

# Inappropriate Behavior: Is it the disability, or the kid being a kid – Does it matter?

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# A Little About Me

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- Board Certified Behavior Analyst.
- Worked one year at – A residential home for individuals with severe behavior and emotional disorders.
- Master's Degree in Special Education at Sam Houston State University.
- Executive Director of pediatric facility

# Does this sound familiar?

I find it very interesting that two best friends for life who like the opposite times can watch a football game and a controversial call happens. How is it that both of them seeing the exact same play have two **COMPLETELY** different interpretations of what happens.

Perception is **NEVER** reality. Just because someone saw or said something, is extremely passionate about it does not make it 100% accurate. When looking at behavior the goal is to be **OBJECTIVE** and you can't be objective with **DEFINING** the behavior.

# Let's set the tone

Human behavior dictates that you DON'T have to observe an inappropriate behavior in order to imitate it. Humans can:

- Physical Aggression
- Steal
- Spit
- Bite
- Flop
- Cuss
- Lie

And much more without previous exposure. Most humans will perform all of these behaviors before the age of seven. **Who hasn't done any of these?**

# No Excuses

Just because inappropriate behavior is in our nature DOES NOT make it acceptable for anyone including special needs children to engage in that behavior. If a child engages in inappropriate behavior then it's a COMMUNICATION OR BEHAVIOR ISSUES NOT A SPECIAL NEEDS ISSUE! Now there are some factors that may make it more probable for behavior such as:

- Communication issue – IN MOST CASES
- Medical issues – overused as an excuse
- Self stimulatory issues

# We learn through trial and error

What unfortunately happens is that since we are not sure how to deal with the behavior **we do nothing and excuse it away or keep doing random consequences which greater confuses the child.**

**Everyone needs consistent consequences.**

Humans learn through consequences. What would happen if your two week paycheck varied greatly from week to week if you worked the same amount of hours? What if green lights didn't mean go anymore? Why then do we keep changing the rules for our kids?

# And here we go.....

- Inconsistency of consequences breeds chaos. When one person is doing one intervention and another is doing something different, there is an extremely low probability of success.



# People need to work together

Everyone needs to be on the same page in order for a higher degree of success. We get on the same page by:

- Properly defining the behavior
- Understanding the functions of behavior
- Take data to measure success of behavior



# The core problem

Before a behavior can be worked on it must be defined. What is a tantrum?

You first have to properly and completely define the behavior to something observable and measurable. Although it may be a medical issue it still manifest itself in an observable way (crying, increased yawning, etc.)

# Let's define some behavior

- Define Crying?
- Define Physical Aggression?
- Define Verbal Aggression?

# Functions of Behavior

In order to truly understand and motivate behavior you have to understand common functions. There are more than these four, but these are the most useful:

- Attention
- Escape
- Tangible
- Self Stimulatory

# Functions of Behavior

**Attention** - This is the one behavior that gets exhibited the most, and unfortunately gets reinforced way too often. Essentially, attention-maintained behavior has some simple components:

- Seeking attention from other individuals whether good or bad
- Trying to evoke a reaction out of an individual
- Having attention focused on themselves

# Functions of Behavior cont'd

Escape-maintained or task avoidant behavior is the opposite of attention-maintained behavior. With escape-maintained behavior the object is to:

- Exhibit behavior in order for people to leave them alone
- Avoid doing work or tasks
- Avoid demands being placed on them

People tend to engage in escape behavior when the task is too difficult, they simply do not want to do it, or they want out of the situation or environment.

# Functions of Behavior cont'd

- Tangible – this behavior is straight-forward in terms of what its function is. Behavior for tangible is manifested either when the item is taken away from the child, or when there is a delay in the presentation of a reinforcer. Tangible is exhibited when you take a doll away from a little girl, or a child is upset when you don't give him his candy fast enough. In order to curb tangible behaviors, wait for them to show the behaviors that you want to see before they get the tangible.

# Functions of Behavior cont'd

- Self Stimulatory – This function is the most difficult by far to reduce because the act itself serves as a reinforcer. This behavior is performed when 0 or 100 people are around and can happen during different emotional states.

# So how do I compete?

- Attention – If your child craves attention, then give it to him....only when he's being appropriate. What if he does something that requires your attention? (e.g. destroying property) Acknowledge with the behavior but with minimal verbal response and a flat affect.

# So how do I compete?

- Escape – If your child likes to escape demands, he/she has to realize that escaping will not get rid of the demand... only completing the task. Get them through the task, even if you have to prompt them through it. The main thing is to watch what you say...no IDLE threats!!!! Pick something easy to follow through with, then move on to more difficult ones.

# So how do I compete?

Tangible – This one may be the most straightforward. If he/she acts up then he/she CAN NOT have that item. If your child does not have great contingent access skills then give them another reinforcer, just not the one they got upset about. (I do not prefer this method, and should only be used if your child does not understand contingent access.)

# So how do I compete?

- Self Stimulatory – Not too many choices. You need to reinforce when it's not happening with a reinforcer that can compete with the self stimulatory. If you can't beat it then all you can do is.... CONFINE IT!!! Make sure it happens only in a certain room or at a certain time. This works wonders over time. Make sure child has the concept of contingent access.

# Now here come the Data

- You **HAVE** to take data to view its effectiveness. Remember our sports example in the beginning? You don't have to be a robot, but you should account for things such as:

- Frequency
- Duration
- Intensity
- Latency
- Location or Time of day



You have to take data on all those measures, but pick 2 to 4 of the ones that most likely affect the behavior.

# Let's go over the game plan

## Behavior Game Plan

Behavior: \_\_\_\_\_

Define the Behavior: \_\_\_\_\_

What is the proposed function of the behavior? (Why did it occur?)

\_\_\_\_\_

What should I do? (Ask yourself how you should intervene.)

\_\_\_\_\_

Data will be taking on? How long?

What to reinforce? (Remember: We need to work towards decreasing inappropriate behaviors and increasing appropriate behaviors.)

\_\_\_\_\_

### Do's & Don'ts

Do:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Don't:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

GOALS: \_\_\_\_\_

# Something to remember

- Just because a child has behavior doesn't mean it is NECESSARILY someone's fault. We spend too much assigning blame and not actually fixing the problem.
- Behavior is going to happen. It's how we deal with it that determines how long it will remain. How does a little child know that they said a bad word?
- Remember that your words have value. Don't diminish it by threats. Empty threats damage your word value!

# Something to remember

- Lack of communication is the number one cause of behavior issues. ALL KIDS NEED A FUNCTIONAL COMMUNICATION SYSTEM!
- Can your child do the following:
  - Answer W questions
  - Understand time concepts
  - Intraverbals
  - Answer yes/no correctly and fluently
  - Understand emotions
  - Imitate fluently
  - There's others too

# Something to remember

- Behavior is like matter. It can be created or destroyed, it does manifest itself in different and hopefully more favorable. A little kid whose got a temper is hopefully an adult who still may have a temper (hopefully controlled). When you reduce an extreme behavior (aggression, self stim) sometimes another behavior will rise temporarily.
- While you are getting rid of behavior you have to replace it with the communication equivalent ASAP. This will reduce another inappropriate behavior filling in the void.

# Something to remember

- Don't be afraid if the behavior goes up initially. A child is used to getting a set reaction and when it changes they will go to higher measures to get that reaction. The process is called extinction.
- Extinction is the removal of all reinforcement so the behavior has no access to reinforcement
- Don't create a bad ladder!

