Principles and Practical Strategies for Managing Disruptive Behavior in the Classroom

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Overview
- An introduction to disruptive behavior
- Pinpointing and understanding problem behavior
- Antecedent strategies to prevent problems
- Consequence strategies to shape behavior
- Classroom-wide behavior intervention

Keep an open mind!
"If you keep on doing what you've always done, you'll keep on getting what you've always got."  
W.L. Bateman

### Disruptive behaviors
- Occur in any child, regardless of learning or mental health condition
- May be acute or chronic
- May be internally and/or externally triggered
- More commonly occur among:
  - Children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
  - Children with oppositional defiant disorder
  - Children with unaddressed learning problems
  - Children with other mental health conditions (e.g., tics, anxiety, pervasive developmental disorders)

Why target disruptive behaviors in class?
- Interferes with the child's learning
- Interferes with others' learning
- Disrupts social development
- Reduces instructional time
- Stressful
- Drains resources
- Negative modeling for other students
- Not having an effective strategy can maintain or exacerbate disruptive behaviors
Behavior problems in the classroom

- Disrespect
- Interrupting
- Teasing
- Invading other’s personal space
- Refusal to do work
- Non-compliance
- Leaving seat
- Leaving classroom

Inadequate or inconsistent performance relative to the teacher’s expectations

Principles of Behavior Change

- People learn by observing the behavior of others and the consequences of that behavior
- Children's behavior can be shaped, modified, and developed when the variables affecting that behavior are understood and effectively altered
  - Necessary condition which a teacher must accept for effective behavioral intervention
- Contingencies (behavior → consequence) are learned faster when they are explained clearly and implemented consistently

Principles of behavior change

Antecedents and consequence interventions are designed to change the rate at which a behavior occurs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Antecedents</th>
<th>Behaviors</th>
<th>Consequences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What happens before a behavior</td>
<td>Appropriate or inappropriate behavior</td>
<td>Things that happen after behavior occurs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The principles in pictures
**ABC model of behavior in the classroom**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Antecedent</th>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Consequence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher: Who can tell me the weather today?</td>
<td>Jalen calls out</td>
<td>“Jalen, what did I just say about raising your hand?” (Irritated)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher: Raise your hand if you know today’s weather?</td>
<td>Jalen calls out</td>
<td>Ignores Jalen and calls on Jack, whose hand is up</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Pinpointing and understanding the problem: Don’t put the cart before the horse**

**You can’t address all the problems at once!**

**Identifying a problem behavior**
- Specific
- Observable
- Measurable

**Which of these behaviors are specific, observable and measurable?**
- Difficulty sitting still
- Has an attitude
- Is very nice
- Talks back to teachers
- Interrupts others’ conversations
- Is rude
- Hits other children
- Curses
- Does not listen
- Does not behave
- Leaves room without permission
- Does not complete assignments
- Follows directions

**Assessment**
- Understanding why a behavior occurs facilitates a more targeted and effective intervention
- Function-Based Assessment
  - Systematic procedure to identify problem behaviors and their potential controlling variables
  - Precisely describes the problem behavior(s) (PB)
  - Specifies the circumstances and times the PB occurs
  - Identifies the consequences that maintain the PB
  - Conducted via direct observation or indirect assessment
**Function of behavior**

- To get something you want
  - Adult attention
  - Peer attention
  - Tangible object, event or activity
  - Automatic positive reinforcement
- To avoid/escape something you don't want
  - A task that is too long
  - A task that is too difficult
  - A social situation
  - Automatic negative reinforcement

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**Putting the pieces together**

- When Dominic is asked to start his math worksheet (Antecedent), he begins to make jokes, get out of his seat, and/or talk to his peers (Behavior) in order to avoid doing the task and to gain peer attention (Consequence).

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**Optimal interventions for behavior change**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Antecedents</th>
<th>Behaviors</th>
<th>Consequences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clear Expectations</td>
<td>Target behavior</td>
<td>Praise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modifying the environment</td>
<td>Pro-social or Problematic behavior</td>
<td>Active Ignoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stimulating the curriculum</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tangible Rewards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitions</td>
<td></td>
<td>Positive Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anticipate Challenges</td>
<td></td>
<td>Logical Consequences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Time Out</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Antecedent interventions: The prevention is in the planning**

- Clear Expectations: Direct Instructions
  - **Positive**
    - No yelling indoors or stop shouting
  - **Direct**
    - Can you have a seat please? or... Let's clean up now.
  - **Specific**
    - Be careful!
  - **One at a time**
    - Put away your pencil and push in your chair and go in line for recess.
  - **Logical Consequences**
    - Please put away your pencil. Great listening! (praise)
  - **Time Out**
    - Please sit down in your chair or...

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**If it's not a choice, don't ask. Tell.**

- Please use your indoor voice
- Please sit down in your chair or...
- Please put your book back in the cubby.
- Use both hands to carry the tray.
- Please put away your pencil.
- Please go in line for recess.
Clear Expectations: Direct Instructions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rule</th>
<th>Wrong</th>
<th>Right</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explained before given or after compliance</td>
<td>Please put away your crayons. Why? Because it’s time to go to art. But I can use my crayons in art! No, they will get mixed in.</td>
<td>It’s time to go to art, so please put away your crayons. But I can use them in art! Ignored. To other students: Good job putting away your crayons guys! Now they won’t get mixed in with Ms. Schultz’s crayons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prompt</td>
<td>(Sternly) Johnny, you’d better walk this time!</td>
<td>Johnny, please walk in line quietly like you did yesterday.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Given only when necessary</td>
<td>Put on your coat. It’s a little cold outside; would you like to wear your coat or your sweater?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More about Direct Instructions

- Wait for compliance
  - 10 seconds of silence
- Prompt
  - May be preceded by getting the child’s attention (e.g., make eye contact)
- Don’t give direct instruction unless you have to – save them for when you most need compliance

Clear Expectations: Rules

- Positively stated; incorporate student input
- Limited to 3 – 6
- Reflective of common classroom, home and community expectations
  - Compliance, raising hand and waiting to be called on, being on time, and transition behaviors)
- Steps: establishment, review, evaluation, compliance
- Provide rationale for rules during establishment procedure
- Explain consequences to breaking rules before you need to give them

Sample Classroom Rules

- Speak respectfully to peers and adults
- Complete work/participate in class
- Raise hand and wait to be called on before speaking
- Follow instructions with one reminder
- Hands and feet to self
- Use materials and possessions appropriately

Sample Rules for Group Discussions

- Remove problematic objects
- Assign seats
- Reduce distraction (e.g. unnecessary materials)
- Provide for different instructional modalities (group, 1:1)
- Create organized charts and timelines

Modify the physical environment
Additional antecedent strategies
- Appropriate curriculum
  - Is the work too long, too boring, too hard?
  - Break tasks into subparts, stimulate, behavioral momentum
- Transitions
  - Make them predictable, advance warning
  - Review steps
  - Add excitement to transitions (e.g., special job, positive attention)
- Look for patterns and anticipate difficulties
- “Down time is bad time”

Consequences

Dialogue between patient and his teacher
- Teacher: do you know what you did wrong?
- Student: Yes
- T: Good. If you do it again, there is going to be a consequence. Do you understand?
- S: Yes
- T: So tell me what I said
- S: If I misbehave again, there’s going to be a consequence.
- T: Exactly!
- S: What’s a consequence?

Attention: A potent antecedent and consequence
- Teacher attention is a reward for nearly every student
- Positive teacher attention improves the relationship between teachers and students
- Students often respond to attention given to others
- Negative teacher attention is often preferred over no attention

Praise
- Praise: a positive evaluation of a behavior
- Improves relationship, increases self-esteem
- Most of us overestimate the amount of praise we give
- Recommended rate of praise
  - 5 praises for every 1 negative comment
  - 20 or more praises per hour

Unlabeled vs. labeled praise
- Unlabeled praise: global, nonspecific
  - Examples: Awesome! Love it! Great, keep it up!
- Labeled praise: behavior specific
  - Tells student exactly what you want to see more of
  - Increases chance that child will repeat desired behavior
  - Examples: Awesome job finishing your worksheet! Thanks for listening! Great job following directions!
### Praise the Opposite

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem Behavior</th>
<th>Opposite Behavior</th>
<th>Labeled Praise</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Defiance</td>
<td>Following Directions</td>
<td>“Thanks for listening”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hitting</td>
<td>Being Safe with Hands</td>
<td>“Good job of being safe with your hands”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking with friend</td>
<td>Focusing/completing seatwork</td>
<td>“You did a great job completing your assignment this period!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loud talking</td>
<td>Using an indoor voice</td>
<td>“I love the way you are using an indoor voice”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Excerpts copyright McNeil et al.

### Selective Attention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good Behavior</th>
<th>Poor Behavior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attention</strong></td>
<td><strong>Criticism Trap</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praise</td>
<td>Active Ignoring + Selective Attention</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

McMahon & Forehand, 2005, Courtesy of Verduin

### Active/planned ignoring

- No attention is provided upon the occurrence of the target behavior
- Effective ignoring requires awareness of one’s own verbal and non-verbal behavior
  - No eye rolling, sighing, glaring, frowning
  - Neutral tone of voice
  - Do not make eye contact
- Watch situation peripherally
  - As soon as child begins behaving appropriately, even for a second or even accidentally, give enthusiastic labeled praise

Excerpts copyright McNeil et al.

### To ignore or not ignore: that is the question

- Whining
- Negotiating
- Calling out
- Asking repeatedly after being told “no”
- Daydreaming
- Nosepicking
- Noncompliance
- Stalling or dawdling
- Forgetting work
- Doodling
- Dangerous behavior
- Physical aggression
- Leaving the building, or other self-endangering behavior
- Repeated noncompliance
- True distress

### What to expect at first

- Beware of the extinction burst
  - Example: broken soda machine
- Behavior will eventually stop if ignoring is consistent and rewards/attention can be gained another way
- But...misbehavior is reinforced if ignoring is abandoned

### Selective attention in action

1. Use Active Ignoring for off-task or disruptive behavior
2. Scan the area for good behavior, then praise or describe it
3. Keep an eye open for positive/neutral behavior in target child
4. Give ample positive attention for the new behavior

Courtesy of Verduin
Sit and Watch

- Calmly label the target behavior that occurred
- Direct child to location away from the group
- Direct child to sit and watch how the others engage in the replacement behavior
- After two minutes, approach the child to discuss the behavior using a teaching moment

Teaching Moment

- Purpose
  - Teach personal responsibility
  - Cause and effect relationship
  - Makes use of behavioral rehearsal
  - Follows the script of questions carefully
- Steps
  - “Why are you in Sit and Watch?”
  - “What should you have done instead?”
  - “Show me how you do that.”

Classroom-wide Behavior Plans and Daily Report Cards

Classroom-wide behavior management

- Ingredients for a successful program
  - Feasibility
  - Identifiable criteria
  - Data monitoring
  - Reinforcement

Sample class-wide criteria

- Following classroom rules
  - E.g. keep hands/feet safe, raise hand, speak respectfully, follow directions, use materials and possessions appropriately
- Complete work and participate in class
- Complete homework

Point system

- Interval-based positive reinforcement
  - Students earn reinforcement for every period of time that criteria are met
  - Points, tickets, etc., awarded at the end of each monitoring period
- Frequency-based response cost
  - Students lose points or receive a consequence for each instance that a specified negative behavior is exhibited
- Points/tickets used to purchase prizes or privileges at specified periods (daily or weekly)
- Requires recording each student’s points on monitoring sheet, setting point goals, etc.
Independent Group Contingency
- A child or selected children’s behavior determines the consequences for the entire group
  - Example: Each morning, the teacher draws 2 names from a hat. If the selected students have completed their homework, then everyone receives a prize
- Possible way to motivate entire class while minimizing work for teacher

Interdependent Group Contingency
- The entire group must reach criterion before the group can gain access to the reinforcement
  - When all class members turn in their book reports, the entire class earns a pizza party

The Good Behavior Game
- Divide the class (e.g., two teams, tables, etc)
- Identify either a positive behavior to increase (e.g., homework turned in) or a negative behavior to decrease (e.g., call-outs)
- Keep a public score on the blackboard or chart
- The winning team gets the prize
- A variation is that both teams can win if they reach specified criteria

The Daily Report Card (DRC)
- Provides a way to identify, monitor and change a child’s problematic behaviors
- AKA “Behavior Chart” or “Sticker Chart”
- Simple and easy to implement
- Can be transported among classrooms or activities
- Based on principles of behavior change
  - ABC model, positive reinforcement, shaping
- Developed collaboratively

Keeping score for the GBG
Key components of a good DRC

- Target behaviors
- Monitoring periods
- Reinforcers

Target Behaviors

- Specific
- Observable
- Measurable (can be assessed reliably)
- Positively stated whenever possible
- Attainable about 70-80% of the time

Common target behaviors

- Contribute appropriately to class discussion
- Write down homework assignments completely
- Follow directions with up to two reminders
- Attempt half of all math problems
- Check work over before asking for help
- Remain seated during independent seat work unless asking teacher first by raising hand
- Use inside voice level during snack time
- Start seat work with only one reminder
- Ignore teasing during circle time

Monitoring Periods

- Discrete periods of time
  - Good: Once per day
  - Better: Two or three times a day
  - Best: Once per hour or activity
- More is not always better
  - Easier to track patterns
  - Better data (more reliable due to memory and saliency effects)
  - Easier for child to get a “fresh start”
  - Number of periods should be manageable by teachers/aides
  - Too many periods may be a distraction to child

Daily Report Card

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target Behavior</th>
<th>Art</th>
<th>Computer</th>
<th>Math</th>
<th>P.E.</th>
<th>Science</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Speak respectfully to teachers and peers</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No/A</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No/A</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Raise hand and wait to be called on before speaking</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No/A</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No/A</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No/A</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No/A</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comments:

Number of Yeses: ____________
Number of Possible Yeses: _________
Daily Percentage: _________
Home Reward Earned: Yes / No

Level 1 80-100%
Level 2 66-79%
Level 3 50-65%
Level 4 40-55%
Level 5 20-39%
Level 6 0-19%

Sample DRC
Rewards for DRC

- Share progress at regular intervals
- Give tokens (points, stickers, $s, tickets)
- 70-85% = reward, 85-100% = extra/better reward
- Reward can be given at home or at school
- School-based rewards
  - Immediate and consistent (within monitoring period)
  - Available and appropriate
  - Material, privilege, or activity

Wrap-up

Consultation

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

Questions and Comments?

Center for Cognitive Behavior Therapy

- Expertise in the following clinical areas:
  - Tics and Tourette syndrome
  - Trichotillomania
  - Anxiety and obsessive-compulsive disorders
  - Attention deficit hyperactivity and disruptive behavior disorders
  - Social skills deficits

- Clinical and consultation services include:
  - Cognitive behavior therapy
  - School-based consultation
  - Workshops for parents, educators, and mental health professionals
  - Independent evaluations

- To make a referral, schedule an in-service, or learn more:
  - Call: 732-994-3456
  - Email: meir@CenterForCBT.org
  - Visit: www.CenterForCBT.org