Working Successfully with Students who Engage in Challenging Behaviours

Utilising Functional Behavioural Assessment to understand the function of a student's challenging behaviour and develop targeted, proactive interventions
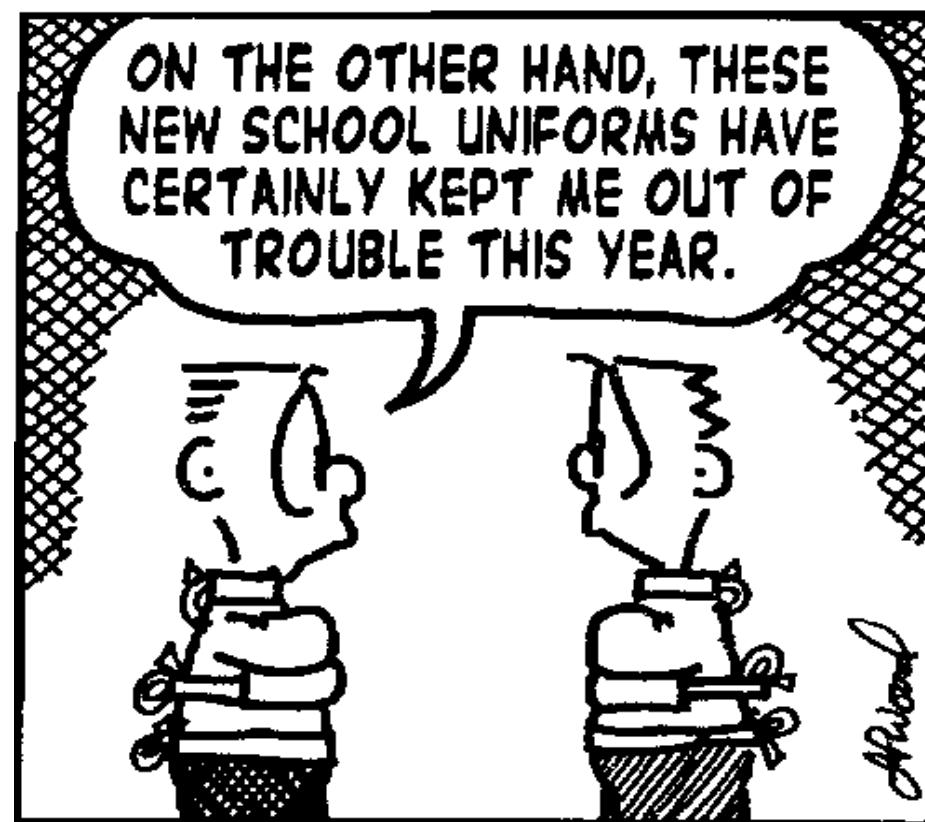
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Government of South Australia
Department for Education

Can you help me, Mrs. Martin? This wasn't covered in any of my education courses.

SIPRESS

ON THE OTHER HAND, THESE NEW SCHOOL UNIFORMS HAVE CERTAINLY KEPT ME OUT OF TROUBLE THIS YEAR.

Today's Plan

- ## Understanding Challenging Behaviour
  - Functional Behavioural Assessment (FBA)

- ## Addressing Challenging Behaviour
  - Proactive Approaches
  - Reactive Approaches

- ## Key learning outcomes
  - *Understand the key functions behind behaviours and how to identify the function of student's behaviours?*
  - *Understand how FBA and behavioural hypotheses support the development of targeted, proactive approaches to reduce challenging behaviours*

Things to Keep in Mind about Challenging Behaviour

- All behaviour serves a specific function/purpose for that person, no matter how maladaptive or ineffective it appears to others

- It is the person's best attempt to manage the situation they are in

- What might be unacceptable behaviour in one setting may be reinforced in another (i.e. home vs school environment)

" IF THE ONLY TOOL YOU HAVE IS A HAMMER, YOU TEND TO SEE EVERY PROBLEM AS A NAIL.

– ABRAHAM HAROLD MASLOW
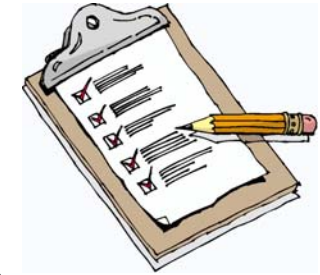
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Key Functions of Challenging Behaviours

- Common reasons for challenging behaviours

  – *Avoid/escape a non-preferred person/activity*

  – *Obtain a preferred object/activity*

  – *Initiate or maintain a social connection*

  – *Express distress, emotion or sensory need*

  – *To "save face"*

What is an FBA?

- A Functional Behaviour Assessment (FBA) is a broad term used to describe a number of different methods that allow practitioners to identify the reason a specific behaviour is occurring

"People do not engage in self-injury [or] aggression... solely because they have... developmental disabilities. There is logic to their behaviour, and functional assessment is an attempt to understand that logic"

- O'Neill, Horner, Albin, Sprague, Storey, and Newton (1997, p. 8)

FBA Process

1. Define the behaviour

2. Collect & Analyse the Data

   – Where is this behaviour happening? Where is it not happening?

   – How often is the behaviour occurring?

   – Who is around when it occurs?

   – What tends to happen right before and right after the behaviour?

   – What is a more acceptable behaviour that can be used as a replacement?

3. Develop hypotheses to explain the behaviour

4. Develop a plan

Behavioural Hypotheses

- Hypotheses are developed to describe the function of a challenging behaviour in the context of its triggers and outcomes

  ABC: Antecedent (trigger) – Behaviour – Consequence

- Hypothesis format

  When ___*(insert setting event)*___ the **student will** ___*(insert challenging behaviour)*___ **in order to** ___*(insert intended outcome/function)*___ .

- Example

  – *When given* <u>*numeracy tasks*</u> *Tom will* <u>*yell & swear*</u> *in order to* <u>*get sent out of class and avoid the task*</u>

- Hypotheses are tested and used to guide interventions

Hypothesis Informs Intervention

Example:

- *At the end of a computer/iPad activity Tim will refuse to stop in order to …*

  - Avoid interactions with others
  - Avoid the next task which is non-preferred
  - Appear strong and defiant in front of his peers
  - Continue with the task because he believes he will never get another turn
  - Continue with one task he feels a sense of mastery/confidence with

Each of these potential functions would require a different focus for effective intervention

Addressing Challenging Behaviours

- **Proactive Interventions**: *When the behaviour is not occurring*
  - Environmental Modifications to support success
  - Skills Development to increase success

- **Reactive Interventions**: *When the behaviour is occurring*
  - Restore safety

- Seek to be 90% proactive

Managing Challenging Behaviours Before They Occur

"Changing the world to suit the unique needs of the student"

- Creating an environment where challenging behaviours are less likely to occur (also called antecedent management)

- Creating an environment where pro-social behaviours are more likely to occur

- Doesn't require a relationship with the student

- These strategies are likely to be helpful for many students

IF YOU CHANGE NOTHING, NOTHING WILL CHANGE.

thingsweforget.blogspot.com

PROACTIVE

Managing Challenging Behaviours Before They Occur

"Changing the world to suit the unique needs of the student"

Examples

- ## Physical Environment
  Classroom layout & seating; light; temperature; noise; visual clutter; access to exits; cushions etc.

- ## Social Environment
  Structured vs unstructured play; scaffolding of play; composition of social groups; collaborative vs competitive play

- ## Language & Communication
  Role modelling; visual prompts; breaking down instructions into smaller steps; speak slower; give time to process instructions

- ## Timetables & Activities
  Movement/mindfulness/interoception activities; structure of the day; length of activities

PROACTIVE

Managing Challenging Behaviours Before They Occur

"Equipping the student with the skills they need to succeed in the world"

- What skills we prioritise depends on the current skills and goals of the student. Agreed in partnership with the student, family and other service providers

- Educational
  – Functional Literacy and Numeracy

- Wellbeing
  – Build resilience and growth mindset
  – Coping skills and emotional regulation

- Life Skills
  – Social skills (with adults & peers)
  – Independent Living (cooking etc.)
  – Community engagement (e.g. transport training, shopping)
 – Healthy sleep, exercise & diet habits

PROACTIVE

Responding to Challenging Behaviours When They Occur

- Ideally responding to challenging behaviour should only be 10% of the intervention. Focus on being proactive

- The goal at this time is to restore safety and well-being for all involved

- When a student is engaging in challenging behaviour it is not an optimal time for teaching/learning
  - When everyone is calm and safe, that is when learning can occur

- This doesn't mean there are no consequences for inappropriate behaviour

- Management of Actual and Potential Aggression is a comprehensive, evidence based package for responding to challenging behaviours
  - Used by Dept for Education, DCP, SA Health, Autism SA etc.

Sharing & Feedback

- With the person next to you share one piece of learning from the workshop that you will be taking away?

- Questions

PARENT-TEACHER NIGHT

WARREN

"You must be Timmy's dad. I'm Timmy's teacher."
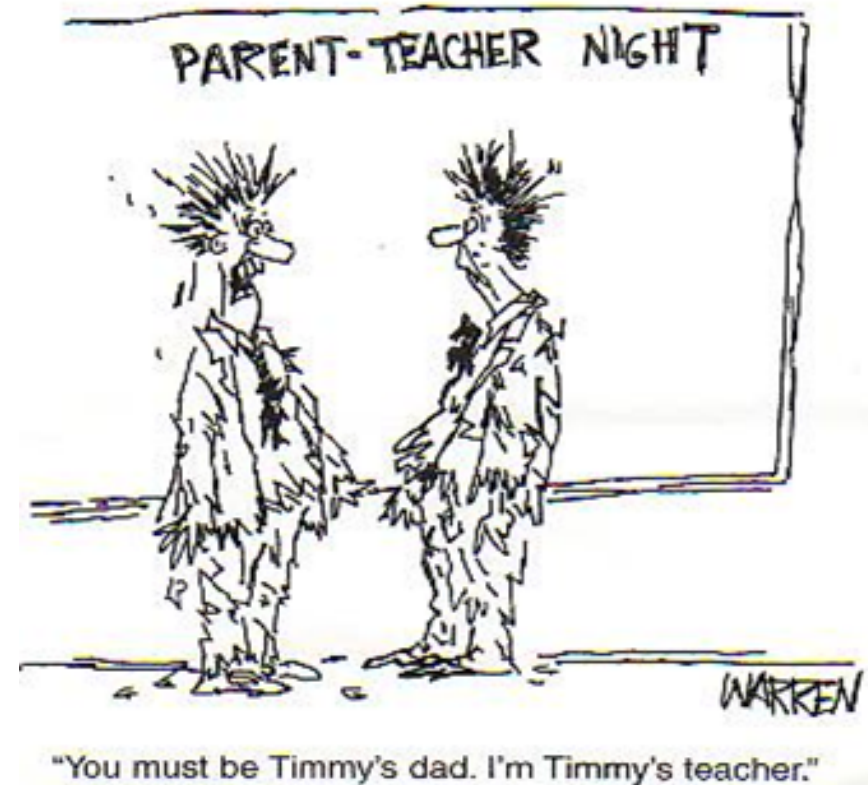
*The best behaviour management occurs when the challenging behaviour is **not** happening.*

The best personal support occurs when the challenging behaviour is present.