



PBS Practice

The purpose of the series on PBS Practices is to provide information about important elements of positive behavior support. PBS Practices are not specific recommendations for implementation, and they should always be considered within the larger context of planning, assessment and comprehensive support.

Proactive Support Strategies

Behavior is related to and affected by its context (i.e., the environment influences behavior). Through environmental modifications, it may be possible to prevent or reduce challenging behavior. Proactive support strategies are focused on reducing the likelihood of problem behavior and allowing an individual to be as independent and successful as possible.

Modifications can be directed at circumstances that immediately precede behavior (antecedents) or broader setting events. Specific strategies should be individualized (e.g., determined based on a functional assessment). Examples of proactive strategies include modifying task characteristics, reorganizing the physical setting, clarifying routines and expectations, revising the activity schedule, changing social interactions, providing more opportunities for choices, enhancing the predictability of the setting, and addressing physiological issues that may be affecting behavior.

<i>Examples: Hypotheses</i>	<i>Proactive Strategies</i>
<i>When an adult's attention is withdrawn or focused on other children, Lisa makes noises; her behavior results in the adult talking to her and moving closer to her.</i>	<i>Tell Lisa when you will be unavailable for extended periods, "I'm going to be with ___ now." Interact with Lisa periodically from across the room.</i>
<i>When unanticipated changes in the routine occur, Ben throws his materials; having to pick them up delays the transition to the next activity.</i>	<i>Provide a written or picture schedule and refer to it throughout the day. Prepare Ben for changes by saying, "Next we will ___." Remove materials prior to transitions.</i>
<i>When Donna finishes an activity early, she bites her fingernails and cuticles; this gives her another form of stimulation.</i>	<i>Provide Donna something she enjoys doing when she finishes activities early (e.g., hand-held games, crafts).</i>

Through functional assessment and brainstorming interventions, many proactive strategies may be identified for consideration. It will be up to an individual's behavioral support team to determine which strategies are most promising and fit best for the person and circumstances.

Behavioral problems may be prevented on a large scale through the appropriate design of settings, programs, and systems. For example, effective school-wide programs and classroom management systems may reduce the number of students who will require individualized behavior plans.

Frequently-Asked Questions

1. *Does being proactive mean that you are expected to anticipate and prevent every problem? This doesn't seem possible.* There may always be novel circumstances - or unusual combinations of events - that provoke problems. Assessing patterns and making proactive changes may prevent some, if not most, difficulties. Such changes may also establish a more positive lifestyle for the individual.
2. *If you eliminate all difficult circumstances, doesn't that further limit a person's ability to interact effectively in typical settings?* We can run the risk of creating situations in which the surroundings are so highly controlled that day-to-day challenges simply don't arise. When making environmental adjustments, it is important to evaluate whether or not the circumstance is something the person must come in contact with now or in the future. If so, teaching replacement skills to deal with those conditions is essential.

Other Resources

Fox, J. & Conroy, M. (1995). Setting events and behavior disorders of children and youth: An interbehavioral field analysis for research and practice. Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 3, 130-140.

Horner, R.H., Vaughn, B.J., Day, H.M., & Ard, W.R. (1996). The relationship between setting events and problem behavior: Expanding our understanding of behavioral support. In L. Koegel, R. Koegel, & G. Dunlap (Eds.), Positive behavioral support: Including people with difficult behavior in the community (pp. 381-402). Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

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