

Behaviour And Communication

Problematic behaviour often impedes social relationships and learning opportunities both for the student and classmates. It inhibits inclusion. Sometimes we tend to focus on dealing with consequences rather than addressing the function or purpose of the behaviour for the child. When we focus on consequential interventions, the behaviour usually is replaced by an alternate behaviour (often equally as inappropriate). We need to take a “Functional Communication Training” approach.

We will always select a method to communicate that is the most efficient and effective. If a behaviour is problematic, we need to remember that it involves the “interaction between two people”. The behaviour itself may not be problematic. It is often the interaction between the two people from which a problem arises. We also need to remember that some children have no other means to communicate except through the particular challenging behaviour. On the other hand, other children do have other ways to communicate, but no one may be listening to them unless they engage in the escalating behaviour.

Communication and behaviour are inseparable. In other words, behaviour provides a function (or means of communication) for the person who does it. (Pat Mirenda, 1999) Augmentative communication (PCS, BIGmack, signs, gestures, etc.) can provide a more appropriate means of addressing the function of the undesired behaviour for the individual.

4 Probable Functions of Behaviour	Communicative Replacements
• to get <u>tangibles</u> (e.g., “I want...”)	• “want”, “please”, “more”
• to get <u>attention</u> or social interaction (e.g., “Pay attention to me”)	• “pay attention to me”, “come here”, “more”, use of conversation book
• to <u>escape</u> or avoid (e.g., “I don’t want...”)	• “break”, “go”, “no”, “stop”, “help”, “please”, provide a choice
• to decrease sensory <u>boredom</u> or stress (e.g., “This makes me feel better”)	• “I’m bored”, “give me something to do”
	• message should be specific to the function & context of the behaviour

(Pat Mirenda, 1997)

It is important that the communicative replacement behaviour be at least as effective as the behaviour you wish to extinguish. Otherwise, the individual will not expend the energy to engage in that new behaviour.

Further Resources & References:

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Mirenda, P. (1997) *Functional Communication Training and Augmentative Communication: A Research Review*. *Augmentative and Alternative Communication*, 13, 207-225.