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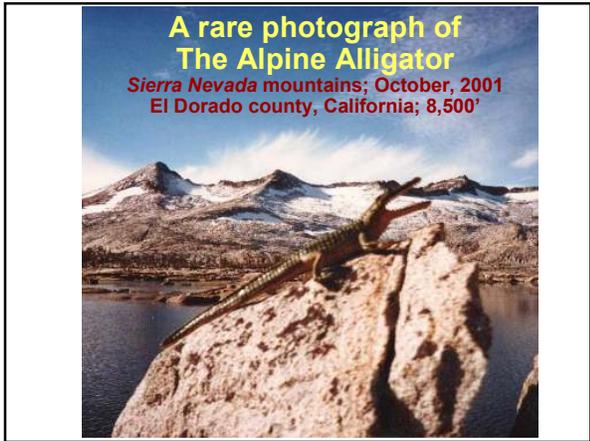
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**Positive Behavior Support:  
Roots, Ruts, and Recipes**

Glen Dunlap  
University of South Florida  
Reno, NV

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**Site of the USF-Reno Campus**



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**Glen in some serious snow and cold  
(note: this is *not* Florida)**



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By the way,  
moving to Reno is not the same as  
“retiring”

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**A Little Background**

Positive Behavior Support

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**Positive Behavior Support**

- A broad approach for organizing the physical, educational, social, systemic, and logistical supports needed to achieve an improved quality of life, while reducing problem behaviors that interfere with desired lifestyles.
- PBS is relevant for multiple levels of analysis and application:
  - Individual supports
  - Larger units (classes, schools, programs, etc.)

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**Some Key Features of PBS**

- Applications of social and behavioral sciences
- Practical, multi-component interventions
- Data-based accountability
- Focus on meaningful, lifestyle outcomes
- Incorporation of systems change to promote durability
- Research-based (data-based) strategies

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## A Nutshell History of PBS

- Early 1980s --- Intensive advocacy related to civil rights for people with severe disabilities
  - Deinstitutionalization; community inclusion
  - Anti-aversives
- Early 1980s --- Seminal research and conceptual frameworks regarding functional properties of problem behavior...
  - Functional analysis and functional assessment, and educational-communicative interventions
  - Giving us tools to address problem behaviors without relying strictly on consequences (such as punishers)

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## Mid-1980s

- Development & promulgation of policy statements – prohibition of aversives and promotion of community inclusion and positive intervention strategies
- Federal support for research and training on positive (nonaversive) approaches
  - RRTC funded in 1987
    - Led to numerous state PBS teams – and a training team network - the forerunner of APBS

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## 1990s

- 1990 - “Positive behavior support” appears in literature for first time, along with a definition and list of key features
- Early 1990s --- expansion from severe disabilities to numerous additional populations
- Mid-1990s --- expansion from individual applications to larger units of analysis
  - Most notably.... SW-PBS

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## 2000s

- Further expansion and dissemination of PBS practices
- Establishment of numerous PBS projects and networks
- Text books, manuals, DVDs, research reports, web sites, and syntheses of PBS research
- Development of disciplinary infrastructure

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## Positive Behavior Support: A Quick Status Check

- 1999 - *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*
- 2003 - APBS ---- 5<sup>th</sup> International Conference (2008)
- Well over 7100 schools participating in SW-PBS
  - OSEP TA Center on PBIS
- Most states have PBS initiatives
- Google --- "Positive Behavior Support" yields 3,370,000 results (3-24-08)
  - OSEP TA Center on PBIS; **APBS**; Arizona PBS; Florida PBS; "Baby behavior" Center; Michigan PBS Network; ....
  - Majority of listings are legitimate, high-quality sites

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## Irrelevant Transition Slide



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# ROOTS

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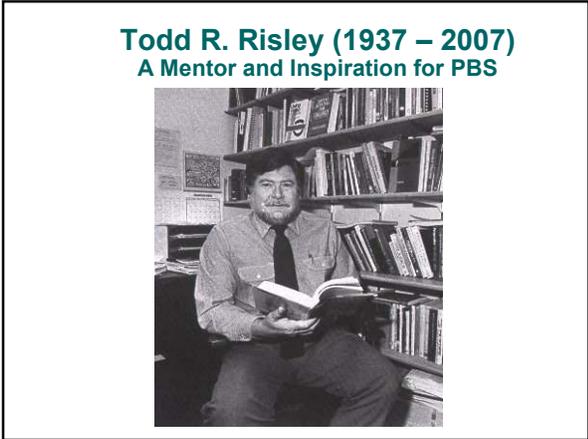
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## Life Arrangements

- Reconceptualizing behavior support as occurring at a larger lifestyle level
  - Where and how a person lives
  - Nature and quality of daily routines
  - What a person does in the context of work, play and social interactions
- Quality of Life as not just a desired outcome; but also as an “intervention” – a positive behavior support

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### Todd's Cabin, on Risley Mountain, Alaska



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### Emergence of PBS

- Mid-1980s – about 20 years ago
- Convergence of 2 major forces
  - (1) **The Vision; the Values.** Civil rights movement --- manifested as disability rights movement. Rights to:
    - Participate in community
    - Be free from dehumanizing interventions (e.g., aversives)
  - (2) **The Methods; the Tools.** New research and perspectives on problem behavior
    - Functional equivalence and problem behavior as communication
    - Functional assessment and functional analysis
    - Intervention emphasizing (a) instruction and (b) environmental (antecedent) design

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### Applied Behavior Analysis: A Parent of PBS

- ABA gave PBS:
  - A strong conceptual orientation
  - A set of useful methodological techniques and principles
  - A set of powerful intervention and assessment strategies
- ABA and PBS have many commonalities, as well as some clear distinctions
- ABA is manifested in different ways
  - Some are quite different from PBS
  - Some have great overlap and are essentially indistinguishable from PBS

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**An Early Model of Applied Behavior Analysis  
(Exemplified by M. Wolf and T. Risley)**

The Roots of  
Positive Behavior  
Support

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**1. Focus on Practical Solutions to  
Serious Human Problems**

Strategies that *can* be  
used to help people  
develop better ways  
of living

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**2. Quest for Parsimony**

Messages of  
Research Should be  
Simple and Direct

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**3. Quest for Meaningful Impact**

To Benefit Individuals in Life Altering Ways; and/or To Benefit Large Numbers of Individuals Simultaneously

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**4. A Commitment to Placing Solutions Above the Strictures of Science**

For example, research designs should conform to the real world circumstances, rather than vice versa

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**5. Emphasis on Ecological Validity**

"Solutions" in analog contexts are NOT solutions to real human problems

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## 6. Commitment to Collaboration

Ideas and solutions are social, communal phenomena that are unlikely to be devised by researchers alone

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## 7. Ideas are More Important than Ideologies

Must always be open to potentially useful perspectives

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## A Dynamic Model of Problem Solving

- Seven features that characterized an early model of ABA;
- and are also key characteristics of our approach called PBS.
  
- These features are central to our Roots.

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### Irrelevant Transition Slide



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## RUTS (or Risks)

Some tendencies  
to avoid

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## E.V.I.L

- E** Egregious Exaggeration
  - \* Extreme overconfidence, overstatements
- V** Vanity (and arrogance)
  - \* Sure we're pretty; but we're not perfect
- I** Insularity
  - \* Need to be aware/respectful of other approaches
- L** Lethargy (and complacency)
  - \* There is too much to do to accept the status quo

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## Avoiding RUTS

Stay focused on:

- Big vision and values --- a commitment to using our knowledge to help produce good lives over the long haul
- Data --- be wary of seductive practices that aren't supported by evidence ---- it is good to explore; it is not good to engage in unfounded fantasy when it is people's lives we are talking about
- A positive, constructive approach to serious human problems --- be wary of distractions and be wary of disputes that don't ultimately mean very much
- Our roots

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## A few relevant quotes

- "...with malice toward none, and with charity toward all" ---- A. Lincoln
- "It is possible to disagree without being disagreeable" ---- B. Obama
- "If this is coffee, please bring me some tea; but if this is tea, please bring me some coffee" ---- A. Lincoln

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## Another Irrelevant Transition Slide (Confined for 2 weeks in a mountain cabin by a major blizzard)



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# Recipes

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## 1. Create Useful Systems of Data Collection and Utilization

Todd Risley's motto:  
"Do good, and take data"  
An adjustment to Todd Risley's motto:  
"Do good, and collect - and use - valid data constructively"

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**"Just because something is measurable, doesn't mean it is the key issue"**

Art Stafford,  
Letter to *Time* magazine on an unrelated topic,  
March 10, 2008

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## Progress can be difficult without the right measures

- Consider SW-PBS
- \*\*\* and “Office Discipline Referrals” (ODRs)
- Consider Systems Change and Services for Students with Autism
- \*\*\* we don’t have measures that are valid or that are actually used at the school or district level

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- A huge priority for PBS is investment in the development and deployment of feasible, meaningful measures with which to make informed decisions
  - If something is worth working for, it is worth measuring
  - The presence of the right measure is a facilitator; the absence is a barrier
- As our friend Abraham Lincoln aptly put it:  
*“Give me 6 hours to chop down a tree, and I will spend the first 4 sharpening the axe”*

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## 2. Promote Innovation – with data

- Applications of PBS with different and challenging populations
  - Psychoses; Obsessions; Compulsions; Dual diagnoses; Bi-polar disorders; Addictions
  - Juvenile offenders; Children in the child welfare system; Children in transition to adulthood
- New interventions and multi-component strategies
  - e.g., behavioral, educational, psychopharmacological; activity regimens; TM; etc.
- New variables related to major challenges --- “scaling up;” integrity of implementation; sustainability

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### 3. Invest in APBS

- APBS is the infrastructure of the PBS approach
- APBS is gaining strength, stability, and maturity
- APBS can be enormously helpful to all of us
  - Awareness, advocacy and dissemination
  - Training
  - Networking
- APBS can be our propeller

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### 4. Keep an Eye on the Big Picture

- The purpose of PBS is to facilitate the acquisition and maintenance of an improved quality of life
- We are on the right road, but there is much we have yet to learn --- so we should approach our work with energy, confidence, and optimism --- but also curiosity, ambition, and humility
- The ROOTS of our problem solving approach, brought to us by our pioneers, such as Todd Risley, are worth remembering and embracing.

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### So Thanks, Todd For your essential contributions to PBS



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**And thanks, also, to all of you who are here to continue the process of improving PBS**



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**HAVE A GREAT CONFERENCE!**



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**I'm Done --- Thanks**



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