Managing Challenging Behavior: An Introduction for Parents

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My Background

- Undergraduate and Master's degrees in Special Education
  - Focus on autism and moderate to severe disabilities
- Board Certified Behavior Analyst
- Public school special education teacher – 5 years
  - 1 year kindergarten
  - 4 years pre-k
- Supervisor at the University of Georgia's Severe Behavior and Skill Acquisition Clinic
- Doctoral student at the University of Kentucky
  - Research assistant and student-teacher supervisor
- Peer-reviewed research and textbook chapters

The University of Georgia
Applied Behavior Analysis Support Clinic

Effective Strategies for Training Parents to Implement Interventions and Manage Behavior

- Written directions or manuals
- Modeling (live and video)
- Practice skills
- Performance-based feedback
- Collaboration between trainer and parent between practice sessions

- NO STUDIES ASSESSED GENERALIZATION FOR MANAGING CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR

Barton & Fettig, 2013
Fettig & Barton, 2014

What is the goal of this presentation?

- Overview of vocabulary
- History of treating challenging behavior
- Current treatment process
- School's role
- General strategies for home

Who am I talking to?

- Parents or caregivers?
- Siblings?
- Grandparents or other relatives?
- Teachers?
- Speech language pathologists?
- Occupational therapists?
- Physical therapists?
- Students?

Differing Effects of Challenging Behavior

- Family
- School
- Peers
- Community

Challenging Behavior: Form

- **Form** – what the behavior looks like
  - Tantrumming
  - Yelling
  - Property destruction
  - Aggression
  - Self-injurious behavior
  - Non-compliance
  - Stereotypy
  - Inattentiveness
  - Elopement
 - Verbal Threats

Challenging Behavior: Form

- Old way of managing challenging behavior…
  - Based on form
  - Reactive strategies
  - Punishment-based (aka, default technology)
- Punishment is effective; however…
  - Ethical considerations
  - Difficulty of effects maintaining
  - If not effective initially, research does not support "increasing" punishment

Lerman, 2003

Challenging Behavior: Function

- **Function** – what is the challenging behavior accessing that is maintaining its occurrence (i.e., why is the behavior occurring?)
  - Tangibles
    - Toys, foods, video, computer game, perseverative items
  - Attention
    - Parent, classmates, teacher, positive, negative, eye-gaze
  - Escape
    - School work, demands at home, pain
  - Automatic
    - Sensory input that is not socially mediated (e.g., scratching your head, rubbing your eyes)
  - Multiply maintained
    - Any combination of the above functions
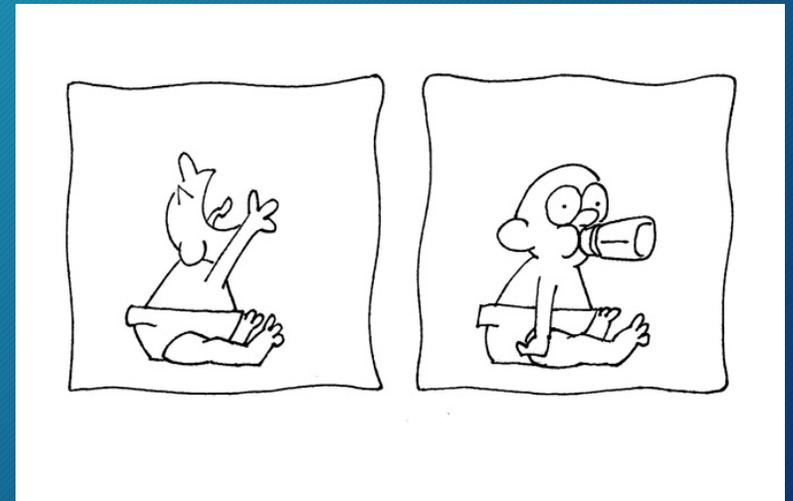
Challenging Behavior: Function

Target Challenging Behaviors:
Aggression
Verbal task refusal (e.g., "No")
Elopement (i.e., leaving designated area

Potential Functions:
Attention
Tangible
Escape
Automatic
Multiple

Challenging behavior: Function

- Current way of managing challenging behavior…
    - Based on function
    - Preventative strategies
    - Reinforcement-based (e.g., positive behavior supports)
- Teach a socially appropriate replacement behavior that accesses the same function as the target challenging behavior

Socially Appropriate Replacement Behavior

Challenging Behavior

Child pushes silverware off of table

→

Function

Parent tells child, "We don't do that. Silverware stays on the table." (i.e., **attention**)

Replacement Behavior

Child asks parent for tickles

→

Function

Parent tells child, "I'm going to get you!" and then tickles child. (i.e., **attention**)

Socially Appropriate Replacement Behavior

- In the previous example:

  - Challenging Behavior = Property Disruption
  - Function = Attention

  - Socially Appropriate Replacement Behavior = Requesting (i.e., functional communication training [FCT])
  - Function = Attention

  - CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR AND REPLACMENT BEHAVIOR ACCESS THE SAME FUCNTION

Socially Appropriate Replacement Behavior

- Functional Communication Training
  - Teaching a socially appropriate form of requesting
  - Allows an individual access to any function
  - Requesting may be vocal, sign, eye-gaze, gesture, picture exchange, voice output communication aide, etc.
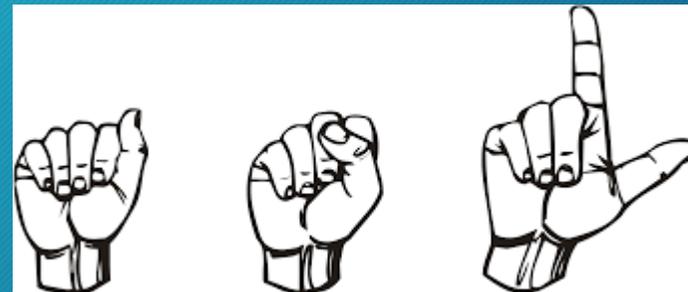
Challenging Behavior: Function

- Teaching a socially appropriate replacement behavior only works if we have the right function; otherwise, the challenging behavior will likely continue occurring

Challenging Behavior: Function

Challenging Behavior
Child begins hitting herself

Hypothesized Function
Parent gives child chips and talks to her to calm her down (i.e. **tangible**)

Actual Function
Parent gives child chips and talks to her to calm her down (i.e. **tangible and attention**)

Challenging Behavior: Function

- How do we determine the function of a challenging behavior?

Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA)

- Interviews
- Observation (e.g., A-B-C data sheet)
- Functional Analysis
  - Experimental manipulation of environment in order to determine function of a challenging behavior

FBA - Interviews

- Sample interview questions to help determine the function of a challenging behavior:

  - What seems to trigger the problem behavior?
  - How do you react or respond to the problem behavior?
  - What do you think he/she is trying to communicate with his/her problem behavior, if anything?
  - Do the problem behaviors reliably occur during any particular activities?
  - Do the problem behaviors reliably *not* occur during any particular activities?

FBA - Observation

- Sample observation data sheet

Antecedent	Behavior	Consequence

FBA - Observation

- Sample observation data sheet
  - Target Behavior: *Aggression towards others*

Antecedent	Behavior	Consequence	
Teacher tells child to clean up	Child hits teacher	Teacher walks away	Escape
Peer playing with toy	Child hits peer	Peer gives child toy	Tangible
Teacher reading book during large group	Child pushes a peer	Paraprofessional has child sit on her lap	Attention… and Escape?

FBA - Functional Analysis

- "Gold Standard" assessment for determining function of a challenging behavior

- Systematically and experimentally modifying the child's environment to determine the function of a challenging behavior

- A behavior specialist (e.g., BCBA, school psychologist) *with functional analysis experience* should be involved throughout the functional analysis process

FBA – Behavior Intervention Plan

- Once the function of the target challenging behavior is confirmed, then a **Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP)** is developed
- BIP
  - Preventative Strategies
  - Reactive Strategies

BIP – Preventative Strategies

- Socially Appropriate Replacement Behavior (which should access the same function as the target challenging behavior)
- Instructional strategy for teaching the replacement behavior
- Environmental modifications

BIP – Reactive Strategies

- What to do if the behavior occurs…
  - Varies based on the function of the behavior, the resources available, the safety the child and other individuals close by

BIP – Punishment?

- ****NOTE: Punishment procedures should only be implemented if there is immediate concern for the safety of the individuals in a classroom. Otherwise, previously mentioned preventative and reactive procedures should be implemented first, and their effectiveness should be documented across multiple days. After data are collected, IEP team may discuss other options including punishment procedures. If punishment is determined to be needed to increase the likelihood that problem behaviors will decrease, IEP team needs to ensure that: (a) socially appropriate alternative behaviors are being taught to the student and (b) the least aversive form of punishment that can still be effective is selected.****

- **Need to try reinforcement based approach first!**

School's Role

- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Amendments of 1997 (P.L. 105-17) indicate that if a student engages in behaviors that interfere with the student's learning or the learning of others then the student's IEP team should consider "strategies, including positive behavior interventions, strategies, and support to address that behavior" (IDEA , 20 U.S.C. 1414 (d)(3)(B)(i))
  - noncompliance, verbal and physical abuse, property destruction, aggression, behaviors that distract from teaching (Drasgow & Yell, 2001)

- Failure to provide positive behavior supports "would constitute a denial of the free appropriate public education (mandate of the IDEA)" (IDEA Regulations, Appendix B, Question 38)

FBA –School's Role

- What does this all mean for schools?

- Treating challenging behavior should be included in a student's IEP
- Function should be addressed with supporting data from interviews, observations, and functional analysis if necessary

- Preventative strategies
- Teach socially appropriate replacement behavior
  - Should be taught using "research-based intervention, curriculum, and practices" (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004, p. 2787)
- HAVE DATA TO SUPPORT THE FBA, BIP, AND ANY CHANGES THEREAFTER

Take home strategies…

- Stress the importance of teaching functional communication at IEP meetings
  - And don't be satisfied with "I want" phrases
  - Remember all the functions
- Do not neglect play skills (i.e., independent rec/leisure skills) from a child's IEP goals
- When a BIP is finalized, request training to ensure that you can continue procedures at home
 - Remember procedures required for training to be effective

Environmental Modifications and Other Strategies

- Sensory-based interventions for treating challenging behavior "are *more likely to be ineffective than effective* for children with disabilities" (Barton, Reichow, Schnitz, Smith, & Sherlock, 2015, p.78)
  - Therefore, stick with FBA
- Ensure that environments are engaging
  - Does child interact with available materials? For how long?
  - May need to consider setting up a rotation system of preferred materials
    - Note how long the child engages with materials to inform when materials are rotated (i.e., Daily? Weekly? Hourly?)

This is what happens when an environment is *not* engaging:
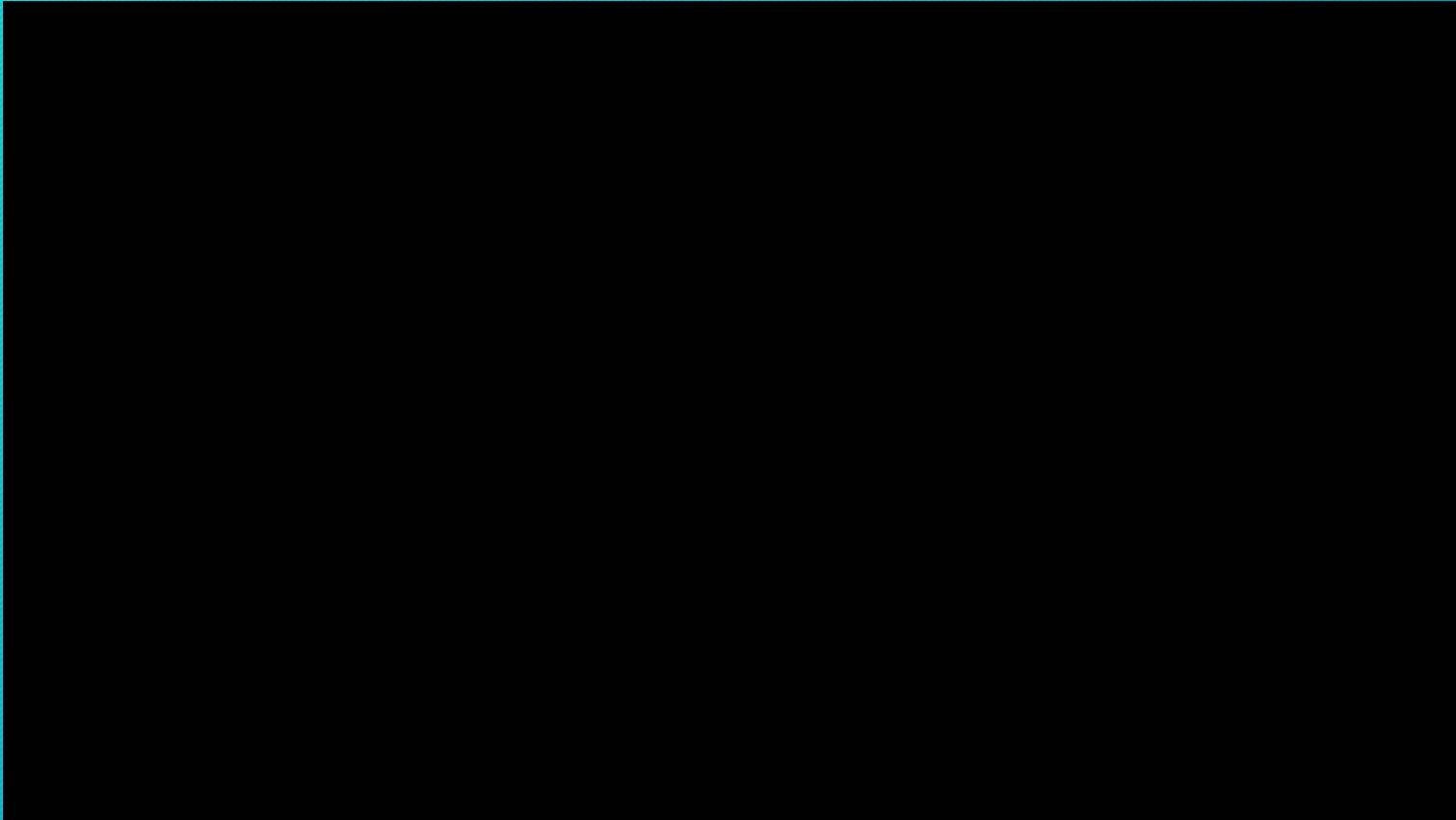
This is what happens when an environment *is* engaging:
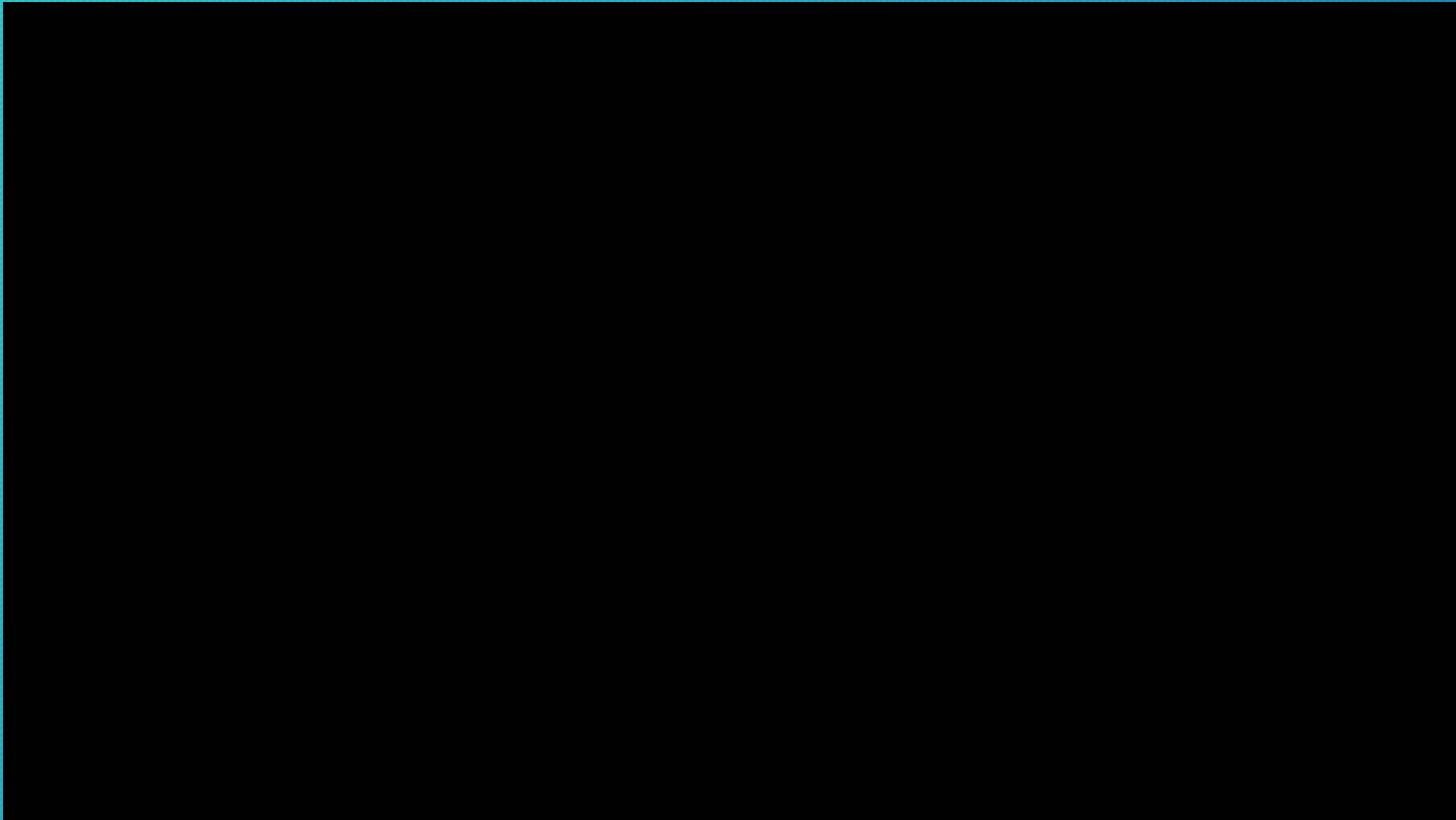
The End

Questions, comments, concerns, constructive feedback, funny anecdotes?