

Behaviour And Communication And It's Impact On Relationships And Inclusion

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" approach.

We will always select a method to communicate that is the most efficient and effective. If 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, object cues, 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"
	<i>Note: message should be specific to the function & context of the behaviour</i>

(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.

Functional Analysis Interview

When assessing the behaviour, we need to look for the relationship between the behaviour and the environment in which it occurs.

- assess the function of the behaviour (with at least two observers)
- select an AAC (alternative means of communication for the student)
- indicate the message or behaviour of choice to replace the undesired behaviour
- teach the new method of communicating through repeated trials which occur prior to the escalating behaviour occurring (see preliminary behaviours to escalated behaviour)

The interview should include descriptions of:

- the behaviour(s)
- where/when they occur (situations, activities, people, sensory experiences, and other factors which increase & decrease the occurrence of the behaviour)
- the preliminary aspects to the behaviour (any preliminary communicative behaviours)
- current consequences for the behaviour
- how effective the behaviour is for the person in getting what he/he wants
- some alternatives for the behavior
- how the person presently communicates
- motivators or reinforcers for the person
- history of the behaviour and attempted solutions

When we see predictable behaviour in regular contexts, this is a good indicator that the individual understands cause and effect. Our goal should be to teach the child new skills that will help meet their needs or functions. Functional communication training (FCT) (Durance, 1990, pg. 23), involves both the assessment and function/purpose of the behaviour as well as the teaching of an alternative method to communicate that need.

Motivation Assessment Scale (MAS)

This should be completed by those who know the student best (e.g., family, assistant, etc.) Individuals should list those activities, environments, sensory experiences (light, sound, movement, smells, tactile experiences), and/or people, animals, etc., which are most motivating to the student. We will then try to build these features into activities, or look for potential activities, which already have these features, built into them. This often helps to minimize inappropriate behaviours, as we are addressing the student's needs to attend.

You may conduct a motivational assessment for your student on-line through the

creators' (Durand & Crimmins) website at:

<http://www.monacoassociates.com/mas/mas.htm>

First you must log in with a student ID. Upon answering the questions on a rated scale, you submit your data. You will immediately receive a graded scale regarding the four key areas of function as related to your specific student. There is also a section for further information to assist with interpreting these results.

Instructional or Teaching Techniques For New Appropriate Responses

- Prompt Fading: do not verbally prompt or nag, but use respectful physical prompts to decrease prompt dependency.
- Errorless Learning: it is important that the student not experience the inappropriate behaviour. We want to catch them before it occurs. Look for the preliminary behaviours.
- Instruct in Regular Settings: do not remove the student for instruction, but use the actual functional settings in which the behaviours occur if possible.
- Provide Lots Of Repeated Experiences Or Practices: massed trial will help the student learn the new communicative replacement for the undesired behaviour. Be prepared for an escalation initially until the student learns that the new behaviour does really work.

Resources & References

Durand, V.M. (1990) Severe Behaviour Problems: A Functional Communication Training Approach. NY: Guilford Press. (Motivational Assessment)
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Toward A Functional Analysis of Self-Injury. *Analysis and intervention in Development Disabilities*, 2, 3-20.

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O'Neill, R., Horner, R., Albin, R., Sprague, J., Stoey, K., & Newton, S. (1997) *Functional Assessment And Program Development for Problem Behavior*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole. (Functional Analysis Interview) For purchase, check out Amazon at ...

<http://www.amazon.com/Functional-Assessment-Program-Development-Behavior/dp/0534260225>

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

247 FUNCTIONAL COMMUNICATION TRAINING USING ASSISTIVE DEVICES ...

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We evaluated the effectiveness of **functional communication training** (FCT) as an inter- ... quire students to point to pictures (**Mirenda**, ...

<http://seab.envmed.rochester.edu/jaba/articles/1999/jaba-32-03-0247.pdf>

Center for Evidence-Based Practice: Young Children with ...

The **functional assessment interview** offers an efficient method for getting ... **Functional assessment and program development for problem behavior: A ...**

<http://challengingbehavior.fmhi.usf.edu/fba.htm>

FUNCTIONAL ASSESSMENT INTERVIEW FORM - YOUNG CHILD

File Format: PDF/Adobe Acrobat - [View as HTML](#)

... **Newton, J. S. (1997). Functional. Assessment and Program Development for Problem Behavior**

... E. IDENTIFY THE "FUNCTION" OF THE UNDESIRABLE BEHAVIOR(S) ...

<http://challengingbehavior.fmhi.usf.edu/docs/blankFAI.pdf>

Four Basic Questions To Understanding Behaviours

We need to clarify the factors that may contribute to and decrease inappropriate behaviours. If we can gain some clarity about these factors, we can attempt to build in those components that decrease this behaviour, and try to alter those experiences that may contribute to his inappropriate behaviour. The student's team (particularly the TAs and family who know the student best) should work through the following questions to help address this issue.

1. What Behaviours Does The Student Demonstrate Prior To Inappropriate Behaviour?

If we can identify recognize some of the student's pre-communicative behaviours, in some situations, we may be able to change the situation so as to avoid the escalation of the inappropriate behaviour. The student's teaching assistant needs to focus on giving the student immediate feedback when he/she expresses initial frustration. This may be helpful in preventing escalation, when paired with a response to change the environment or activity.

2. Factors Which Decrease Occurrence Of The Inappropriate Behaviour

Which environments, situations, activities, sensory experiences and people decrease the occurrence of the student's inappropriate behaviour? We want to look to increase activities and routines that have these components, or build some of these factors into potentially functional routines where they don't currently exist. None of these factors may be consistent all of the time. Update the list of motivators for the student as these will likely be included in this list.

3. Factors Which Increase Occurrence Of The Inappropriate Behaviour

Which environments, situations activities, sensory experiences and people increase the student's inappropriate behaviour? We want to try to eliminate these components from the student's schedule. If some of these factors are unavoidable at times, we can at least try to pair some of the positive reinforcers or motivators (from the list above) with these situations. (An example, is the student's teaching assistant involving him with a toy, towel or hand clapping during the group calendar time, which is usually not sensory stimulating enough.)

4. Preventative Strategies

What kinds of preventative strategies and techniques have been most effective in altering the student's inappropriate behaviour, so far? Those who know the student best, will have the most current information (e.g., family and assistants may use different strategies). These strategies should be re-visited each year, as they may change. It is often helpful to break these down into the following areas:

- Strategies to help avoid the behaviour
- Strategies to re-direct the behaviour once you see it coming
- Strategies to deal with the behaviour once it has occurred (i.e., consistent consequences)

Sample Student's Behaviour Analysis

Factors Which Decrease Self Abuse

- give him choices that he wants (everything is going his way)
- don't rush him
- communicate to him through signs about what is happening
- avoid placing him with people he doesn't know
- calming touch, soothing, patting or stroking down his shoulders
- proper communication about what is happening
- being with people he knows and who know him well
- changing the activity accordingly, based on his mood
- having someone who understands his needs

Factors Which Increase Self Abuse

- boredom
- frustration
- lack of communication via signs in his hands
- working with someone new
- not getting his way
- wants his toy and you aren't quick enough getting it to him
- increased seizure activity
- a new seizure medication
- being tired (difficulty sleeping the night before)
- in an unfamiliar setting
- not following routines
- being in pain
- seizure activity increased or seizure medication has changed
- not getting his way
- the activity is carrying on too long
- he needs to go to the bathroom, is we, and people haven't read his "signals" correctly

Behaviours Demonstrated Prior To Self Abuse

- he gets very restless

- he starts wringing his hands
- then puts both hands together and bashes his forehead
- he will start poking his thumb on his forehead then poke his eye
- jaw tightens up

Sample Student's Behaviour Strategies

Preventative Strategies

a) to avoid the behaviour...

- go slow when introducing new people to work with the student
- make sure everyone working with him knows how to communicate fluently with him
- change his activities often so he doesn't get bored (short periods of work time)
- try to maintain good seizure control
- plan a fluid transition time for the student to experience new people, places and activities
- give the student time and respect his own need for his pacing
- keep the student's physical contact to only one person at a time

b) to redirect the behaviour once you sense it is about to start ...

- pull the student's hands down and apart
- stroke with deep pressure down both of his arms simultaneously
- apply deep intermittent pressure on both of his shoulders
- use the student's signs, provide him with choices ("What does he want?")
- catch him just before he hits and change the activity or give him a toy
- provide choices through signs to see what he wants

c) to respond to the behaviour once it occurs (consistent consequences)

- don't reward him with a toy or change of activity
- sign "stop hitting" in his hands (tap on his forehead for the "hitting" sign)
- bring his hands down and hold them in his lap
- wait 5 seconds after he resists to know that he has really relaxed
- stroke him with deep pressure down both of his arms

- apply deep intermittent pressure on both of his shoulders
- use signs to provide the student with choices about what he wants