

Thinking About, and Responding to, Student Behavior

Presented by:

Kris Collins, MEd, NBCT

District Behavior Specialist

SHS, Renaissance, DeBerry, Walsh, Warner, Harris, Balliet, Pottenger, and Brunton



Session Goals

- Learn about "problem" behaviors and why they occur
- Learn a new way to think about and work with "problem" behaviors
- Discuss why and how to partner with school staff

What is Behavior?

- ALL BEHAVIOR IS COMMUNICATION.
- Behavior is the observable response to an individual's internal and external experiences.
- Behavior is an outward demonstration of the body's internal processes, perceptions about their environment, emotions, thoughts, and intentions.
- Often, caregivers and educators build interventions (responses) around what we see, and what we believe the intention to be, rather than what lies beneath.



Switch our Lens from "Dealing With" Behavior to "Responding To" Behavior

- When we see a behavior that is problematic, we typically ask: How do we get rid of it?
- What would happen if we moved towards: What is the behavior telling us about the child?
- A Trauma Informed Response dictates that we acknowledge that the student's (mis)behavior is the body's response to stress. It is imperative that we address the stress to change the behavior. Instead of thinking, "What is wrong with you?" We should think, "What happened to you?" Additionally, a responsive approach leads us to wonder what skill deficit is causing the child to exhibit this behavior.
- As we become detectives and determine what the stressor is that is resulting in a "negative" behavior, we can put interventions in place that address the stress and/or the lagging social/emotional skill. When we do that, a natural result should be a reduction/elimination of the behavior.



Paradigm Shift...

- Emphasis is on **problems** (and solving them) rather than on behaviors (and modifying them)...
 - REMEMBER: Concerning behavior is simply the signal by which a child communicates that they are having difficulty meeting certain expectations
 - Behaviors are not the only observable, objective, quantifiable data...**unsolved problems** are too
 - This requires us to ask different questions



Paradigm Shift Part 2....

- The problem solving is **collaborative**, not unilateral
 - Something you're doing **with** the kiddo rather than to them
 - You're still an authority figure when you're solving problems collaboratively...and the kiddo is "taking responsibility" and being "held accountable"
 - Caregivers are off the hook for ingenious solutions
 - Why? Because it is collaborative!

Paradigm Shift – Part 3

- The problem solving is **proactive**, not reactive
 - Unsolved problems are highly predictable, if we answer two questions:
 - Why do some kiddos respond so poorly to problems and frustrations?
 - Answer: Because they're lacking the skills to respond more adaptively
 - When do kids exhibit concerning behaviors?
 - Answer: When they're having difficulty meeting certain expectations
 - Intervention can now be largely **proactive**
- When developing and implementing interventions for children, we need to:
 - Address the **NEED** rather than the behavior.
 - The NEED is most often a lack of skills, or an unsolved problem.

Examples...

- Examples of Lagging Skills:
 - Executive Function skills
 - Language processing/communication skills
 - Emotion regulation skills
 - Cognitive flexibility skills
 - Social skills
 - Empathy
 - Appreciating how one's behavior is affecting others
 - Resolving disagreements without conflict
 - Taking another's perspective
 - Honesty
- How to get to unsolved problems?
- Ask the kiddo:
 - I've noticed..... what's up?
 - What are people getting on your case about?
 - What are you getting in trouble for?
 - Why do you think that is?

A Moment to Check In...

Are there any problem behaviors that you are seeing at home that you want to discuss through the lens of lagging skills???



Jayden – A Case Study

- Jayden and his family recently moved. They were living with his grandmother who died. Because of the move, Jayden had to change schools. Jayden has been at his new school for 6 weeks. Jayden has an IEP due to a Developmental Delay that impacts his communication, attention, and social skills. The behavioral challenges that were identified by the school staff were: wandering around the classroom, not following directions, touching peers, and environmental aggression. Today Jayden punched a classmate and the principal called home to speak with Jayden's caregiver.

Case Study

How can the caregiver and Principal work to uncover Jayden's Lagging Skills and put a plan in place?



Jayden – A Case Study ...Continued...

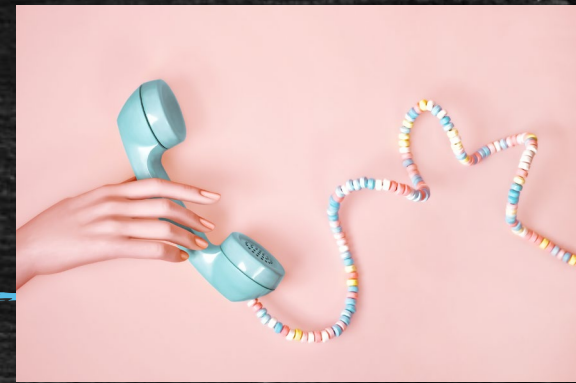
▪ School Interventions:

- Take a Break Card and access to a break area within the classroom
- Visual reminders on his desk (coping skills, executive function skills, functional communication skills)
- Check in with preferred staff in the morning to set goals, remind and reteach expectations, review incentive(s) for the day. Check out at the end of the day.
- Incentive Plan (point sheet, token board, etc.)
- Social Skills/Functional Communication Skills Groups with SAC
- Individual Counseling with SAC to practice skills
- "Lunch Bunch" to practice social skills with peers
- First/Then language – offer Choices
- FBA/BIP

▪ Home Interventions:

- Individual and/or family therapy
- Organized/Supervised play dates to practice social skills with peers
- Incentive plan (point sheet, token board, etc.) with rewards and consequences for behavior at school and/or completion of routines/chores
- Visual reminders/checklists of routines that Jayden struggles with such as: morning 'getting ready' routine, or bedtime routine
- Take a Break Space where Jayden can go when feeling overwhelmed
- Practice learned skills with caregiver(s)
- First/Then language (first dinner, then dessert)
- Offer Choices

Communication with School Staff



- Who calls you?
 - Teacher
 - Counselor
 - Behavior/Autism Specialist
 - Principal/Assistant Principal
 - ETL
 - School Psychologist
- Purpose of the phone call(s)
 - Discuss and collaborate on addressing "problem" behaviors
 - Share what the child did well
 - Gather information
 - Offer support (referrals)
 - Schedule meetings
- Caregivers
 - Inform school staff of what works well at home, and ask them what is working at school.
 - Inform staff of any known triggers.
 - Inform staff of any changes that are causing the child stress, anxiety, and/or trauma.
 - Inform staff of any health related changes

Sources:

Beyond Behaviors. Using Brain Science and Compassion to Understand and Solve Children's Behavioral Challenges. Mona Delahooke, PhD. 2019

Advanced Training in Collaborative & Proactive Solutions: Moving From Power and Control to Collaboration and Problem Solving. Ross Greene, PhD. 2021

When little people
are overwhelmed
by big emotions,
it's our job to share
our calm, not join
their chaos.

L. R. Knost

