Dealing with Challenging Behaviors During Speech Therapy Sessions

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The Speech Therapy Solution Webinar

Today We Will Cover...

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- Identifying the cause of the behavior
- Finding replacement behaviors
- Examples and replacement behaviors for common disruptive behaviors
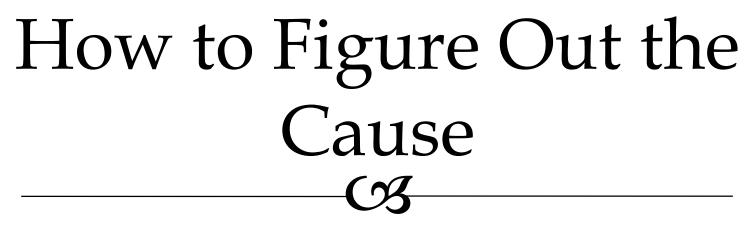- Case Study

Why are you doing that?

❧ The first thing you must do when dealing with unwanted behavior is determine why the behavior is happening.

5 Causes of Challenging Behavior

❧ Challenging behaviors will be caused by one of these things:

1. Attention-Seeking (from peers or adults)
2. To Get Something They Want
3. To Escape from Something
4. To Avoid Having to do Something
5. Automatic Reinforcement (the activity itself is reinforcing, like stimming)

How to Figure Out the Cause

ൟ Do a functional behavior analysis (FBA)

ൟ It helps to have someone else do this (outsider) but you can video tape the session and then watch it afterwards if you're alone

ൟ Analyze what happens right before the behavior, during the behavior, and after

ൟ Describe what the child was doing at all points (like looking to someone for a reaction)

ൟ Think about the outcome for the child (did he get out of what he didn't want to do?) and the responses from others (did the other students laugh)

ൟ Use the data sheet on the following page

Behavior Analysis Data Collection Sheet

Child's Name: _____ Type of Behaviors being Analyzed (or time of day) _____

Instructions: Record behaviors on the data sheet below. Use this information to form a hypothesis as to the function of the behavior and create an appropriate replacement behavior to teach the child. Remember to make it so the replacement behavior gets the need met and the old behavior doesn't work any more.

Antecedent: What happened right before the behavior (include day, time, and setting)	Behavior: Describe behavior and what the child was doing during (looking at anyone for a response?)	Reactions: How did the people around the child react? (Include students and teachers)	Outcome: What happened as a result of the child's behavior? How did the situation change?	Possible Function of Behavior (See below)

Possible Functions of Behavior: **1** = Attention Seeking   **2** = Get something they want   **3** = Escape something

4 = Avoid having to do something   **5** = Automatic Reinforcement (the activity itself is reinforcing)

Look for Patterns

- Collect data like this on several difference incidents
- Look for patterns that may help you decide why each behavior was happening
- Do they all happen at the same time of day or same part of the session?
- What seems to happen right before that triggers it?
- What seems to make the behaviors better or worse?
- Keep in mind there may be multiple causes for challenging behaviors

Step Two: Replacement Behaviors

 Next, find a behavior that will get the same need met but in a more socially acceptable (or less disruptive) manner

It's all fun and games until someone figure out the FUNCTION of your BEHAVIOR!

someecards
user card

Rules for Replacement Behaviors

- **Make it easy:** As easy if not easier than the challenging behavior that the child is currently using. Match it to the child's communication level
- **Make it effective:** It needs to get the need met as well if not better than the current challenging behavior
- **Make sure Everyone Is On Board:** Get the whole team on board so that the child's behavior is responded to the same way in every situation

Replacement Behaviors for Minimally Verbal

 Make sure your replacement behavior lines up with the level of communication that the child typically uses

Child's Name: _____ Behavior Being Analyzed: _____

Instructions: After recording a child's behaviors (including what happens before and as a result of the behavior), come up with a hypothesis (guess) about what the function of the behavior is. Circle the suspected behavior below and choose an appropriate replacement behavior from the list or make up your own. Choose a behavior that will be easy for the child to do but select from as far to the right on the table as the child will be easily able to do. Teach the child the replacement behavior and always respond to the replacement behavior by meeting that need (even if you have to help the child do the replacement behavior) and stop responding to the old behavior so that it no longer gets that need met.

Suspected Function:	Gesture Replacement	Picture Replacement	Sign Replacement	Alternative Comm.	Verbal Replacement
Attention-Seeking	Child places a hand gently on the teacher/adult	Child hands the teacher a picture of a child waving	Child gives the sign language sign for "hi"	Child pushes a button on a talker that says "hi"	Child says "hi" or "can I have a hug?"
Get What Wants	Child reaches for what he wants	Child hands the teacher a picture of what he wants (or a "want" pic)	Child signs "want" or the name of the object	Child pushes a button that says "want" or the name of the object	Child says the name of the object or says "want"
Escape	Child points to a beanbag chair	Child hands the teacher a "break" picture	Child signs "break" or "all done"	Child pushes a button that says "I need a break" or "all done"	Child says "break" or "all done"
Avoidance	Child shakes head "no"	Child hands the teacher a "no thank you" card	Child signs "no"	Child pushes a button that says "no thank you"	Child says "no thank you" or "not right now"
Automatic Reinforce.	Child points to the type of sensory input he needs (choose an activity that will get the sensory need met better than the old behavior)	Child hands the teacher a picture of the sensory input he needs (like a trampoline or chewy toy)	Child does the sign language sign for the type of sensory input he needs (make one up if needed)	Child pushes a button that says what type of sensory input he needs (like "I need to jump" or "I need a hug")	Child says the words for what kind of sensory input he needs (like "bite" for a chewy toy)

Replacement Behaviors for Verbal Children

 If the student is able to adequately communicate his basic wants and needs (functional communication is not the issue), then you'll want to find replacement behaviors that are more complex

 Make sure the new behavior will meet the need of the student as effectively as the old behavior but is less disruptive

Attention-Seeking: Verbal Children

What it looks like:

- Student looks at peers or adults after behaviors to see a reaction

- Student repeats the behavior when others react strongly (laughing or yelling)

- Student seems to enjoy getting in trouble for the behavior (laughing or smiling)

- Ignoring the behavior causes it to escalate until a reaction occurs

Attention-Seeking: Verbal Children

Possible Replacements:

- Teach the child how to use appropriate language to ask to talk with someone or to get a hug

- Give the student a job that will give him more attention, like having him hand out the cards or ask the other students questions

- Let the student be the teacher for a brief time

- Give the student a chance at the beginning of each session to be in the spotlight (tell jokes, do a trick, etc.)

- Use the student as an example for the other students (Joey is going to show us how to do a good /f/ sound)

Trying to Get Object: Verbal Children

What it looks like:

- Behavior results in the student getting something tangible
- Behavior occurs when the item he wants comes into view
- Behavior stops when the student gets what he wants

Trying to Get Object: Verbal Children

Possible Replacements:

- Teach the student the words to say to ask for what he wants

- If the student can't have what he wants right away, use a "first, then" board that says "first…" with a picture of what he must do followed by the word "then…" when a picture of what he wants

- If someone else is using what he wants, have the student place his name or a picture of himself on a velcro strip next to that thing so everyone knows he's next in line (like waiting for a turn on the computer)

Escape Behaviors: Verbal Children

What it looks like:

- Behavior occurs during non-preferred activities
- Child does not end up participating in the task as a result of the behavior
- Behaviors continue until opportunity to participate has passed
- Behaviors will resume if the child is forced to go back to the non-preferred activity
- Child may goof off or try to distract others from the task at hand until it is over

Escape Behaviors: Verbal Children

Possible Replacements:

- Teach student to use appropriate language to ask for a break or to ask for help
- Pre-Teach the task to the student ahead of time so he's more likely to want to participate
- If the student can't take a break yet, create a simple visual or to-do list that will show him exactly what he must do before he can take a break (start with 1-2 items on the list and gradually increase)
- Ask the student to help another student do the task so they are working together
- Simplify the task so he is more likely to participate and then gradually increase the difficulty level

Avoidance Behaviors: Verbal Children

What it looks like:

- Behaviors occur immediately before a non-preferred task or activity
- Behaviors result in the activity being delayed, postponed, or canceled
- If upcoming activity is canceled or student is given another option, behaviors stop
- Child may be goofing off or distracting others to avoid the upcoming event

Avoidance Behaviors: Verbal Children

Possible Replacements:

- Teach the student to use appropriate language to tell someone that he doesn't want to do the activity
- Offer to provide assistance or simplify the upcoming task/activity
- Shorten the duration of the activity at first and then gradually increase time
- Set a timer so the child knows how long he'll have to do the task
- Pre-Teach the task so he's not feeling anxious about performance

Automatic Reinforcement: Verbal Children

What it looks like:

- Student may be fidgeting or squirming in his chair (to get extra input)
- Student doesn't stay seated in his chair
- Student is touching everything on the table (or everyone at the table)
- Student makes sound effects or noises with his mouth
- Student isn't able to focus on the activity you are doing

Automatic Reinforcement: Verbal Children

Possible Replacements:

- Offer a sensory activity at the beginning of each session that will match the sensory input of the behaviors
- Allow the child to participate in the activity while standing up, laying on the floor, or sitting on an exercise ball
- Incorporate movement into the activities you are doing
- Talk about how the child is feeling at the beginning, middle, and end of the session to increase his awareness of his body (how's your engine running?)

Possible Cause/Type of Self-Stimulatory Behavior	Possible Replacement Behaviors
Child Has Been Sitting Too Long	Have child request a movement break
	Offer alternative seating for the child, such as a chair vs. floor, sitting on a pillow, sitting on a small exercise ball, etc.
	Offer child a fidget toy to play with while sitting (something small and non-distracting that can keep his hands busy)
Child is Tired	Offer child a short nap (if possible)
Child is Excited	Replace with clapping hands
	Replace with squeezing hands together
Child is Angry/Upset	Replace with squeezing/biting/hitting a pillow
	Have child request break/go for a walk
	Do Self-Calming Strategies
Child is Flapping/Sensory Input in Fingers	Replace with squeezing hands or pushing hands together
	Offer child a stress ball or squeezable toy to play with
	Replace with child sitting on hands (to feel that pressure)

Child is Rocking/Sensory Input for Balance and Body	Have your child rock side to side instead of front to back. This looks more like swaying along to music than the traditional rocking. It's also easier to keep his eyes on the teacher this way.
	Offer child a big hug, squeeze him tightly all over his torso to get that pressure
	Have child wear a tight vest or shirt. They make special sensory shirts that hug the torso with gentle pressure
	Have your child request a break to go roll on the floor. Or, roll him up in a blanket like a burrito. He may miss a few minutes of whatever you were doing, but it will be worth it if he can focus when he gets back.
Child is Biting Himself/Sensory Input to Mouth	Replace with giving your child something to chew on. They make special jewelry that is designed for children to chew on, even big kids!
	Offer your child a bite to eat or a piece of gum.
	Offer your child a chewy, sour candy. This can alert the senses in the mouth.

Child is Biting His Arm/Sensory Input to Arm	If your child doesn't respond to the mouth techniques, maybe he needs the sensory input in his arm. Try teaching him to squeeze his arm in that place or you can do it for him.
Child is Scratching Himself/Needs Deep Pressure Sensory Input	Try offering your child some deep pressure when he does this. That means, tight squeezes all over his body. You can also have him lay down and roll a big ball over his body. I've even lightly squished a child between two bean bags. Your child will tell you with his actions if he likes it or not. Don't keep trying something he's not comfortable with, but one of them may work.

Case Study

- 6-yr-old Male
- Activity: Circle Time
- Behaviors: When sitting at circle time, student would make sound effects with his mouth while looking around the room aimlessly. He would touch his neighbors, lay down on the floor, sing random songs, and do other disruptive behaviors. The teacher would give him several warnings, each of which would cause him to stop briefly but then he would resume again. He always knew the correct behavior when his teacher reminded him but quickly reverted to the disruptive behaviors.

Case Study

❧ Behaviors Continued: After a few warnings, his teacher would tell him he was being too disruptive and make him sit at the other side of the room. Student would begin making very loud noises and then looking at the teacher to see if she would respond. If she didn't respond, he would begin knocking over furniture until she came over to stop him.

Case Study

Function of Behavior:

❧ Behaviors During Circle Time: Automatic Reinforcement (sensory input)

❧ Behaviors When Removed: Attention-Seeking

Summary: The student wanted to be a part of the group but had a hard time maintaining focus once he was there

Case Study

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Replacement Behaviors:

- ❧ Pre-teaching circle time behaviors and using visual cues to remind him
- ❧ Offering fidget toys or a wiggle seat for extra input
- ❧ Teacher repeatedly brought his attention back to the circle-time activity by asking him questions, saying his name, and including his interests
- ❧ Student was given manipulatives to hold during circle time that related to the circle time activity
- ❧ Student was given extra jobs to keep him engaged
- ❧ Removal from circle was no longer needed once other supports were in place