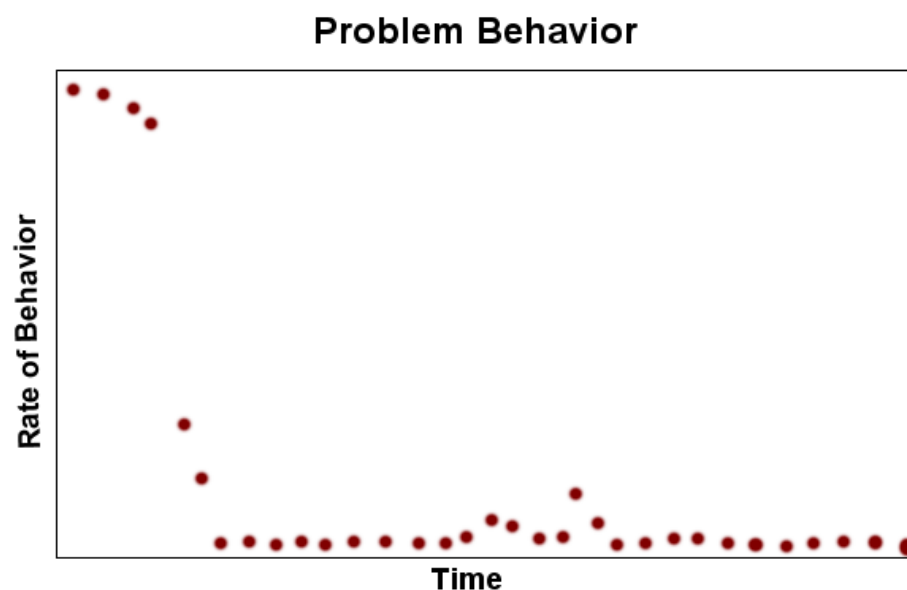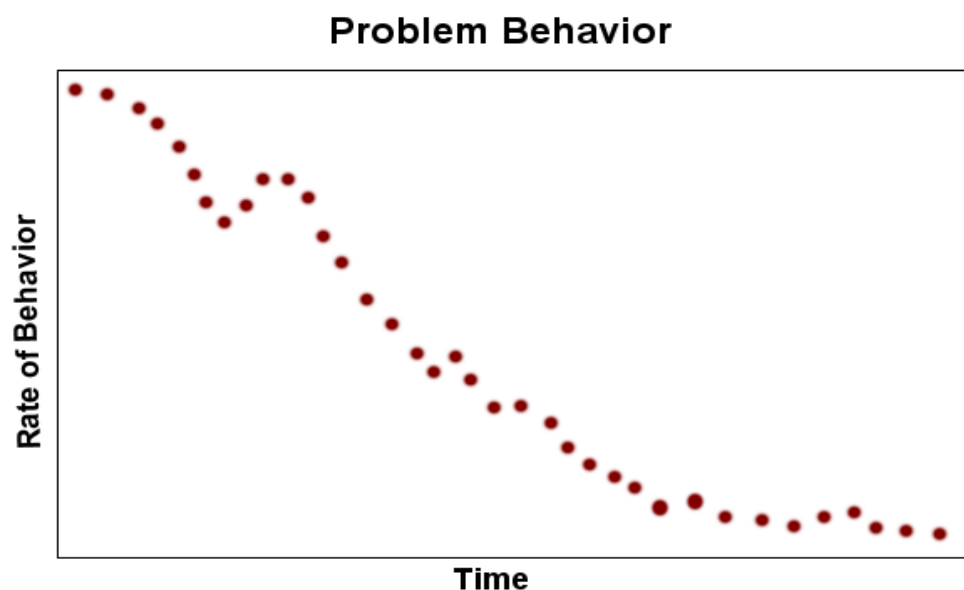# Antecedent Strategies

A Proactive Approach to Reducing Problem Behaviors

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Behavior Change Research

- Historically, emphasized the role of consequences when thinking about the variables that maintain challenging behavior and designing intervention strategies to reduce or eliminate challenging behavior

- Newest Research emphasizes the role of antecedent variables, changing how we think about challenging behavior and meaningful interventions

Problem Behavior

Rate of Behavior

Time

Problem Behavior

Rate of Behavior

Time

Why Antecedent Strategies?

- Alters events prior to the occurrence of problem behavior
- Decrease the likelihood of problem behavior
- Increase the likelihood of desired behavior
- Relatively unintrusive interventions
- Relatively easy to implement correctly
- Require less vigilance from the staff because they are not contingent on student behavior

A-B-C Model

- Distal antecedents

  - Establishing Operations/Setting events

- Proximal antecedents

  - "Triggers"

- Behaviors

- Consequences

Isn't that giving them what they want?

- Maybe, but they are going to get it

  - I repeat: they **are** going to get it

- Ultimately, aren't we there to teach people how to "get what they want?"

  - Pick your battles

  - Set the terms

- You might even get what **you** want

Establishing Operations (EOs)/ Setting Events

- Refer to an event that alters the effect or value of the reinforcer
- These events "set the stage" or help "establish" a mood or internal state in the student that makes the functional reinforcer more or less desirable
- Generally occurs some period of time prior to the target behavior (as opposed to the "trigger")

Setting the Stage

- Structure environment
- Maximize instructional time
- Minimize down time
- Structure transitions
- Teach procedures & routines
- Maximize choice & individual control
- Use visual supports

- Active engagement (vs. passive observation)
- Teach errorlessly
- Teach critical skills
- Environmental engineering
- Treat students respectfully in tone, words, actions

EOs Could Also Involve

- Medications
- Medical or physical problems
- Sleep cycles
- Eating routines & diet
- Daily schedule (predictability & choice)
- Number of people in the environment
- Sensory qualities of the environment
- Staffing patterns & interactions
- Prior negative or positive interactions
- States of deprivation or satiation

Deprivation-related EOs

- What internal state or mood is created when the student is deprived of:
  - Food
  - Fluids
  - Sleep
  - Stimulation
  - Medication
  - Attention

Satiation-related EO examples

- What internal state or mood is created when the student is satiated on:
  - Food
  - Noise
  - Crowds
  - Overstimulation
  - Too much work
  - Repetition

Non-contingent Reinforcement (NCR)

- Provide the "maintaining" consequence at a high rate _before_ the problem behavior occurs
- Independent of the behavior

–For states of deprivation: schedule opportunities through out the day for the student to gain access to the reinforcer

- Must be given non-contingently

–For states of satiation: schedule breaks away from the source of the satiation or take steps to remove the source altogether if possible

EO Manipulation Examples

- Sleep deprived – opportunity to sleep
- Hungry – give food
- Bored – more stimulation
- Attention-seeking – more attention
- Sensory-seeking – scheduled sensory diet
  - All given non-contingently

Interventions for escape-motivated behaviors (R-)

- Eliminate or reduce the aversive qualities of events that establish escape as a negative reinforcer
- Provide escape from task non-contingently
- Scheduled breaks
- Modify the complexity, duration, rate, novelty, etc.
- Curriculum revision
- Intersperse difficult/easy tasks
- Initially eliminate task demands, then slowly reintroduce them
- Stimulus fading
- shaping

What if I can't change the EO or it has already occurred??

- Manipulate those within your control

- Decrease task demands

- Temporarily change expectations

- Increase the availability of powerful reinforcers

- Provide choices

- Neutralizing routines

  - Allow student to engage in a period of activity which is calming to the student to help reduce the influence of the EO

Stimulus Control Manipulations

- Requires identifying "triggers" and stimuli (S_D) that cue problem behavior

- Dependent on "discrimination learning"

– Remove the cue (S_D) or trigger for problem behavior

– Add a cue (S_D) for appropriate behavior

Adding a Cue for Appropriate Behavior

- Teach the appropriate replacement behavior
- Provide prompts to elicit the appropriate behavior
- Visual cues, supports, pictures
- Prompting strategies & hierarchies
- Pre-correction
- Social stories
- Behavior guides
- Cue cards
- Script cards

Alternative Replacement Behavior

- Must be functionally equivalent
  - Must result in the same amount & quality of reinforcement as the problem behavior
- Must be at least as easy as problem behavior for student to perform
- Must be taught
  - Use good, solid teaching strategies such as stimulus prompts, response prompts, continuous reinforcement during acquisition
  - Create teaching sessions & written instructional programs to teach replacement behaviors

Response Effort Manipulations

- Refers to the amount of work that has to be done to get the reinforcer
  - Physical effort
- Complexity of alternative behavior
  - Delay of reinforcement
- Length of time between when the behavior occurs & reinforcement
  - Reinforcement schedule
- Number of times the behavior must occur before getting reinforced

In a Nutshell

- Make it easier to get reinforced for engaging in appropriate behavior than for engaging in problem behavior

- Requires high rates of ongoing reinforcement delivered in the absence of problem behaviors

- Teach an easy, easy, easy functionally equivalent alternative behavior

– Teach it to mastery

– Prompt it's use

– Support the student to use the new behavior

– Reinforce the prompted use of the behavior

Effort of Problem Behavior

- Increase the effort required for inappropriate behavior
  - Move reinforcing item to a high shelf
  - Move student far away from the reinforcing item or source of reinforcement

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Summary

- Avoiding problem behavior is easier than dealing with the problem event
- Set a positive mood where children students can be successful and earn high rates of reinforcement
- Be aware of setting events that set students up for problem behavior
- Try to eliminate or mitigate those setting events
- When you can't control those setting events, reduce task demands for the day
- Stimulus control manipulations
  - Remove cue for problem behavior
  - Add cue for appropriate behavior

Summary

- Make the alternative replacement behavior easier to use to get reinforcement than the problem behavior

- Prompt the alternative replacement behavior before problem behavior occurs

- Be sure the reinforcement for the alternative behavior is the same as (and as good as) the reinforcement for problem behavior