



# PBS & Autism: Research, Expertise and Stakeholder Values & Preferences

Tom Tutton APBS 2020

# Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect)



**Autism specific service provider. Support people across the age and autism spectrum at any point through their life**

- **Diagnosis**
- **Early Intervention**
- **Education**
- **Individual & Family Support**
- **Employment**
- **Leisure & community**
- **Research**
- **Autism friendly environments**





## APBS EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE INFORMATION

**Evidence-based practice in Positive Behavior Support is defined as the integration of rigorous science-based knowledge with applied expertise driven by stakeholder preferences, values, and goals within natural communities of support**

APBS Approved Definition March 26, 2013



**Sackett *et al* (1996)**

# Best Research Evidence



- 1. Broad search: Very few specific papers**
- 2. Select a paper and follow links: A few more**
- 3. Select an autism strategy and link to PBS & vice versa**

**“Are there behavioral interventions that are uniquely identified for, and effective with, young children with autism?”**

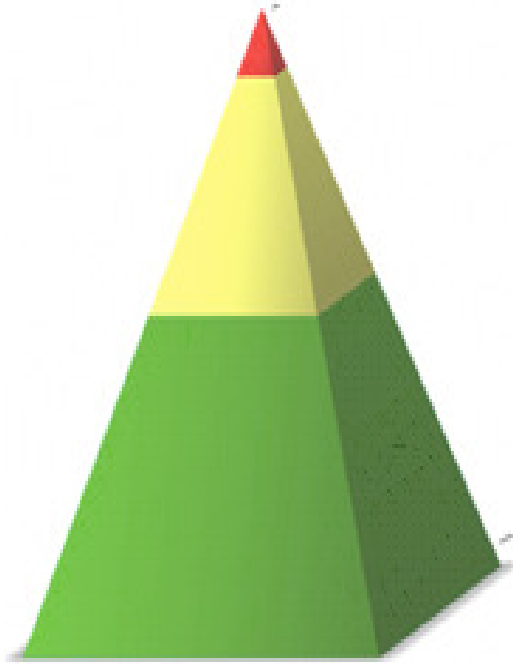
***“This paper [did] not identify any type of intervention that is **uniquely** effective with young children with autism”***

**Organise environments that minimise aversive events, maximise access to rewarding activities and outcomes**

- (a) a high level of child engagement**
- (b) access to preferred activities and rewards**
- (c) consistent & predictable system of visual scheduling**
- (d) continual access to typical peers**
- (e) an immediate and effective system of communication**

**Horner, Carr *et al* (2002)**

# PBIS adapted for autism



**Tier 3**: More intensive, comprehensive & individualized wraparound interventions

**Tier 2**: Quick response PBS interventions (a) using FBA to design a behaviour plan (b) implementing plans during ongoing routines

**Tier 1**: Address the core strengths & support needs of autism (a) organise a high-quality 'autism friendly' environments (b) arrange the environment to support positive behaviour (c) develop communication & social skills as part of the core curriculum

? Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI)

Neitzel (2010)

## Loman, Strickland-Cohen & Walker (2018)

**Use principles of Universal Design for Learning to support participation**

- **Multiple means of representation (visual supports)**
- **Multiple means of expression (Augmentative Alternative Communication)**
- **Multiple means of engagement (Systematic instruction & individualised reinforcement)**

***“Designing & posting behavioral expectations with clear language and visuals may be beneficial to all students and staff in prompting positive behaviors”***



# 1:1 Structured / Visual Supports

**Structured / Visual supports are strategies to increase independence & success through individualised structure**

**= Physical organisation, routines, schedules, work systems, visual structure**

- ✓ **Proactively address antecedent conditions that may be stressful or induce challenging behaviour e.g. verbal overload, unpredictability or sudden change**
- ✓ **Persistently available visual cues increases independence in meeting positive behavioural expectations or replacement behaviours**

**Kidder & McDonnell (2017)**

# 1:1 FBA & Social Stories

**Brief functional analysis to help develop a Social Story™ that matched the function of the target behaviour for two boys on the autism spectrum**

**FBA based Social Stories can be**

- **Effective on increasing replacement behaviours**
- **Support maintenance of skills**
- **Preferred by people using the social stories**

*Pane et al (2015)*

**Clinical Expertise**

**PBS is one of 8 elements of an autism specific relationship based approach**



✓ **Consistent & predictable system of visual scheduling**

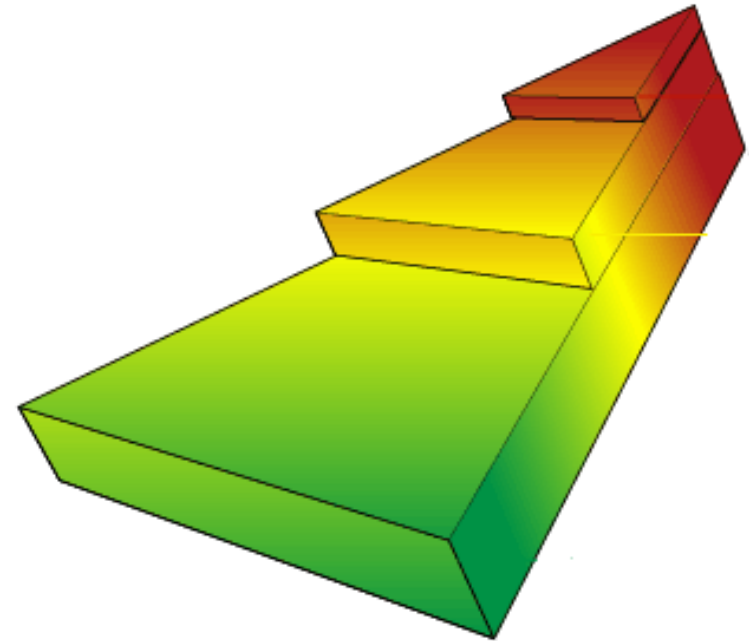
# Tier 1 adaptations

Mainstream transition model

All students have an Individual Plan

- Quality of Life
- Strengths & Interests
- Communication
- Sensory
- Emotional Regulation

Whole school visuals &  
Structured Supports



# Strengths & Interests

- ✓ A high level of student engagement
- ✓ Access to preferred activities and rewards

**The deficit perspective has dominated autism**

**In mainstream neuroscientific research, any difference is considered a potential deficit. The majority of research studies (50%) focus on deficits with 38% 'mixed' and 11% strengths based**

**Low expectations lead to low outcomes. Opportunities are overlooked e.g. only 5 of 137 adults used a savant skill to find employment** Howlin (2009)

# Everyday & Exceptional Skills

- **Memory for facts & figures**
- **Visual perception & processing**
- **Aptitude for Technology**
- **Attention to Detail**
- **Humour**
- **Fair & just**
- **Expertise in preferred interest**
- **Logical thinking**
- **Ability to think differently**
- **Persistence**
- **Ability to Focus**

**Memory**

**Athletic or coordination**

**Music**

**Sensory perception**

**Mechanical / Visuospatial**

**Reading**

**Art / Drawing**

**Computation / Calculation**

*Exploring Giftedness and Autism - A study of a differentiated program for autistic savants. Dr Trevor Clark (2016) Routledge*

# Sensory

- ✓ Organise environments that minimise aversive events
  - ✓ Access to preferred (sensory) activities and rewards
- 
- Inclusive design
  - Adapt sensory nature of tasks or environment
  - Embed sensory input into routines
  - Provide quiet areas
  - Teach sensory coping skills



# Emotional Regulation

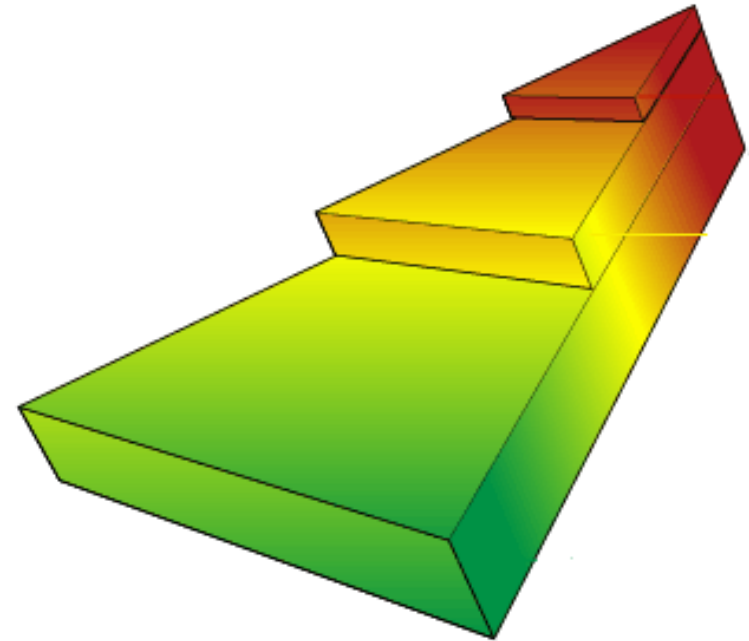
**ER programs should:**

- ✓ **(a) Support self identification of emotional states (internal & external bodily sensations, thinking & behavioural signs) (b) Teach matched strategies to support coping**
- ✓ **Have the potential to support every person (age / ability / setting)**
- ✓ **Be acceptable to the people who are using it**
- ✓ **Be personalised & incorporate strengths & interests**
- ✓ **Be embedded in a person's daily life (not wholly 'clinic' or 'group' based)**



# Tier 2 adaptations

- **Specialist autism groups**
  - ‘Secret Agent Society’ evidence-based, multimedia curriculum to help children improve their social and emotional resilience
- **Sensory assessment & support**
- **Simplified PBS**



# Simplified PBS

**Without a simpler manner of training, FBA likely will continue to be inconsistently or inadequately applied to many students who need it the most**

***It is not a watering down of principles***

**Simplification indicates more precise & straightforward language, rationale, & examples of how FBA can be applied in the classroom or home**



**POSITIVE  
BEHAVIOUR  
SUPPORT**

**Scott et al (2010) & Bradshaw et al (2012)**

Understand behaviour

**A**

Before the behaviour  
Setting conditions (most likely):

Triggers:

**B**

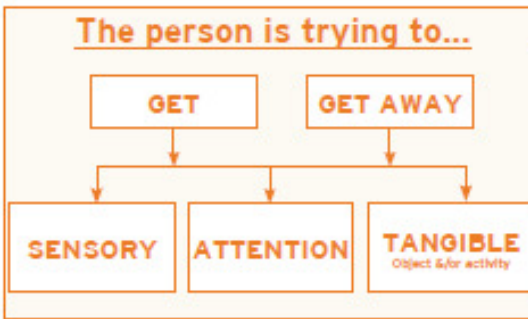
Challenging Behaviour  
Description:

Intensity:  
Duration:  
Frequency:

**C**

Response to the behaviour  
How do others typically react?      How does the person respond?

Identify the function



**F**

Possible purpose of the challenging behaviour

function

Why are they using this behaviour instead of something more helpful?

What do you think they are trying to say?

How do you think the person is feeling?

Proactive plan for intervention

**P**

Prevention & stress reduction  
Matched Setting Condition Strategies

revent

Matched Trigger Strategies

**T**

Teach quick replacement behaviour

each

Teach longer term new skill

**R**

Plan to Reinforce replacement behaviour / new skill

What?  
When?  
How often?

reinforce

Reactive Strategies (see Response Plan)  
Review date:

# FBA & Autism

**An assessment is only as good as the information collected**

**Like all good detective work, it takes time and expertise to gather helpful reliable information and this is done before any hypothesis is reached**

**This includes**

- **understanding autism accurately**
- **understanding what challenging behaviour is and why it happens**
- **Assuming all challenging behaviour communicates information (it happens for a reason)**



# Behaviour & Sensory

**Sensory issues (e.g. pain, discomfort or under-stimulation) can be setting conditions & triggers to challenging behaviour**

**Responses to behaviour can be sensory**

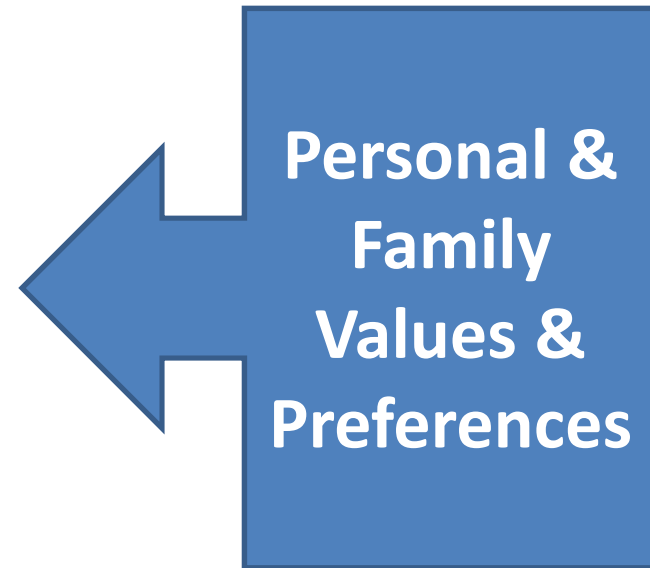
**One function of behaviour is to 'Get' or 'Get Away' from sensory**

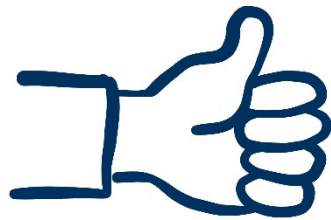
**Environmental changes can be sensory & a 'low arousal' approach is part of PBS**

**Replacement behaviours can be sensory & coping**

***Note:* MAS has no 'escape from sensory' option**

**Evidence  
Based  
Practice**





**POSITIVE  
BEHAVIOUR  
SUPPORT**

**The Aspect Think Tank is a group of  
Autistic adults**

**They review the ACA PBS element in  
Dec 2019. Three themes emerged**

- 1. Context is essential to understand  
challenging behaviour**
- 2. Autistic behaviours are not  
challenging**
- 3. Autistic voice helps to build  
empathy**

# Other key messages

- **Focus on happiness as an outcome for PBS**
- **Focus on strengths**
- **Recognition that stress and distress is strongly felt in challenging situations**
- **The importance of relationships and ‘safe people’**
- **Resources for parents to differentiate PBS from ABA**



***“Organise environments that minimise aversive events, maximise access to rewarding activities and outcomes”***

**Know the lived experience of Autistic people & partner in PBS**

**Maintain focus on Quality of Life, happiness & safe relationships**

**Use multiple means of representation, expression and engagement**

**Recognise strengths & interests to maintain engagement**

**Provide access to preferred activities & rewards**

**Address communication, emotional regulation, sensory at T1 & T2**

**Maintain consistent & predictable visual scheduling & organisation**

**Provide continual access to typical peers**

**If challenges emerge: ensure the behaviour is actually ‘challenging’ & appreciate the distress involved**

**Initiate simplified FBA at T2, consider sensory issues**

**Use autism specific strategies to assist e.g. FBA based social stories**

**Adapt implementation measurement tools (e.g. TFI)**

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