

# Chapter 6: Managing Challenging Behaviour

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*“... a behavioral support plan is a document that is designed to change the behavior of adults with the expectation that if adult behavior changes, the behavior of the student will change.”*

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Horner and Sugai, 1999  
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*The purpose of a behaviour may be:*

- to gain attention*
- to escape/avoid*
- to get something*
- regulation*
- play.*

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Durand and Crimmins, 1988  
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Students with autism spectrum disorders often demonstrate unusual and challenging behaviours, and they do not always respond to methods of discipline employed in the classroom environment. To implement effective instructional activities, it may be necessary to first focus on managing student behaviour. Behaviour problems are often the primary concern of teachers and parents, because they disrupt the learning of all students in the class, and harmony in the family. It may be necessary to develop systematic plans for changing behaviour.

It is important that behaviour intervention plans be based on an understanding of the characteristics of autism spectrum disorders, as well as knowledge of the strengths and needs of individual students. Understanding that all behaviour has a communicative function is essential in developing successful intervention plans.

Behaviour intervention plans should be developed through a collaborative problem-solving process involving all the significant people in students’ lives, including parents, classroom teachers, special educators and teacher assistants. The process may also include others, such as principals, psychologists, behaviour consultants, speech-language pathologists and occupational therapists. It is critical that final plans take into consideration the space, materials and staffing resources available in the classroom. Plans will only be effective if they are implemented on a consistent basis. If a student requires a specific type of intervention, e.g., providing a tangible reinforcement on a half-hour basis, it may be necessary to brainstorm creative ways to incorporate the intervention without disrupting the classroom routine, e.g., having the student leave the room when it is time for the reinforcement.

## Positive Behavioural Supports

The theoretical framework of Positive Behavioural Supports (PBS) should be used when developing behavioural intervention plans. Positive behavioural support plans begin with a functional behavioural analysis (FBA). The purpose of an FBA is to identify those conditions that trigger or maintain challenging behaviour, as well as conditions associated with desirable behaviours. The emphasis in a positive behavioural support plan is prevention, accommodation and teaching appropriate behaviour.

Functional behavioural analysis typically involves the following steps.<sup>59</sup>

1. Determine which behaviour to target.
2. Identify the function of the behaviour and contributing factors.
3. Identify an alternative behaviour.
4. Identify strategies to increase positive behaviours.
5. Identify strategies to decrease negative behaviours.
6. Develop behaviour intervention plans.
7. Evaluate behaviour intervention plans.

A functional behavioural analysis can be conducted formally over a period of several days or in a less-formal problem-solving or brainstorming process completed in one session.

### **1. Determine which behaviour to target**

If students have a variety of challenging or disruptive behaviours, it will be necessary to establish priorities and determine which behaviour to address first. It is difficult to try to reduce several negative behaviours at the same time. It is also critical to determine whether a specific behaviour is truly problematic. When establishing priorities, consider the following.

- Is the behaviour life threatening?
- Does the behaviour significantly interfere with learning?
- Is the behaviour dangerous to others?
- Does the behaviour damage materials?
- Does the behaviour interfere with social acceptance?
- Has the behaviour been an issue for some time?

### **2. Identify the function of the behaviour and contributing factors**

The function or purpose of a behaviour is not always obvious. It is often necessary to “play detective” and conduct a functional assessment. Functional assessment is based on the premise that all behaviour serves some purpose. Observed behaviour is often the tip of the iceberg and a direct result of underlying issues and/or deficits. For instance, students with autism spectrum disorders may display observable behaviours, such as inappropriate screaming that are related to underlying factors, such as an inability to modulate sensory arousal, limited attention seeking skills, a desire for intense auditory feedback, limited impulse control and/or boredom or frustration with the current activity.

Because students with autism spectrum disorders often have significant difficulty expressing their thoughts and desires in an effective manner, it is important to consider the potential communicative function of a specific behaviour. For instance, the purpose of a negative behaviour may be:

- to gain attention
- to communicate a need or want
- to gain a tangible consequence
- to escape from an unpleasant situation
- to gain a sensory consequence
- to self-regulate
- to make a comment or declaration
- to release tension
- out of habit.<sup>60</sup>

Information for functional assessments can be found through:

- a review of students' records
- interviews with people knowledgeable about students, such as teacher assistants or family members
- observation and recording behavioural data.

Frequent communication with students' families may provide valuable information. School staff and families often develop a communication system, such as a daily communication log or book that travels to and from school with students. Information provided by the family may be extremely useful in identifying the function of challenging behaviour.

Frequently it is necessary to employ a more structured approach to a functional behavioural assessment. Two common approaches involve the ABC method and the use of an assessment instrument such as the Motivation Assessment Scale.

### **ABC method**

Consider the ABCs, i.e., the antecedents, behaviours and consequences associated with the behaviour.

- Antecedents are the time, people, places or events in the environment that are present prior to the target behaviour. Antecedents can include "slow triggers," technically known as setting events, that increase the probability of the behaviour occurring, and "fast triggers," events that seem to immediately precede the behaviour in a predictable pattern.

- Antecedents can be categorized into fast triggers or slow triggers.
  - Fast triggers are events with a discrete onset and end point that appear to provoke or prompt a specific behaviour in an immediate fashion, e.g., loud noises, a specific task, a specific direction, taking something away, etc.
  - Slow triggers are events that do not occur immediately prior to the behaviour but appear to make the individual more likely to demonstrate a specific behaviour, e.g., medical issues, change in routine.
- Behaviours
  - Include the frequency, intensity and duration of the behaviour.
  - Be specific, for example, screaming can vary in intensity and duration, and may or may not be a behaviour to target if the intensity is mild.
- Consequences are events that occur directly after the behaviour. It is important to consider two different types of consequences:
  - planned consequences imposed after negative behaviour
  - unplanned consequences, i.e., actual events that take place after a behaviour is displayed. For instance, a teacher may decide to withdraw attention from a student who is swearing (imposed consequence), while peers may laugh at the student (actual event). Often, it is the unplanned consequences that have the most significant impact on the behaviour.

The following chart demonstrates what a functional behavioural analysis might look like. The example involves a hypothetical junior high school student with Asperger's Disorder. In this example, the student has daily outbursts severe enough to disrupt the classroom atmosphere and as a consequence, the student is being excluded from a number of classes.

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 See Appendix I, page 186,  
 for a blank Behaviour  
 Observation and Data  
 Collection Chart.  
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Antecedents	Behaviour	Consequences
Fast triggers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teasing by classmates</li> <li>• Timed tests</li> <li>• Tasks that involve considerable writing</li> <li>• Open-ended writing or thinking activities</li> <li>• Receiving less-than-perfect marks</li> </ul> Slow triggers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of organizational skills</li> <li>• Lack of impulse control</li> <li>• Is unable to read social situations</li> <li>• Has difficulty with abstract or metaphorical language</li> <li>• Lack of fine motor skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verbally abusive               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– screams</li> <li>– obscenities</li> <li>– threatens to harm others</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Refuses to complete work</li> <li>• Walks out of class</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Warning from teacher</li> <li>• Increased teasing by peers</li> <li>• Removal from classroom/school</li> <li>• 1:1 talks from teacher/T.A./administrator</li> <li>• Tasks are not completed</li> </ul>

Recording the ABCs associated with a specific behaviour often helps one identify:

1. When and where does the behaviour typically occur?
2. Under what circumstances does the behaviour typically not occur?
3. What is going on in the setting when the behaviour typically occurs?
4. Who is generally involved or near the student when the behaviour typically occurs?

This information helps the team to build hypotheses or theories about the possible function that the problematic behaviour might be serving for the student. In the example provided above, it is likely that the student's outbursts serve the function of allowing him to avoid tasks that he perceives to be excessively difficult. Support for this theory is based on the demonstration of the relationship between certain kinds of tasks, e.g., those that require considerable writing as well as open-ended assignments, and the occurrence of the target behaviour. Additional support is provided by knowing the events or conditions associated with the behaviour. Understanding the function of the behaviour in terms of environmental events allows the team to choose interventions that are within their control and have a high probability of success.

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See Appendix J, pages  
187–188, for a copy of the  
Motivation Assessment Scale  
(Durand and Crimmins, 1988).  
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### **Motivation Assessment Scale**

The Motivation Assessment Scale helps determine whether a specific behaviour is displayed to gain specific sensory feedback, attention or a tangible reward, or to avoid nonpreferred tasks.

Whatever method of data collection is chosen, it is important to note that a student may display the same behaviour in different situations for different reasons. The function of behaviour may also change over time. In the example of the hypothetical junior high school student, it is likely that the function of the behaviour is avoidance of tasks that he finds difficult. However it may also be possible that in some situations, the behaviour might be reinforced by the individual attention from an adult that occurs immediately after an outburst. Therefore, it is important for the process of behavioural analysis to be ongoing. It is critical to continually revisit the analysis and adapt approaches as necessary.

### **3. Identify an alternative behaviour**

The functional assessment of behaviour provides a foundation for developing behaviour plans. The success of behaviour plans often depends more on instructional and proactive strategies than on reactive strategies.

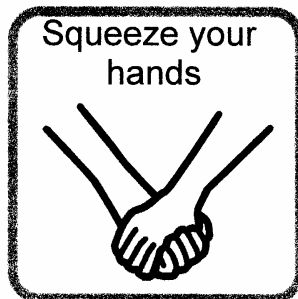
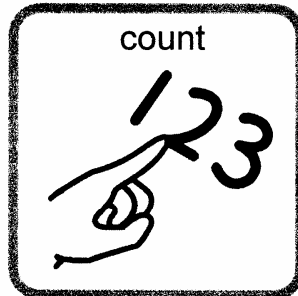
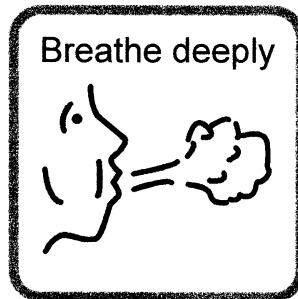
Once the purpose of a behaviour has been determined or hypothesized, it is possible to identify an alternative, more appropriate behaviour that serves the same function. For example, if a student pushes materials off of his desk and onto the floor to avoid a task that is too difficult, the student may need to be taught a more acceptable way to reject or postpone nonpreferred activities, or be taught to ask for assistance in an appropriate way.

The focus of behaviour intervention should be on instruction rather than discipline. The goal is to increase students' use of alternative, more appropriate means of achieving the same purpose. Alternative behaviours are usually more effective ways to communicate or interact with others.

It cannot be assumed that students have the skills necessary to engage in alternative behaviours. Systematic instruction and reinforcement are usually necessary. In most situations, teaching alternate behaviours needs to be combined with other positive program strategies.

The following examples illustrate the use of visual strategies to teach anger management strategies and relaxation techniques.

### Anger Management Strategy <sup>61</sup>



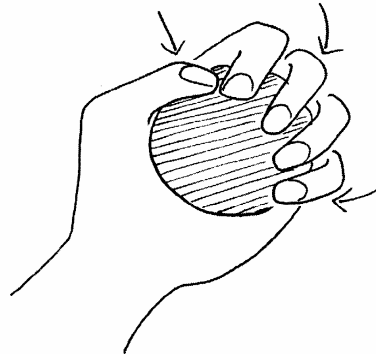
# My Relaxation Book

Place child's picture here.

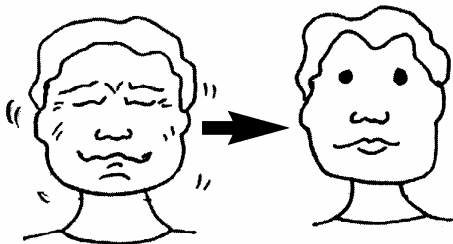
Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**1. Hold the ball and squeeze tight.**

**Now let go, relax.....**

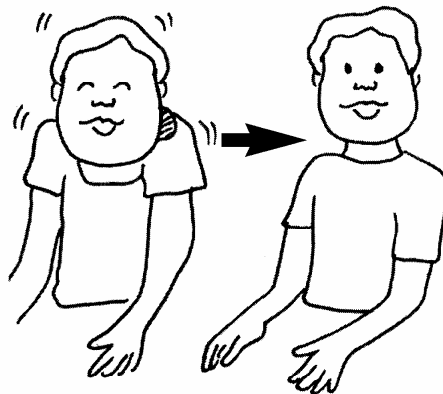


**2. Make a "monster" face.**



**Now let go, relax.....**

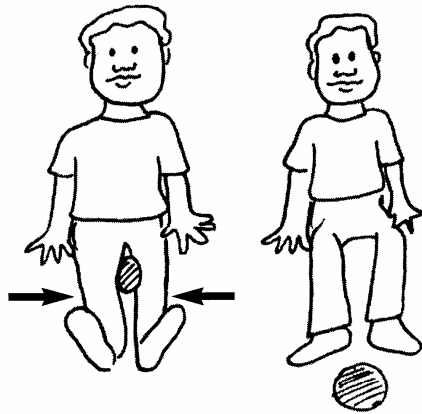
**3. Squeeze the ball with your shoulders.**



**Now let go, relax.....**

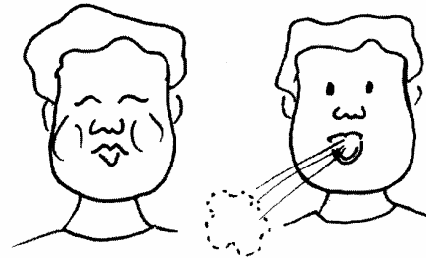
Relaxation Techniques (continued) <sup>62</sup>

**4. Squeeze the ball with your knees.**



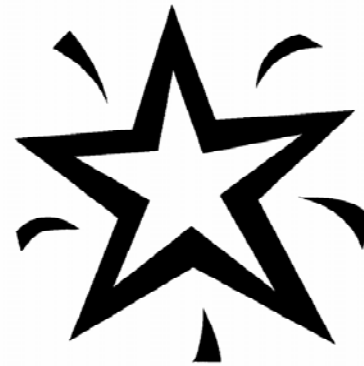
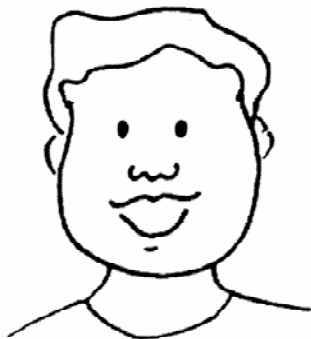
**Now let go, relax.....**

**5. Now hold your breath.**



**Blow out and relax.....**

**6. Now you are nice and relaxed.**



**I did a good job.**

## 4. Identify strategies to increase positive behaviours

### Adapt the environment

Problem behaviours can often be reduced or eliminated by making changes in the physical environment or classroom routine. The assessment and analysis of a behaviour may indicate that the behaviour tends to occur within specific areas, during specific activities, under certain conditions or during interactions with certain individuals. Sometimes, making environmental accommodations minimizes the likelihood of the behaviour occurring. However, this does not mean that the entire classroom or routine should be radically changed to accommodate a single student. In many cases, minor adaptations can significantly impact behaviour.

Possible environmental adaptations include:

- removing distracting stimuli
- decreasing sensory input
- incorporating daily sensory experiences that are calming
- making changes in physical arrangements
- providing a clear and predictable schedule
- scheduling relaxation times or exercise breaks before difficult situations
- alternating demanding tasks with those that are easier
- providing choices
- providing frequent access to favourite activities and peers
- designating a place for students to relax.

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For more on strategies for  
addressing sensory issues, see  
pages 54–59.  
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### Use positive/proactive approaches

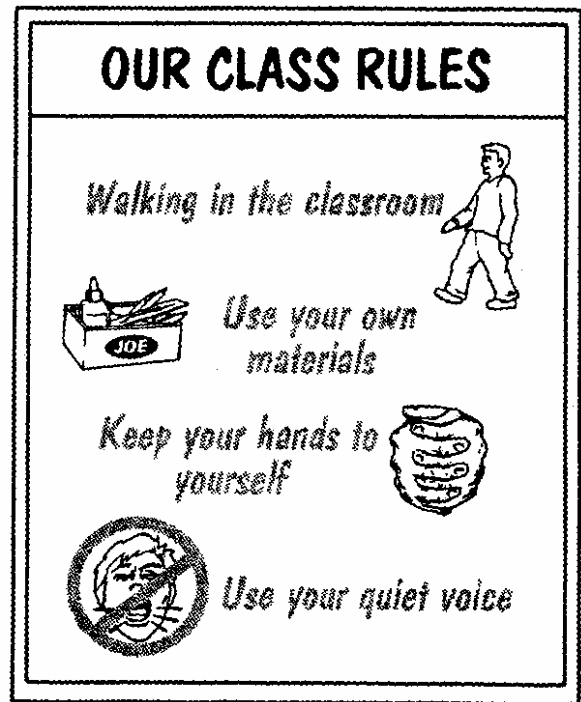
It is generally more effective for teachers to emphasize the development of positive behaviours than the elimination of negative behaviours. Components of a positive approach include:

- teaching essential communication skills based on the ability of the individual student, e.g., requesting, rejecting, protesting, etc.
- teaching social skills that are not readily picked up by observing others
- identifying functions of maladaptive behaviours and teaching appropriate replacement behaviours
- providing visual supports to clarify instructions, and teach new concepts and skills
- using social stories to teach behaviour for situations that are problematic

- providing clear schedules and using them to prepare students for transitions and changes
- teaching students to make choices and providing opportunities for choice
- providing instruction at an appropriate level for individual students
- monitoring students' responses to the environment and adapting it as necessary
- rewarding appropriate behaviour with reinforcements that are meaningful to individual students
- teaching relaxation techniques
- fading prompts to increase independent functioning
- providing clear expectations for behaviour
- using appropriate visual aids to help students understand expectations.

Examples follow.

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It may be helpful to monitor students for signs of increasing anxiety and identify the environmental factors that may be associated. For example, if social play increases stress, it might be helpful to provide opportunities for isolated play. This does not mean that the program should forego the goal of increasing interactive play with peers. However, the amount of time spent with others may need to be reduced if a student is anxious. Over time, contact with other students can be increased in the context of a program that teaches social skills and provides support in interactive situations.

### **Use reinforcement strategies**

It is often necessary to develop an incentive or reinforcement system to motivate students to display appropriate behaviours and/or refrain from displaying maladaptive behaviours. It may be helpful to consider, “What is the pay-off for participating in this activity?” If there are no obvious pay-offs from the student’s perspective, it may be necessary to devise one.

In order to be effective, selected reinforcers or rewards must be appealing and motivating to students. However, what is motivating for one student may not be motivating to another. The appeal of a specific reward may wane over time, so it may be necessary to rotate or change rewards on a regular basis. Some students respond positively when they know exactly what they are working for, while others are more motivated by earning surprise rewards. It is often effective to present a menu of reinforcers and allow students to select ones they would like to work for.

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See Appendix F, page 183, for a Likes and Dislikes Chart and Appendix G, page 184, for a Checklist of School Reinforcers.  
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There are several types of reinforcement. They include:

- social reinforcement—providing students with positive attention
- activity/privilege reinforcement—providing students with opportunities to engage in preferred activities
- material or tangible reinforcement—providing students with desired items.

Generally speaking, social reinforcement is considered the most natural form of reinforcement, while food reinforcers are considered the least. Food rewards are often difficult to implement in the classroom environment because the other students also want treats. When designing a reinforcement program, it is important to identify the most natural form of reinforcement that is powerful enough to motivate students to

display positive behaviours and/or refrain from displaying negative behaviours. With very young children, particularly those with complex developmental and behavioural needs, it may be necessary to initially provide students with food rewards or opportunities to engage in stereotypic or self-stimulatory behaviours. Although the ultimate goal is to reduce the frequency of stereotypic behaviours and fade the use of edible reinforcers, they may be necessary during the initial phases of teaching. As students' skills develop and interests broaden, it may be possible to implement more natural forms of reinforcement. Prior to using food rewards, complete a reinforcement inventory to identify other possible reinforcers.

Praise students when presenting reinforcers. It is important to remember to be as specific as possible when praising. Telling a student "I like the way that you are sitting in your desk" is much more informative than saying he or she is "being good."

Once effective reinforcers are identified, teachers must decide how and when to provide students with reinforcement. Reinforcement strategies can be broadly grouped into three categories: reinforcing students for displaying positive behaviours, reinforcing students for refraining from displaying negative behaviours, and token economies.

- Reinforcement for displaying positive behaviours
  - Students receive reinforcement each time they display specific positive behaviours.

Example: A student hands a "break" picture symbol to the teacher and is given an opportunity to listen to music as reinforcement for communicating the need for a break in an appropriate manner.

- Reinforcement for refraining from negative behaviours<sup>64</sup>
  - Students receive reinforcement for refraining from displaying targeted negative behaviours for a predetermined period of time.

Example: A student is given a checkmark if he or she refrains from screaming for five consecutive minutes. Each time the student screams, a timer is reset. When the student earns 10 checkmarks, he or she is given an opportunity to listen to music on a walkman.

- Students receive reinforcement for refraining from displaying targeted negative behaviours during a specific task.

Example: The student receives a sticker for refraining from aggressive behaviours throughout the morning circle.

- Students receive reinforcement for displaying low rates of targeted negative behaviours.

Example: A student is provided with five computer picture symbols at the start of math class. Each time he or she screams, a picture symbol is removed. The student is provided with an opportunity to play on the computer if he or she has at least one picture symbol left at the end of the class. Over time, the number of picture symbols provided at the start of the class is gradually reduced.

- Token economies

- Students receive tokens, e.g., poker chips, pennies, for displaying appropriate behaviours and tokens are removed when negative behaviours are displayed. Earned tokens are cashed in for preferred items and activities.

Example: A student is provided with a penny each time he or she communicates with others using an “inside voice.” A penny is removed from the bank each time he or she screams. At the end of the day, the student is given an opportunity to buy computer time. The student is “charged” one penny per minute of computer time.

As students experience success, efforts should be made to fade reinforcements. This can be accomplished by:

- using more natural forms of reinforcement
- increasing expectations
- reducing the size or amount of reinforcements provided.

The need for external reinforcers is greatly reduced when the student is engaged in an activity that he or she is interested in and/or competent at. While it takes effort and creativity to identify and structure activities that engage the interest of students with autism spectrum disorders, these efforts can result in much improved learning and a reduction in challenging behaviour.

### **Help students develop self-control**

Instruction may need to focus on the development of anger-management and self-control strategies. Using social stories to teach self-control in specific situations has proved useful for students with autism spectrum disorders.

Another visually based approach for teaching self-control is Cognitive Picture Rehearsal.<sup>65</sup> This strategy uses visual supports in an individualized program. Pictures and scripts for a sequence of behaviours are presented, and students are given opportunities for repeated practice of the behaviours, with immediate reinforcement. The general process follows.

1. Identify the behaviours to be reduced, e.g., screaming in response to loud noises.
2. Identify the antecedents to the undesirable behaviours, e.g., loud play in the gym, and provide students with appropriate alternative ways to cope with the antecedent condition, e.g., putting on headphones to dull the stimuli.
3. Identify reinforcers that follow the appropriate behaviour, e.g., a special treat at the end of gym class.
4. Provide students with pictorial or photographic representations of this chain of events and give instructions using these pictures so students are familiar with the sequence of antecedents, behaviours and reinforcers.
5. Rehearse this sequence before going into stressful situations. Reinforce the sequence with pictures.
6. Use the sequence in situations where there are problems with self-control and keep the pictures close by so they can be referred to on an as-needed basis.

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For strategies to promote independence and self-monitoring, see pages 46–48, 77.  
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## **5. Identify strategies to decrease negative behaviours**

### **Identify the least restrictive or aversive strategy**

Negative consequences should never be implemented until it has been demonstrated that positive forms of programming are ineffective. It is important to document the effectiveness of all behavioural methods to justify the use of alternative measures. Interventions should always be designed and implemented in manner that is safe for students and staff, and which respects the dignity and basic rights of students. Parents should always be included in discussions and decisions regarding the use of negative consequences.

Positive programming strategies that focus on increasing student competence, and making necessary accommodations to physical settings, materials and instruction are the most

successful in facilitating long-term behavioural change. However it is sometimes necessary to design planned reactions to behaviours to maintain order and safety in the classroom. Reactive or consequence-based interventions should never be implemented in isolation. It is important to also implement complementary reinforcement programs to motivate students to refrain from negative behaviours.

It is essential that everyone involved is prepared to react to specific behaviours in consistent ways and with the same consequences. Staff responsible for carrying out plans require skills and knowledge about behavioural principles. In general, there are three major types of reactive techniques:

- ignoring the behaviour
- redirection
- removal from reinforcements or time out.

Planned ignoring of problem behaviours may be appropriate for minor behaviours. Gaining attention may be the motivation for the behaviour, so reacting may actually encourage it. If the behaviour seems to serve the function of gaining attention, students may need to be taught how to gain attention in appropriate ways. Ignoring may be difficult to implement in a classroom setting, particularly if the behaviour is disruptive to learning. It is important to ensure that students are not being inadvertently reinforced by other sources, such as peers.

Redirection is a vital component of any behaviour intervention plan. If a behaviour is unacceptable, students need to know what is expected instead, and expectations must be communicated clearly. The use of visual aids, such as pictographs, are often helpful. Redirection is used in combination with positive programming strategies. Students need to be taught appropriate alternative behaviours, and be given opportunities to practise them.

Removal from reinforcements is sometimes referred to as time out. Time out can be an effective behaviour management strategy when used effectively and incorporated into an overall plan to promote the development of desirable behaviours. If a student is anxious or upset, it may be necessary for the student to leave the situation to calm down before any redirection or teaching of alternative behaviours can occur. This approach can be combined with positive programming strategies, such as teaching students to

recognize when they are becoming anxious, and teaching them to independently remove themselves from situations before they lose control of their behaviour. Because removal from the learning environment is a restrictive and serious form of intervention, it should only be used when less restrictive interventions have proved ineffective. Time out should always be used cautiously and the process should be carefully documented.

There are two basic types of time out.

- Time out within the classroom—The student is removed from an activity or group in a manner that allows him or her to continue to observe, but not actually participate in the activity.
- Time out outside the classroom—The student is removed from a group or activity in a manner that does not allow him or her to observe or participate in the group activity. The time out may involve directing the student to the hallway outside the classroom or to a separate area. To ensure safety, it is critical that the student be monitored and supervised throughout the duration of a time out.

It is important to note that many students with autism spectrum disorders prefer to be isolated. As such, some students may purposely engage in negative behaviours to avoid group situations and structured tasks. Generally speaking, time-out consequences are only effective when students feel that they are missing out on positive experiences during the time out.

Time-out procedures should be clearly outlined in the students' individualized program plans and/or behaviour plans and communicated to them, to their parents and to administrators. Seek permission from administrators and parents prior to implementation. It is critical to evaluate the effectiveness of the procedure on a regular basis.

Consequences such as time out should never be used as isolation. It is important to develop a comprehensive behaviour management plan that is structured around positive behavioural supports to motivate students to display appropriate behaviours and refrain from less desirable behaviours (see examples of support plans at the end of this section).

### **Crisis management interventions**

The best way to deal with a crisis is to plan well to prevent one. However, some students with autism spectrum disorders can become very agitated. In such cases, it may be necessary to have a crisis management intervention plan ready. All staff working with the student and perhaps other students in the class should be aware of and understand the plan. This crisis plan will ideally be developed by the whole planning team, including family members. The plan may include:

- a description of the signals that indicate that a crisis situation is developing
- a strategy for preventing injury to the student, peers and staff in all settings in which a crisis may occur
- a list of steps in the intervention to match each step of the escalating behaviour problem
- provision of appropriate training for staff who will carry out the plan, with opportunities to practise the interventions required
- record keeping, for monitoring use of the crisis plan and evaluating its effectiveness.

It may be appropriate to allow students to engage in repetitive, stereotypical behaviours in stressful situations, as this behaviour may be a coping mechanism. Although the goal may be to teach more appropriate means of dealing with stress, repetitive behaviour is preferable to aggression.

Physical intervention is not a behavioural management strategy—it is a crisis management technique. Physical interventions are not designed to reduce the frequency or severity of negative behaviours but to ensure the safety of students. These interventions should only be used in emergency situations where safety is an issue. Teachers should consult with administrators to determine which interventions are approved for use in their jurisdiction, what training is available and what documentation is required. Only staff who have received specific training should attempt to implement physical interventions.

### **Dealing with repetitive behaviours**

Repetitive behaviours are often a concern to parents and teachers. However, as one parent of a student with autism spectrum disorders said, “Pick your battles.” It may not be an appropriate use of instructional time and effort to try to eliminate a particular repetitive behaviour in light of the many other things students need to learn. These behaviours cannot

be totally eliminated but they may be reduced and, in some situations, replaced with more suitable alternatives. Repetitive behaviours, such as rocking and spinning, may serve an important function for students. If students use repetitive behaviours to calm down, it may be appropriate to teach other methods of relaxation that provide the same sensory feedback. For some students, it may be appropriate to find other sources of stimulation to satisfy sensory needs. It may be necessary to provide students with time and space to engage in repetitive behaviours until appropriate calming strategies are developed.

High rates of repetitive behaviour or a sudden increase in these behaviours should serve as a signal that might indicate that the student is experiencing difficulties that he or she cannot communicate.

Consider these suggestions for reducing or replacing repetitive behaviours.

- Teach alternative behaviours that are related, but more socially acceptable.
- Provide a variety of sensory experiences during the day.
- When the behaviour is occurring, try to divert attention to another activity.
- Negotiate when and where repetitive actions are acceptable. Controlled access may reduce desperation to engage in the activity, and should be scheduled rather than contingent upon good behaviour.
- Gradually reduce the amount of time allotted for the behaviours.
- Use the level of repetitive behaviours to assess students' levels of stress.
- Allow students to engage in the behaviours to calm down in emergency situations.
- Collect data on the frequency and/or intensity of repetitive behaviours throughout the day. Use this information to plan interventions.

## **6. Develop behaviour intervention plans**

Once the team has identified behaviours that need intervention and the contributing factors, desired alternative behaviours, and strategies for instruction and management, interventions can be planned. These plans should be included in students' IPPs.

Written plans should outline the goals for behaviour change, environmental adaptations, positive program strategies and reactive strategies, so that all those involved can maintain a consistent approach. This is particularly important for maintaining consistency between home and school, in environments throughout the school and for situations in which on-call staff are working with students.

Establish review dates for behaviour goals and develop a process to evaluate the effectiveness of intervention plans.

For students in inclusive settings, it is important to consider how plans will be implemented without disrupting other students, stigmatizing students with autism spectrum disorders or taking resources away from other members of the class. Consider these suggestions.

- Develop subtle reinforcement programs that will not attract the attention of other students, e.g., have a chart on the teacher's desk or student's desk.
- Deliver reinforcements outside of the classroom or when other students are not present.
- Ask parents to provide reinforcements outside school hours.
- Use similar strategies with the whole class or with other students who have behaviour management issues.

If a behaviour appears to be motivated by a desire to seek attention, it is often necessary to enlist the cooperation of classmates to ensure that attention is minimized when a student acts out. Explanations can be provided in a matter-of-fact manner without disclosing personal information, e.g., "Billy thinks we find it funny when he makes noises, so it is important that we do not laugh or smile when he does so." It may be necessary to debrief classmates following severe behavioural outbursts to allay fears and concerns.

## **7. Evaluate behaviour intervention plans**

When evaluating the effectiveness of behaviour intervention plans, consider the following.

- Are interventions being implemented consistently at school and at home?
- Do they need to continue for longer periods of time? (Have they had sufficient time to work?)
- Do minor adjustments need to be made?

- Is the target behaviour being maintained through factors that were not accounted for?
- Do reinforcements need to be modified?
- Are alternative strategies needed?

Behaviour plans vary in complexity depending on the nature of the problem. Some plans include detailed descriptions of the behaviour; environmental manipulations; cueing strategies; type, frequency and schedule of reinforcement; and data collection procedures. Other plans include more general descriptions of these components.

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See Appendix K, pages  
189–191, for a blank Plan for  
Managing Challenging  
Behaviour Safely.  
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The following pages provide two plans for managing challenging behaviour safely, effectively and respectfully. The first example (Mike) outlines a management plan for an elementary student in an inclusive classroom and the second (Sonny) summarizes the management plan for a junior high student.

It is important to note that these plans identify steps for decreasing the likelihood that the behaviour will occur, while lessening the impact should an incident take place. Effective, comprehensive and durable behaviour support also involves teaching alternate, replacement behaviours (see page 88) so that it becomes less necessary to “manage” behaviour. For example, in Mike’s case effective behavioural support might involve teaching him to request a break prior to becoming agitated, and/or gradually increasing his tolerance for academic tasks.

# Plan for Managing Challenging Behaviour Safely<sup>65a</sup>

**Re:** Mike (Elementary Student)

**Objective:** To ensure that staff working with Mike are aware of behaviour support procedures in place to maintain a healthy environment for Mike, other students and staff.

**Rationale:** Mike, on occasion, will display aggressive behaviours, e.g., hitting, toward the teacher assistant.

## **Key Understandings About:** Mike

- Mike finds afternoons quite difficult (he tends to display better coping skills in the morning).
- Mike has difficulty coping with change.
- Academic demands tend to raise Mike's anxiety.

## **Plan:**

- ▶ Staff working with Mike will read and sign this plan.
- ▶ Be aware of antecedent events. This behaviour is most likely to occur when:
  - Mike is presented with a math task
  - Mike is agitated
  - other students use the computer.
- ▶ Be aware of warning signs (escalating behaviours)
  - Mike starts to twitch.
  - Mike drops to the floor.
  - Mike starting humming.
  - Mike bites his sleeve.

These behaviours are communicative in nature and indicate that Mike is having difficulty.

- ▶ Immediate measures (list plans to diffuse the situation)
  - When warning behaviours are displayed, a picture symbol depicting a bean bag chair will be placed in his hand.
  - Mike will be directed to sit in the bean bag chair.
  - The teacher assistant will ensure that she is out of Mike's reach to ensure her own safety.
  - Mike will be presented with two different options for a break.
  
- ▶ Implement positive behaviour supports (describe proactive strategies to use consistently to support students that increase their abilities to communicate their wants and needs, and that teach alternative, more acceptable responses to frustration).
  - Place Stop sign on door to discourage Mike from running out of class.
  - Introduce bean bag chair into classroom as a calming area.
  - Schedule time to practise calming routine with bean bag chair.
  - Provide Mike with a water bottle with a straw as oral activities often have a calming effect on him.
  - Modify Mike's work to ensure he is successful.
  
- ▶ Help peers learn to:
  - understand autism spectrum disorders by reading an age-appropriate book on the topic
  - recognize Mike's warning behaviours
  - refrain from taunting Mike when it is their turn to use the computer.
  
- ▶ Staff will (include any other measures that staff need to take):
  - refrain from lifting or carrying Mike
  - ensure they always have the picture of the bean bag chair handy
  - ensure that Mike clearly understands when his next turn on the computer will be.
  
- ▶ Reactive Plan—In spite of proactive strategies, if aggressive or unsafe behaviour occurs, the following plan is in place (list a plan for dealing with escalating behaviour that includes steps and staff responses for each level of escalation).
  - The teacher assistant will alert the teacher when Mike is directed to the bean bag chair to calm down (in case assistance is required).
  - The teacher assistant will verbally debrief with Mike when he is calm and then resume the daily routine.
  - Mike's parents will be notified if the incident is serious.

I have read this plan and am aware of support procedures to be followed when working with Mike.

Note: A copy of this plan should be kept in the office and be read by school personnel before they begin working with the student.

Team members' signatures:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Date:

\_\_\_\_\_

Review date:

\_\_\_\_\_

# Plan for Managing Challenging Behaviour Safely<sup>65a</sup>

**Re:** Sonny (Junior High Student)

**Objective:** To ensure that staff working with Sonny are aware of behaviour support procedures in place to maintain a healthy environment for Sonny, other students and staff.

**Rationale:** Sonny, on occasion, will display aggressive behaviours, e.g., hitting others, and destructive behaviours, e.g., throwing furniture, when he is upset.

## **Key Understandings About:** Sonny

- Sonny gets physically aggressive when anxious or upset.
- Taunting and teasing make Sonny anxious.
- Perceived academic pressures raise Sonny's anxiety.
- Sonny wants to have friends and be respected for his vast knowledge of video games and computers.

## **Plan:**

- ▶ Staff working with Sonny will read and sign this plan.
- ▶ Be aware of antecedent events. This behaviour is most likely to occur when:
  - Sonny is presented with a new assignment
  - Sonny hears raised voices (he is sensitive to sounds)
  - Sonny thinks other students are making fun of him
  - Sonny does not understand the meaning of what another student says to him.
- ▶ Be aware of warning signs (escalating behaviours)
  - Sonny starts talking to himself.
  - Sonny begins to pace.
  - Sonny approaches the student he believes is teasing or taunting him.
  - Sonny reaches for a desk or another piece of furniture.

These behaviours are communicative in nature and indicate that Sonny is having difficulty.

- ▶ Immediate measures (list plans to diffuse the situation)
  - Sonny will be given a problem-solving card with relaxation choices, e.g., breathe deeply, go get a drink, don't react.
  - Other students will be removed from the vicinity.
  - Once Sonny has calmed down, he will create a plan outlining upcoming activities, with assistance.
  
- ▶ Implement positive behaviour supports (describe proactive strategies to use consistently to support students that increase their abilities to communicate their wants and needs, and that teach alternative, more acceptable responses to frustration).
  - Problem-solving strategies will be practised and recorded on a cue card.
  - Relaxation strategies will be selected, practised and recorded on a cue card.
  - Sonny will be involved in creating a social story dealing with teasing.
  - Sonny will be rewarded when he handles a tough situation.
  - Sonny will be given the opportunity to practise new work in a group setting and be successful before being asked to do it on his own.
  - Sonny's work will be modified to ensure he is successful.
  - Sonny will be given specific daily goals regarding academic and behaviour expectations.
  - Sonny will work toward having free time at the computer.
  - Sonny will be given the opportunity to share the games and programs he creates with other students.
  
- ▶ Help peers learn to:
  - understand that Sonny may not comprehend their intentions
  - reduce their joking and teasing
  - include Sonny in their activities.
  
- ▶ Staff will (include any other measures that staff need to take):
  - supervise Sonny during lunchtime
  - invite Sonny to join one lunchtime club
  - offer Sonny choices about how he wants to demonstrate his knowledge and learning.

- **Reactive Plan**—In spite of proactive strategies, if aggressive or unsafe behaviour occurs, the following plan is in place (list a plan for dealing with escalating behaviour that includes steps and staff responses for each level of escalation).
- Sonny will be asked to leave class and an adult will walk with him.
  - Sonny will go to the nurse’s office to calm down.
  - Once calm, Sonny will be prompted to represent his interpretation of the incident through drawing. With assistance, Sonny will identify another way of dealing with similar incidents (previously practiced problem-solving strategies).
  - Sonny will be assisted in developing a plan for restitution, if necessary.
  - Sonny’s parents will be notified if the incident is serious.

I have read this plan and am aware of support procedures to be followed when working with Sonny.

Note: A copy of this plan should be kept in the office and be read by school personnel before they begin working with the student.

Team members’ signatures:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Date:

\_\_\_\_\_

Review date:

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