end

Let's try is with a simple behavior like "cleaning up".

When we think of the behavior of cleaning up, it is important to define the skill we are attempting to teach (step one). Yes, it is true we wish children to put their toys away, but is that all we are expecting? Well, in some classrooms the answer may be, "Yes." We just want the children to put the toy away somewhere and that is it. But, in most classrooms we are expecting a bit more. We want the children to put the toy away in the <u>correct location</u>. That definition allows us to see that the sequence of "cleaning up" involves a degree of category. Understanding

this distinction really helps us because now we can use another developmental sequence, the sequence of "categorizing objects" as the framework for this new skill. We know the sequence of categorization from teaching children how to group objects by color, number and other attributes. It is not much to go on, but when it comes to behavioral sequences where little information is available, any glimmer of insight is useful! So, our definition of the skill we wish to teach is helping children *learn to return used toys to the correct category (classroom center) and location (shelf).* With step one now complete, we can turn to step two, constructing the sequence itself.

In step two, we need to begin to establish the sequence of cleaning up to the right category (center) and location (shelf), so let's think through what this looks like from the infant level on up. The sequence would be as follows:

1. Child stops playing on command or cue

2. Child stays "stopped" and transitions to a new activity

3. Child places toy in a random location

4. Child places toy in the correct classroom center (category level)

5. Child places toy on the correct shelf (location) in the classroom center

Let's analyze each of these quickly so we can envision the sequence.

1. <u>Child stops playing on command or cue</u>

> At this level, the child is beginning to respond to a verbal cue, typically singing, or a visual schedule sign that tells them playtime is done. Many children at this level will stop for a moment, and even sing the cleanup song, but usually get distracted and go back to playing before cleaning up can be completed. They respond to the cleanup signal as a cause-effect that lasts a moment, not as a signal of a transition and that "play time is done".

2. Child stays "stopped" and transitions to a new activity

At this level, children begin to realize a "transition" is occurring. They will not clean up, but they do leave the toy, usually on the floor.

3. Child places toy in a random location

At this level, children begin to realize they must clean up. They will complete the task, but they do not understand the room arrangement or the categories of how the toys are placed in centers. Instead, they clean up to a random location, which may include strange places like garbage cans, under shelves or in their own pockets!

Older children who do not wish to clean up will often fall back to this step. This is why an elementary child who is directed to clean their bedroom will place all the items under their bed or in their closet instead of the correct locations.

4. Child places toy in the correct classroom center (category level)

At this level, the child understands the basics of category and will clean up to the correct general play center. This level is often still seen in kindergarten, where a walk through the dramatic play center yields sights of the baby doll in the refrigerator and the play food in the doll cradle.

Some older children and even adults get stuck at this level. They clean up to the correct general area but never to the right spot. Just because there is a developmental sequence, it does not mean everyone actually makes it to the top in their lifetime!

5. Child stops playing on command or cue

At this level, the child not only cleans up to the correct area (center) but also the correct location within that area (shelf where the toy originated).

Being able to generate these sequences is critical to behavior intervention. For example, if we had a child who could only say single words, then we would never set their next goal to be producing a four word sentence. We would know that such an expectation would be foolish and result in failure. This same logic applies to behavioral sequences. If we have a child who is only

on step two of the "cleaning up" sequence, then expecting them to put their toy away in the right center on the right shelf (step five) will also fail. We will come back to the cleaning up sequence in Chapter 9 and show just how to use a sequence like this as part of an intervention. They truly are the key to unraveling many of our classroom behavior problems!

Understanding versus Expression and Behavior

The last piece of our Neurological Framework, Understanding and Expression, is so vital to the topic of behavior intervention that we will devote a good portion of the remainder of this chapter to its use. As mentioned way back in Chapter 3, there is a distinct difference between Understanding a skill and Expressing it. We also mentioned that one of the places where we see issues with this difference was in classroom discipline. In light of this, we will systematically work our way through the Understanding and Expression categories for behavior. Once we can analyze behavior problems in this way, a clear picture of what techniques to use emerges.

So, what is the difference between Understanding and Expression problems when viewed through the lens of behavior? To put it simply, *a child has an Understanding problem when they are unsure of what behavior they are being asked to show*. It may be due to their age, a developmental problem or their home environment, but they do not understand what they are being asked to do. Children with Understanding Behavioral Problems will need to be taught the skill, either in full or part.

Children with Expression Behavioral Problems have the reverse problem. *They may understand what is being demanded but are unable to show the behavior when required.* This may be due to their age, developmental profile, a long-standing habit, an emotional need or on purpose.

Regardless of the source, these children will not need to be taught the skill. <u>Children with</u>

<u>Expression Behavioral Problems must be enabled to show the skill they already know</u>. This will

involve many techniques from simple reminders to advanced interventions and formal programs.

In some cases, a child will only have one category of problem present and in extreme cases

almost all of them, both Understanding and Expression. This is why it is important for us to

work through the whole chart for each case, especially at the beginning. The ability to

distinguish Understanding versus Expression Problems in behavior issues is similar to using the

Neurological Cue Sequence. It takes a little time to explain, but once understood, it is well worth

the effort. Here is the Behavior Analysis chart in its entirety.

Behavior Analysis Chart

UNDERSTANDING PROBLEMS	EXPRESSION PROBLEMS
Development:	Development:
	Special Needs:
Special Needs:	Habit:
	Purposeful Goal:
Environment:	Emotion/ Mental Health:

Recognizing the Three Understanding Problems and Their Solutions

We will begin with the Understanding Problems, describing each category and outlining the techniques to be used for each type of problem. Let's start with the first Understanding category, Developmental Problems.

Developmental Understanding Problems

Children with Developmental Understanding Problems do not understand what we are expecting of them due to their age and developmental level. Many might see this as an issue for only the very youngest child, but this is not true. Some of the most difficult Developmental Understanding Problems occur in adolescence because many of these older students are unsure of how to handle peer pressure and difficult social situations. They do not understand what to do.

A good way to see the potential sources of Developmental Understanding issues is to make a list of ALL the things that children are required to do in the classroom, from the moment they walk in the door until the moment they leave. Once that list is created, then go through and highlight with a marker every skill that has ever been directly taught to the children.

What an eye-opener… We usually find out that we rarely teach any of the demands we are making! We expect children to learn how to follow classroom routines, manage group, follow through on daily tasks like the restroom, and a whole host of other behaviors that may be totally new to them. Luckily many children have a base for these skills from other environments or are Whole-to-Part learners and will learn them fairly quickly. This is why our classrooms look so

much better in early October than they do the first couple of weeks of school. But, just like some children will never learn to read until directly taught, so too, some children will never learn to use the bathroom without flooding it just by going through the experience. They will need to be systematically taught the skill, often with Visual and Physical Cue support.

Now, a moment of reality here…. It is not possible or expected that we must teach each and every skill on the list we created. It simply isn't necessary. That said, there are times where we may have to do a great deal of teaching in comparison to other years, and we should be ready to make that adjustment. Some years are just more difficult than others and children come to us less prepared. Do not be afraid to provide the extra structure needed in those challenging times. The children will be much more successful, and the structure can always be reduced as our students gain understanding and confidence.

Developmental Understanding Problems and the Two Universal Interventions

So, how do you manage Developmental Understanding problems? There are two strategies that we use for this category, and since we also use them for <u>every category</u> as well, we will call them *Universal Techniques*. These two strategies are well known to us and are:

1. Developmental Teaching (using Sequences)
2. Cueing

We will use these techniques over and over again as we work our way through the rest of the analysis framework.

Special Needs Understanding Problems

Some children have similar developmental issues, but these problems are not due to chronological age like Developmental Understanding problems. **Children with Special Needs Understanding Problems do not understand what we are expecting of them due to a disability or a learning challenge like a processing disorder**. These children have learning profiles that also impact how they learn behavior. They may have challenges that include an inability to process, generalize skills and other barriers to learning. Unless these roadblocks are bypassed, the child will struggle with learning behavioral skills just as they do any other part of the curriculum.

An important consideration when dealing with this category is understanding that the special need should determine HOW the behavior is taught, not WHETHER it should be taught. Many children have disabilities like autism or cognitive delays that directly impact the behaviors we see. But, just because the disability may commonly result in some of these stereotypic behaviors does not mean that we shouldn't try to remove them. Too often our children are held back not by their own limitations but our perception of their limitations. Look at this example from a much older student to see how we set our behavior expectations and then hold a student to them.

> ### THINK ABOUT IT!
>
> A 16-year-old had a developmental level of 22 months. The student was required to be in a chair with a Velcro strap, especially at lunch time, because they would smear feces on the wall and it was a health hazard. No one had ever tried to get rid of the behavior since the student was functioning at an infant-toddler level.
>
> **The question:**
>
> Would you allow this behavior to continue in a typically developing 22-month-old child?

The case outlined here was a real one, and the behavior was removed in a three-day period once intervention was begun. They were not pleasant days, mind you, but at least the student was now able to move freely about her environment. The point in this example is not that the behavior was removed but how long this student had remained strapped into that chair because no one ever thought to provide intervention!

This is how serious it can be when we allow our own preconceived limitations influence what interventions we are willing to provide our students. It is important that we always attempt to get typical levels of behavior regardless of the situation we face. We might not always be successful, but until we try, we will not know how far the student can go. It is best to begin with normalized goals and adjust downward unless we are truly certain that that level cannot be attained. Even then, always make some attempt to aim a bit higher than you think the student can go at some time along the way. You may be pleasantly surprised at the result!

The last point to make about this category is the need to be especially aware of children with ADD and ADHD. We typically treat this group of children as having Expressive Problems only. We assume that they do not have the neurological chemistry to attend and control hyperactivity, and yes, many do not. But, even if they are put on medication and now have the ability to EXPRESS these skills, it does not mean they UNDERSTAND or can use them. Many of them have been moving at warp speed for so long that they do not have the skills to even play, let alone sit still. Unless we teach them these objectives, they will still "look" like they are having ADD and ADHD related problems. Because they are still showing these behavior patterns,

many end up with changes in medication or increased dosages, when all they really needed was a bit of play and behavioral intervention.

This is one of those sad situations that is way too common. So, if we have a child on medication, we should not expect a prescription to actually teach the skill the child may be missing.   If the child already does Understands how to attend and/or remain still, then the medication will be enough. It will solve the Expression Problem caused by the child's physiological makeup. If they do not have the skill, though, we also have an Understanding Problem and it will not go away until we teach the behaviors the child needs.

Special Needs Understanding Interventions

Let's close this section with the solutions for this category. Like mentioned previously, we will continue to use our Universal Techniques:

1. Developmental Teaching (using Sequences)
2. Cueing

But, now we will also add a third technique just for this category:

3. Information about the disability or learning need

Even though we will not allow the disability to artificially lower our expectations, we DO have to take it into consideration when we teach the needed skill. A child who cannot generalize due to Down Syndrome will also find it difficult to generalize a skill like "using an inside voice". A child who has proprioceptive problems, like discussed in Chapter 2, will continue to have difficulty judging space and this may be the root of his problem about "pushing" people in line.

Keeping this information in the back of our mind will help us from misconstruing situations as being behavioral only. Many of the behaviors may be stem from the special need itself.

Environmental Understanding Problems

The last form of Understanding problems involves situations due to environmental learning. **Children with Environmental Understanding Problems do not understand what we are expecting of them because it is not part of their daily environmental demands at home**. Sometimes these home demands are too stringent and the child has difficulty making choices or being autonomous in the classroom. Other times the parent is neglectful and has never bothered teaching basic behaviors such as sitting down at a table to eat, sharing or listening to adults, so the child does not understand how this should be done outside the home. And, in still other cases, the parent may be hesitant to put too many demands on the child. They love the experience of being a parent, the birthday parties and clothes, but they are not ready to deal with the responsibility of being a parent. They cannot stand tears, defiance and are continually worried that they will somehow damage their child emotionally if they make demands. These children often use tantrums and other behaviors to "get their way", and they bring this understanding of how the world works into our classrooms. As you can see, the number of variations that we may see in this category is as vast as the different types of families in our communities.

Another especially challenging aspect of this category is the fact that sometimes the problems we see do not stem from lack of teaching, as outlined above, they stem from active and systematic teaching of an alternative value system. This includes children who are taught to fight when they think they are being "disrespected", who witness beating of women at home and then hit girls at

school, use inappropriate words in their daily language, and many other behaviors. The difficult thing about this group is the fact that the behaviors and values being taught at home may stem from cultural and religious traditions, something that we do not have the right to change. So, how do we manage this category in today's diverse classrooms?

Environmental Understanding Interventions

The first two techniques we will use for this category continue to be our Universal Techniques of Developmental Teaching and Cues, but we now must add one more very important technique called, *Pragmatics of Behavior*. Pragmatics, as a term, means that we are able to switch "registers" based on environmental demands. We often see people talk about pragmatics of language since we use different vocal tones and words depending on our audience. In other words, we speak differently to our friends than we do our employers and other formal groups.
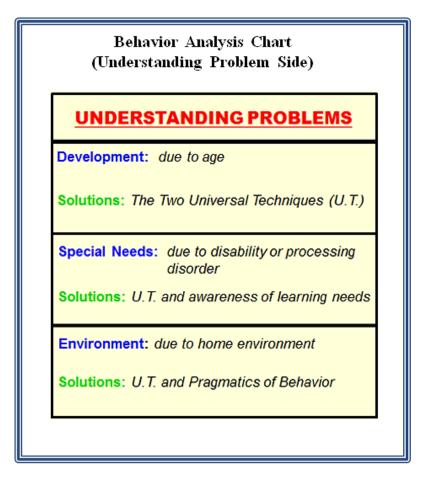
In Pragmatics of Behavior, we are going to do the same thing. Like mentioned earlier, we do not have the power, or for that matter, the right, to change the values of the home. So, we <u>have to</u> <u>clearly define school as a different behavioral register</u> when the home and school values are opposed to each other. We must make it clear to the children that, "In school we ___," in order to teach them that a different set of expectations is operating in the classroom environment. Some people may worry that setting this new behavioral register may confuse a child, but that is rarely the case. Just look at a child's behavior at home versus their grandparents' house, and it quickly becomes evident that children can manage different behavioral registers quite well!

Once we begin to set school as a different behavior register using Pragmatics of Behavior, we may have to cue this change in some way to get the best result. Some children merely need the

Verbal Cue of the morning announcements to realize they are in school and a different set of expectations is required. Other children need Visual Cues like looking at the list of school rules before their days begin. Still others may require a Physical Cue like "signing in" every morning or moving their picture from the "home" side of the bulletin board to the "in school" side. Regardless of what cue level we use, this technique will be highly valuable in those difficult situations where a child is clearly being taught a different set of "appropriate" behaviors at home.

Summarizing Understanding Problems

Once we are able to analyze a behavior issues for Understanding Problems, the solutions become much more apparent. We can then determine what techniques we should try in order to remove the old behavior and establish a new skill. Let's look at the full Analysis Chart we have now constructed for Understanding Problems.

Behavior Analysis Chart
(Understanding Problem Side)

UNDERSTANDING PROBLEMS

Development: *due to age*

Solutions: *The Two Universal Techniques (U.T.)*

Special Needs: *due to disability or processing disorder*

Solutions: *U.T. and awareness of learning needs*

Environment: *due to home environment*

Solutions: *U.T. and Pragmatics of Behavior*

The most common question that comes up when the Understanding analysis is first tried is, "How can a teacher know for sure whether the child is having difficulty understanding a behavioral expectation, especially if one of the categories deals with their home experiences?" The truth is there really is no way to be certain. All we can do is develop that intuition that comes from time in the field. Until then, the rule of thumb should be <u>if we can't tell whether an Understanding Problem is present, treat the situation as one and do the teaching</u>! We can never harm by providing extra support, but we can cause failure if the support is needed but not available. So, to be on the safe side, we should always apply Understanding techniques in any situation that leaves us puzzled.

Recognizing the Five Expression Problems and Their Solutions

Now that we have the Understanding problems well in hand, we can continue over to the other side of the Behavior Analysis Chart and examine Expression Problems. Remember, Expression Problems involve situations where the child knows the skill but is not able to show it on demand and/or for as long as expected. Let's start with the first of the five categories, Developmental Expression.

Developmental Expression Problems

When a child has a Developmental Expression Problem, it also stems from chronological age just like Developmental <u>Understanding</u> Problems**. Children with Developmental Expression Problems do not have the ability to express the behavior to the degree or for the length of time desired due to their age and developmental level**. Children who fall in this category DO understand what they should do, they just can't carry it out well. We often see this problem in very demanding situations like weddings, a sibling's Little League games or any other activity

where the wait time and behavioral demands quickly out-pace what a younger child can manage. We can also see this pattern developing in infants and toddlers. They typically will respond to an adult command to stop an action, but if left near temptation for too long, they eventually give in to the misbehavior. This is why this age group must be reinforced and removed from the situation as quickly as possible!

We can find Developmental Expression Problems in two situations, when we have a child who is typically developing but on the immature side, and when we have inappropriate adult expectations.   The adult expectations piece is the side we must guard against. It is so easy in the midst of a busy day to forget about appropriate wait times, warnings for transitions and many other demands that set children up for failure. It is always good practice to automatically review the appropriateness of our expectations when we are faced with analyzing a behavior issues. Take a look at another real life example.

THINK ABOUT IT!

An inclusion preschool teacher was struggling with circle time. By the end of the 50-minute circle each day, the same group of children would leave the group area and begin playing under the tables.

The question:

What could be causing this problem?

Most of us would immediately pick up on the fact that the group time was unusually long in this scenario, and yes, that definitely is the main problem in this situation. What makes this case even more interesting is the fact that the teacher had an unusually large group of children with physical disabilities that year, and the children who were causing the problem *were the only ones*

who could walk! The teacher didn't even realize at first that all the children who remained in circle were in wheelchairs or standing-boards and couldn't leave if they wanted to. It took a friend to gently point that out. My guess is, given such a long circle, if the other children had been ambulatory, they would have joined their friends under the table!

What is important to take from this case is the fact that it sometimes takes an outside pair of eyes to help us with Developmental Expression Problems. We become so used to our "way of doing things" that we may not realize it just isn't the correct level for a particular group of children. This can easily happen if we have a classroom that is functioning much lower than what we typically see. Developmental Expression problems can also be especially challenging for parents, so we will re-examine them when we take up the topic of family support in Chapter 12.

Developmental Expression Interventions

The solutions for Developmental Expression Problems are actually rather straight forward. We will continue to use our Universal Techniques, but we will add a third as well:

3. Reflection on Developmental Demands

If we are dealing with only one child who is struggling, we may find that our expectations ARE just fine. We are just dealing with a little one who is a bit immature. If that is the case, we can make an individual adjustment for the child and know that they will eventually catch up with the rest of the group. But, if we are seeing widespread problems, then the situation is probably our fault and must be corrected by reconsidering the demands we are making in the classroom.

Special Needs Expression Problems

The next category involves children that require assistance and is also simple to understand.
Children with Special Needs Expression Problems do not have the ability to express the behavior due to a disability or a learning challenge like a processing disorder. These children have a physiological-based problem like ADD, ADHD, sensory disorders, compulsions, cognitive delays and other issues that get in the way of them being able to express skills.

Special Needs Expression Interventions

Much of the intervention for this group may fall outside of our expertise. These children are often on medication and/or receiving outside behavioral services. In cases where we can put in place interventions, we will continue to use the two Universal Techniques, but we may also have to rely on other advanced techniques such as *Incompatible Behaviors*.

Incompatible Behaviors are used to keep another behavior, the inappropriate behavior, from occurring. These work because the two behaviors cannot occur at the same time---they are incompatible. For example, a little child with ADHD had begun spitting whenever he left the classroom. The teacher gave him a kazoo stuffed with paper (so it wouldn't play too loudly) and had him play music for the other children to march to in the hall. Since it is not possible to play a kazoo and spit at the same time, he totally forgot about the spitting.

The thing about this example, and any other Incompatible Behavior, is the effectiveness of the solution can never be guaranteed. What works for one child may not work for another. This little one loved the kazoo and it was very effective. Another child might begin to chew on the kazoo or throw it instead.   All you can do is try various Incompatible Behaviors and see what

works. We will look at Incompatible Behaviors in more detail and other advanced intervention strategies in the next chapter.

Unconscious/Habit-Based Expression Problems

The next category of Expression Problems is quite common and well worth noting. **Children with Unconscious or Habit-Based Expression Problems do not have the ability to express the behavior because they do not make an active choice to either comply or misbehave**. These children are operating on automatic and never stop to consider what they are doing. They lash out in anger, suck their thumb, talk out in class, etc. without realizing they are doing it. When you are faced with this situation, **nothing** will solve this behavior problem until you bring the behavioral choice to consciousness.

Unconscious/Habit-Based Expression Interventions

So how do you bring a behavior to consciousness? Well, this category involves some of the most unusual and creative solutions you will find in behavior support! One of my favorites involved a dear friend who, for some unknown reason, put pure white carpet in every room of her house. She then instructed her three teenage sons to take off their shoes when they came in, but they kept forgetting.

This is why Unconscious and Habit-Based Expression Problems are as frustrating for the child as the adult. These children were constantly getting into trouble even though they never even thought about their shoes until they were halfway across the room. If you are not thinking about the situation and able to make the decision to be appropriate, you are also NOT making the

decision to be inappropriate either. It is out of their hands until someone finds a cue to remind them. This means that we must deal with this category in one of three ways:

1. Developmental Teaching (using Sequences)

2. Cueing

3. Bringing the Behavior to Consciousness

So, what this mother did was combine numbers one and three. She came up with a cue that would bring the behavioral expectation to consciousness BEFORE failure could occur, a key component to this technique. In this case, she got a small doggy toy that squeaked and put it under the doormat. She then gathered the children around, and her husband, and told them when they heard the squeak they had better take off their shoes or she was putting them back outside. Does this mean her sons (and husband) automatically took off their shoes? Well, no, they might decide to ignore the request. The difference now, though, is the misbehavior is purposeful, a whole new category, and can be dealt with accordingly. So, yes, sometimes a cue will still not work because the child involved chooses to ignore it, but at that point there is a decision involved and that choice gives us a whole new group of solutions. It becomes a Purposeful Problem.

Purposeful Expression Problems

It really isn't difficult to notice a Purposeful Expression Problem. The child knows what he or she is doing and is continuing it for any number of reasons. This is the most common behavioral intervention model we see in the field. Any number of other techniques will identify the goals behind Purposeful Expression Problems, so feel free to use any strategy that is currently effective for you. They all dovetail well with this system and should be continued if effective.

While it is not difficult to see a Purposeful behavior, there is one caution. Many Purposeful

behaviors have their root in another category. If this category is not also part of the intervention

plan, the behavior will either come back or transform into a different inappropriate behavior.

Let's look at a case in which this happened.

THINK ABOUT IT!

A child in a kindergarten classroom went to sit in his chair one day and instead fell onto the floor. The whole classroom burst into laughter, so the student began to repeat the "falling" frequently throughout the day and appeared to be enjoying the attention it brought from his peers. You notice, though, that when he does go to sit down for something he likes, like snack, he still seems to sit on the edge of his chair.

The question:

What intervention(s) should be provided in this case?

In this situation, we clearly have a Purposeful Problem. This child has noticed that he gets a

great deal of attention for falling on the floor and is continuing it as a choice. But we also notice

that even when NOT trying to fall off the chair, the child still comes pretty close to doing so.

This suggests that the child may have a proprioceptive problem that does not allow him to judge

his body position in space well. Matter of fact, the first instance of him falling may have actually

been an accident due to this processing issue, but since he got so much attention for it, he began

to do it also on purpose.

This type of Purposeful-Other Category mixture is very, very common and can be easily missed

if we do not actively think about the full analysis. It especially seen with Special Needs like

processing problems, but is also frequently seen in Developmental Understanding behaviors. For

example, when a very young child uses an inappropriate word "they have heard", they rarely know what they are saying. But, if they get a big reaction from those around them, then, in a blink of an eye, the Developmental Understanding situation also becomes Purposeful. They STILL don't know what in the world they said, but wow, what a reaction! And so another Purposeful Problem begins…

Purposeful Expression Interventions

So, how do we manage Purposeful Problems? Well, we will definitely continue to use our two Universal Cues. They will be very important tools in this category, but we will also need to consider using *Formal Program Interventions* as well. This means that we may have to establish reinforcers, consequences and a systematic behavioral plan in order to remove the "purposeful" end of the behavior. This is obviously a very large topic and will be the focus of Chapter 9.

Emotional/Mental Health Expression Problems

The last category of Expression Problems involves some very serious issues that may require outside assistance. **Children with Emotional or Mental Health Expression Problems do not have the ability to express the behavior because of strong emotions and/or mental health issues**. Obviously, if we are discussing children who are having typical emotional reactions like fear, shyness or anger, then yes, we can use many strategies to assist them. If these problems spill over into diagnosable   mental health conditions, though, the interventions to be used will be determined by a team that includes both the teacher and mental health support personnel.

Emotional/Mental Health Expression Interventions

In light of the seriousness of this category, we will have to move very carefully as we determine what interventions to use. If there is ever any doubt about whether the problem is a true mental health condition, you MUST have an outside consult with a mental health professional before beginning any intervention. So, our techniques for this category will be as follows:

1. Developmental Teaching (using Sequences)

2. Cueing

3. Establishing a Positive and Responsive Environment

4. Obtaining Mental Health Assistance As Needed

So, let's take a look at the first three approaches, the pieces that we can manage on our own.

Developing cues for strong emotions can be a rather interesting process since the cues that are effective typically come from the children themselves. This means the cues they choose are often illogical and have no real bearing on the situation. For example, a child was very apprehensive about having a visit from a local policeman. The child's history appeared to include an episode that resulted in a family member being taken away to jail. The child was not so fearful that he didn't want to participate. He actually said he wished to "become a cop" when he was older and was interested in meeting one, but it was also clear that he was in a state of high anxiety as well.

In this case, the teacher <u>asked the child what he thought would make him feel more comfortable</u>, and he decided that as long as he had his coat on, he would be OK. Now, why in the world this cue signaled safety to the child was beyond the teacher. Maybe he thought he could make a run

for it if the policeman looked like he was going to take HIM to jail. Regardless, the child was convinced this would work and it did.

This is the key to dealing with mild fears and uncomfortable situations such as shyness. Having the child determine what will help them brings the fear or emotion to a manageable concrete form. Once it is in that form, it can then be faded over time. So, separation anxiety and other difficult situations really can benefit from a cue. Sometimes you may have to help establish a cue, especially in the case of toddlers, but even very young three-year-olds can often choose a way to comfort themselves, just be ready for some pretty unusual solutions!

Another piece of this category that we can manage in our rooms on our own is the establishing of an emotionally secure and responsive environment. Some of this deals with bullying, an advanced intervention topic we will cover in Chapter 9, but there are many more casual pieces we should put into place as well. For example, just pausing and understanding the emotions of our children is a good place to begin. Just imagine how we would feel if we spent close to an hour creating something like a puzzle, writing a paper or crocheting a blanket. Then a friend or spouse comes along, announces clean up time, and we are expected to take the whole thing apart! Needless to say, we wouldn't be too happy… Well, a child who has spent 45 minutes building a block structure feels the same way.

So how do we manage a situation like this? After all, it is not like we can keep a block tower up all day. The key is validating the child's emotions. Something as simple as vocalizing how sad it must be to tear it down and offering to take a picture, count the number of blocks used or some other diversion can go far to defuse a situation. If handled wisely, such techniques can actually

become reinforcing, with the child creating a scrapbook of block pictures over the year or setting a "new block number goal" to break each day. We won't always be able to remove the emotions involved in our school day, nor should this be our goal. Children have to learn to manage disappointment and deal with situations that they would prefer to avoid. That said, acknowledging emotions and being respectful of children's feelings can really go far and will lead to practices like warnings before transitions, appropriate wait times and reasonable expectations that create the positive environment our children need.

Cautions about Modern Curriculum Goals and Emotions

The last piece to mention in this category is serious and stem from some of the newer trends in curriculum. Many teachers, wishing to improve society, will include well-meaning but developmentally inappropriate content that causes fear in children. Things like global warming or cooling, the cutting of the rain forest, destruction of animals and other related concepts are not appropriate for an early childhood classroom. For example, when one kindergarten child was questioned about the destruction of the rainforest and the location of the equator, the child said she was told the place was "very far away" so she figured it was somewhere near her grandmother's house. Well, her grandmother lived only 45 minutes away…..and in Ohio!

Children do not have the understanding of time, space and relationship that allows them to process these global issues. This results in fears that they cannot control because they envision these "dangers" to be much closer to home than they really are. This is why we should never lose sight of our Developmentally Appropriate Practice (*). We would never dream of introducing such symbolic content in any other parts of curriculum. We know that the

information must be accessible and hands-on to a great degree. We somehow lose this in our zeal to change the world, an understandable error.

So, what should we do with this content? Just skip it? Absolutely not! This is where our tried and true use of Sequences comes back into play. Let's go ahead and use it now to determine what developmental level we should be using for this goal. First we will list the steps we need to take:

1. <u>Define</u> what we are really attempting to teach
2. <u>Construct</u> steps for that skill from its very beginning and to its natural end

The definition is the important step here, so let's convert each of these global issues into the true behavior we are hoping to get into memory:

Global Issue	**Behavior Required**
Warming/Cooling	Use resources well
Rainforest	Do not destroy needlessly
Endangered Animals	Care for wildlife

Once we have the REAL definition of what we wish to teach, the activities to do so (step #2) becomes evident to any teacher. A sampling of solutions or concepts includes:

Global Issue	**Behavior Required**	**Child Level to Teach**
Warming/Cooling	Use resources well	1. Renew 2. Reuse 3. Recycle

Rainforest	Do not destroy needlessly	1. Don't randomly strip leaves from trees 2. Plant trees 3. Use renewable resources well
Endangered Animals	Care for wildlife	1. Don't step on ants for no reason 2. Take care of pets 3. Don't scare birds

In other words, if we teach our children to care for the pets and animals that populate their current lives, we can probably assume that they will not choose to bludgeon baby seals to death as adults. So, we CAN teach environmental goals without resorting to fearful concepts that are developmentally inappropriate for children. Such "reality" can be dealt with when they are old enough to put the information into perspective. Until then, they merely add to the stress and emotional concerns of our children, something that does not further our goal of establishing an emotionally supportive and secure environment.

Summarizing Expression Problems

Now that we have fully analyzed behavior issues for Expression Problems, we have another whole set of solutions to try. We can add this Expression piece to our chart and see the complete picture of the Analysis System on the next page.

Behavior Analysis Chart with Solutions

UNDERSTANDING PROBLEMS	EXPRESSION PROBLEMS
Development: *due to age*	**Development:** *due to age*
Solutions: *The Two Universal Techniques (U.T.)*	**Solutions:** *The Two Universal Techniques (U.T.)*
Special Needs: *due to disability or processing disorder*	**Special Needs:** *due to disability or processing disorder*
Solutions: *U.T. and awareness of learning needs*	**Solutions:** *U.T. and incompatible behaviors*
Environment: *due to home environment*	**Unconscious:** *due to habit*
Solutions: *U.T. and Pragmatics of Behavior*	**Solutions:** *U.T. and bring to awareness*
	Purposeful: *due to choice*
	Solutions: *U.T. and formal programs*
	Emotional/Men. Health: *due to emotional issues*
	Solutions: *U.T. , security and outside assistance*

Once we have such a chart, we can begin to understand how a single behavior looks different in each category. Let's look at something as simple as tantrums and see how the explanation for the behavior changes as do the solutions.

Behavior Analysis of Tantrums

UNDERSTANDING PROBLEMS

Development: doesn't understand how to express anger appropriately due to age

Solutions: assist the child when developmentally ready, then cue solutions

Special Needs: doesn't have ability to communicate anger due to special need

Solutions: provide a communication replacement that will fit the child's special needs

Environment: doesn't understand another way to express anger because this "works at home"

Solutions: make it clear it does "not work at school" and cue a replacement behavior

EXPRESSION PROBLEMS

Development: can't express anger with the control or level expected

Solutions: adjust demands if inappropriate

Special Needs: can't express because special need is causing frustration

Solutions: find ways to express that meet needs

Unconscious: can't express because tantrums have become a habit

Solutions: use controlled ignoring to cue

Purposeful: chooses to express anger this way

Solutions: use formal program and replace

Emotional/Men. Health: emotions too strong to express anger in another way

Solutions: validate emotion, help find alternative

It is clear that if we really think about it, a tantrum can stem from many sources. It looks like the same behavior when casually observed but takes on very different meanings when analyzed using the Behavior Analysis chart. More importantly, until we fully analyze the situation, we could be pursuing the wrong solution. This is why the Behavior Analysis Chart is so powerful. It guides our thought process to the intervention that is matched to the child's needs. Without this examination, we could be using valid techniques but they will still fail because they do not target the problem at hand. This is a very common and frustrating occurrence in the classroom. We will continue to use this Analysis Chart in the next chapter. As we use it more and more, the analysis will become second-nature and a chart will no longer even be needed.

General Behavior Supports and Techniques

We will conclude this chapter with some of the more common techniques that serve as the foundation of our behavioral approach. These are the global strategies that keep more serious behavior problems from happening in the first place. Let's begin with the attitude we must take towards behavior support in order to reduce our own stress in the classroom.

Cognitive Curriculum versus a Behavior Intervention Curriculum

We become teachers because we love teaching, so it can be a great disappointment when behavior problems continually get in the way of that goal. The reality is there are two different forms of curriculum. There is a Cognitive Curriculum that includes all the typical skills and interventions that we normally think of as our Core Objectives, and there is a Behavior Intervention Curriculum that deals with the functional aspect of the classroom. These two Curriculum segments are balanced most years and in most rooms. We understand that we will be teaching both sides of the program and it usually works fairly well. True, there are times when the day is so peaceful more gets done on the Cognitive end and others when the Behavioral end seems to take precedence, but overall, the two are fairly even. This, however, is not always the case. There are some teaching positions or some random times when the Behavioral Curriculum is the predominant need.

When Behavioral objectives become the focus, it can become stressful, especially if the teacher is not ready for the switch and/or resents the intrusion into the Cognitive Curriculum. But, there are some teaching positions that just must accept that this will happen frequently. Whether an intervention classroom or an area of high need, these classrooms will find that the Behavioral

Curriculum will often become the focus of the room for a period of time. It is the reality of managing these programs. It is important for us to realize that for many children these behavioral skills are the catalyst for the rest of the curriculum and well worth our time. Until these behaviors are established, the Cognitive Curriculum simply cannot take place.

So, when we find that we are spending a great deal of time dealing with behavior, we should stop and actually begin to focus on this as a curriculum goal. We are not abandoning or being forced to ignore our teaching, it IS our teaching. We will discuss how to prepare for these behavioral goals systematically as part of our daily planning. By making this part of our curriculum from the very beginning, we can reduce the number of times when the Behavioral Curriculum overshadows our Cognitive Curriculum.

Recognizing Developmental Misbehavior from True Problems

Another important mindset for the general classroom is understanding that behavior issues WILL happen regardless of how well we run our rooms. We are not failing when these occur; they are just a normal part of a teacher's life. After all, there is no cure for childhood other than time! It is important, then, to recognize the behavior problems that are normally seen in the developmental age group we are teaching. This will keep us from over-responding to these behaviors when they occur.

It also can help us anticipate situations that are bound to rapidly become behavior problems due to the age of the children involved. For example, a teacher working with very, very young children must expect that there may be instances of biting. That does not mean you ignore it, but it does mean that the techniques used and the seriousness of the behavior concern would not be

the same as in a classroom of older children. It is a problem commonly seen in that young age group.

In addition, a teacher in this very young classroom should also be vigilant for situations that could become a problem. For example, in a classroom of four-year-olds, associative play is more common and usually managed fairly well by the children. A teacher in that room can remain aware of children playing together but does not need to be overly worried. There will, of course, be incidents, but they are not as common as in a classroom of children just turning three. In a room of children that young, a teacher **does** have to be concerned when a child attempts to use associative play and interact with another child. The concern does not mean they should stop the children from trying, but at that age, attempts to "play together" can very quickly become a fight over toys since the children are just leaving parallel play. Because of this, the wise teacher knows that when they see young three's playing together they should casually but <u>quickly</u> get over there so they can be ready to support and intervene as needed. In other words, this teacher understands the common developmental behaviors common for that age group and is ready to assist the children as needed.

Recognizing Accidental Misbehavior from Purposeful Misbehavior

One common mistake in behavior management is automatically assuming a misbehavior is purposeful and therefore worthy of consequences. Hopefully the use of the Behavior Analysis Framework will help us avoid this mistake, but another rule of thumb is to <u>try casual interventions before ever concluding that a formal program is needed</u>. This will allow us to see if the issue can be quickly solved without developing a more involved plan.

For example, a teacher in a third grade classroom was very upset with her students. She had asked them repeatedly to put their names at the top of their paper, but they kept forgetting. In desperation, and to be honest, a bit of anger, she began to throw the papers away and give failing grades if a name was missing.

This type of situation is when you really need to take a step back and think logically. Why would a child ever bother completing a whole paper and then purposefully leave their name off of it so it could be thrown away? Well, they wouldn't! A child purposefully misbehaving in this situation would just leave the paper blank. They wouldn't bother to do all the work first. This is an excellent example of a accidental behavior that is being treated as purposeful and punished.

The solution that was tried for this situation shows how easily such things can be managed if cued well. The teacher told the class that she was getting old and needed help to see their names. The way the class could help her was to highlight their name with a fluorescent marker before they put it in the basket. She then put a can of colorful markers next to the "work completed" basket and placed a sample paper in it to serve as a further Visual Cue. Well, that did the trick! The children loved the brightly colored markers and were eager to use them. In addition, if a child DID forget, they were quickly reminded when they saw other highlighted papers already in the basket and would quickly add their name and highlight it too. The whole solution took moments to implement and the problem was solved in a day. The teacher came to realize that the misbehavior was accidental (unconscious) and responded accordingly.

Focusing on Behavior PATTERNS Rather than Specific Problems

An additional aspect of behavior management is dealing with students that seem to have chronic

little issues over time. None of them ever reach the level of the problems we will be discussing

in the next chapter, but the situations are still intrusive because of their frequency. This is when

determining the pattern behind the behavior can be helpful. When children have a behavior

pattern or characteristic that is not dealt with, you will see repeated and varied expression of the

problem come out over time. Some of the common patterns you might see include:

1. Defiance: The child refuses to follow adult directions

2. Edgers: They will comply, but just barely. If asked to walk, they use a slow run. If
   asked to sit down, they are on the edge of their seat.

3. Sneaks: They will comply until the adult is distracted, then they will misbehave.

4. Boss: They must be in charge. This is a common problem that we allow to develop in
   our very gifted children. They are so precocious and cute that we allow them
   to dictate how, when and where things occur. This control and inability to take
   direction loses its appeal as the child gets older, but by that time a true habit is
   established and hard to break.

When these types of patterns are seen, the goal should be to remove the overall pattern itself

rather than overly focus on the behavior. You may target the behaviors as part of the program,

but the true goal is to replace the behavioral tendency that is developing. So, for example, if you

have a child with a pattern of defiance, you will see problems across the day. Rather than target

each of those behaviors one at a time, deal with the category if possible. This will remove the

behavior much more quickly and completely that if you target the issues at lunch…then the

issues at recess….then the issues on the bus, etc. Targeting patterns can also be useful when

assisting parents and will be further discussed in Chapter 12. It is a technique that can help

parents understand the seriousness of a behavior issue and increase their involvement in developing and supporting behavioral interventions.

The Praise versus Encouragement Controversy

The last concept we will discuss is the praise versus encouragement controversy. Many teachers are concerned about using praise in the classroom. Rather than saying things like "good job" they feel we should be saying "you worked so hard" instead. By this point, though, we realize that children process items differently and need a variety of approaches, so it does not surprise us that it is no different for this issue as well. It all comes back down to that Learning-Cue Style and Learning Direction.

If a child has a *Whole-to-Part* Learning Direction, the use of praise can work quite well. The child can work back from the "good job" phrase and realize that the work they are doing has value and is appreciated. More importantly they can discern the specific behaviors that led to that praise and eventually use them purposefully. On the other hand, children who are more *Part-to-Whole* may need more specifics. These children needs to hear exactly what they did that is right, so for these children, hearing encouragement that labels the specific action is more beneficial. They need to hear that they "worked hard" or "didn't give up". They need the identification of the behavior they should be repeating.

Complicating this issue, though, is the Learning-Cue Style of the child. Some children just do not process verbal information, praise or otherwise, well. These children should still hear the words, it is the only way they will come to have meaning, but for them a smile (Visual Cue) or pat on the back (Physical Cue) may be more powerful. In light of this, it is important to remember that

support of behavior is not always verbal. Many children will respond much better to the lower level cues.

The last piece of the puzzle is the issue of <u>Pragmatics of Behavior</u>. The value system of the child may be very, very different from the one being used in school. This means that a child may NEED to hear what is right and wrong in a definitive manner. It is the only way they can ever come to really understand the behavioral register of school. These children need to hear what is right and wrong in a clear manner, and we should not be afraid to do just that.

So, how in the world do we manage to put THIS all together? It can make a teacher's head swim! The easiest way is to use both praise and encouragement in tandem. It is just as easy to say, "Great job, Lily----you worked so long and never gave up," as it is to use one form or the other. Then, by observing the child's reaction, you can come to know how they individually respond. Some children feel pressured by praise and will rebel the minute they hear it, others, well, they really need the attention and validation praise gives. <u>Using what is right for the child is always the way to go, regardless of the pedagogy controversies that swirl around us</u>. This guideline will be important to remember as we begin Chapter 9 and examine more controversial techniques such as timeout, reinforcement and consequences.

Putting Positive Behavior Support All Together

We now have completed our survey of general behavior supports. Let's quickly look at a list of the techniques we now can apply.

We know how to use the Neurological Cue Framework to Solve Behavior Issues….

1. Learning-Cue Style
2. Processing Issues
3. Learning Direction
4. Sequencing
5. Understanding versus Expression

…can complete a Behavior Analysis….

1. Understanding Problems:
    -*Developmental Understanding Problems*
        *Two Universal Interventions

    -*Special Needs Understanding Problems*

    -*Environmental Understanding Problems*
        * Pragmatics of Behavior

2. Expression Problems:
    -*Developmental Expression Problems*

    -*Special Needs Expression Problems*
        *Incompatible Behaviors

    -*Unconscious/Habit-Based Expression Problems*

    -*Purposeful Expression Problems*

    -*Emotional/Mental Health Expression Problems*

….and can use General Behavior Supports and Techniques

1. Cognitive Curriculum versus Behavior Curriculum
2. Recognizing Developmental Misbehavior from True Problems
3. Recognizing Accidental Misbehavior from Purposeful Misbehavior
4. Focusing on Behavior PATTERNS Rather than Specific Problem
5. The Praise versus Encouragement Controversy

These tools will assist us in managing the day-to-day operation of our rooms. Now we will use

many of the same tools and learn to manage more difficult situations. In the process, we will

pick up advanced techniques that will be of great use in the diverse classroom.