



INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON COGNITIVE RESEARCH & DISORDERS

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# **How to Manage Behavior in Your Classroom – In Person and Online**

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# Objectives

Understand the A-B-Cs of behavior

- Identify common behavioral triggers
- Identify behaviors and their functions
- Identify common behavioral responses
- Discuss the impact of behaviors in the classroom
- Explore strategies to address student behaviors (online and virtual)
  - Understand rewards vs bribes
  - Examine short-term consequences vs long-term change



# Behavior Defined

## *What is behavior?*

- Human behavior includes **EVERYTHING** that people do!
- Behavior is **ANY** observable or measurable act

## There are many ways to label behavior:

- Appropriate or inappropriate
- Good or bad
- On task or off task

## Common descriptions for behavioral concerns:

- Problem, challenging, maladaptive



# When are Behaviors a Problem?

Behaviors become a concern when they interfere with a student's:

- Learning or skill development
- Play and/or social interactions
- Or are harmful to the student (or others)

**As a teacher -**

*How many times has one student's behavior disrupted the entire classroom?*



# When are Behaviors a Problem?

Think about your classroom (especially if virtual!)

Are there certain students who:

- Require more attention?
- Get away with certain things?
- Do what they want?



# What Can You Do?

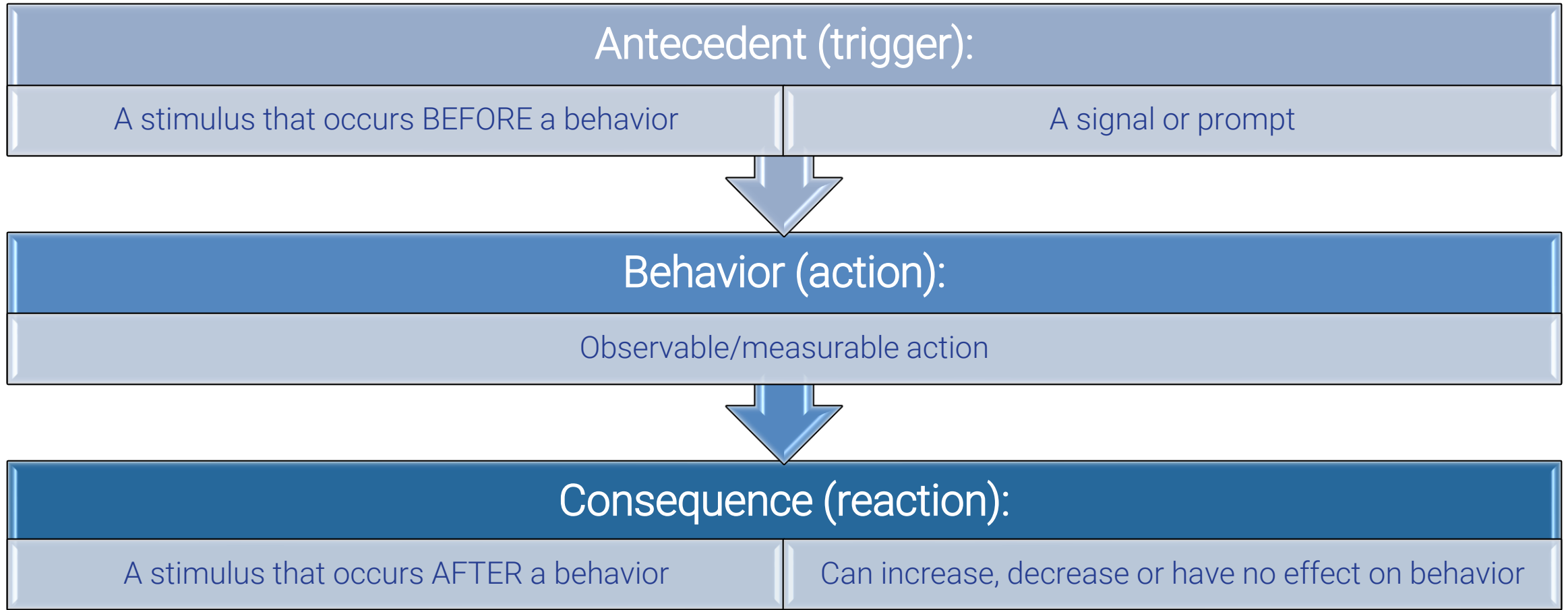
You CAN change behavior!  
But it helps if...

You know the function or trigger

And you know how to react!



# Understanding the A-B-Cs of Behavior



# Identifying Behavioral Triggers

## A little more about the “A” (Antecedent)

A behavior has occurred.... So, where do we start? What do we do?

- Investigate what happened **right before** the behavior.
- Ask the questions: WHO-WHAT-WHEN-WHERE-HOW-WHY

WHO is involved

- Children, siblings, peers, staff, therapists, teachers

WHAT is going on

- What are they doing?

WHEN they are

- Morning, lunch, recess, group work, individual lessons

WHERE they are

- Home (and where in the home), classroom, playground?

HOW intense is it

- Mild, moderate, high; frequent, continuous

WHY are they doing it

- .... Let's look at that further



# Why do Behaviors Occur?

## A little more about the “B” (Behaviors)

Why do students engage in “challenging behaviors”?

**Because it works!**

So let's examine WHY?

- Are they testing limits? Is it a sense of control?
- Do they want something?
- Do they want attention?
- Are they bored?
- Are they frustrated?
- Are they tired? Hungry? Sick?



# Identifying Functions of Behaviors

## WHY are they engaging in behaviors?

### Automatic (Sensory)

- Engaging in behavior because something looks, feels or sounds “good”
- Engaging in behavior to alleviate aversive sensation

### Access (Tangible)

- Engaging in behavior to gain a preferred item or object
- Engaging in behavior to participate in a preferred activity (play)

### Escape (Demand)

- Escaping or avoiding someone/something that is aversive or unpleasant
- Avoiding or resisting a task or activity that is non-preferred or difficult

### Attention

- Engaging in a behavior to bring awareness to themselves
- Engaging in a behavior to seek social interaction with another person(s)

# Identifying Behavioral Responses

## A little more about the “C” (Consequence)

A behavior has occurred... How did YOU respond? How did the student respond?

- Identify what happened **AFTER** the behavior occurred
- Consequences can increase, decrease or have no effect on behaviors, so:
  1. Identify the behavior (B)
  2. Think about what happened right before the behavior occurred (A)
  3. Consider your actions after the behavior (C)

Then ask yourself the question:

*“Has what I’ve been doing been working?”*

# What Can I Do to Improve Behavioral Responses?

- Our actions can increase or decrease behaviors
  - The key is to **INCREASE appropriate behavior** and thus **DECREASE** inappropriate behavior
- Behaviors are learned
  - While managing antecedents can help, this is not as effective
  - We can shape, model, and replace behaviors so our students can make **long term changes**
- But it's not always that easy!
  - Sometimes, as teachers, just need to **SURVIVE** and get through!
  - In the **SHORT TERM**: Set up the classroom, design activities, plan great lessons, ignore attention-seeking behavior...
    - And yet behaviors still occur!

# What Can I Do to Make Behavioral Changes?

Let's talk about consequences (LONG-TERM changes)

- Punishment occurs when a consequence DECREASES the future probability of the behavior it follows
- Reinforcement occurs when a consequence INCREASES the future probability of the behavior it follows
  
- Punishment is AVERSIVE and only used as a last resort!
- POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT is the most effective way to make behavioral changes.

# Examples of Positive Reinforcement

## Edible Reinforcers

Food, snacks, candy, drinks

## Sensory Reinforcers

Massagers, koosh balls, textured toys, tickles, swings, lights, music, BREAKS!

## Tangible Reinforcers

Stickers, trinkets, cards, small toys, school materials, just about any “item”

## Activity/Social Reinforcers

Games, reading, music, playing outside, swinging, special events, PRAISE!

# A Few Words about Bribery

- What is **Bribery**:
  - Is an act of giving money, gifts, or something of value that **alters or influences the behavior** of the recipient.
- Simply put, if a student has **already engaged** in the undesired behavior do not reinforce it by enticing them with something else!
  - Example: **If you stop talking, you can have the iPad FIX THIS**
- What's the difference?
  - Bribery occurs **AFTER** an unwanted behavior has already been happening!
  - Reinforcement occurs **AFTER** a wanted behavior!
    - Example: Completing homework afterschool and the iPad

# What Can I Do to Improve Behavioral Responses over Time?

Base your response or actions on the function of the behavior!

Automatic (Sensory)

- Replace with a more socially appropriate behavior
- Build in activities to your routine (no consequences)

Access (Tangible)

- Work for it! (make sure it is attainable)
- Offer choices

Escape (Demands)

- Work through it!
- Set limits and clear expectations

Attention

- Increase on task attention (praise)
- Reduce off task attention (ignore)



# What Can I Do to Improve Behavioral Responses?

The goal is to make inappropriate behaviors:

**INEFFICIENT, INEFFECTIVE, and IRRELEVANT**

Consistency is key!

Be consistent, clear, and concise

Make sure everyone involved knows about the behavioral plan

Explain the importance to everyone involved

# Know Your Limits!

- Watch out for fatigue, frustration, and lack of follow through
  - YOURS
  - Students
  - Others (family, staff)
- Learn and practice brief relaxation strategies to calm your emotions
  - High arousal and intense emotion increase likelihood of giving in
  - Escape is a cause of behavior for YOU, parents, caregivers, and staff too
- Problem solve and tweak your strategy
  - Don't give up!

# Final Thoughts for Behavioral Strategies in the Virtual World

How do you handle behaviors when you aren't "there"?

- Use the A-B-Cs (What was the behavior? What happened before, What was the reaction?)
- Remember the functions: Automatic, Access, Escape, Attention
- WATCH AND OBSERVE
  - The mute button can be your friend!
- IMMEDIATELY offer praise and attention when students are on task!
  - Give credit to those students who ARE engaging in the classroom activities!
- Be energetic
- Offer choices, build in variety
- Silence can be golden
  - Watch your words (too many, too often)
  - Play the long game!
- Communicate/coordinate with your fellow team members
  - It takes a village!



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**THANK YOU!**

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