BEHAVIORAL CONCERNS IN CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS WITH ASD

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PRESENTATION OUTLINE

• Defining challenging behaviors
• Prevalence
• Assessment practices
• Linking assessment to treatment
• Behavioral intervention strategies
• Questions
DEFINING CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS

- Aggression
- Self-Injury
- Disruptions
- Non-compliance
- Tantrums
- Elopement
- Pica
- Stereotypy/Repetitive Behaviors

Repeated pattern of behaviors that negatively influence learning, socialization, and/or development
PREVALENCE

- Children with developmental delays are 3x more likely to score in the clinically significant range on assessments of challenging behaviors (Baker et al., 2003)

- Individuals with ASD:
  - More likely to engage in challenging behaviors as compared to typically developing peers and peers with another diagnosis, such as anxiety or ADHD (Matson et al., 2009)
  - Prevalence of any challenging behavior as high as 64.3-93.7% (McTieman et al., 2011; Murphy et al., 2009)
BEHAVIOR = COMMUNICATION

• Behavior occurs because it serves a function and/or produces an outcome
• Many behaviors are learned over time and through experiences
  • Child may have learned that engaging in challenging behavior results in a preferred outcome or it works for them in getting their needs met
• Delays and difficulties with communication and social skills can put individuals at increased risk for challenging behaviors
ASSESSMENT OF BEHAVIOR CONCERNS

- Applied Behavior Analysis
  - Scientific approach for discovering environmental variables that influence socially significant behavior and for developing behavior change based on those discoveries
- Examine the form of behavior being used to communicate
- Assess for function(s) or purpose of behavior
- Data collection procedures are an important part of the process

Cooper, Heron, & Heward (2007)
ASSESSMENT OF BEHAVIOR CONCERNS

• Positive vs. negative reinforcement
  • Behaviors can be strengthened by “getting something” or “getting out of something”

• Main functions of behavior (Iwata et al., 1982):
  • Attention
    • Positive or negative
  • Escape/Avoidance
    • Task, person, situation, environment
  • Tangible
    • Food, item, activity
  • Sensory/Self-Stimulation
    • Input

• Important
  • Need to examine and rule out underlying medical causes
  • Response to pain, discomfort, or illness?
ASSESSMENT OF BEHAVIOR CONCERNS

Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA)

- Interviews
  - Parent, Teachers, Caregivers

- Rating Scales
  - Questions about Behavior Function (QABF)
  - Motivation Assessment Scale (MAS)

- Direct Observations
  - ABC Charts

Cooper et al. (2007); Steege & Watson (2009)
INTERVIEW TOPICS

- Define Behavior
- Onset & Related Factors
- Frequency & Intensity
- Settings & Time(s) of Day
- Antecedents/Triggers
- Consequences
- Efficiency
- Strategies Attempted to Reduce Behavior
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date/Time/Setting</th>
<th>ANTECEDENT: what happened before the behavior</th>
<th>BEHAVIOR</th>
<th>CONSEQUENCE: what happened after the behavior</th>
<th>EFFECTOR CHILD’S RESPONSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12/19 7:35am At home</td>
<td>John was watching television after eating breakfast. I asked John to go downstairs and get his backpack.</td>
<td>Screaming, crying, hitting</td>
<td>I asked him one more time and then got his backpack myself.</td>
<td>He calmed and kept watching television.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/20 9:53am Reading activity at school</td>
<td>Amy and other students expected to be working independently on their homework assignment.</td>
<td>Amy stood on her chair and threw her pencil across the room.</td>
<td>All of her classmates laughed. I lectured her about needing to go back to work.</td>
<td>She laughed and went back to work after high-fiving her friend.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LINKING ASSESSMENT TO INTERVENTION

• Assessment: Leads to behavior hypotheses about the purpose(s) of the behavior

• Use of FBA increases the likelihood of treatment success (Homer et al., 2002)

• Intervention: Match function of the challenging behavior (Brosnan & Healy, 2011; Kazdin, 2011)
LINKING ASSESSMENT TO INTERVENTION

• Goal: Increase appropriate behaviors while reducing challenging behaviors

1. Use of prevention strategies
2. Teaching replacement behaviors
3. Examining and changing our responses to the child or adolescent’s challenging (and positive) behavior

Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (2013)
PREVENTION STRATEGIES

• Environmental Modifications
  • Use visual supports and activity schedules
  • Modify instructions, presentation/length of tasks, way child is expected to respond
  • Provide choices
  • Create social stories
  • Use timers
  • Modify physical characteristics of setting
  • Set clear rules and consequences for behavior
  • Provide increased attention for demonstration of positive behaviors

Brosnan & Healy (2011); CSEFEL (2013); Lequia, Machelicek, & Rispoli (2012)
Back to School Night!

On August 22nd, I will go to my new school with my mom and dad. I am going to meet new teachers and new friends. It will be a lot of fun! The new school I am going to is called _______ When I go to my new school for the first time, I will be able to eat snacks, play with toys, and I will sit by my mom and dad and listen to the teachers talk.

I will meet new people I do not know. A new person may come by me when I am with my mom or dad.
Afternoon and Evening Schedule

- Get off the bus
- Eat Dinner
- Homework Time
- Game and TV Time
- Bath
- Brush Teeth
- Put on PJ's
- Reading Time
- Bed Time

Morning Schedule

- Wake Up
- Got to the Bathroom
- Get Dressed
- Pack up Items
- Eat Breakfast
- Brush Teeth
- Watch TV

- Put away backpack
- Circle time
- Math

- Snack
- Bathroom
- Reading
Toothbrush
Toothpaste
Squeeze toothpaste on toothbrush
Brush teeth
2 min.
Spit in sink

Rinse with water
Floss

Two children are watching a video on the TV about brushing teeth.
INTERVENTION

- Replacement behavior
  - Teaching the child positive skills to replace the challenging behavior
    - Functional Communication Training (Carr & Durand, 1985)
    - Video modeling
- Changing environmental patterns of response and reinforcement

Increase reinforcement for positive behaviors

Decrease reinforcement for challenging behaviors
Teacher or parent asks the child to complete a math worksheet

- Child completes homework task
- Child yells and throws objects
- Child requests a break with a break card

- Child receives positive reinforcement from teacher or parent
- Child does not have to do the worksheet (Escape)
TANGIBLE

• Function: Access to a preferred item or activity
• Intervention Suggestions
  • Use of visual schedules and activity schedules
  • Functional Communication Training (FCT); Teach and reinforce appropriate way to communicate what child wants
    • Verbal, picture, AAC, sign, gesture
    • Then, teach concepts of Wait/No or Available/Not Available
• Token Economy
  • Child can earn preferred items/activities for demonstration of positive behavior
  • Tokens (e.g., stickers, points) are saved and exchanged for other items (e.g., reward menu)
"I Want...."
**Reward Chart**

**Follow Directions =**

**Rules:**
- Walk nicely by mom
- Hold hand; no pulling hands

= Special Reward!

**Room Cleaning Chart**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Mon</th>
<th>Tues</th>
<th>Wed</th>
<th>Thurs</th>
<th>Fri</th>
<th>Sat</th>
<th>Sun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Put dirty clothes in hamper</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(from room and bathroom)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Put clean clothes in dresser</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Hang up dresses and uniforms in closet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sticker = I completed all three Room Cleaning Tasks

2 Stickers = Extra time to play Just Dance (Computer)
ATTENTION

- **Function:** Access to positive or negative attention from peers, caregivers, teachers, others
- **Intervention Suggestions**
  - **FCT:** Teach and reinforce appropriate way to get attention
  - Increase positive attention given when child is engaging in appropriate behavior
    - “Catch child being good”
  - Decrease/eliminate attention for inappropriate behavior
    - **Self-Injury and Aggression**
    - Concrete reinforcement/reward system
ESCAPE/AVOIDANCE

- Function: Avoid or escape a task, person, situation, or activity
- Intervention Suggestions
  - Examine what child is avoiding or escaping
    - Decrease complexity of demands?
    - Break down tasks into simpler parts?
    - Build in choices?
  - FCT: Teach and reinforce appropriate way to communicate the need for a break (e.g., Break card, “I need a break”, gesture)
  - Use of visuals (First/Then; activity schedule; step-by-step instructions)
  - Reward appropriate behavior with removal from aversive stimuli
    - Follow-through
  - Time-out NOT effective
Function: Sensation seeking
- Often most difficult to identify and treat because the reinforcement is not observable

Intervention Suggestions:
- Find alternative reinforcers that provide the sensory input
- Interrupt and/or redirect the behavior
ELOPEMENT

• Possible safety precautions
  • Door locks/alarms
  • Identification
  • Visuals – Stop Signs
  • Hold hand
• Reinforce appropriate hand-holding and safe behavior
• Resources
  • Big Red Safety Toolkit
  • Kohl’s Safety Center at the American Family Children’s Hospital
IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

• Extinction Bursts
  • Challenging behavior tends to get worse before it gets better when it is no longer reinforced
• Consistency and persistence
• Positive behavior supports and strategies!
• Fading external cues over time; schedule thinning
• Comorbid psychopathology
SCHOOL SETTING

- FBAs are conducted at schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenging behaviors that:</th>
<th>Prevent the student from learning</th>
<th>Prevent other students from learning</th>
<th>Impede the teacher from teaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

- Behavior Intervention Plan
  - Based on the FBA data
  - Include antecedent and consequent strategies
- Importance of consistency between home and school

Steege & Watson (2009)
SOME RESOURCES

- School team (e.g., school psychologist)
- Talk to pediatrician about local therapists and service providers
- Kohl’s Safety Center at AFCH
  - (608) 890-8043
- Big Red Safety Toolkit
- Autism Speaks – Challenging Behaviors Toolkit
  - Autismspeaks.org
- Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (Online modules)
- Regional Centers for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs (CYSHCN)
  - (800) 532-3321
QUESTIONS?

Thank you!