

PARENT HANDOUT



What is an Antecedent? The antecedent is the situation or event that comes before a behavior. It is sometimes described as the ‘trigger’ for the behavior that follows. An antecedent can be an event (telephone ringing, going a different route to school), a person (the music teacher but not the art teacher) or object (stop sign, plate of cookies) in the environment that cues a person to do something.

What is a Behavior? A central idea of the ABC model is that the majority of behaviors we display are learned. In the ABC model, we are very specific about how we use the term “behavior.” A behavior is any action that can be observed and counted or timed. In this model, we want to define behaviors specifically so all those working with a child will know what specific behavior is occurring.

What is a Consequence? Consequences describe what happens immediately after, and in response to, a behavior. Some consequences are natural, like getting a ticket for running a red light or getting a Coke after putting money in a vending machine. Others are planned, like giving a time out when a child hits someone. Behaviors are learned over the years by imitating others or by being directly taught. Consequences are what help maintain behaviors; that is, make it more likely that the behavior will continue. For example, a child learns to raise her hand in school because the teacher calls on her. A child may learn not to hit if the consequence is losing time on the computer.

Functions or Purpose of Disruptive Behaviors: There are a few reasons why a child may be disruptive:

1. The behavior has allowed the child to escape or avoid a situation.
2. The behavior has allowed the child to get attention.
3. The behavior has allowed the child to get what they wanted (a toy, the iPad).
4. The behavior is pleasing to the child (for sensory input, “automatically rewarding,” relieves anxiety).

Functional Behavior Assessment: By keeping a record of behaviors and their antecedents and consequences, we can better understand the possible function, or purpose, of a particular behavior. We can then make better decisions about how to change the behavior.

Behavior Support Plan: This document summarizes strategies developed for your child through the course of the program. Along with documenting target behaviors and their function, the Behavior Support Plan summarizes three main components of the program: Prevention Strategies, Teaching Alternative Skills, and Consequences.

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1. **Avoid Specific Situations or People:** It may be possible to prevent some problem behaviors by limiting trips to restaurants, shops, church or places that involve waiting in line.
2. **Control the Environment:** Examples include putting locks on cabinets or locking doors from the inside to prevent the child from leaving the house. Some teachers control the classroom environment by seating the child away from others who tend to set the child off or by using partitions that limit distractions.
3. **Do Things in Small Doses or Steps:** A child may be able to handle situations for short periods – but behavior may deteriorate over time. Rather than avoid these situations entirely, parents may instead limit the time spent in certain settings or the number of places they go. For example, families find that multiple errands don't work, but a single trip to the grocery store can be successful.
4. **Change the Order of Events:** When engaged in a preferred activity (e.g., playing with an iPad), some children actively protest when asked to switch gears and comply with a routine demand. The parent can reverse the order and have the child complete the demand before having access to the preferred activity.
5. **Respond to Early Signs of the Problem:** Some parents may notice a "look" in their child's eyes or other signals that the child is becoming more irritated. When this occurs, parents can provide additional assistance so the child can succeed quickly with the demand. Parents may also remove the child from the stressful situation to allow him to calm down.
6. **Change How You Ask or Respond:** We often hear parents say that their child gets agitated when they are told "No." Instead, consider providing choices when making requests, using humor, or giving a child notice that he will need to stop what he's doing in 5 minutes.
7. **Address Setting Events:** Setting events are general conditions or situations that affect the child's behavior. Possible setting events include being tired, hungry, or worried about being separated from a parent. For example, consider a home situation with a radio playing, X Box humming and computer whirring. The parent issues a routine request and the child unravels into a meltdown. The routine request could be considered the antecedent, but the setting event (background noise) likely played a role in the child's behavior.
8. **Use Visual or Auditory Cues:** Visual or auditory cues, such as pictures, written lists, or timers, can remind the child about transitions from one activity to another. Visual and auditory cues can help the child process information, provide a sense of predictability, and promote flexibility and independence with the tasks of everyday living. Examples of visual strategies include visual schedules and choice boards.

PARENT HANDOUT**Prevention Strategies for Addressing Problems with your Child's Daily Routine**

1. Change the time of a demand
2. Use fun activities to reward completion of less desired activities
3. Establish a routine

Visual Schedules

We know that many children with ASD have difficulty with transitions and unexpected changes in their routines. One way to help children with ASD understand their routines or cope with unexpected changes in their routines is to use a visual schedule.

Visual schedules are often made of selected small icons or pictures that are attached to a board or stable surface with Velcro. The picture or icons can be removed as each successive step is accomplished. The board should be small enough and light enough to carry - but large enough to place the icons in series. The picture schedule highlights the series and sequence of events and activities for the day. It can also be used to direct the child to the next activity. The pictures and symbols provide information that makes the environment appear more stable and predictable which, in turn, can increase comfort, flexibility, and independence. It often works like this:

1. Place the schedule in a central place.
2. Encourage your child to check the schedule.
3. Review the schedule with the child and select the first picture.
4. Encourage the child to state the activity out loud. For younger or nonverbal children, say it out loud for the child.
5. Have your child take the picture off the schedule and take it with him to the designated area.
6. Complete the activity on the picture.
7. Return to the visual schedule.
8. Have a small box or envelope near the schedule where your child can place the picture of the completed task.
9. Move on to the next picture of the visual schedule.

The visual schedule could be for the entire day. Alternatively, a "mini-schedule" could be created for a selected period - for example, a time of day involving multiple transitions. They may take various forms and can be individualized for the child.



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Overview of Reinforcement

Reinforcers can be any item, activity and/or social response (e.g., foods, drinks, toys, activities, attention, and praise) that increase the chance of behavior occurrence. They follow a child's behavior and can be used to strengthen desired behaviors or to help teach new behaviors and skills. Things that are "typically" reinforcing to many children might not be reinforcing to a child with ASD. This may require thinking creatively about what can be a reinforcer for your child.

5 Types of Reinforcers

1. Primary Reinforcers typically involve food or drink.
2. Social Reinforcers include hugs, high-fives, praise or any kind of social attention.
3. Tangible Reinforcers include enjoyable items such as a favorite toy.
4. Activities/Privileges include enjoyable activities such as going to the park, riding bikes, one-on-one time with mom, watching TV, or swimming.
5. Tokens are reinforcers that have no value in and of themselves. They gain their value in their ability to "purchase" social, activity, material and primary reinforcers. Tokens can be points, stars or even money. The child saves the tokens until he can exchange them for a reinforcer. Tokens are used with children who can wait for a reinforcer and can understand the connection between the token and what they will exchange it for.

You can identify reinforcers for your child by:

- Asking your child what he or she likes
- Talking with others who know the child well, including teachers
- Holding up some reinforcement options and see what the child chooses
- Watching the child to see what he does when given free time

How to Select a Reinforcer

- Every child is different and has different likes and dislikes.
- Use natural reinforcers when possible. These are already available in a child's home or school and often have been given "noncontingently," which means they are provided regardless of the child's behavior.
- Make privileges contingent on appropriate behavior. Many children have access to numerous privileges (e.g., TV, computer, time with their friends, favorite toys) despite having behavior problems. Privileges can be used to reinforce desired behavior.
- Reinforcers may change with different developmental periods. Keep in mind your child's developmental level and rapidly changing interests when selecting reinforcers.

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Bribery vs. Reinforcement

Some parents feel that using reinforcement to get the child to comply is bribery. Reinforcement and bribery are different concepts, though, with the main difference involving when the reinforcer is being offered. Reinforcers are better applied when the contingency between the behavior and the reinforcer is offered up front instead of negotiated after the fact. If negotiated after the fact, the child may learn to refuse to comply unless offered something.

Steps when Using Reinforcers to Change Your Child's Behavior

- STEP 1** Select the Target Behavior.
- STEP 2** Keep the behavioral requirement reasonable. This may require that the demand initially be shortened or lessened.
- STEP 3** It is best to reinforce your child every time. Once behaviors are learned, reinforcers can be gradually faded. Using reinforcement "intermittently," or every once and a while, also can help maintain a new behavior or skill.
- STEP 4** Be sure that reinforcers are initially given closely following the behavior. If there is too much time between the behavior and the reinforcer (e.g., even several seconds), some children may not understand what behavior is being reinforced.
- STEP 5** Be sure to use reinforcers contingently. It is like a mini-contract, which means that when the child does the desired behavior, they will get the reinforcer.
- STEP 6** Be sure to maintain reinforcer value. Some reinforcers lose their value because they are given freely in another setting.
- STEP 7** Be sure to pair social and activity/material reinforcement. Be specific in your praise by letting the child know exactly what you are reinforcing. This helps your child to better understand what behavior is being reinforced.
- STEP 8** Consider using visual cues of the behavior and reinforcer. This helps to cue the child about the expected behavior, the reinforcer, and the steps needed to earn it.

Contingent reinforcement means providing reinforcement immediately after a positive behavior you wish to see increase and not providing reinforcement after negative or disruptive behaviors that you do not wish to increase.

PARENT HANDOUT**Catching Your Child Being Good**

You can use social reinforcement, paired with tangible or material reinforcement if needed, during informal as well as formal interactions with your child. Whenever possible, use social reinforcement (high-five, "good job," "that was great the way you put away the toys") to acknowledge positive behaviors in everyday life. We call this "catching your child being good."

Play Skills

Another more formal way of reinforcing (i.e., promoting) appropriate behavior is to set up a structured play time with your child where you practice positive reinforcement skills.

Strategies to Encourage Joint Play

The goal of play time is to interact with your child with minimal direction of the child's behavior or play. To the extent possible, you LET YOUR CHILD LEAD THE PLAY. As your child plays, you watch and appreciate what your child is doing. You also provide careful attention and social reinforcement. Here's a list of skills you can try out during play time:

- 1) OBSERVE your child in close proximity.
- 2) DESCRIBE what you are seeing after a brief period of observation.
- 3) IMITATE your child's play.
- 4) REFLECT what your child says – either by repeating or paraphrasing.
- 5) PROMOTE positive social or play skills with social reinforcement.
- 6) TAKE ADVANTAGE of ANY opportunity to praise your child's positive behavior. Don't forget to label the behavior.

What To Do If Your Child Misbehaves

If your child is becoming agitated during the play, it's ok to play quietly for a moment without providing attention to the negative behaviors that emerge. If your child does not appear to be calming down, then quietly leave the play. Let the child know that play time is done and that you can play together again later in the day.

How to Set Up a Play Time

Some parents may want to take advantage of moments when the child is already playing with a toy or activity that he normally enjoys and is appropriate. You can also formalize the play time and let the child know that you play with him at a specific time each day.



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Review of Consequences

A consequence is something that happens after the behavior. Consequences that are enjoyable increase the behavior. Consequences that are unpleasant decrease the behavior. Sometimes parents choose a consequence that is intended to stop their child's problematic behavior, but it makes the behavior worse instead of better. This is because the selected consequence actually reinforces the child's inappropriate behavior.

Planned Ignoring

Planned ignoring is a consequence that can be used to reduce attention-seeking behaviors. To use planned ignoring well, you must do the following:

- Avoid eye contact; don't look at the child
- Do not touch the child; walk away if necessary
- Use a "neutral" facial expression; don't react
- Do not talk to the child or respond to him/her
- Make sure that your ignoring is obvious, abrupt and exaggerated – for example turning away and folding your arms

Potential Problems with using Planned Ignoring

#1: Behaviors that are ignored will often get worse before they get better.

#2: Some behaviors cannot always be ignored.

#3: Children can learn to be persistent. If you don't think that you can follow through with planned ignoring, "give in" immediately.

#4: Planned Ignoring can take a while to work.

Three Types of Planned Ignoring

Ignore the Child and the Behavior means paying no attention to the child or the child's behavior (e.g., temper tantrums).

Ignore the Child but not the Behavior is used in response to dangerous or destructive behaviors. This involves using physical guidance or touch to prevent harm to the child, others, or property while otherwise ignoring the child.

Ignore the Behavior but not the Child is used in response to repetitive and socially annoying behaviors. This involves responding to the child but continuing to ignore the repetitive or annoying behavior.

PARENT HANDOUT**Introduction to Compliance**

Children don't comply with parent requests for a variety of reasons. Some children have difficulty paying attention and often don't even hear the instruction from the parent. Other children mean well, but once they start doing what they've been asked to do, they get distracted. Still other children are openly defiant. Noncompliant behavior may range from ignoring the parent request, to saying "no, no, no," to tantrums that vary in duration and severity. No matter the reason, noncompliance can become a habit that children learn when they are given commands and are permitted not to comply. Increasing compliance in children involves setting in place a new habit. We want your child to listen to your instructions and follow through on your commands the first time he or she hears them.

4 Steps for Compliance Training

STEP 1: Stand close to your child and get his attention.

STEP 2: Tell your child what to do (don't ask!)

STEP 3: At the same time physically guide your child to complete the command. Physical guidance involves providing gentle physical assistance to help a child comply with a command.

STEP 4: As your child complies, provide immediate, specific praise.

Over time, reduce the amount of physical guidance you provide and give commands from an increasingly greater distance.

Using Compliance Training to Teach Your Child to "Stop"

Parents often tell their children to stop behaving in ways that are annoying, disruptive or dangerous. Noncompliant behavior in children with ASD is complicated by the fact that they may not know what appropriate behaviors parents are expecting instead of the unacceptable behavior. The next time you find yourself telling your child to stop a behavior, practice compliance training. Walk over to your child, get his or her attention, and give an instruction that tells him what he should do. The key is to be explicit when giving the instruction, provide the necessary amount of guidance, and praise the child for complying.

Common Problems with Compliance Training

If a child becomes resistant or aggressive when physical guidance is provided, first work on commands that can easily and quickly be accomplished. If you think that social reinforcement will not be enough to promote compliance, the use of tangible reinforcers may be used in addition to social reinforcement.

BEHAVIOR SUPPORT PLAN

CHILD'S NAME:

IDENTIFICATION NUMBER:

DATA COLLECTION: How to track progress of problem behaviors			
ACRONYM	WHAT IT STANDS FOR	DEFINITION	EXAMPLES
A	Antecedent	Cue or trigger that occurs right before the behavior takes place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being told what to do • Being told no • Taking away a preferred item
B	Behavior	The target behavior that can be observed, counted, or timed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hitting • Yelling • Talking Back • Whining
C	Consequence	What occurs right after the behavior; Can be positive or negative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time Out • Privilege Removal • Ignore • Reward • Hug/Praise

1) Use your ABC's to determine the function of the behavior:

- To escape or 'get out of doing' demands
- To get attention
- To 'get what he wants'
- Because it's 'self-stimulatory'

2) Determine which behavioral strategy (or strategies) would make the most sense to target the **function** of the behavior

3) Create/use data tracking forms to track your implementation of the strategy and progress in terms of changes in the child's behavior