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Effective Strategies for Decreasing Challenging Behavior in Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders

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Course Objectives

- List examples of the components of behavior.
- Identify the function of behavior given various situations involving challenging behavior.
- Identify the replacement skills needed to teach an individual with autism who is having challenging behavior.
- Describe process for creating an intervention plan for addressing challenging behavior.
- Select strategies for teaching a new skill to an individual with autism.

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Challenging behavior

- Within the context of school, children who exhibit challenging behaviors are considered at increased risk of academic failure, delinquency, dropping out, gang membership and adult incarceration (Dunlap 2006).
- Campbell (1995) estimated that approximately 10-15% of all typically developing preschool children have chronic mild to moderate levels of behavior problems.

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What does the research say?

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Presence and Impact

- When children with significant problems are neither identified in a timely way nor given appropriate education and treatment, their problems tend to be long lasting, requiring more intensive services and resources over time. Moreover, when the challenging behavior of young children is not addressed in an appropriate and timely way, the future likelihood increases for poor academic outcomes, peer rejection, adult mental health concerns, and adverse effects on their families, their service providers, and their communities.
- Although some systems and tools for early identification of children with challenging behaviors are available, the actual identification of these children and provision of appropriate services are very low.

(Dunlap et al. 2006)

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Prevention

- Children and their families who access mental and physical care are less likely to have behavioral and social problems.
- Nurturing and positive parenting is associated with children who have healthy relationships and reduced challenging behavior.
- High quality early education environments and caregiver interactions are associated with fewer behavior problems and the development of social competence.

(Dunlap et al. 2006)

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Intervention

- Interventions based on a functional assessment of the relation between the challenging behaviors and the child's environment are effective for reducing challenging behaviors of young children.
- Teaching procedures have been demonstrated to be effective in developing children's skills and reducing challenging behaviors.
- Interventions involving alterations to features of the child's activities and the child's social and physical environment have been demonstrated to reduce challenging behaviors.
- Multicomponent implemented over time and across multiple relevant environments can produce durable, generalized increases in prosocial behavior and reductions in challenging behaviors.
- Family involvement in the planning and implementation of interventions facilitates durable reductions in challenging behaviors of young children.

(Dunlap et al. 2006)

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Where do we start?

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Positive Behavior Supports (PBS)

- Empirically based
- Focuses on “why” behind the behavior
- Based on the assumption that behavior keeps occurring because it is reinforced
- Teaches children what to do instead of the problem behavior
- Focuses on changing the environment instead of just reacting to the behavior
- Involves planning to prevent and teach behavior versus just reacting to the behavior

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BEHAVIOR = INFORMATION

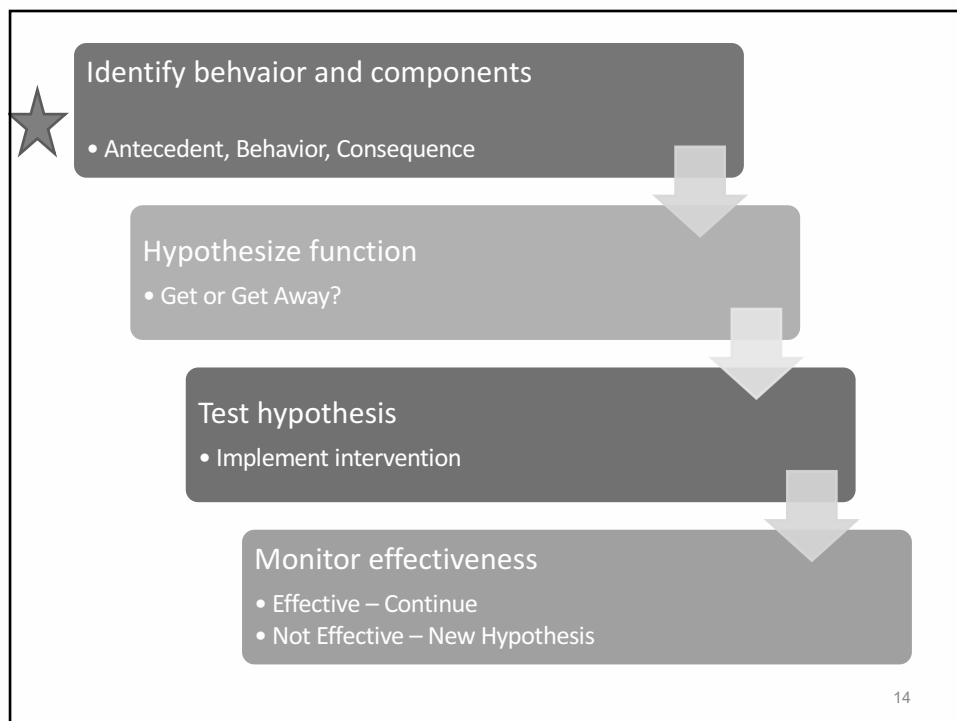
Our perception of the information
makes it “good” or “bad”

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Children with Autism

- Difficulty with communication, social skills, and various sensory preferences
- Constantly giving us information through their behavior
- Important for us to **objectively** interpret the information

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Identify target behavior

- Describe behavior (avoid words: meltdown, aggressive, disengaged, hyperactive, inattentive)
- Stranger test (anybody could take data on the behavior)
- Pick only 2-3 behaviors
- *Don't hypothesize yet!*

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Describe the behavior

- When working on handwriting work sheet, Mark will ask for help several times. If the teacher does not hear him and come over to him, he will scream “help” and tear up his worksheet. If she hears him and helps him, he will continue with the worksheet.

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Describe the behavior

- When transitioning from breakfast in the morning to rug time, Jacob will run around the room until the teacher can physically stop him. When she stops him, he starts hitting her and kicking her until she takes him into the hallway, sits him down, and makes him wait.

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Describe the behavior

- During free play time, Sam will walk up to the puzzles, throw the puzzle pieces at peers until teacher takes him to a table by himself. When he is at the table by himself, he will start screaming at the teacher until he is removed from the classroom and taken to the principal's office.

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Antecedents

- What happens before the target behavior?
- Not just an event, could be environment, activity, lack of activity
- Ex: Transition, took away desired item, unstructured activity, gave instruction, entered cafeteria, got on bus, recess time
- Start thinking about common threads with antecedents? Seeing any patterns?

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Behavior

- Identify target behavior
- Be specific
- Target only 2-3 specific behaviors

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Consequences

- Do not judge or make assumptions
- What happened right after the behavior?
- Ex: took away assignment, verbal re-direction, time out, gave what they wanted, removed from setting, sensory-based activity, gave attention, took away attention

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Identify components of behavior

Antecedent	Behavior	Consequence
What event happens right before the behavior	What is the specific behavior	What happens right after the behavior?
Ex: What environment triggers the behavior	Avoid: meltdown, bad behavior, outburst	Do you verbally reprimand the child? Does the child get removed from class?
What person triggers the behavior	Instead: hits another person, screams, bites himself (be specific), scratches.	Does the child get time-out? Does the child get help?
What activity triggers the behavior?		

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Reaction?

- How did the child react?
- Did the behavior:
 - Get worse
 - Stop or get better
 - No change
 - Changed to a different behavior

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Identify the components

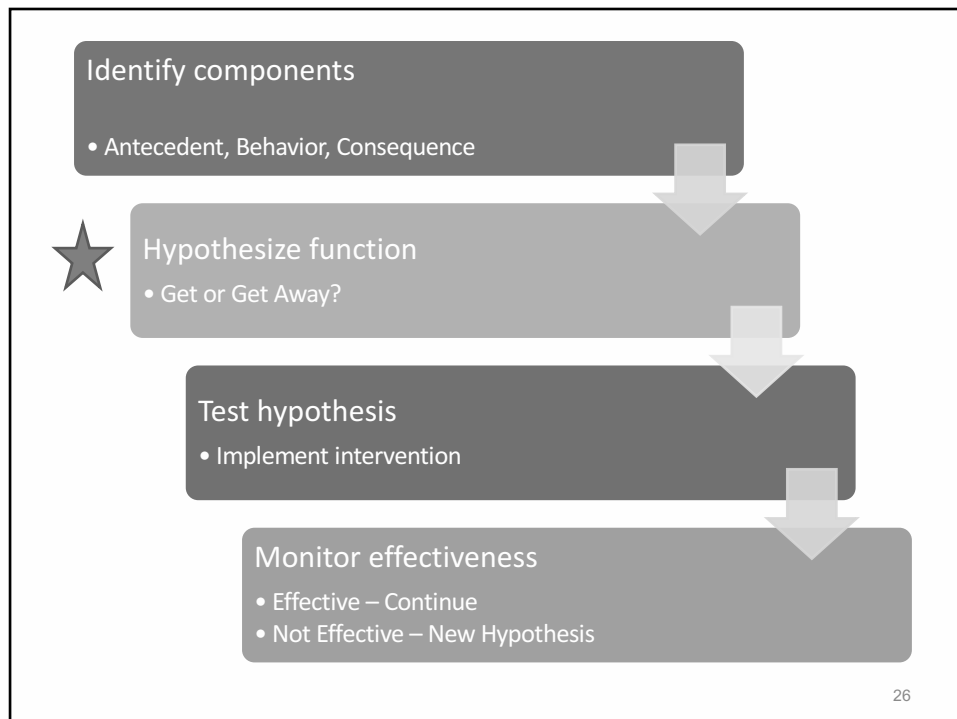
- When working on handwriting work sheet, Mark will ask for help several times. If the teacher does not hear him and come over to him, he will scream “help” and tear up his worksheet. If she hears him and helps him, he will continue with the worksheet.
- Antecedent?
- Behavior?
- Consequence? Worse or better or same

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Identify the components

- When transitioning from breakfast in the morning to rug time, Jacob will run around the room until the teacher can physically stop him. When she stops him, he starts hitting her and kicking her until she takes him into the hallway, sits him down, and makes him wait.
- Antecedent?
- Behavior?
- Consequence? Worse or better or same

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Determining the function?

- What is the child **getting** or **not getting** from the the behavior?
- What makes the behavior **continue** or what makes the behavior **stop**?

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Never start
an
intervention/
strategy
without
formulating a
hypothesis

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The Hypothesis

- Educated guess as to “why” the behavior is occurring
- What is the student getting or not getting out of the behavior? Why does it keep happening?
- When treating planning, we have to start with a hypothesis (most common stepped skipped)
- No right or wrong answer until we test it
- Possibility of multiple hypotheses for one behavior

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Hypothesis

- Get?
 - Attention
 - Tangible
 - Sensory
- Get away?
 - Attention
 - Tangible
 - Sensory

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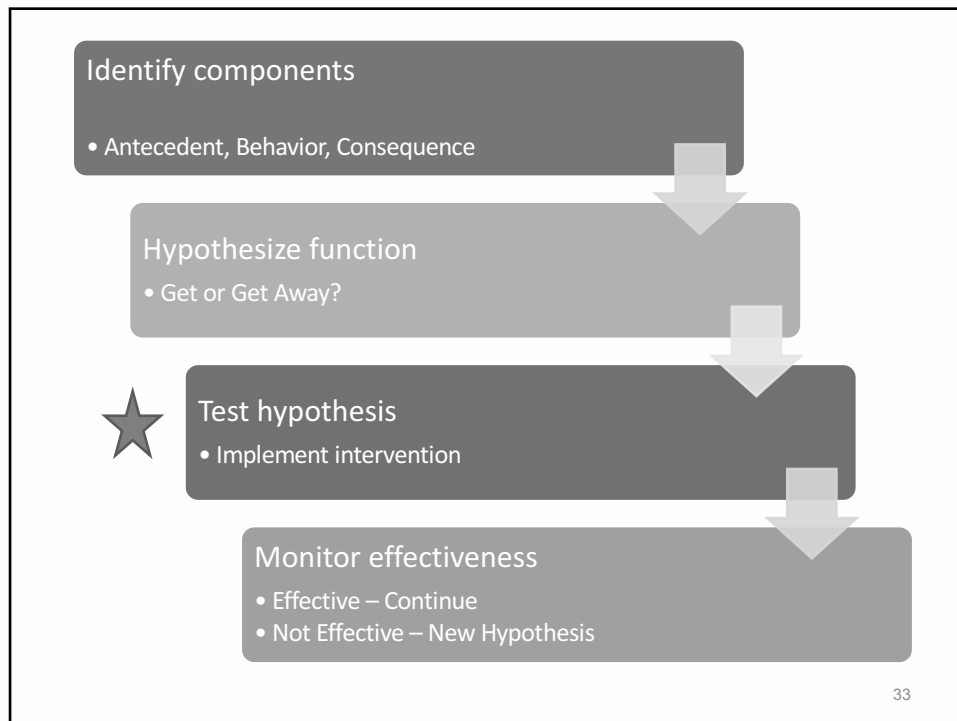
Get	Get Away
<p>Attention: Help, attention</p> <p>Tangible: favorite activity, favorite toy, snack, drink, structure</p> <p>Sensory: walk, deep pressure, swinging</p>	<p>Attention: Away from a teacher, away from a peer</p> <p>Tangible: Away from an activity, environment, difficult assignment</p> <p>Sensory: Away from noise, away from smells</p>

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How do formulate?

- Do I have enough objective information?
- Make some conclusions about the behavior:
 - Antecedents
 - Consequences
 - Sensory needs
- What makes it stop?
- What makes it worse?

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Plan for Intervention (Behavior Curriculum)

<p>★ <u>Preventative Strategies</u> (Are there any changes to the setting that may decrease or prevent the challenging behavior from occurring)</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Simplify •Visual supports •Structure •Teaching instructions 	<p><u>Teach Replacement Skills</u> (appropriate skills that have the same function)</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Asking for help •Asking for a break •How to wait •How to occupy self 	<p><u>Encourage appropriate behavior/Reward use of Replacement Skills</u></p> <p>Discourage problem behavior</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Ignore problem behavior •Child specific reinforcers for replacement skill
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Preventative Strategies

Strategies you put in place or do before you ever expect the replacement skill or problem behavior

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Preventative Strategies

- Simplify
- Visual supports
- Structure
- Teaching instructions
- Materials Management

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Simplify

- Do you need to simplify the activity?

Tip: The activity should start where the student is successful.

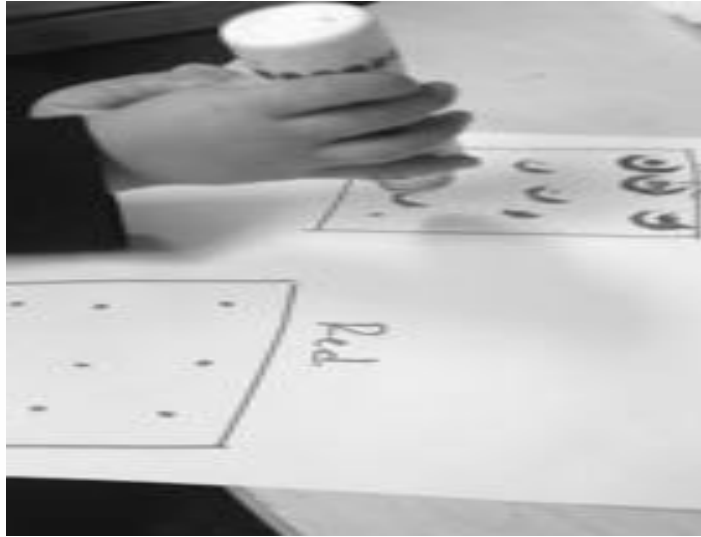
Example: Handwriting – writing students name.

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Simplify – writing name

- Only leaving off the last letter of child's name
- Highlighting name and child trace's letters of name

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Visual Supports

- How can I provide more visual supports to support learning?
- Examples:
 - Schedules
 - Dry erase board
 - Timers

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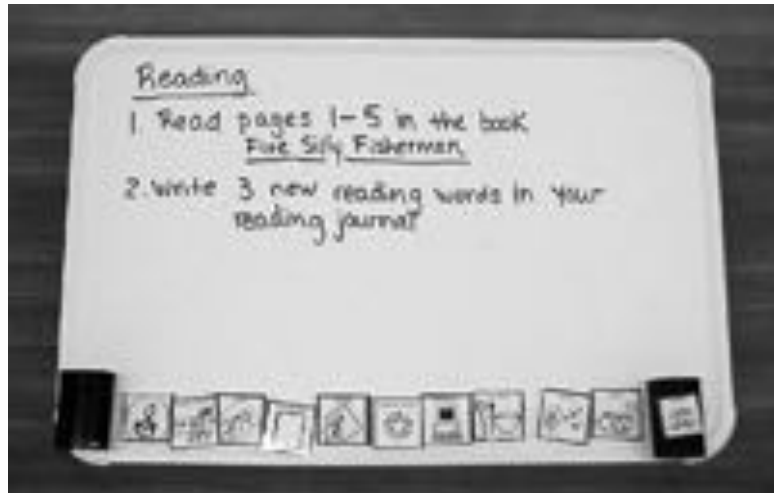


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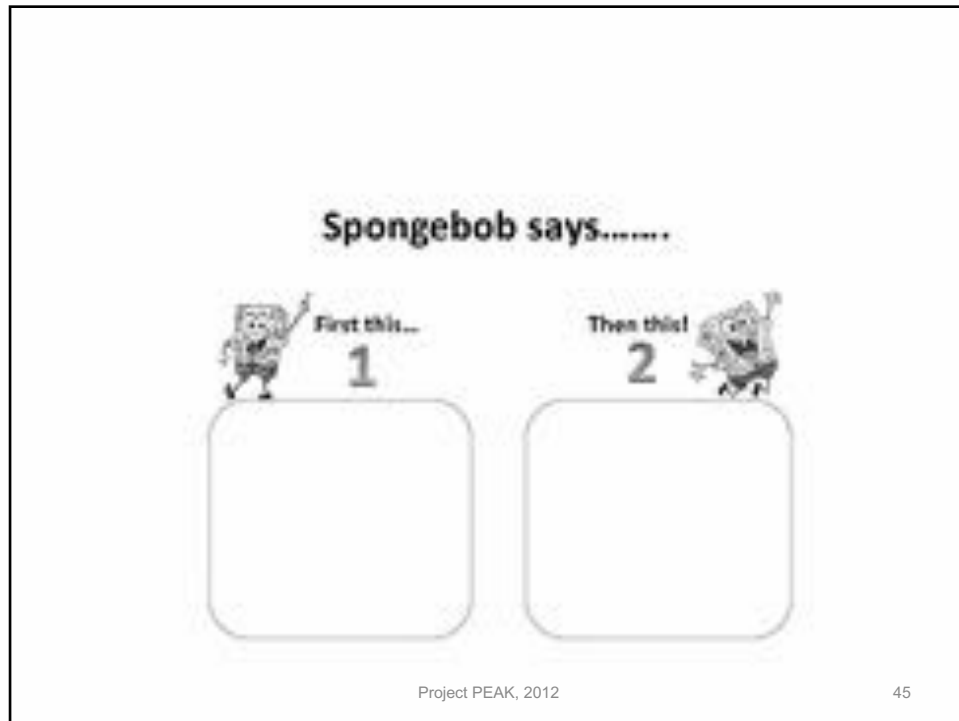
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Structure

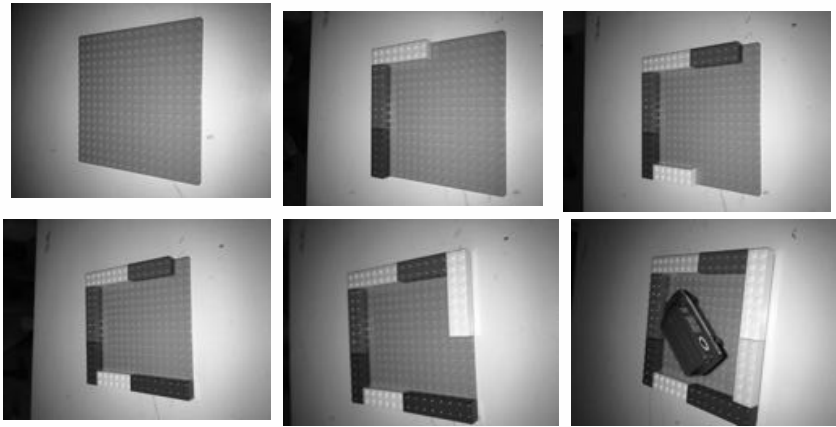
- Can the child look at the activity and know exactly what to do?
- Do we need to make an open ended activity more structured?

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Lego – Step by Step



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Teaching Instruction

- Choices
- Direct Statements
- Corrective Statements

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Are we providing the child with choices?

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Choices

- Can the child make a choice?
- Start by offering two choices
- If students try to negotiate other options, keep repeating the two choices
- If the child does not make a choice, make a choice for him/her
- Give choices such as:
 - Time for reinforcers
 - How to do a required activity
 - Number of activities to do
- Support your choices with pictures when available

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Examples of providing choices

- Required worksheet?
 - Do you want to do the front or back first?
 - Do you want to use a pencil or a crayon?
- Going to the restroom?
 - Do you want to go now or in 5 minutes?
 - Do you want to go to this bathroom or that bathroom?
 - Do you want to walk quietly or sing on our way?
- Going to a required class?
 - Do you want to walk with or without a picture?
 - Do you want me to hold or your hand or stand beside you?
- Transitioning away from a preferred activity?
 - Do you want me to turn off computer or do you want to?
 - Do you want to leave the activity now or in one minute?

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Direct Statements

- Use direct, simple language. Tell them exactly what you want them to do
- “first _____, then _____.”
- “Hands in lap.”
- “Walking feet.”

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Corrective Statements

- Limit the times you use the words
(these can be antecedents for challenging behaviors)
 - No
 - Stop
 - Wait
 - Don't...
- Instead, tell them what you want to do, or say,
“Nice try, next time _____.”
- Use visuals when possible

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Materials Management

- Have your materials organized and prepared ahead of time. The more down time the child experiences, the more likelihood of a problem behavior
 - Reinforcers are accessible and ready
 - Academic materials are ready
 - Any visual supports needed are ready

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Plan for Intervention (Behavior Curriculum)

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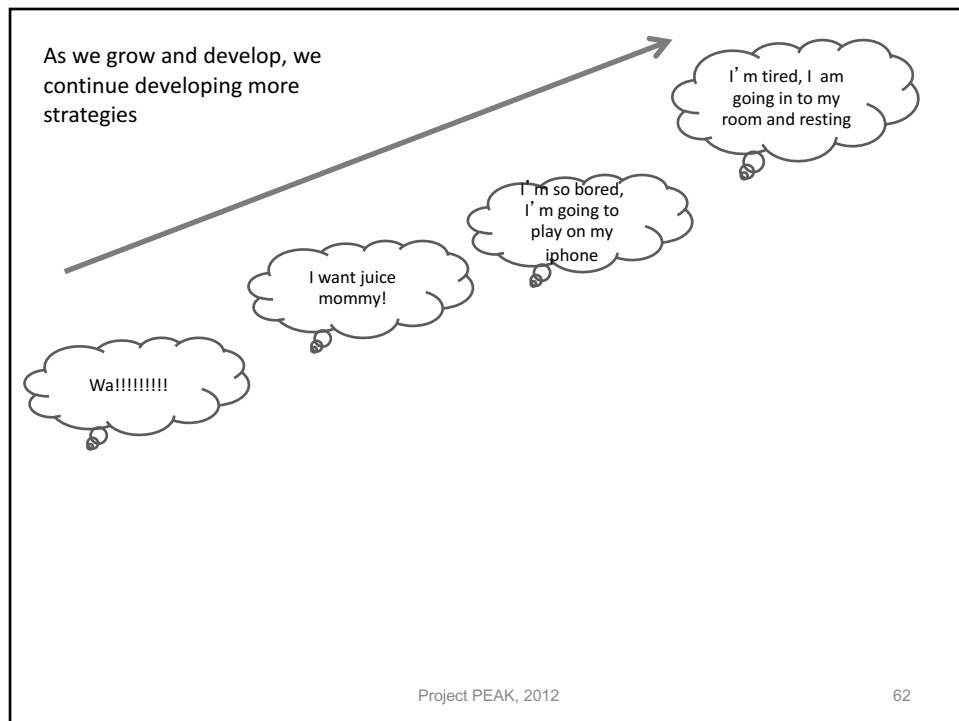
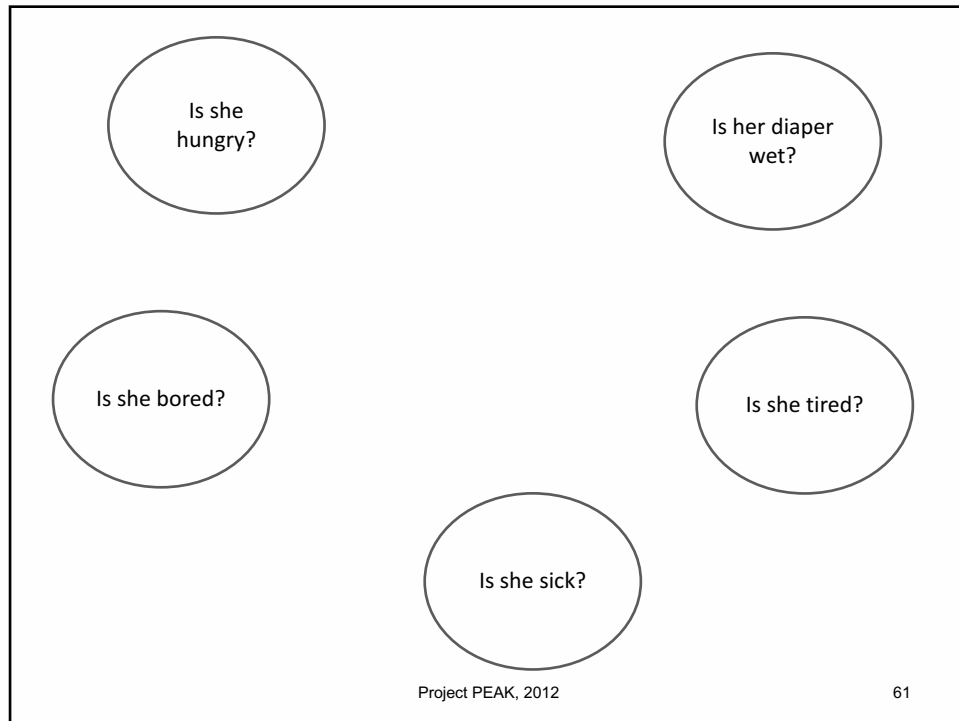
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One skill
we are
born with



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Children with autism might have the same needs as peers their age, but they do not have a good strategy on how to handle the need



I really want
some juice

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I am bored
with this
activity

I am tired, I
need a break!

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Replacement Skill

So often we get caught up on the problem behavior that we forget to target what we want them doing instead of the target behavior.

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Teach Replacement Skills

- What do I want them to do “instead” of the problem behavior?
- What skill(s) is the child missing?

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Potential deficit areas

- Communication
- Academic
- Independence
 - Self-help
 - Unstructured, student directed time, open ended activities
 - Time management
 - Transitions
- Leisure skills
- Social Skills
- Emotional Regulation

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Specific replacement skills

- Asking for help
- Asking for a break
- Asking for an alternate activity/assignment
- Self-Management Skills
- Asking for attention
- Specific academic skills
- Problem solving skills
- Teach to ignore problem behavior of other's
- Making a choice
- Transitioning away from a reinforcer
- Occupying self during wait time
- Occupying self during unstructured times
- Academic skills
- Emotional regulation skills

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Consequences

How am I going to respond after the
behavior?

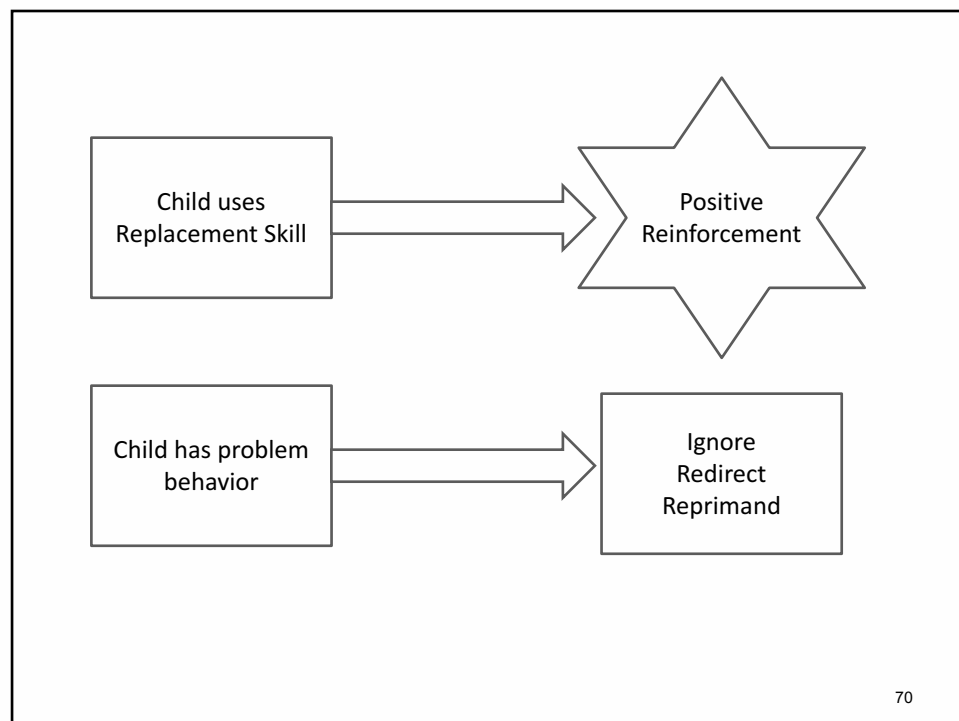
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Plan for Intervention (Behavior Curriculum)

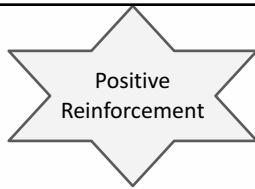
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Positive Reinforcement

Anything given to a student that will increase the likelihood of that behavior occurring again

- Increase frequency of behavior
(communicating for an item)
- Improve quality of behavior
(Writing worksheet)
- Improve duration of behavior
(Sitting in a chair)

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I shouldn't have to "bribe" my child to do what I want/need them to do....

Bribery vs Positive Reinforcement

- ***Timing is critical***
- Bribery – purpose is to stop the problem behavior
- Positive reinforcement – purpose is to increase the replacement skill

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Examples of Positive Reinforcement

- Favorite toy or activity
- Special job in the classroom
- Favorite snack/drink
- Special outing

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Tips for Positive Reinforcement

- Initially, give it to them immediately after they do the expected behavior
- Be specific with the behavior you are reinforcing
- Pair tangible with a social praise
- 50% rule for time between reinforcers
- Make sure you have a variety of reinforcers (if you don't, you might have to work on increasing number of reinforcers)
- Limit access to reinforcers at other times of the day
- Better to get more often in smaller quantities or lengths

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Common Pitfalls...

- Reinforcer loses its power (does child have access to it at other times?)
- We do not give child reinforcer frequently enough
- We are expecting too much from the child (child cannot do the skill expected therefore never gets the reinforcer)


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Using a reinforcer board

- Helps with delayed gratification
- Great to use in the regular education environment
- Can be used with kids very young to older students (modified as needed)
- Helps teach activities involving duration


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I am working for.....




The circles can represent a portion of the completed task (papers, math-addition, colored-pictures, sentences). Once all five are filled in the reinforcement is earned. It is important that there be reasonable and achievable to ensure success. Increase expectations as the student continues to meet with success. Turn the reinforcer on prior to prevent satiation. The reinforcer must be highly motivating. You are only as good as your reinforcer.


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First



Then



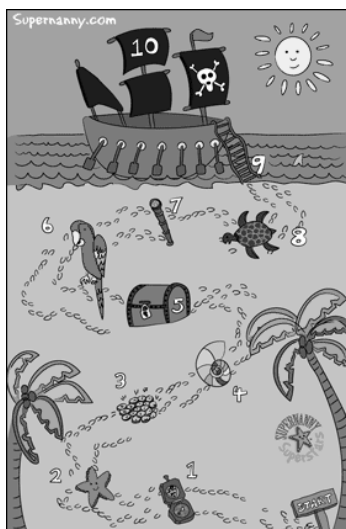
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continued™

Ignore
Redirect
Reprimand

How can the problem behavior be minimized?

- Provide consistent and calm response
- No eye contact or other response
- Offer assistance with task or activity
- Provide verbal praise to students who are meeting expectations
- Prompt student to return to desired activity (verbal prompts, your proximity, modeling, etc.)
- Provide tangible reward to students meeting expectations
- Prompt peers to ignore problem behavior
- Provide verbal reprimand
- Provide negative consequence (i.e., time- out, loss of preferred activity)

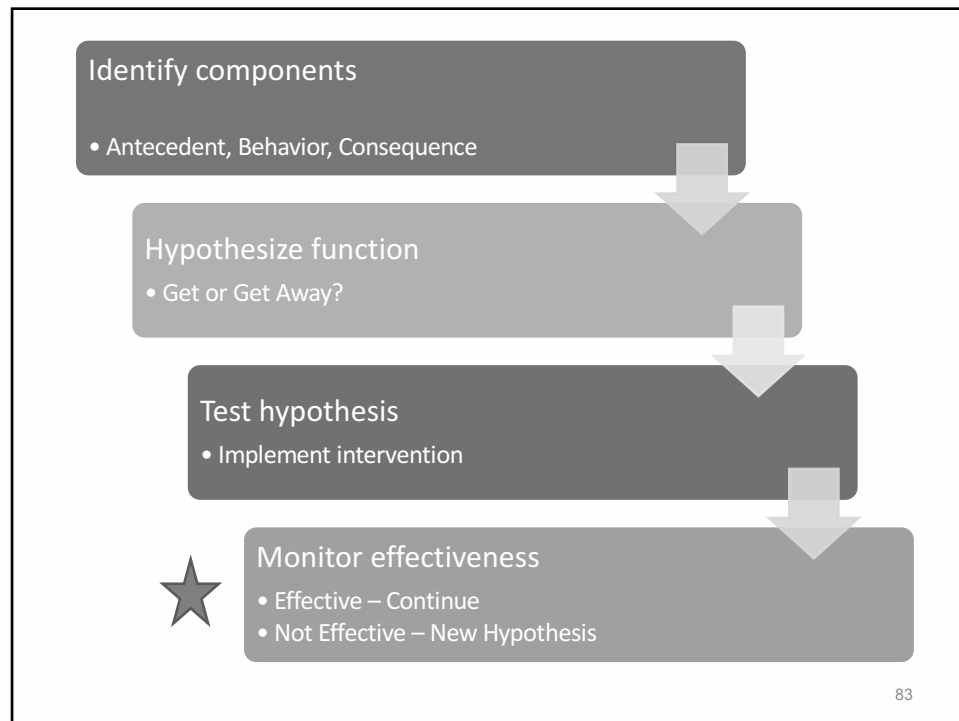
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Tips for teaching the new skill

- Simplify when teaching – most common mistake
- Consider teaching in 1:1 situation before practicing in natural environment
- Use stronger reinforcers for more difficult tasks
- Watch your verbal prompts and cues (children get very dependent on verbal cues)

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Monitor Effectiveness

- What is the data saying?
- Is the challenging behavior decreasing?
 - Do we need to change our hypothesis about the behavior?
- Is the child using the replacement skill more often and with less assistance?
 - Do we need to change how we are teaching the skill?

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Moving forward

- Do we need to decrease amount of help or prompts we are providing the child?
- Do we need to reduce the frequency of the reinforcement?
- Do we need to increase variety of reinforcers?
- Do we need to further challenge the child?
 - More time with peers?
 - Start to sabotage situations in order to teach more skills?

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Putting it all together

Case Studies

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Staying objective

What you might hear	How to stay objective
Sometimes, when we are in the classroom, Jonathan will start making loud noises. He is doing this because he is overly sensitive to noise. The noises in the classroom really bother him because when he is not in the classroom he does not make loud noises.	<p>When the teacher is talking to the classroom in large group (A), Jonathan makes loud noises (B).</p> <p>Once he makes the loud noises, the paraprofessional takes him out of the classroom and they stop (C).</p>

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Preventative Strategies	Replacement Skills	Reinforcement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shorter large group time • Use a timer to indicate how long the group will last • Give him a visual that outlines the activities in the group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking for a break • Being quiet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving him a break when he asks for it • Using a reward board for duration boxes when he's quiet during large group times

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What we might hear	What we need to hear
I need you to come see Abby because I think she has sensory issues. She will not sit during circle time, she just gets up and wanders around the room after about five minutes of circle time when it's time to read a story. I need you to come see her and get her a weighted blanket because of her sensory issues. She will not come sit down in circle time again until we are almost finished and she hears the song that she likes (head, shoulders, knees, and toes).	<p>A) When it is time to read a book during circle time</p> <p>B) Abby will wander around the room</p> <p>C) She continues wandering until she hears the song "head shoulder knees and toes"</p>

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Preventative Strategies	Replacement Skills	Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Using a schedule to show him the activities for circle time •Give her an interactive copy of the classroom book to go through while teacher is reading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Participating in a non-preferred activity (sitting during classroom book time) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Using small items (ex: candy, goldfish) to give her each time she turns the page in her book. Gradually we will reduce the frequency that she receives the tangible reinforcement

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Dylan is a three year old student with autism who just started the early childhood program through the public schools. During center time, he wanders around the room constantly and will sometimes throw the toys off the toy shelf. He stops wandering when somebody sits and plays with him with a structured activity (puzzles) or when somebody gets out bubbles.

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Antecedent	Unstructured activity
Behavior	Wanders around room and destroys materials
Consequence	Attention from a teacher involving a structured activity

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Preventative Strategies	Replacement Skills	Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reducing the amount of activities he has access to during center time. Putting more close-ended activities out during center time Giving him a schedule to use during center time that corresponds with the close ended activities. Practice the activities before having them do the activities during center time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participating in center time appropriately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At the end of his center time schedule will be a preferred activity. The non-preferred activities will be simple and short, ending with the preferred activity

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Cindy is a 16 year old girl with autism. Currently she is in a self-contained classroom with her own aide. When her aid gives her a new academic activity, she will first say, “no _____,” her behavior will escalate to scratching another person and eventually hitting another person. Her behavior will escalate until the teacher removes the academic activity or gives her a familiar activity.

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Antecedent	New academic activity
Behavior	"No" – Scratching - Hitting
Consequence	Removed new activity or gives a familiar activity

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Preventative	Replacement Skills	Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The teacher will have high reinforcers available during any new activities. The teacher will simplify the new activities and use visual supports to indicate how long they will do the new activity The teachers will only introduce new activities in the morning because afternoons are much more difficult for her The teacher will have a picture of "help" on her desk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to ask for help 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> She will get the highly preferred reinforcer when she does the new task. She will get help when she asks for it or gives the teacher a picture of help

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Grace is a 2nd grade student with autism. When Grace loses a game, she will stick her tongue out, yell “I hate you,” to the peer, and sometimes throw the game across the room. When she does this behavior, the teacher puts her in time out. She continues to do this behavior anytime she loses a game. When she wins a game, her behavior is great.

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Antecedent	Loses a game
Behavior	Sticks her tongue out, yells, throws game
Consequence	Put in time out

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Preventative Strategies	Replacement Skills	Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initially, the teacher will practice activities in which Grace is not playing against another person, only against herself (ex: guess the number) The games they will start with will be quick games that they can repeat a lot (versus one long game) Before playing the game, the teacher will walk through a social story about losing a game 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to lose a game 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grace will get a highly preferred reinforcer when she appropriately accepts losing a game.

Questions?

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