The Behavior ABC's

USE YOUR ABC'S

The A-B-C model is a practical way to organize your observations and nourish your curiosity. Rather than guessing a person's motivation in the moment, it helps you zoom out to see themes in their behavior and craft a better hypothesis as to what they are trying to gain or avoid. When an unwanted behavior occurs, list three things about the incident.

Antecedent

What happened right before the problematic behavior?

Behavior

What was the behavior?

Consequence

What happened right after the behavior? This can be positive or negative.

OBJECTIVE OBSERVATION

Use an ABC chart (pg. 5) to observe the student over a variety of sessions, gathering enough data for your consideration. Brainstorm the function of the behavior (pg. 7) and consider how to satisfy the outcomes the student is desiring in a healthy, engaging way. Remain objective when filling in your ABCs, rather than prematurely attaching an opinion to the behavior. Writing an opinion into your observation makes it difficult to formulate an unbiased hypothesis as to why someone may be doing what they are doing.

Subjective Observation: Myra is defiant.

Objective Observation: Myra stomps off the stage after the audience laughs.

A good litmus test to use when writing your observation is to ask, "Could someone film a reenactment of what happened from reading my observation?" If you asked three people to film their friend being defiant, you'd likely have three different scenes. However, if you asked those three people to film their friend stomping off stage, you'd have three similar scenes.

BE SPECIFIC WITH YOUR PRAISE

We will inevitably experience disruptive behaviors. It's how we respond to these situations that can make all the difference. One way to re-direct your student is to introduce a replacement behavior. When introducing a replacement behavior, model what you want your student to do. When your student chooses the replacement behavior, offer positive reinforcement. When it comes to celebrating the student's choice, be specific with your praise. Be sure to specifically state the student's name and the behavior you want repeated.

Insufficient Reinforcement: Giving Myra a *thumbs up* when she chooses to stay on stage as Oliver and Luis do their part.

Positive Reinforcement: "Great job watching Oliver say his line, Myra!"

ALL BEHAVIOR IS NOT EQUAL

Do not suppose the reason for one person's behavior is the same reason for another person's identical behavior. One individual might be disruptive or silly because he wants to gain attention, while another may be disruptive or silly to avoid failing in front of her peers. The same behavior in each person does not necessarily come from the same motivation, and therefore does not always warrant the same response.

The first student may need an appropriate time during class where he can have "all eyes on him," while the second may need you to adapt her script to include shorter words, rather than phrases she is uncomfortable sounding out.

SENSORY SENSITIVITIES

Many individuals with intellectual differences are especially sensitive to sensory stimuli (ex. sounds, textures, smells, balance, sight, touch). While seeking attention or a sense of control are common functions for unwanted behaviors, avoiding an uncomfortable sensory experience is also a frequent instigator. When a student exhibits hyper-sensitivities, ask their caretaker to share any helpful tools the student uses at home. Then, consider how to incorporate those tactics into your rehearsal time.

You can also try the following:

- Use headphones or earplugs to dampen loud sounds
- Work together to find a non-irritating texture
- Ask permission before touching and use firm (rather than light) touch
- Use overhead lights instead of a bright spotlight
- Create a "quiet space" where someone who is over-stimulated can step away to self-regulate
- Ensure costumes are comfortable, avoiding unfamiliar textures or tight elastic
- Request that your instructors and students refrain from wearing strong scents (i.e. perfume, cologne)

IT TAKES TIME

Understanding and changing our behavior is a life-long process that requires a significant amount of time and patience. However, some of the most satisfying work you can do is to teach your students to replace destructive behaviors with constructive ways of communicating their needs and desires. This paves the way for more fulfilling and authentic relationships, which can drastically improve an individual's quality of life.

In this long and often taxing process, it's important to maintain a posture of gentleness and empathy. This is much easier said than done! Surround yourself with a team that can encourage you throughout your students' behavioral development.

ABC BEHAVIOR CHART

Name:

Date/Time	**Antecedent** What happened right before the behavior?	**Behavior** Objectively describe the behavior.	**Consequence** What happened right after the behavior?	**Possible Function** Thing trying to be gained or avoided?
March 11 2:04p	Group is playing a game that involves going around the circle and repeating a sound with greater and greater volume.	Jonathan puts his hands over his ears, and pushes his neighboring TA, Lily, when she makes the sound at a loud volume next to him.	Jonathan is taken by a TA into a quiet room for a sensory break to help regulate his emotions and behaviors.	Avoid sensory stimulation (auditory)
March 11 2:38p	Lily hands Jonathan a hand band to put on for his costume.	Jonathan throws the headband back at Lily.	Lily tries to help by placing the headband on Jonathan's head. Jonathan stomps his foot and hits himself.	Avoid sensory stimulation (tactile)

Name:

Date/Time	**Antecedent** What happened right before the behavior?	**Behavior** Objectively describe the behavior.	**Consequence** What happened right after the behavior?	**Possible Function** Thing trying to be gained or avoided?

FUNCTIONS REFERENCE SHEET

Though there are countless motivations for behavior, these bullet points are a helpful place to start. If you're having a difficult time identifying the core motivation behind someone's behavior, fill out your ABCs, and then consider the following.

TO GAIN

- Validation for Their Contribution
- Affirmation
- Friendship
- Belonging
- Attention
- Celebration
- Status or Success
- Sense of Feeling Useful
- Respect or Recognition
- Freedom or Individuality
- Safety
- Trust
- Sense of Being Unique
- Personal Space
- Sense of Being Good
- Significance or Identity Competence or Knowledge
- Happiness
- Sensory Experience
- Control or Ownership
- Balance or Grounding
- Calm
- Physical Rest
- Feeling Valuable
- Structure
- Outlet or Escape

TO AVOID

- Feeling Unsafe
- Embarrassment
- Inadequacy or Feeling Incompetent
- Disrespect
- Failing or Being Wrong
- Someone Who Makes Them Uneasy
- Noise or Stimulation
- Bright lights
- Textures
- Being Touched
- Physical Exhaustion
- Feeling Unwanted
- Acknowledging Limitations
- Feeling Meaningless
- Chaos