

E-book: A Beginning Step to
Using Functional Behavior
Assessment and Behavior
Intervention Plans

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Children with autism and related disabilities sometimes present challenges in the area of behavior. When this occurs, the adults in that child's life begin to investigate methods and techniques to encourage the best in their child. Conducting a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) and a developing a good Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) are great places to start. This e-book will examine the beginning stages of the process for conducting a Functional Behavior Assessment and writing a Behavior Intervention Plan. This e-book encompasses only a ***small amount*** of the work and detail that goes into the FBA and BIP process. This book is meant to get you started with the process of looking at, analyzing, and providing strategies for behaviors.

What is a Functional Behavior Assessment?

A Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) is a process in which you observe the individual and take data in order to find out **why** the person is engaging in the behavior. Since it is thought that all behavior communicates something and all behavior is purposeful, the theory behind a Functional Behavior Assessment is that the behavior serves a **function** for that person. By conducting a Functional Behavior Assessment, the observer tries to identify the function that the behavior serves. They want to find out why the person is doing the behavior. In order to come up with a behavior plan that works, one must first **correctly** identify the **function**.

FBA's take time to complete because you need to observe the individual and you need to ask many questions to find out if there are any patterns in the person's behavior. For example, do they engage in the behavior with one person, but not another, or does the behavior only happen in the AM or on the bus? These observations, when written down and data is collected, can sometimes help to identify a pattern of behavior, hence, offering an idea of the function that behavior serves for that person.

What Tools Can be Used?

When conducting a FBA several assessment tools may be used. Data collection sheets of various styles, motivation assessments, direct observation, interviews, and questioning of the adults who work closely with the person, are a few tools that can be used.

Where Do I Start?

In order to identify the function of the behavior, you must first start by specifically identifying the **target behavior** in question. It is not enough to say the person is aggressive or

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has outbursts. These descriptors are too vague. When identifying the target behavior, you will need to be extremely specific.

Examples of **target behavior** descriptions which are vague and *not useful*:

- aggressive
- has outbursts
- runs away all the time
- screams at adults
- grabs food all the time
- off task

Examples of **target behavior** descriptions which are *very specific and useful*:

- hits other students and adults when asked to do work tasks
- screams, cries, kicks and throws items when upset
- leaves the group activity, without adult permission, several times a day
- uses a loud voice to communicate with adults when he is corrected
- takes food from others plates during lunch, snack and at home
- plays with fingers or pencil during work time

How Do I Record Data?

Once you have specifically identified the target behavior or behaviors, you can begin to start observing for that behavior. If you have a person with many behaviors, it is helpful to only work on a few behaviors at a time, in order to be truly effective. This means, that some behaviors will be ignored while you are working on your targeted behaviors. To observe and keep good data, you will need to determine what type of data sheet you will need. Using the examples of specific target behaviors above, here are some identified some options for

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collecting data on that behavior:

- **hits other students and adults when asked to do work tasks** ~this behavior may require some type of data collection which focuses on frequency. You will want to record how many times a day this behavior occurs. It would also be helpful to you to include the time and activity each hit occurs. If you have an individual that hits "all day" you will want to record each and every hit.
- **screams, cries, kicks and throws items when upset**~this behavior may require some type of data collection which focuses on intensity or duration. You may want to record how long the screaming, crying, kicking, throwing episodes last or you may want to record how intense they are. For example, sometimes the person may cry, but other times, he/she may cry, kick and throw items. The activity and time the behavior happens is also important to record.
- **leaves the group activity, without adult permission several times a day**~this behavior may require some type of data collection which focuses on frequency. You will want to record how many times this behavior occurs during each activity. A data chart which has the daily schedule and requires the adults to place tally marks each time the child leaves that activity. If you have an individual that leaves the group activity several times a day, you will want to record each and every time.
- **uses a loud voice to communicate with adults when he is corrected**~this behavior may require some type of data collection which focuses on finding out why he is "yelling." An ABC data chart may be handy for this. With an ABC data chart you can identify the Antecedent, Behavior and Consequence (ABC) for the behavior. With an ABC data chart you would record what happened right before the behavior (ex. what did the teacher say when correcting his work), then you record the behavior (**uses a loud voice to communicate with adults when he is corrected**), next, you record the consequence. The consequence is simply whatever happens after the child engages in the behavior (ex. does the adult leave him alone, does the adult say something back, or does the adult ignore the yelling.)
- **takes food from others plates during lunch, snack and at home**~this behavior may require some type of data collection which focuses on frequency. You will want to record how many attempts the person has at taking food as well. It may be helpful to collect data on what type of food the child is trying to take and what is already on his/her plate. In addition, you may want to record the ABC's of this behavior also, because you will want to know what the reaction of the adult is after the child takes the food. This will be important in determining your function of the behavior.
- **plays with fingers or pencil during work time**~this behavior may require some type of data collection which focuses on duration or intervals. You will want to record how many reminders the adult needs to provide the child before he completes or focuses on the work or how long the child waits from the time the direction is given until he/she starts working.

What are the Functional Reasons for a Behavior?

The FBA assumes that there is a function for each behavior. Generally, there are four functions that are used. However, some people choose to add a few other options for functions, and that is fine. For the sake of this book, however, we will focus on the four most commonly identified functions.

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Individuals tend to engage in a behavior because they usually find one of the following items reinforcing:

- **Escape/Avoidance of a Situation**
(EX. Work, Uncomfortable clothes, loud noise, touching water)
- **Gaining Attention**
(EX. from the adult, from another child)
- **Gaining a Tangible Item**
(EX. food, toy, book, teacher's materials)
- **Sensory Input**
(EX. mouthing objects, spinning items)

How Do I Know What the Function Is?

There are a few ways to find out the function. The most useful way is to take data and analyze the data. Also, there are some motivation assessments out there which will ask a series of questions and have you tally the answers to provide a pretty good prediction of the motivation or function of the behavior. We are going to examine some observational items you can look for to help in the process of determining the function for a behavior. The chart below provides some indicators that the person might show you for each function. (This is not an exhaustive list, as there are many other indicators for each function.)

<u>Escape Function</u>
<i>Some Indicators of escape/avoidance reinforcement are:</i>
The individual engages in the behavior when a task is presented.
The individual engages in the behavior when a new activity begins.
The individual engages in the behavior when a stimuli <i>they</i> view/perceive as aversive is presented.
The behavior ends when the student is allowed to leave the activity.
<u>Gain Attention Function</u>
<i>Some Indicators of attention gained reinforcement are:</i>
Attention (words, eye contact, body language) reliably/usually follows the behavior.
The individual looks at or approaches a caregiver before engaging in the behavior.
The individual smiles just before engaging in the behavior.
<u>Gain a Tangible Item Function</u>
<i>Some Indicators of access to a tangible item reinforcement are:</i>
The individual's behavior ends when given the item or activity.
The individual asks for/requests the item.
The individual's behaviors occur after it is clear that they cannot have the item they want.
The individual's behavior occurs when the item is not presented fast enough.
<u>Gain Sensory Input Function</u>
<i>Some Indicators of sensory reinforcement are:</i>
The individual would engage in the behavior even when other people are out of the room.
The individual appears to be engaging in the behavior because they need sensory input (ex. Pushing up against others, mouthing objects, squeezing others, banging tables, hands in ears, rolling on the floor, running around the room, getting up out of seat, etc.)
The individual appears to be enjoying the behavior, not aware of others around them, not being presented with a work activity, and not attempting to gain access to something.

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I have Identified the Function. What do I do Next?

Next, it will be time to identify the preventative strategies needed to keep the child from engaging in the behavior. A list of some preventative, positive supports for individuals is in the following chart.

- Classroom that is highly structured
- Consistent routines for all activities throughout the day
- Pre-made and prepared activities with all materials ready
- Pre-assigned roles and responsibilities throughout the day for staff members
- Pre-determined areas for activities (so that students will know where to go)
- Limited auditory distractions- limit music playing in the background
- Limited visual distractions (few hanging items) Proximity control (staying close by) Visually labeled areas of the classroom
- Clear expectations expressed by using picture icons or visual signs or written words
- Use of visual schedules for various activities
- Individual /Personal schedules to allow for independence and ownership
- A daily class schedule which promotes movement throughout the day
- Neutral voice tone
- Tone of voice -try whispering to calm the atmosphere
- Few/limited words to express what you want the student to do
- Gesture/model along with verbal language
- Provide visual cues along with or instead of verbal language
- Offer a less favored activity first, then a highly preferred activity
- Relocate the activity or people if a problem behavior keeps happening in the same area or with the same person
- Provide highly motivating activities to help the student make it through a difficult activity
- Removal of problem items before the student enters the room (ex. Soda cans, water bottles)
- Change to positive body language- try not to stand over the student or present negative body language (ex. Folded arms, frustrated facial expressions)
- Awareness of sensory issues in the child's environment and a respect for the student that the sensory input may be causing a problem or may be painful for that student
- Decrease of difficult tasks by decreasing in numbers, time, requirements or difficulty
- Provision of a slight physical prompt, if needed, to make the task easier
- Access to highly preferred items for positive behavior
- Use of visual cues to show the child what reward they will get for positive behavior
- Make other school members and the principal aware of your plan

After you have identified the function or at least have a good idea of what you think the function of the behavior may be, then it will then be time to come up with some solutions to addressing the target behavior. Depending on the function of the behavior, your response will be different.

For example, if the student's behavior is maintained by gaining attention for the behavior, you and your team will have to stop providing attention for that inappropriate behavior. Another example might be if a student is using a behavior because he wants to escape a task, you and your team may have to figure out a way to make the task easier and provide him with a break (escape) before he takes it upon himself to take the break. You can always add on more time or work gradually. For sensory maintained behaviors, talk with the Occupational Therapist to see if they have some ideas for you. If not, you can provide the input the child needs on a regular basis throughout the day. If a student's function is determined to be their access to a tangible item that they want, you and your team can work with the student to teach him or her to request the item in an appropriate manner opposite from the inappropriate way of behaving.

Each of these suggestions on the following page is only one of many possible solutions for a Behavior Intervention Plan. Please know that this is only a small portion of what there is to know regarding interventions. With any Behavior Intervention Plan, it will be important to inform other staff members in the school and family members about the techniques you will be using, so that they are not inadvertently hurting the plan. The chart is on the next page.

A Few Intervention Ideas

If the Function is	Try one of these options.
Escape or Avoid a Situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put in place Positive Behavior Supports • Provide a scheduled "escape" before the student engages in the behavior • Decrease the difficulty of the activity, then gradually increase the difficulty • Teach the student to request a break appropriately • Do not stop the activity because of the behavior
Attention from Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put in place Positive Behavior Supports • Do not provide attention for inappropriate behavior (no eye contact, no verbal comments, neutral body language) • Assist the student into a safe situation without verbal comments • Provide an over abundance of attention on a scheduled basis for appropriate behavior and reward for appropriate behavior
Gain Access to a Tangible Item	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put in place Positive Behavior Supports • Teach an appropriate way to ask for the item or activity • Teach the student to "wait" using a wait card, timer, or first-then board • Use visual supports to show the student when he or she will get the item or activity or to show the item is no longer available
Sensory Input Gained from Behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put in place Positive Behavior Supports • Talk with an Occupational Therapist • Provide appropriate sensory input before the student needs it or provide it on a regular basis • Provide an alternate behavior that may give the student the same type of sensory input

What is The Behavior Intervention Plan?

A Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP or BP) is a written list of strategies and supports for an individual which encourages appropriate behaviors and discourages inappropriate behaviors. A Behavior Intervention Plan is created AFTER a FBA is conducted which helps identify the [function](#) of the behavior. A BIP, or set of strategies, should be written for each behavior. This is because each behavior may serve a different function or motivation for the student, therefore, [your response](#) should vary based on the function of the behavior. The BIP should include the child's name, the [specific target behavior](#), the [predicted function](#) (based on your data collection from your FBA), strategies to [increase appropriate behaviors](#), strategies to [decrease inappropriate behaviors](#), materials and supports needed to implement the BIP, and skills to be taught to the student, in order for him or her to demonstrate appropriate behaviors.

What would one Look like?

The following pages offer samples of Behavior Intervention Plans. Each school system has their own standards and forms for creating the BIP. Check with your school system first to see what format they use. In these samples, you will see heavy emphasis placed on the strategies to increase appropriate behavior. This is because you will want to put in place as many preventative strategies as possible, so the behavior does not happen. Consequently, the strategies to decrease behaviors will be the responses and antecedent changes you will use to decrease the likelihood of the behavior happening again.

SAMPLE

Behavior Intervention Plan "Planner"

Target Behavior: Leaving the group during a group activity.

Possible Function: **Escape behavior to avoid demands** and avoid teacher instructions.

Strategies to Increase Appropriate Behaviors:

- visual personal schedule
- mini-task schedule for each activity
- rearrange tables and chairs
- place a staff member behind the student
- place toys on the table as an incentive to stay seated. Fade them later.
- reinforcement schedule with a reward for the student for remaining seated for X number of seconds or minutes

Strategies to Decrease Inappropriate Behaviors:

- 3 step prompting to bring them back to the table (Tell. Model. Assist)
- eliminate or limit verbal comments for inappropriate behavior

Skills to be Taught:

- use of personal schedule
- functional communication training to request a break or an activity
- how to use the mini-task schedule

Supports Needed:

Staff, visual supports for schedules, incentive box or toys, reinforcement schedule and preferred items

SAMPLE

Behavior Intervention Plan "Planner"

Target Behavior: Refusing to sit on the toilet independently.

Possible Function: **Sensory**. Not aware of the need to go.

Strategies to Increase Appropriate Behaviors:

- visual task analysis in the bathroom area
- use pants with elastic waistband instead of zippers
- visual timer to time student's time on the toilet
- "Good Job" sign for success
- preferred items box in bathroom to keep the student in the bathroom area
- Social Story (made famous by Carol Gray) about bathroom expectations or the story can be used to ease the student's fears about the bathroom area

Strategies to Decrease Inappropriate Behaviors:

- planned ignoring of protests to sitting on the toilet
- guided prompting to help the student follow through
- keep the student distracted with preferred activities while they are waiting for the timer to go off
- work on one skill at a time—first sitting on the toilet for a period of time

Skills to be Taught:

- waiting
- sequencing

Supports Needed: timer, sign, Social Story, pictures related to toileting, plastic box, preferred items for the student, time

SAMPLE
Behavior Intervention Plan "Planner"

Target Behavior: Dropping to the Floor (no aggressive behaviors included) for attention.

Possible Function: **Attention** from the adult.

Strategies to Increase Appropriate Behaviors:

- visual personal schedule
- mini-task schedule for each activity
- place toys on the table as an incentive
- give the child something to carry
- give them a job to do between activities to keep focused
- sing on the way to the next activity
- praise the students who walk to the activity without dropping

Strategies to Decrease Inappropriate Behaviors:

- do not call the child's name after he or she has dropped
- do not talk to the child after he or she has dropped
- hold the child's hand and wait for him or her to get up (this has taken up to 20 minutes or longer for some people. However, may take about a week or longer to change the behavior.)
- do not make eye contact with the child during the intervention
- do not talk to others about the child's behavior while you are working with the child
- keep a calm, neutral body tone and try not to talk
- when the child stands up, walk them to the area in which they are supposed to be and proceed with the lesson. Try not to mention the inappropriate behavior they just displayed.

Skills to be Taught:

- picture recognition
- use of schedule

Supports Needed: Staff, visual supports for schedules, incentive box or toys, and preferred items

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Behavior Intervention Plan “Planner”

Target Behavior:

Possible Function:

Strategies to Increase Appropriate Behaviors:

Strategies to Decrease Inappropriate Behaviors:

Skills to be Taught:

Supports Needed:

Best Wishes on your journey with your FBA and BIP. For more information, strategies, free trainings, free teaching materials, and other supports for teaching children with autism, go to

www.autismclassroom.com .

References

www.autismclassroom.com

www.pbis.org

<http://www.wrightslaw.com/info/discipl.fab.starin.htm>