

Strategies for Increasing Problem Solving in Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder

April N. Kisamore, Ph.D., BCBA-D, LBA (NY)

Ever ran into these types of situations?



What do I
wear today?



How many windows
are in my house?





Where
Should I put
this?



Where did I put these?



How do I do
this?

What Causes Hiccups?





How do I get
back to work?

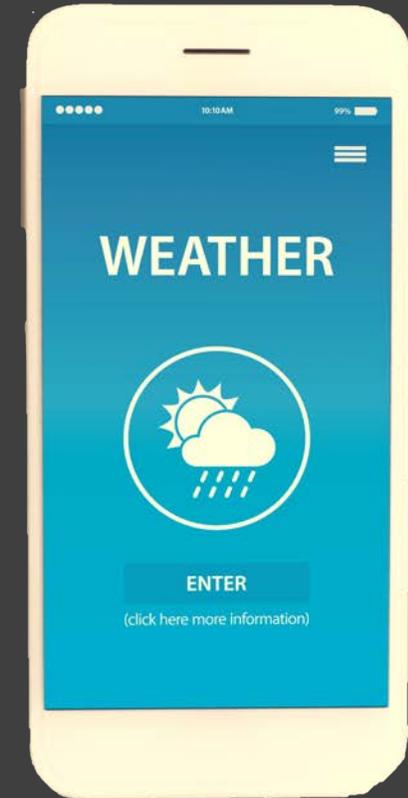
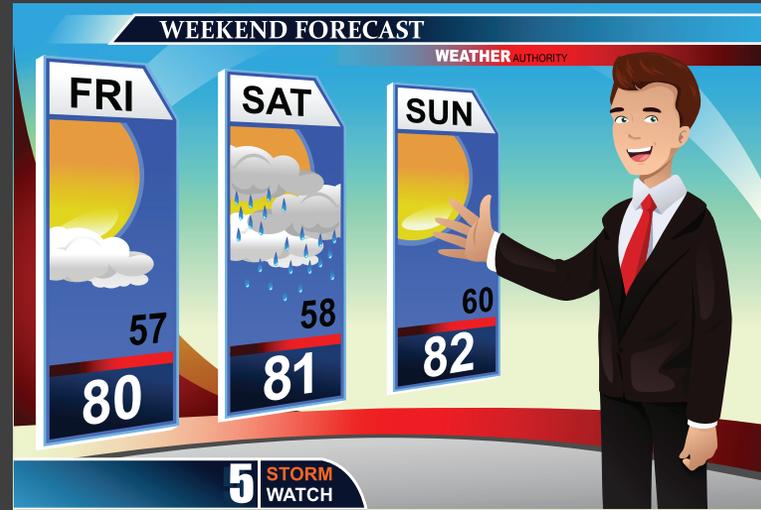
A problem

- Anytime you are presented with a situation in which you have no response immediately available to satisfy a motivating operation (Skinner, 1957)

Problem solve

Thinking and talking to ourselves (Skinner, 1957)

Engage in a series of mediating responses that make the solution more likely (Palmer, 1991)



You might check the weather



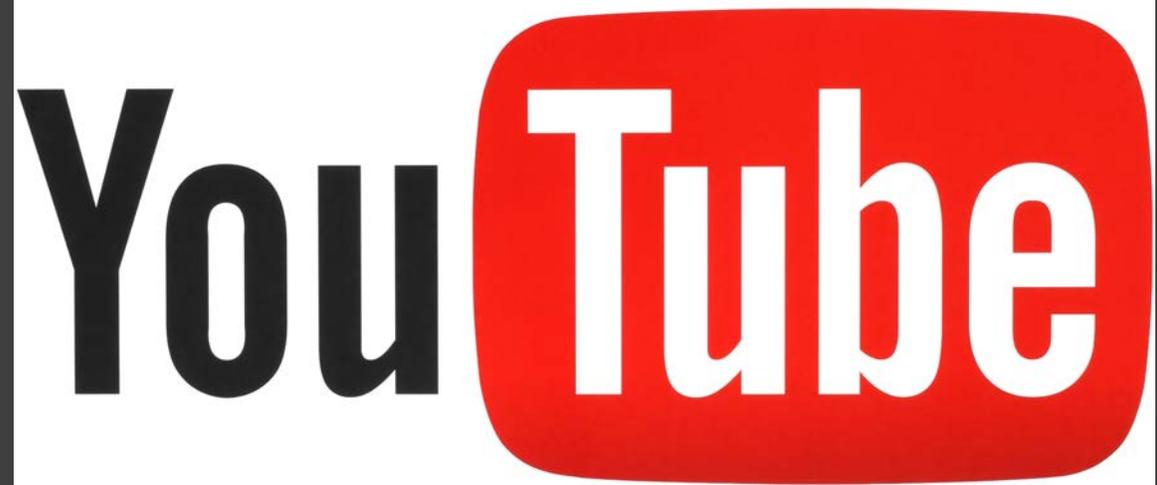
You might imagine your house



You might draw out your space



You might search your home



You might Youtube it

What Causes Hiccups?



You might Google it

You might have to choose among different options

Bus Timetable														
Look for details on each station, including the address and local transit connections, below on the page.														
Mondays to Saturdays except public holidays											Sundays public holidays			
0754	0845	0945	1045	1145	1245	1345	1445	1545	1645	1055	1355	1455	1545	1655
0750	0850	0950	1050	1150	1250	1345	1450	1550	1650	1055	1355	1255	1845	1855
0755	0855	0955	1055	1155	1255	1345	1455	1555	1655	1050	1150	1250	1350	1450
0854	0945	1045	1145	1245	1345	1445	1545	1645	1745	1345	1445	1545	1645	1745
0850	0950	1050	1150	1250	1350	1450	1550	1650	1750	1350	1450	1550	1650	1750
0911	1011	1111	1211	1311	1411	1511	1611	1711	1811	1411	1511	1611	1711	1811
▼ 0850	▼ 1050	▼ 1255	▼ 1450	▼ 1650						1345	1445	1545	1645	1745
0750	▼ 0950	▼ 1150	▼ 1345	▼ 1550										
▼ 0855	▼ 1055	▼ 1255	▼ 1455	▼ 1655						1611	1711	1811		
0755	▼ 0955	▼ 1155	▼ 1345	▼ 1555						1455	1555	1655		
0750	0850	0950	1050	1150	1250	1345	1450	1550		1455	1555	1655		



How do we know to do these things?

How do we teach others to
problem solve?

CTLE Keynote 1: **BOOK**

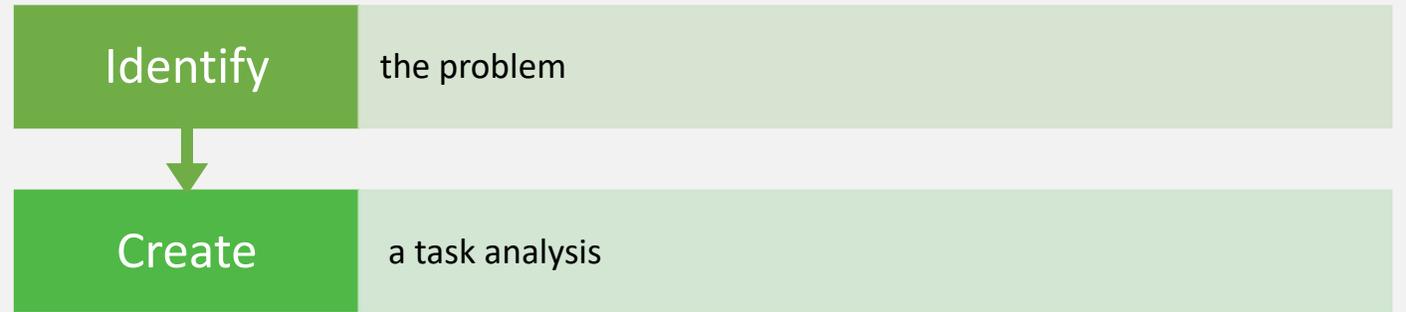


Identify

the problem

How do we
teach others
to problem
solve?

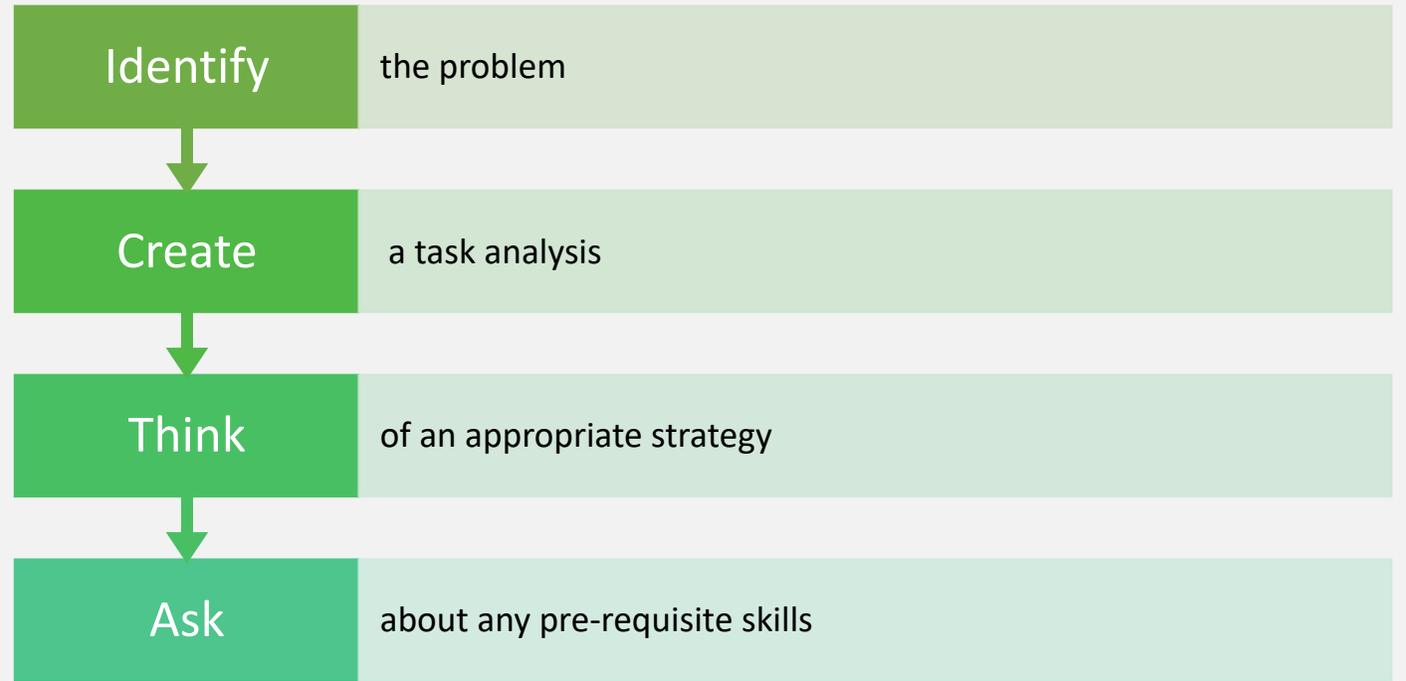
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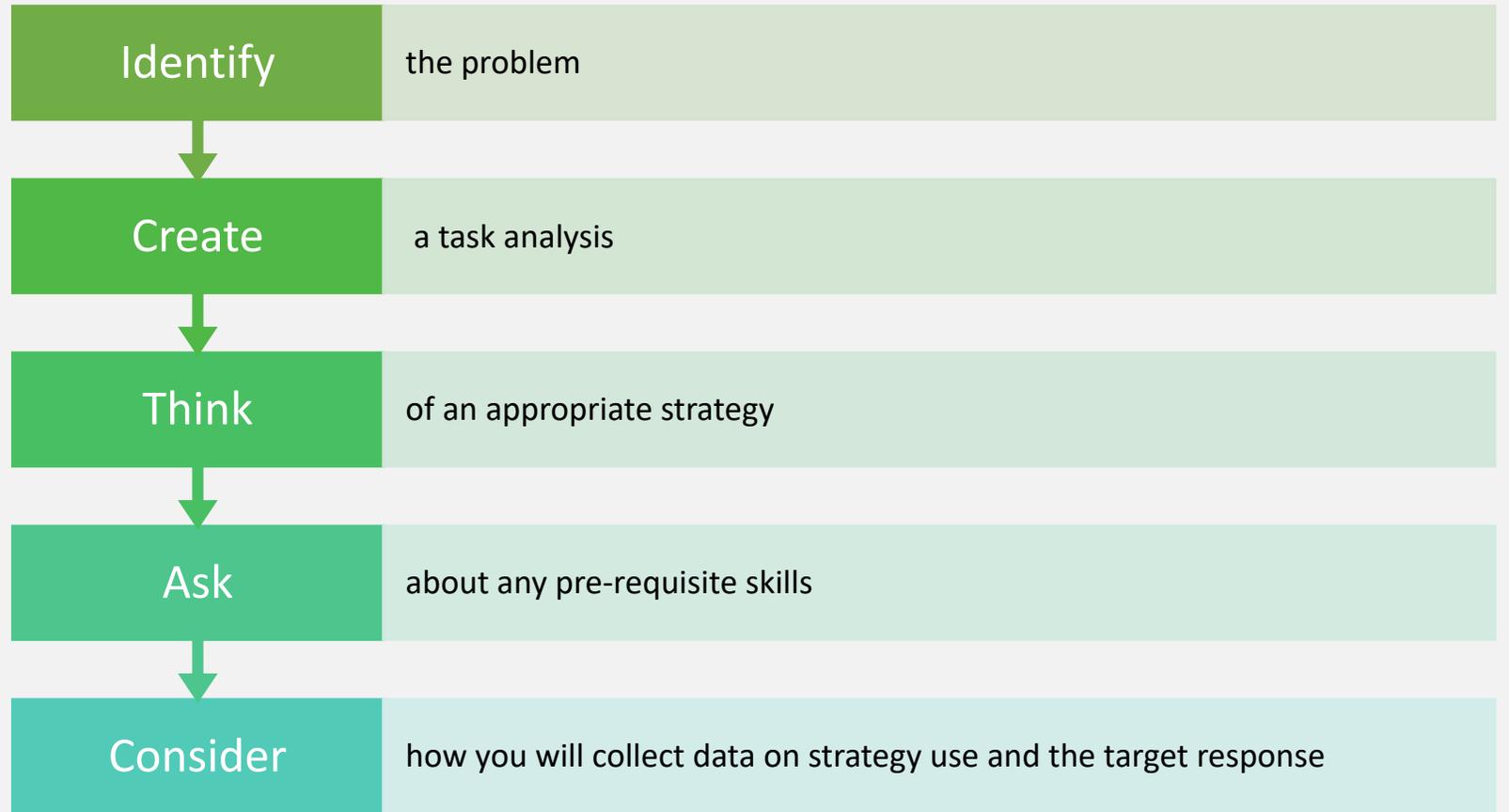
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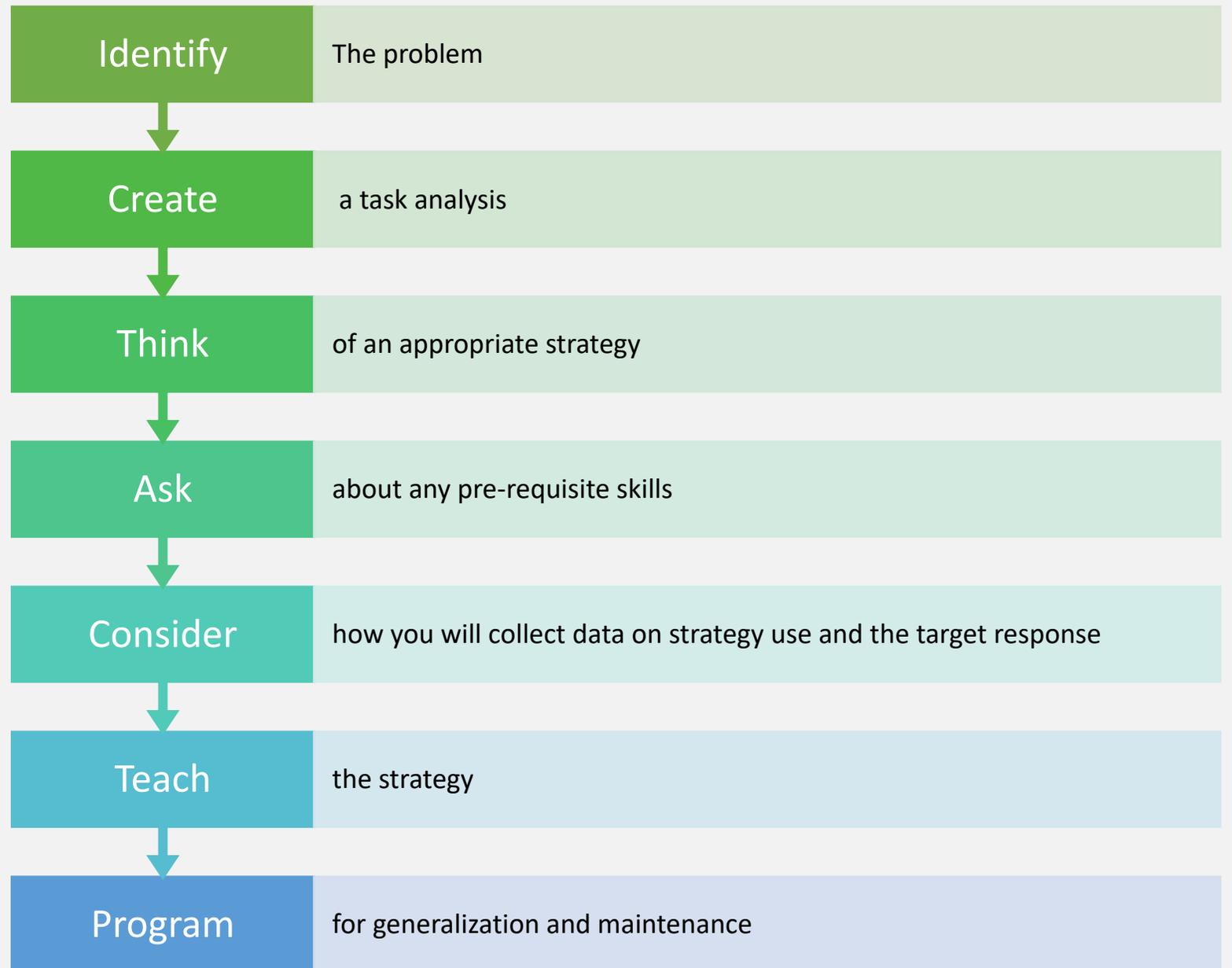
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Vocational Tasks

Benefits of Employment (Hendricks, 2010; Lee & Carter, 2012)

- Financial autonomy

Benefits of Employment

- Financial autonomy

Financial Autonomy

Preferred residence



Financial Autonomy

Personal Interests and Activities



Benefits of Employment

- Reduced reliance on government funds
- Greater contribution to society
- Decreased reliance on day programs and community supports
- Employers often value trustworthiness, reliability, and low absenteeism
- Employees with ASD often demonstrate attention to detail and increased work output

Employment Outcomes

It is estimated that between 50-75% of adults with ASD are unemployed

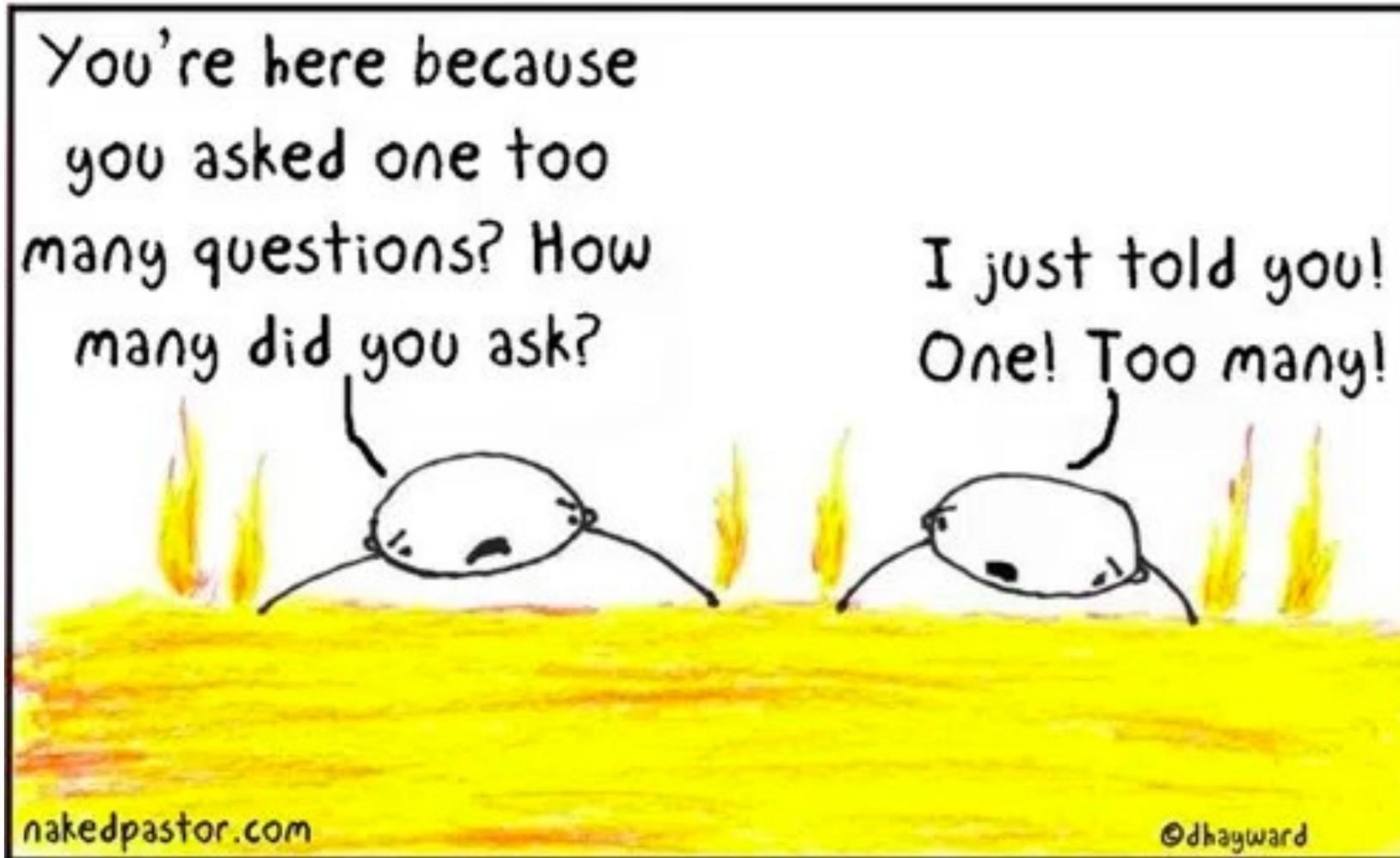
Tend to make less money and have less satisfying jobs

Possible Challenges

Social and communication difficulties

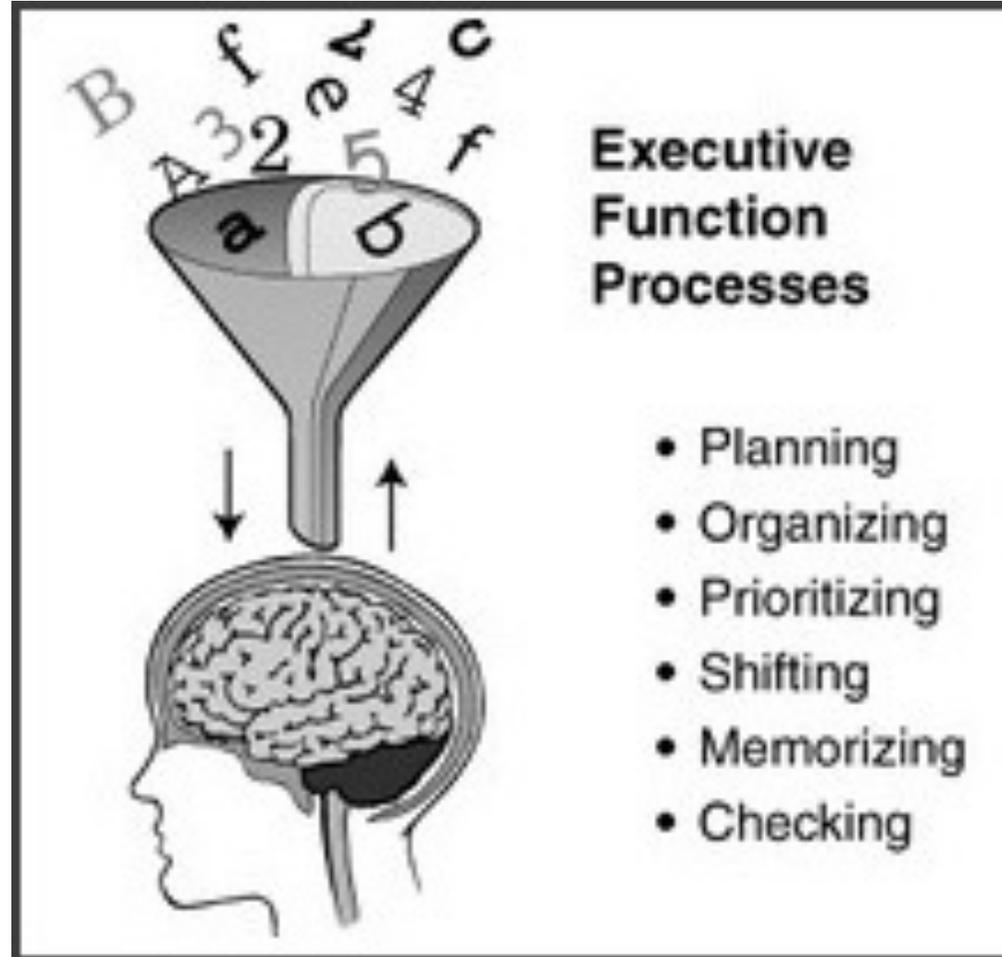
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Social and communication difficulties



Possible Challenges

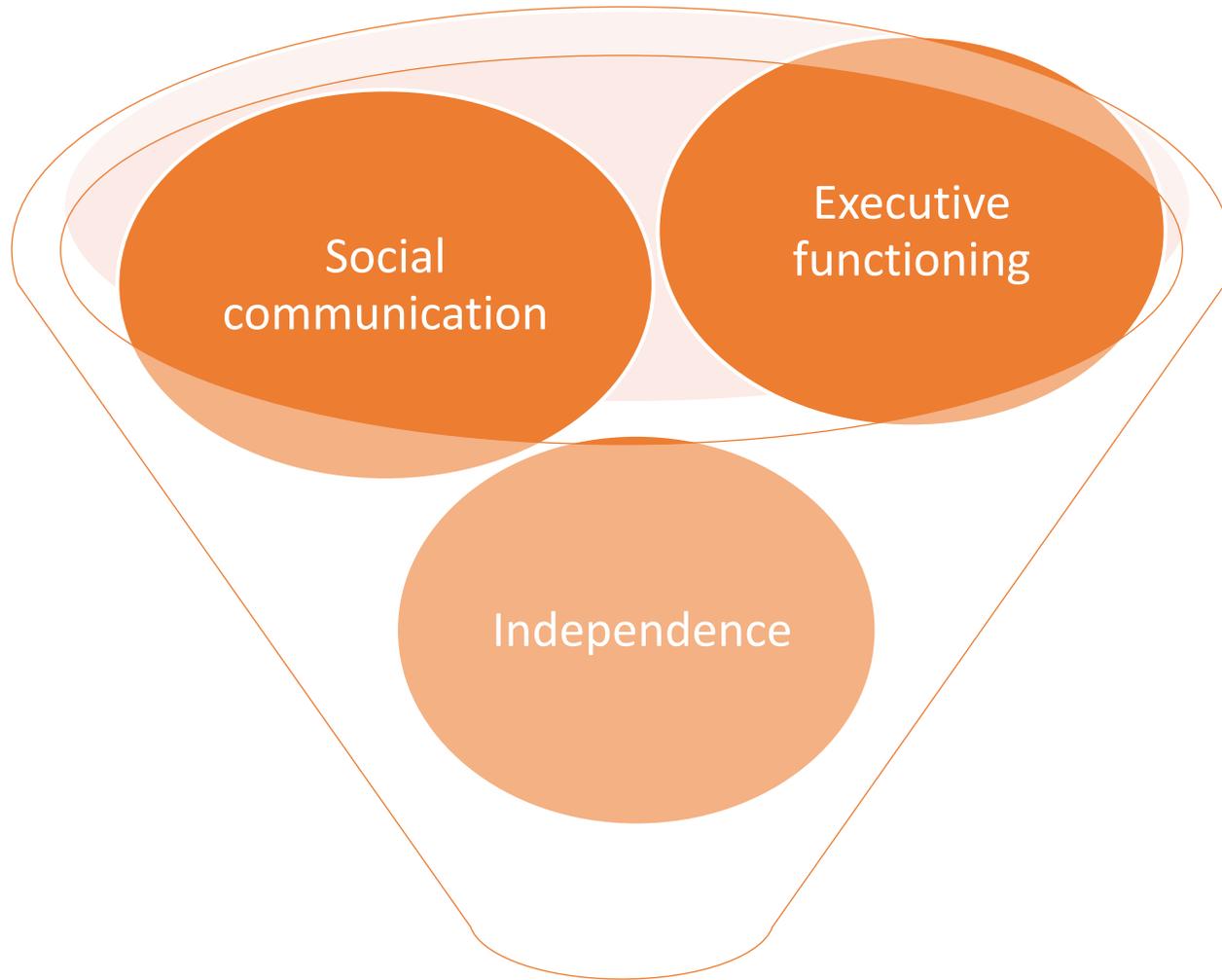
Poor executive functioning skills



Areas of Possible Skill Deficits

Lack of independent performance





Low Rates of Employment

CTLE Keynote 1: **MOON**



Effects of a Problem-Solving Strategy on the
Independent Completion of
Vocational Tasks by Level 1/Level 2 Learners
with Autism Spectrum Disorder

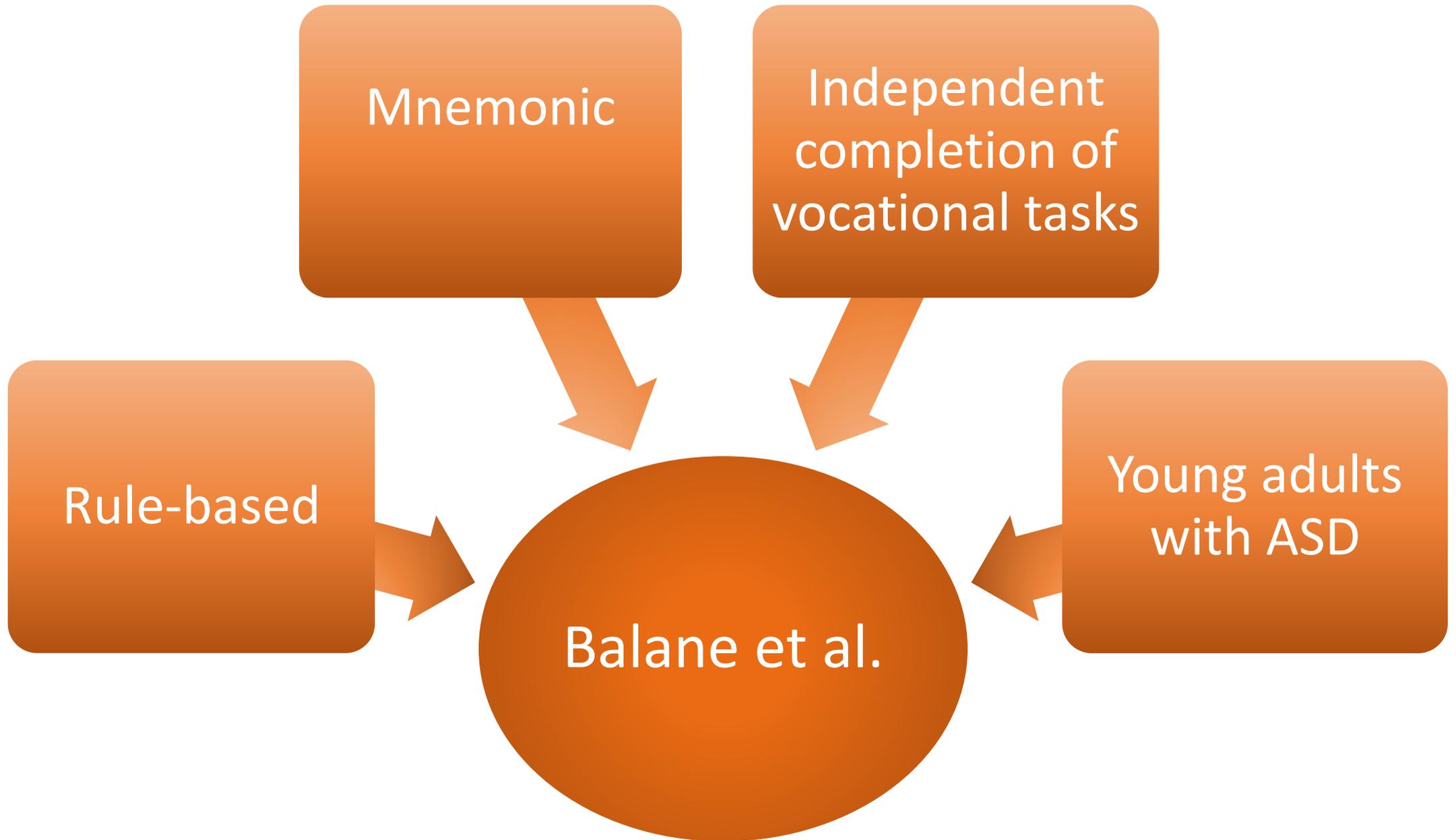
Bernadette C. Balane¹, April N. Kisamore²,

Tina M. Sidener¹, and James E. Carr³

Caldwell University¹

Hunter College, City University of New York²

BACB³



Participants

- Andy: male, 29
- Leslie: female, 26
- Mark: male, 29
- Characteristics:
 - Physical ability to perform various vocational tasks (e.g., staple papers)
 - Learn and follow simple rules (e.g., when someone sneezes, say, “bless you”)
 - Lack of independent problem-solving skills while completing tasks

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Setting and Materials

- Habilitation program sites
- Sessions were conducted in a multi-purpose room
- File folders that contained task items
 - Name of the task
 - Picture of the task

Task	Typical scenario	Problem scenario		
		Missing	Depleted	Dysfunctional
Stamp envelopes	Stamps present	Stamps missing	Insufficient stamps	
Staple papers	Stapler present, sufficient staples in stapler, stapler intact	Stapler missing	Insufficient staples	Stapler broken
Highlight signature lines	Highlighter present, sufficient ink in highlighter, highlighter intact	Highlighter missing	Insufficient ink	
Stuff envelopes	Envelopes present, sufficient envelopes, correct sized envelopes	Envelopes missing	Insufficient envelopes	Incorrect sized envelopes
Rubber band pamphlets	Rubber bands intact, sufficient rubber bands	Rubber bands missing	Insufficient rubber bands	
Paperclip packets	Paperclips present, sufficient paper clips	Paperclips missing	Insufficient paperclips	
Cut papers	Scissors intact	Scissors missing		Scissors broken
Make copies	Paper present, copier plugged in	No paper		Copier unplugged
Hole punch packets	Hole puncher intact	Hole puncher missing		Hole puncher broken
Sharpen pencils	Sharpener present, sharpener unplugged	Sharpener missing		Sharpener unplugged
File sheets in binder	Sufficient sheet protectors, sheet protectors intact		Insufficient sheet protectors	Sheet protectors broken
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Behaviors of Interest (Dependent Variables)

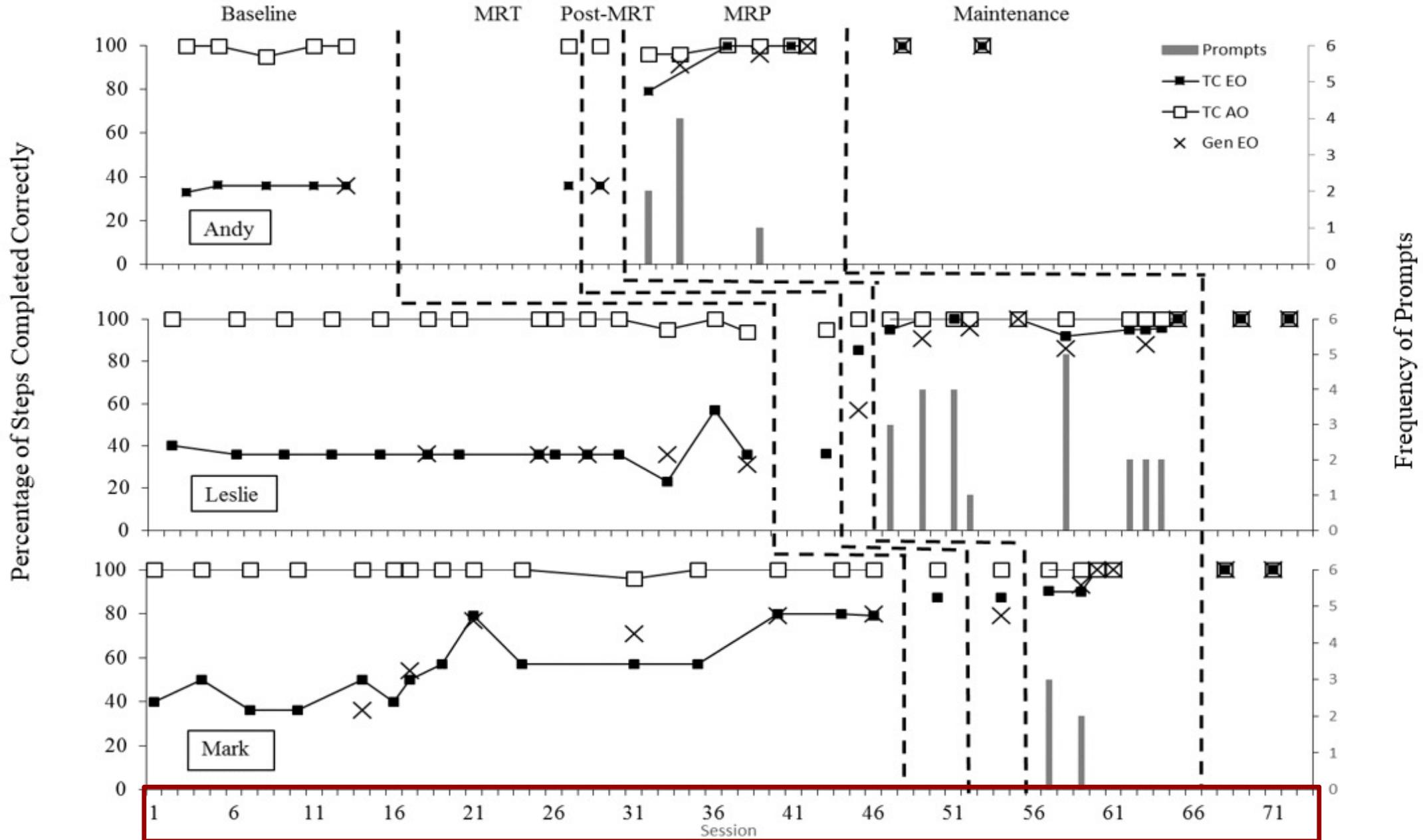
- Percentage of steps completed correctly
 - Obtain task folder
 - Obtain basic task materials
 - Obtain missing, depleted, or functional materials; or plugs in unplugged item
 - Complete the task
 - Place completed task in “finished” bin
- Frequency of experimenter prompts

Pre-requisite Skills Training

- Purpose: Ensure participants could complete the tasks independently during typical scenarios (no problem present)

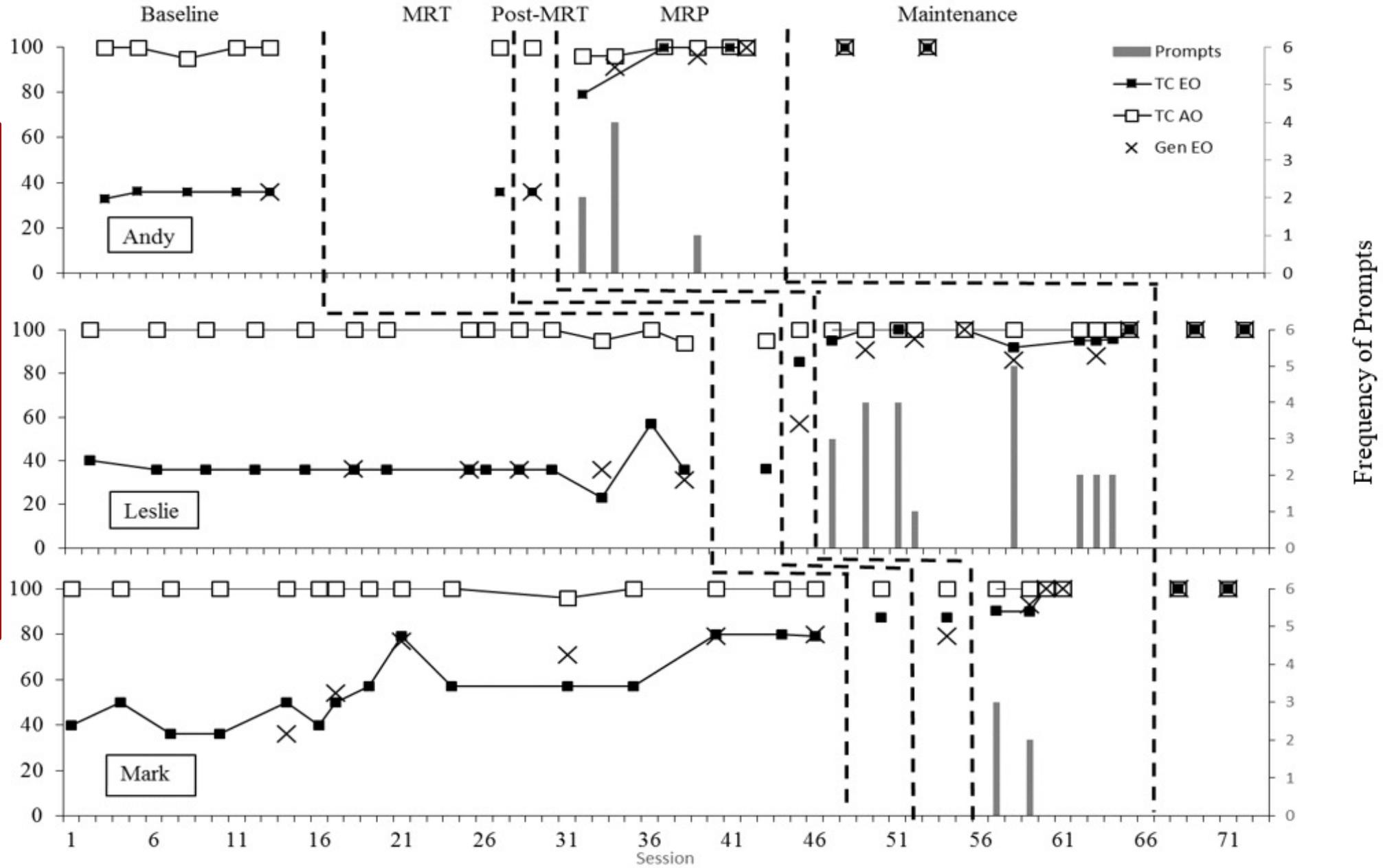
Baseline

- Purpose: Assess percentage of steps completed correctly on tasks with problem scenarios and typical scenarios
- Participants given a set of job folders
- Instructed to “do your work”
- No prompts or feedback for correct or incorrect responding
- No help provided

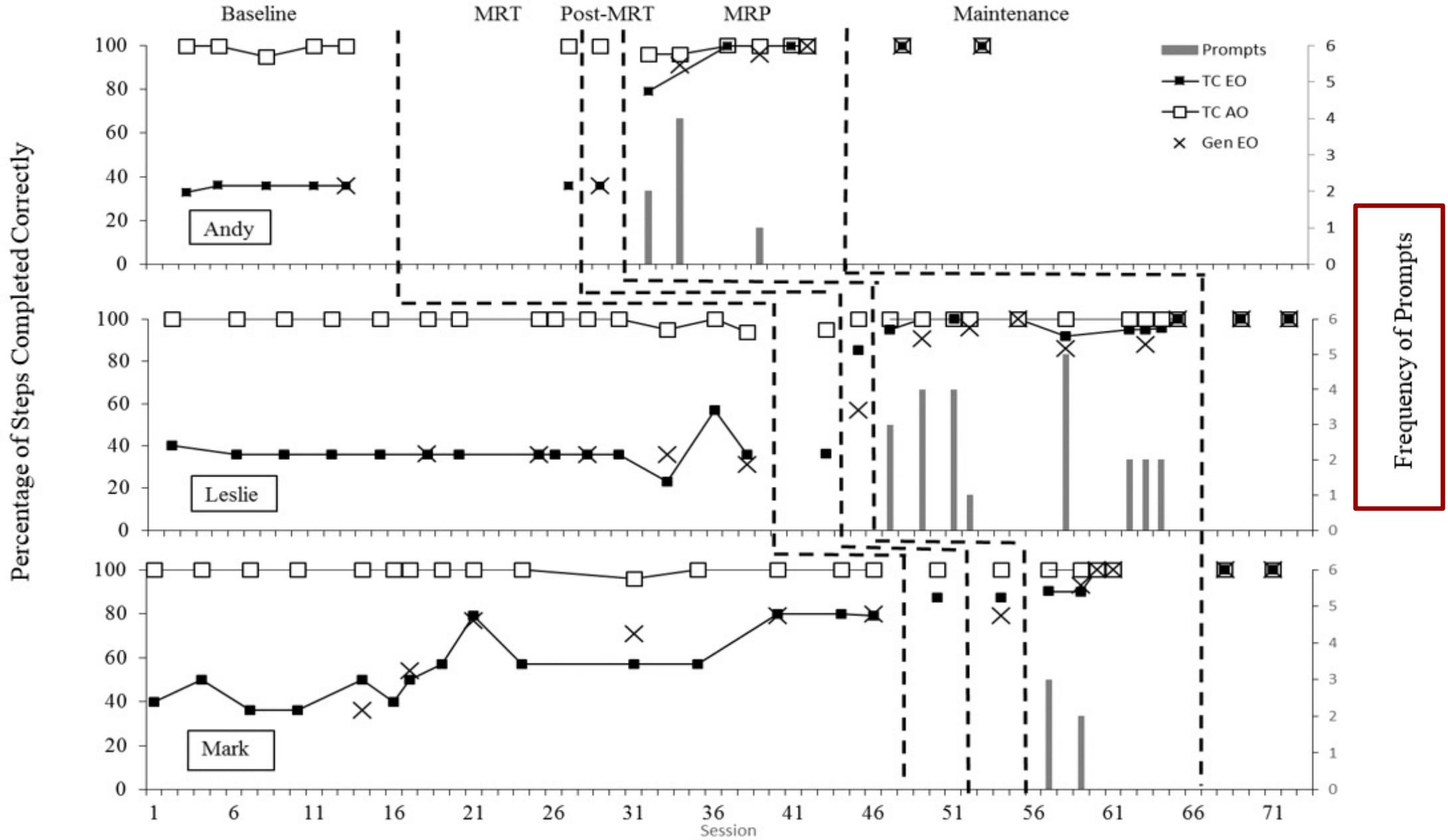


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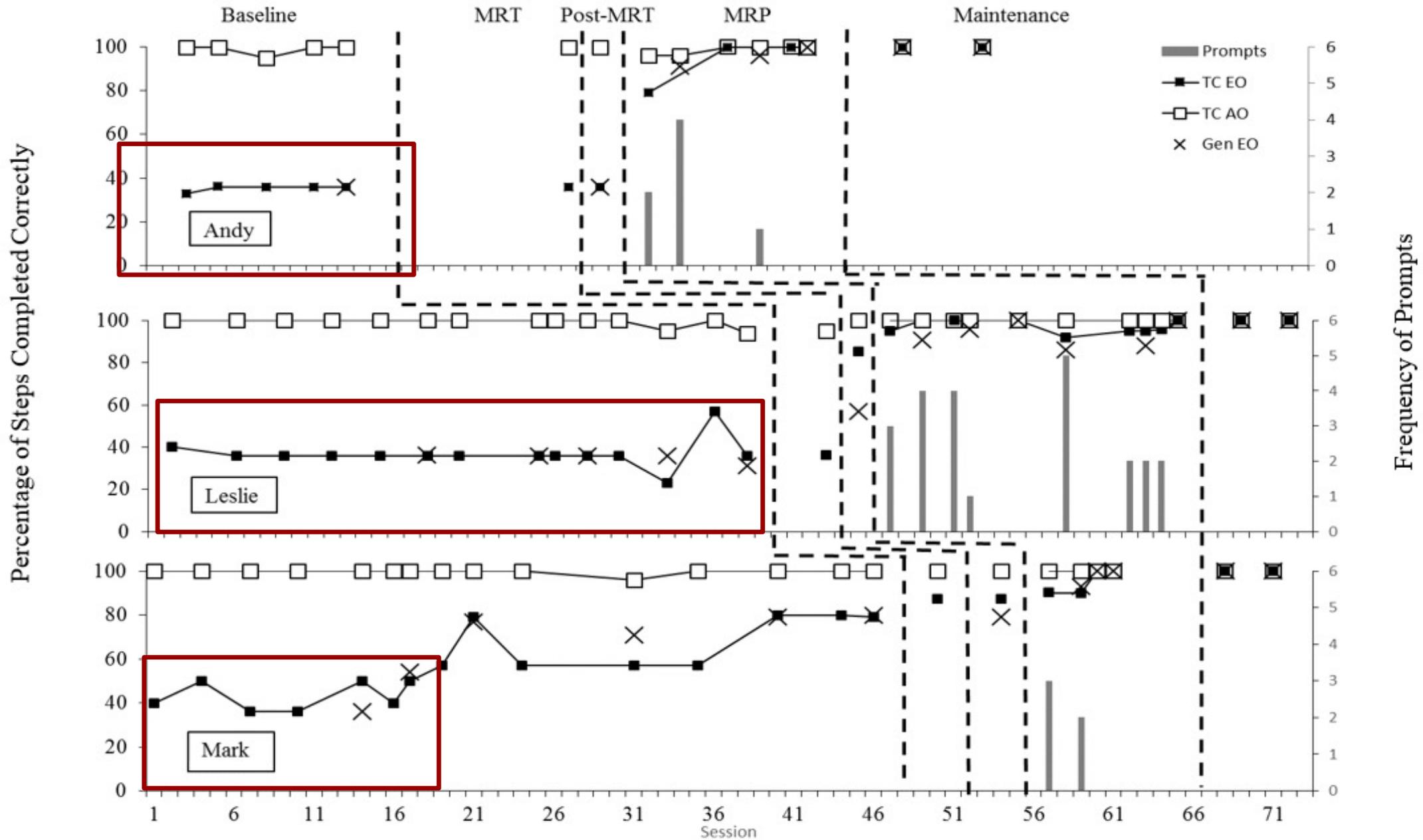
Percentage of Steps Completed Correctly



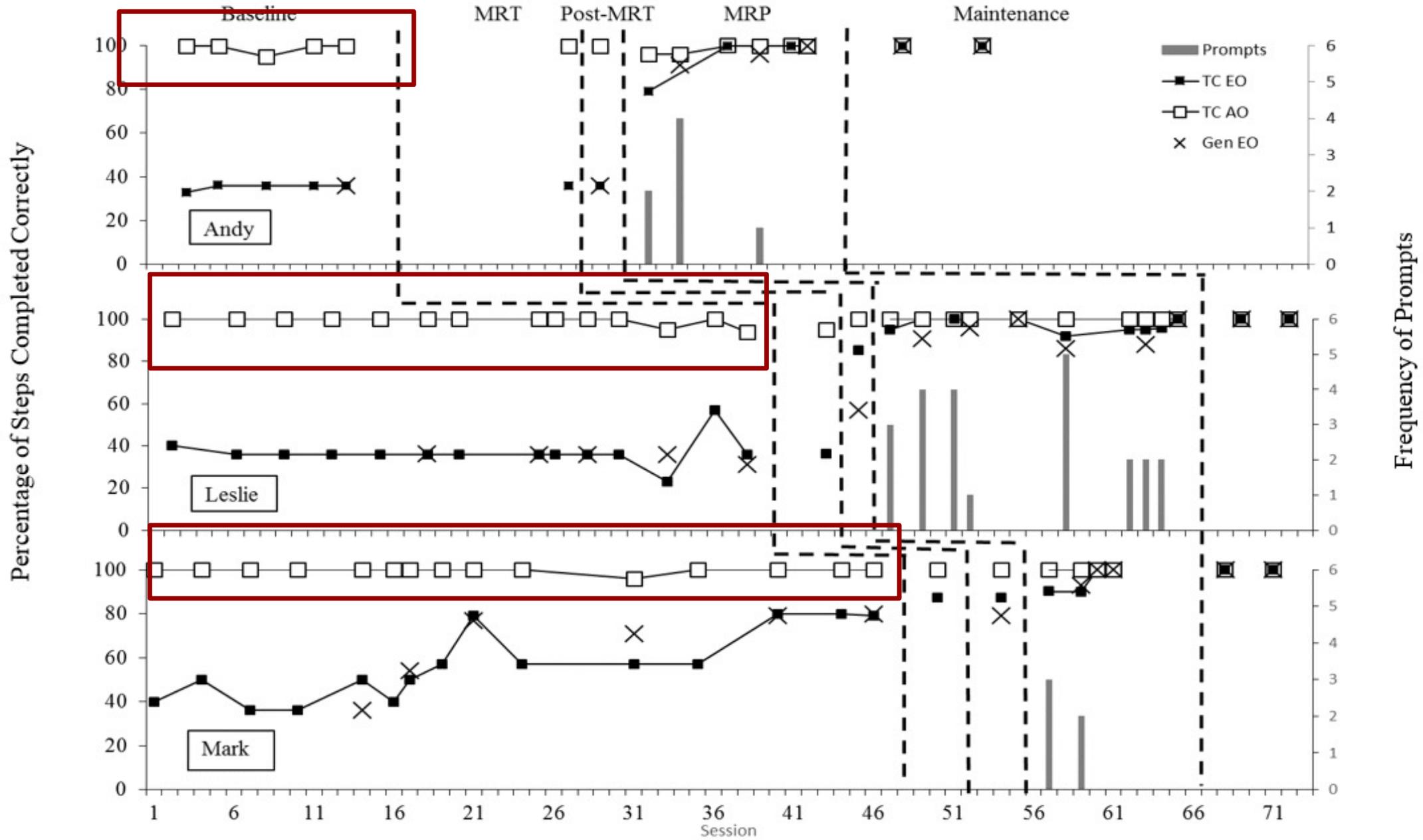
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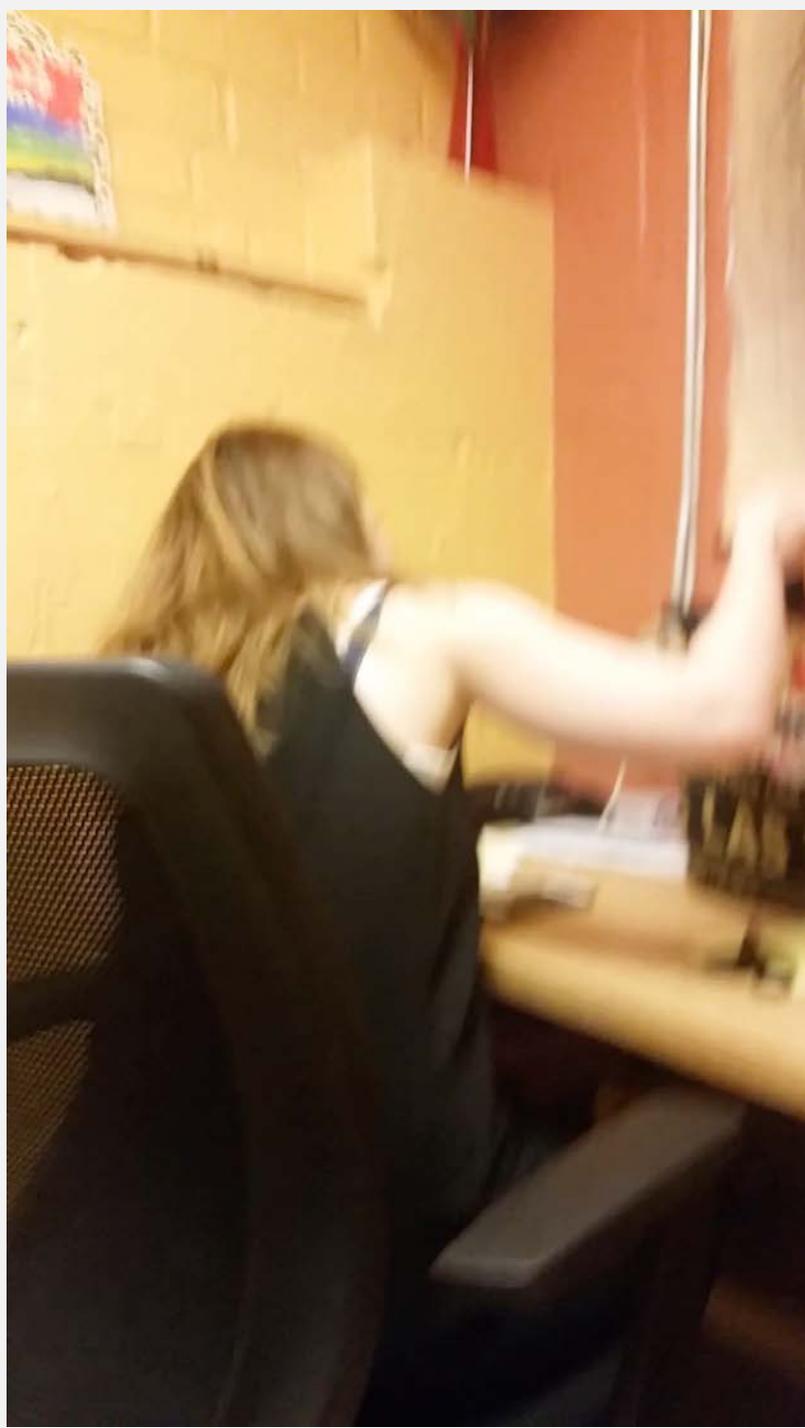
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Baseline for Leslie

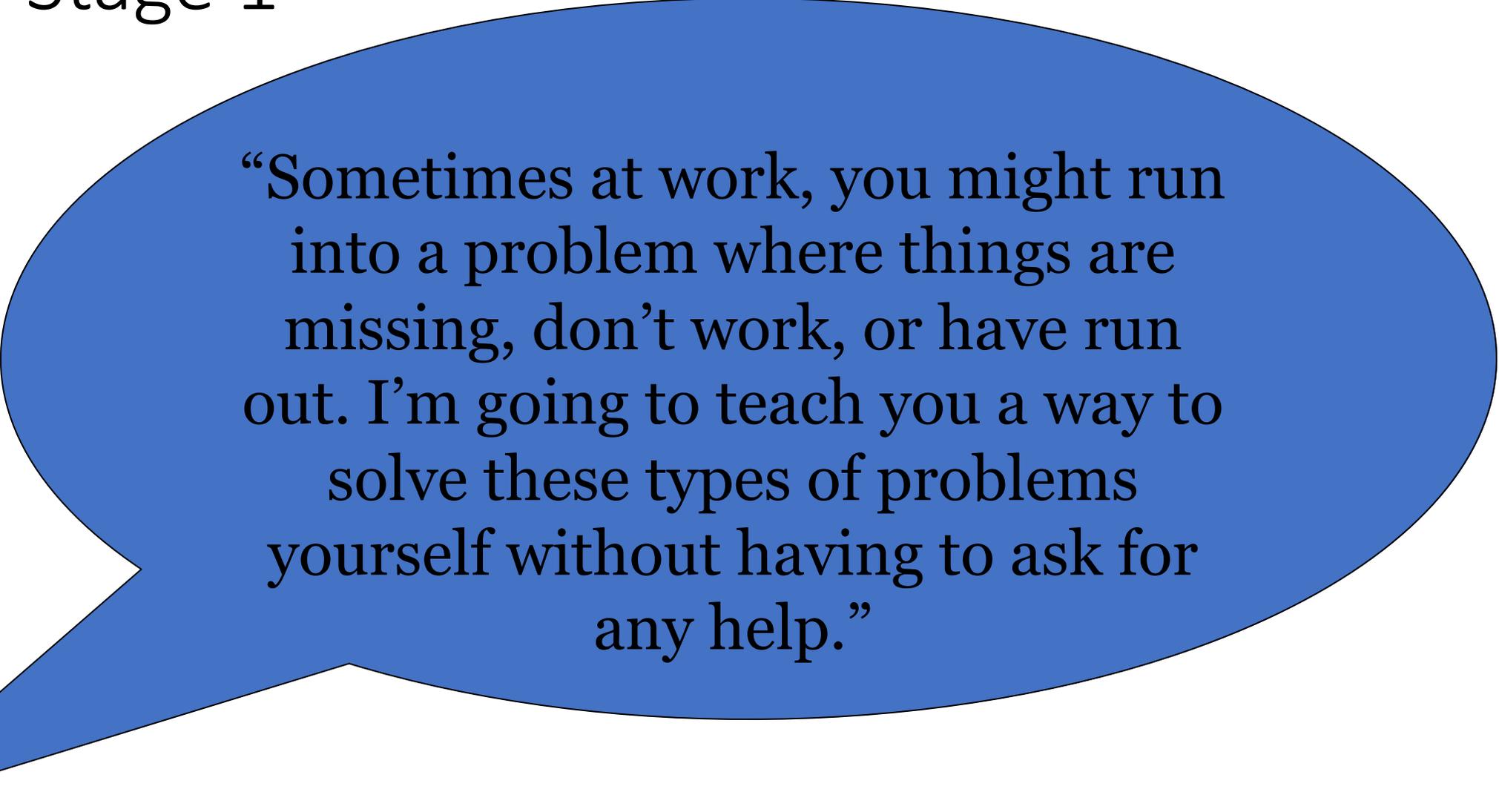
Video 1



Mediating-Response Training (MRT)

- Purpose: Teach the mediating responses
 - **S** = Something's wrong
 - **I** = I can fix it
 - **D** = Do the job
- Two stages
 - Stage 1: Train the mnemonic and rules
 - Stage 2: Model strategy use

MRT Stage 1

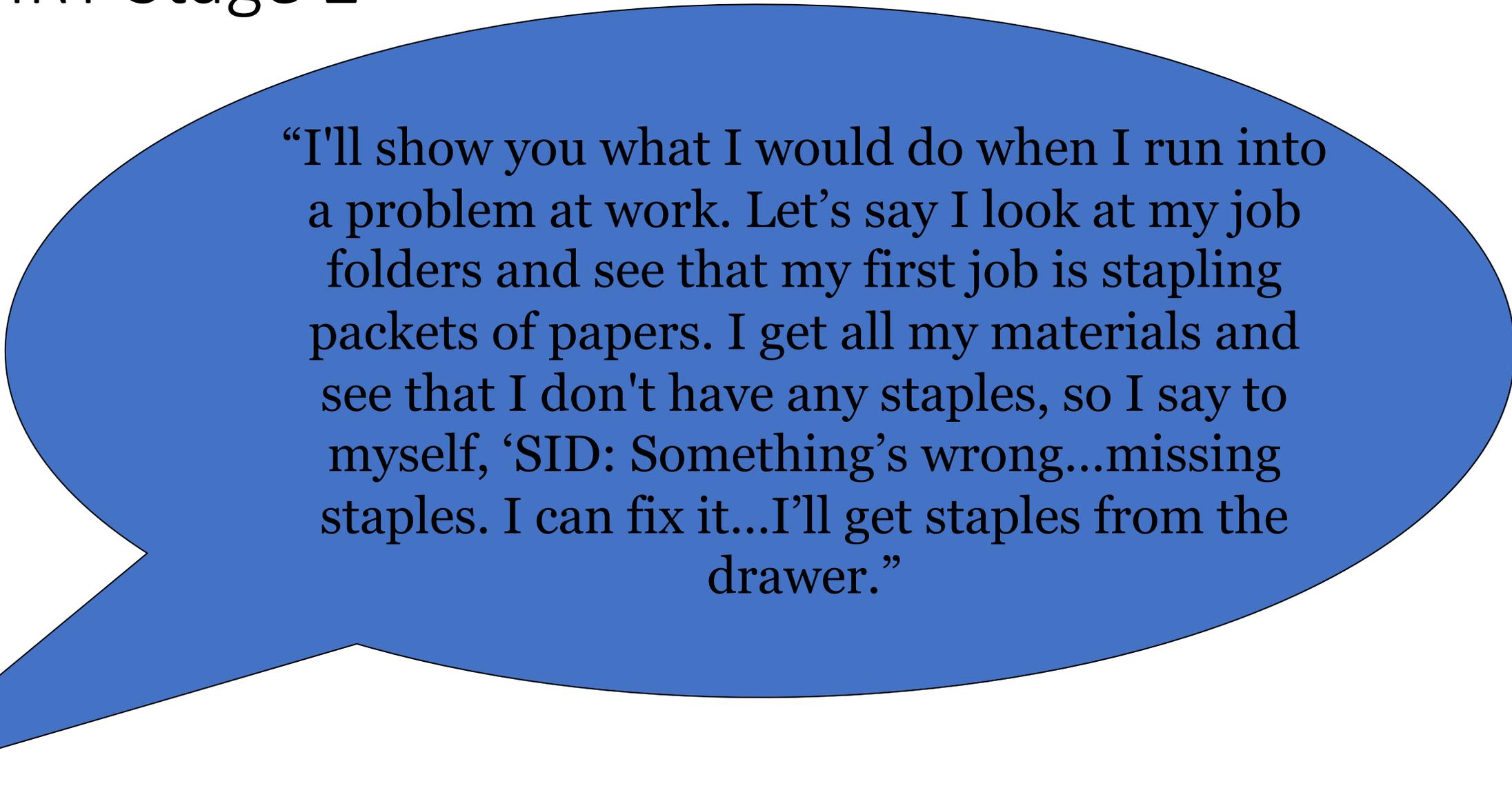


“Sometimes at work, you might run into a problem where things are missing, don’t work, or have run out. I’m going to teach you a way to solve these types of problems yourself without having to ask for any help.”

MRT Stage 1

“First, remember *SID: S-I-D*. Then say to yourself, ‘**S**: Something’s wrong’ and say what it is. Then say to yourself, ‘**I**: I can fix it and do what you need to do to make it work. Then say to yourself ‘**D**: do the job.’ Why don’t you give it a try? Remember, ‘S – Something’s wrong, I – I can fix it, and D – Do the job.’”

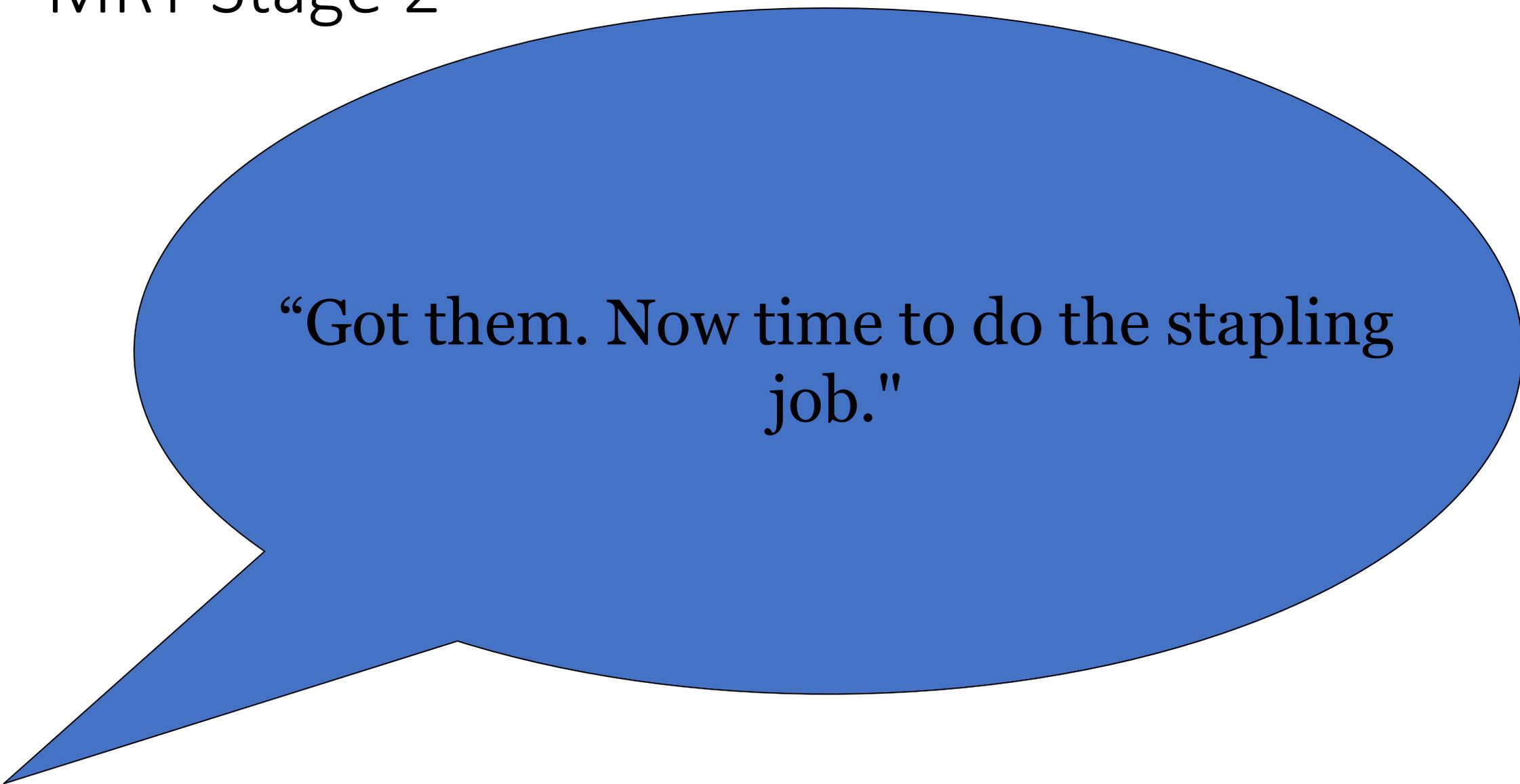
MRT Stage 2



“I'll show you what I would do when I run into a problem at work. Let's say I look at my job folders and see that my first job is stapling packets of papers. I get all my materials and see that I don't have any staples, so I say to myself, 'SID: Something's wrong...missing staples. I can fix it...I'll get staples from the drawer.’”

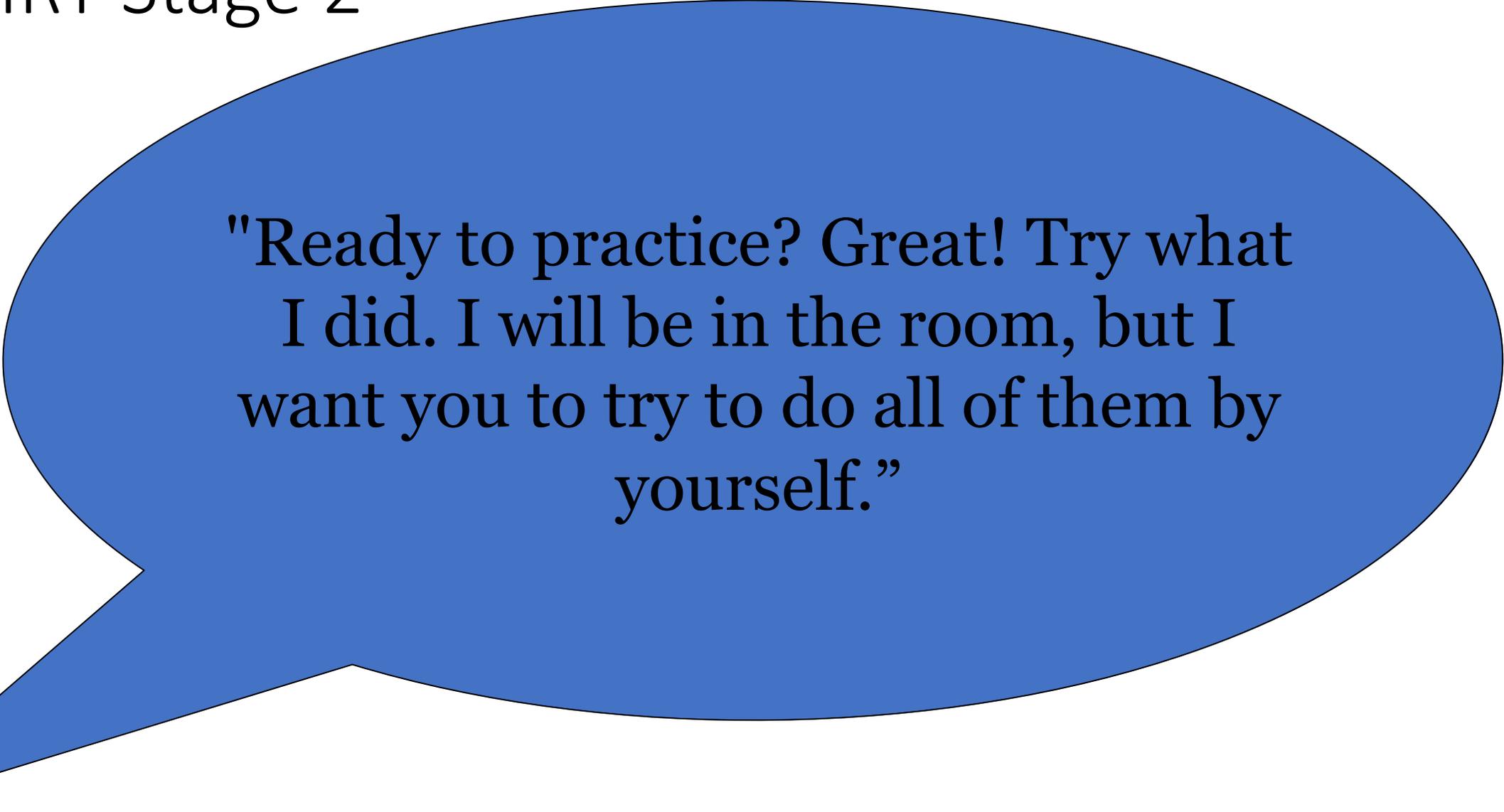


MRT Stage 2

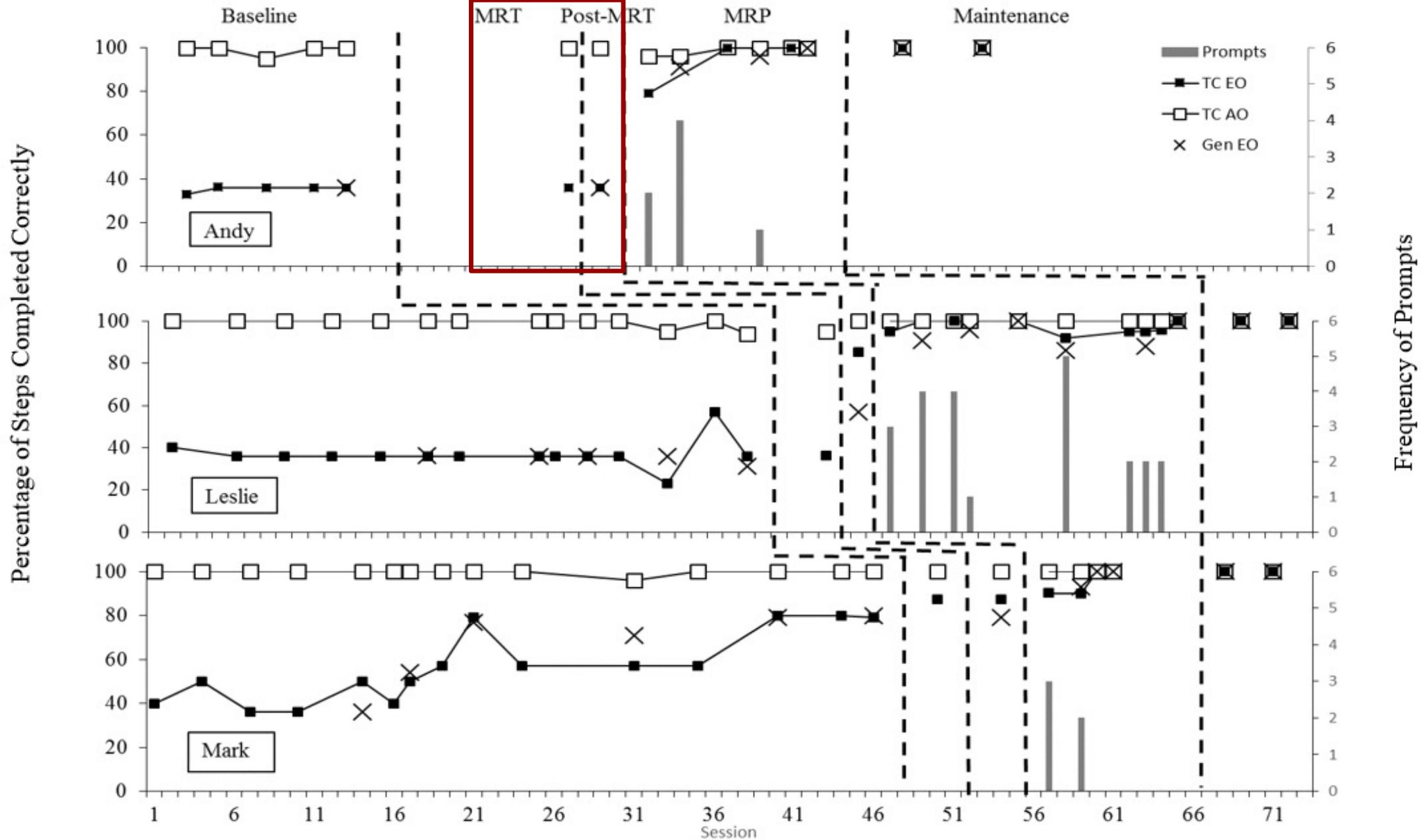


“Got them. Now time to do the stapling
job.”

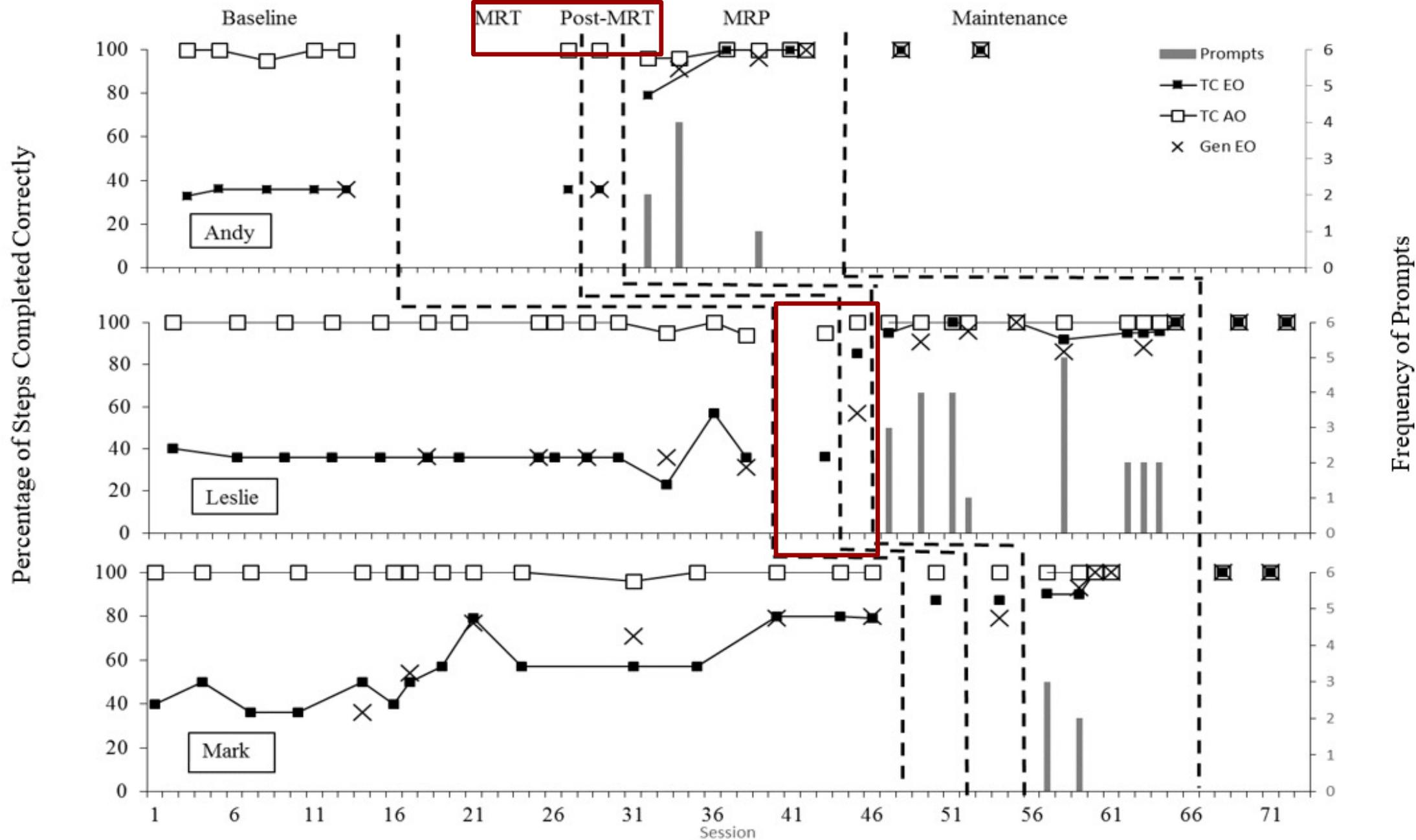
MRT Stage 2



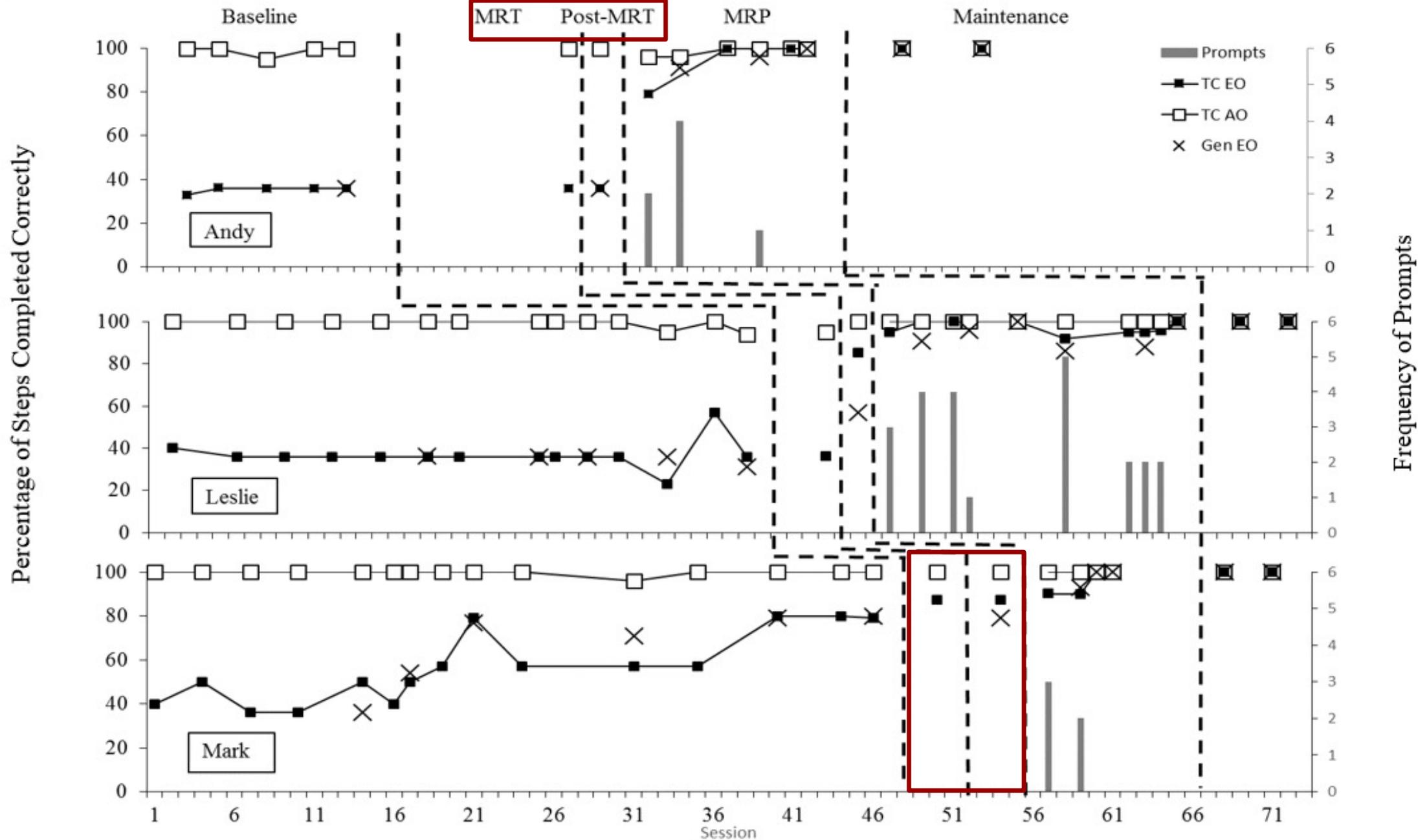
"Ready to practice? Great! Try what I did. I will be in the room, but I want you to try to do all of them by yourself."



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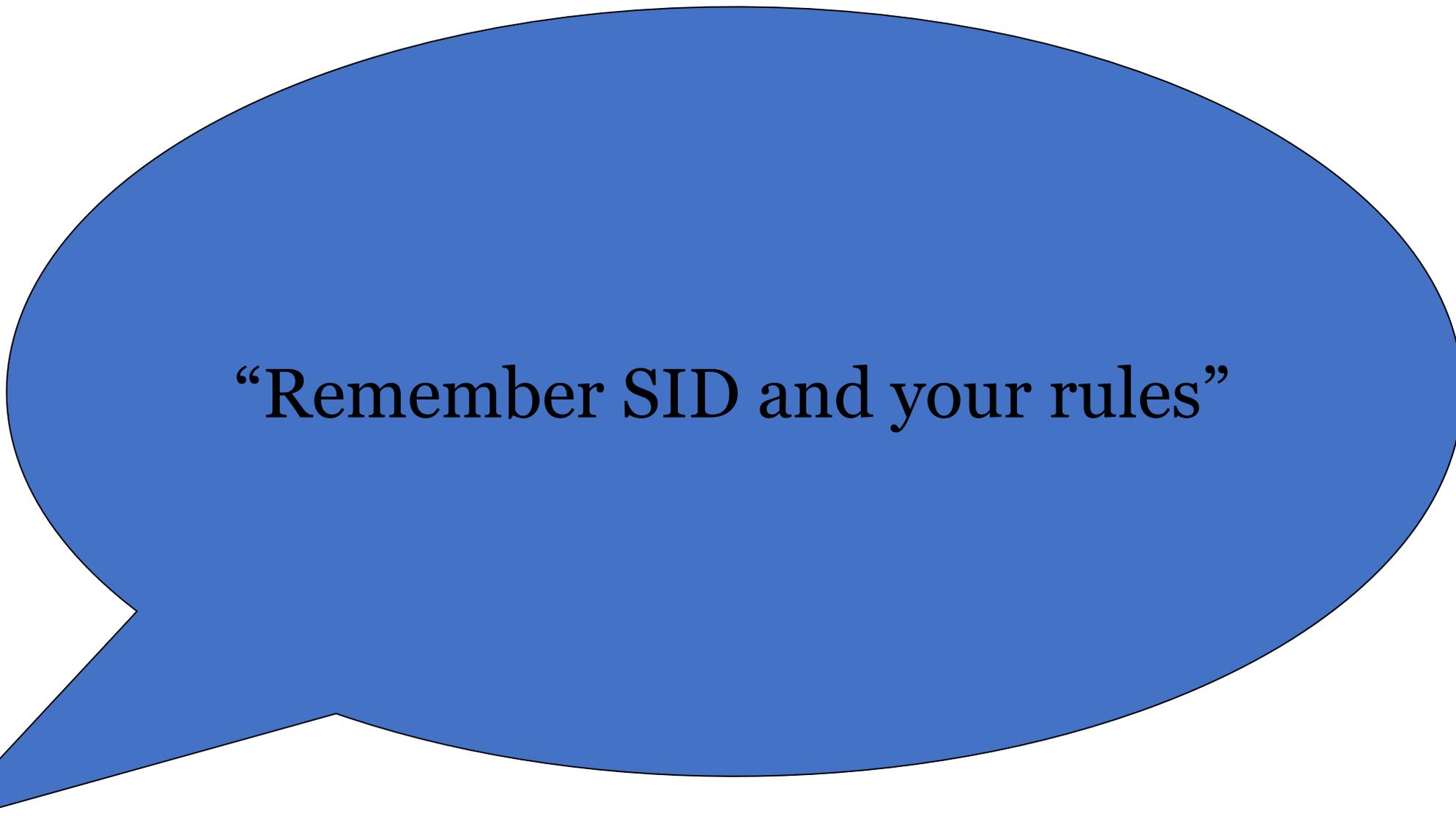


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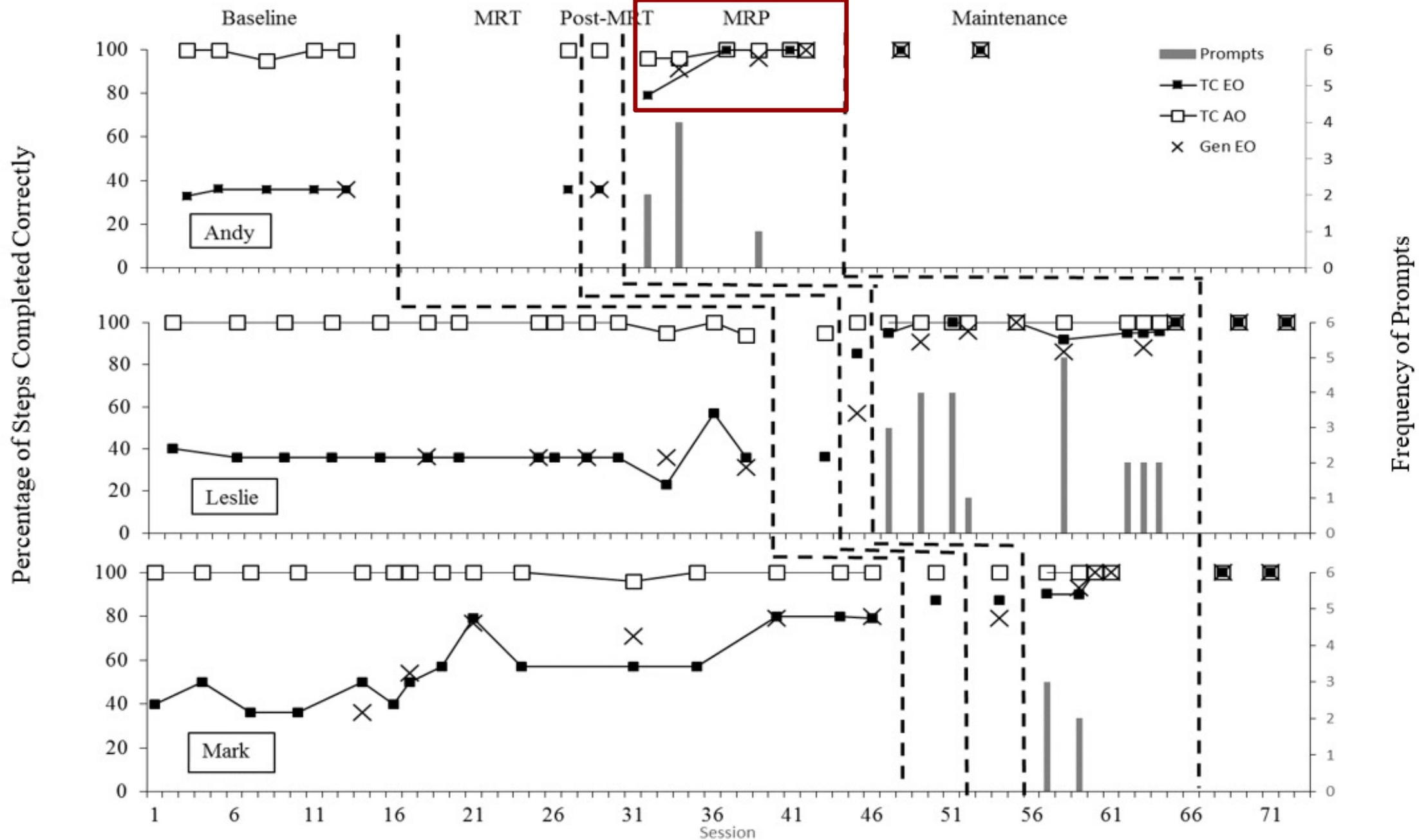


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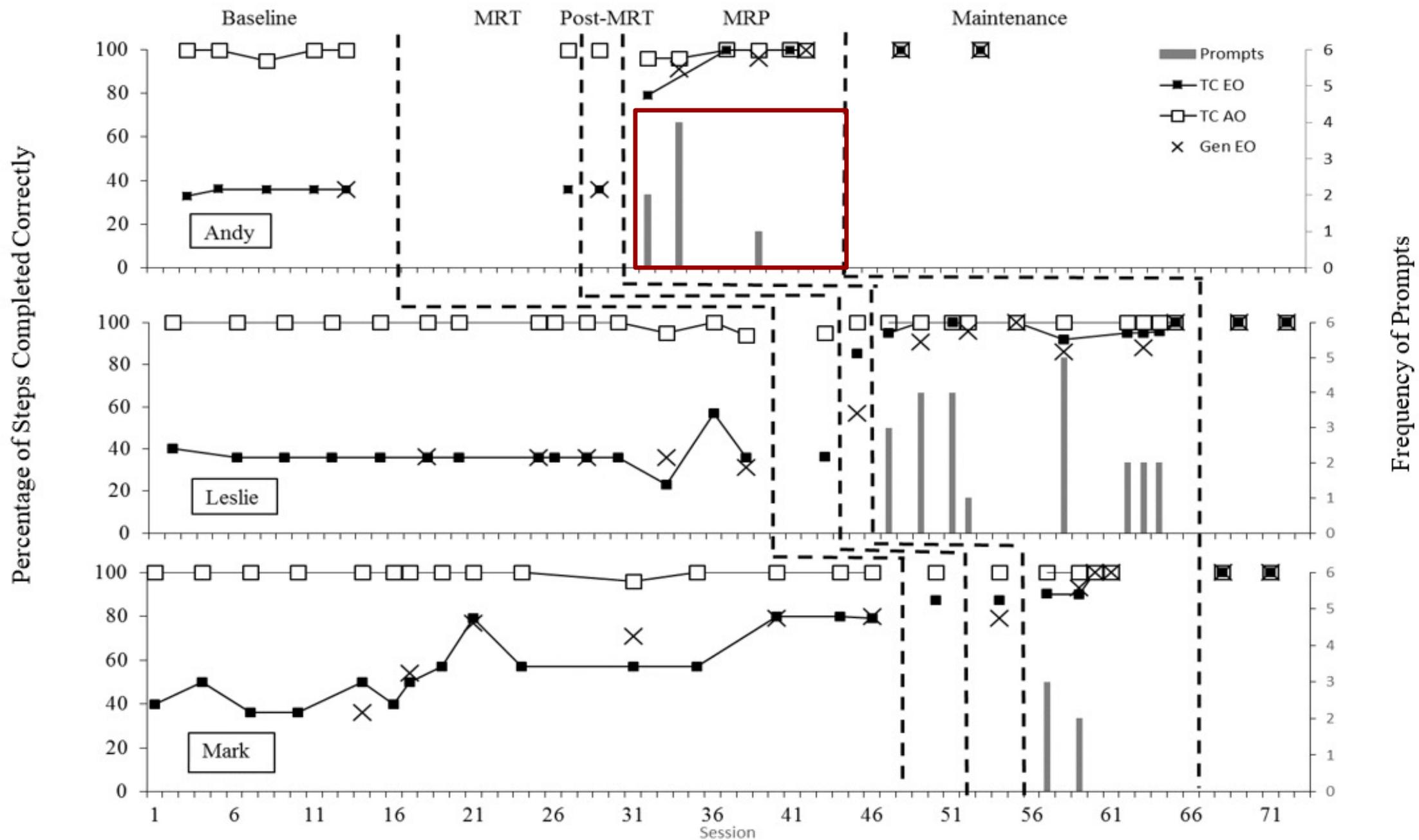
Mediating Response Prompts (MRP)



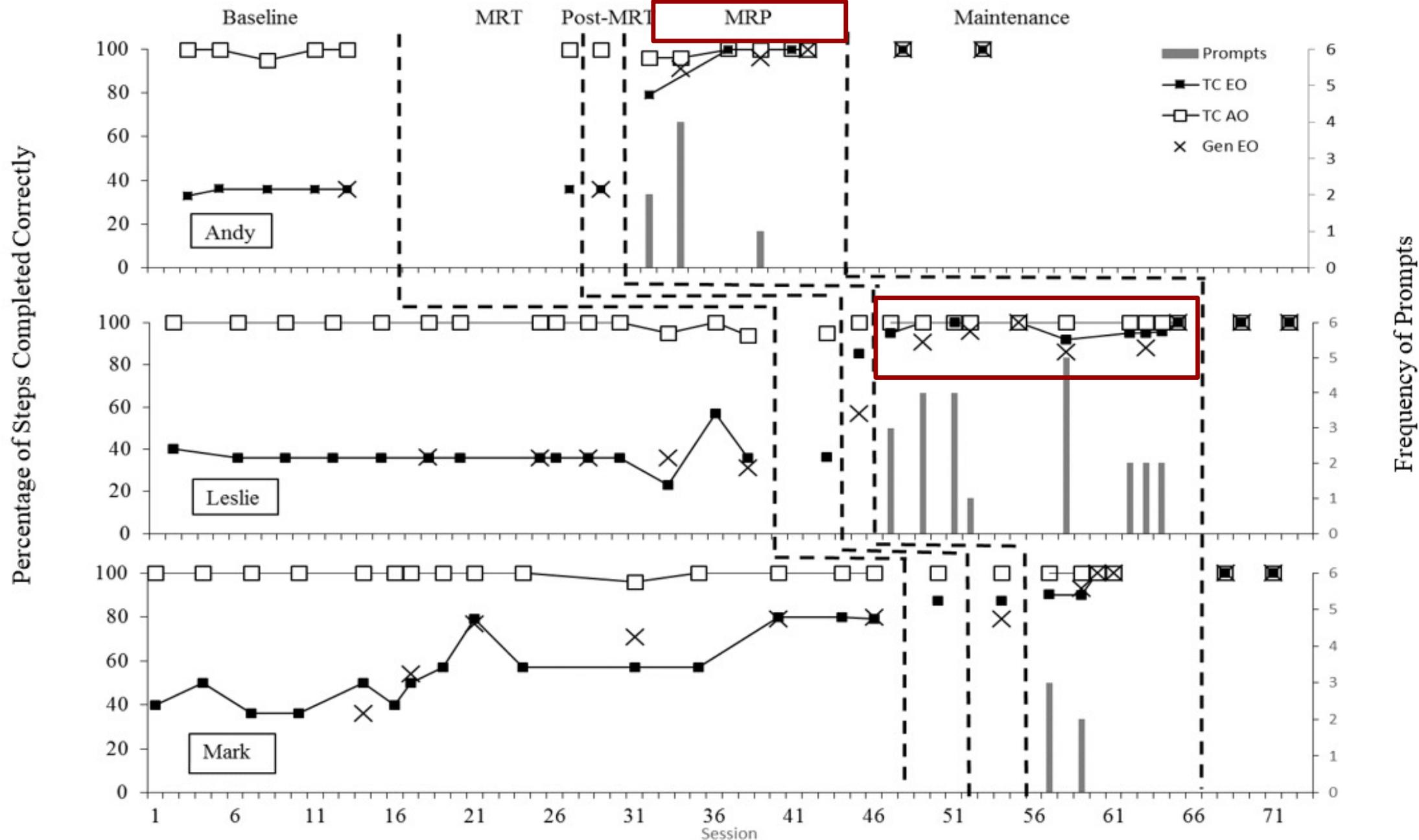
“Remember SID and your rules”



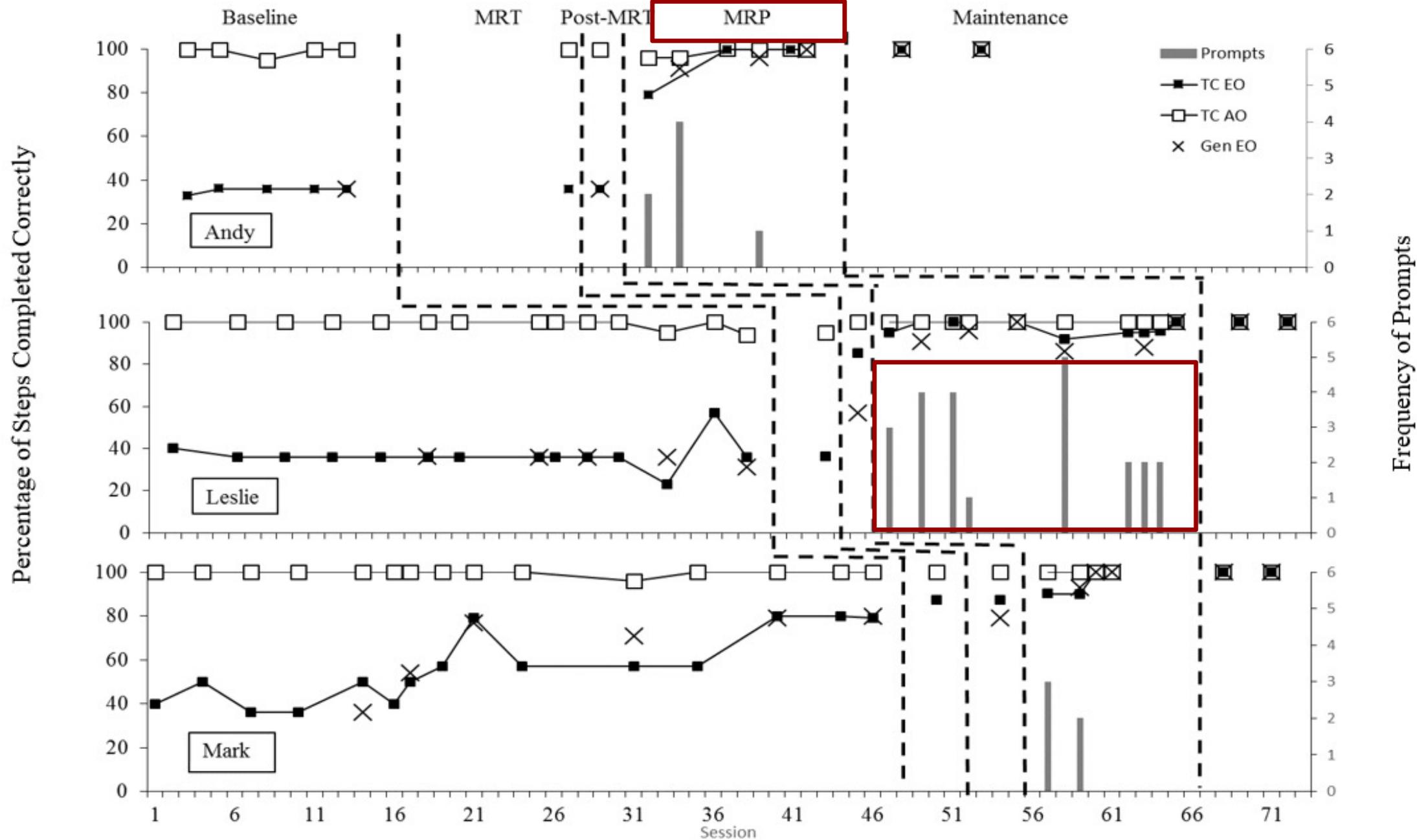
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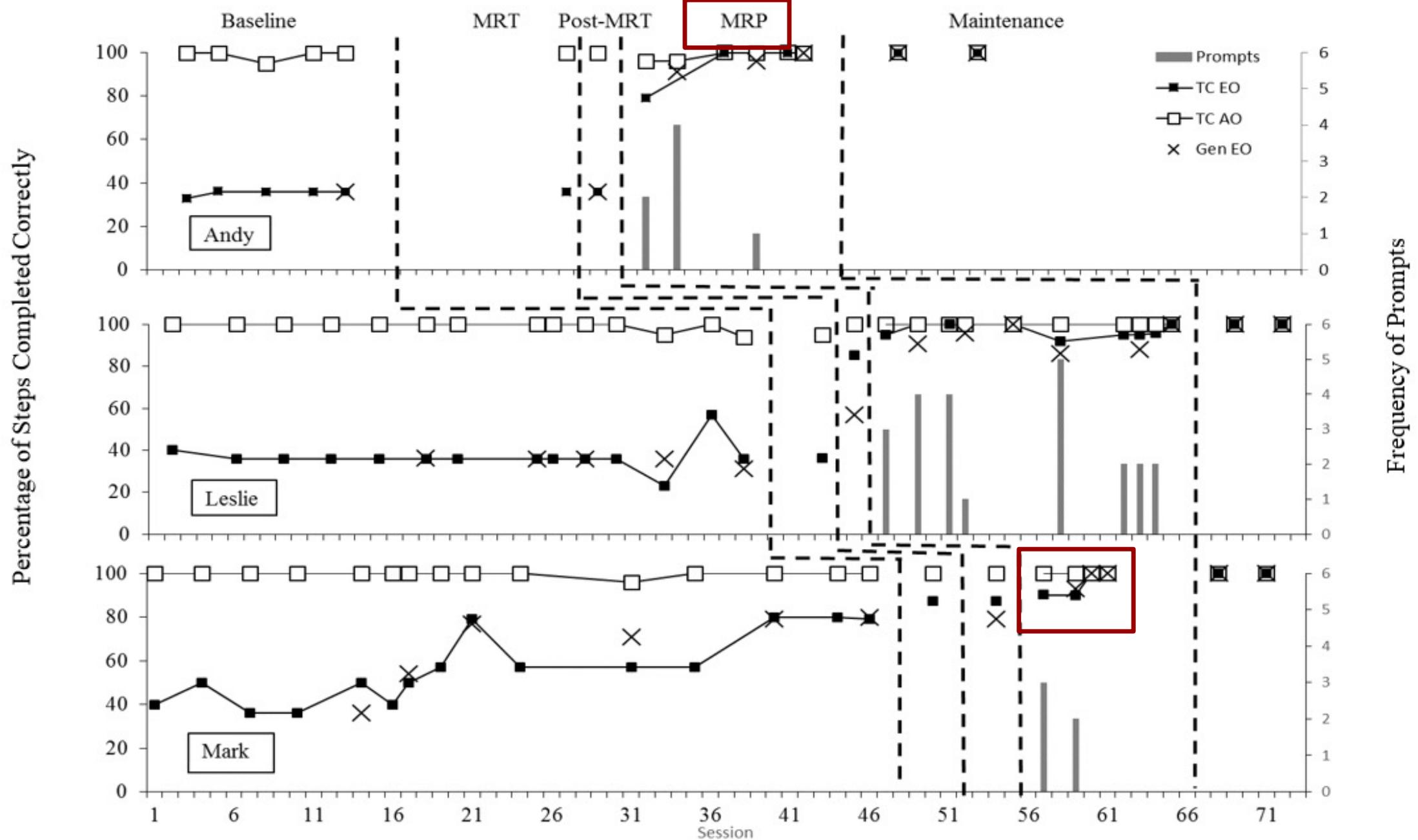


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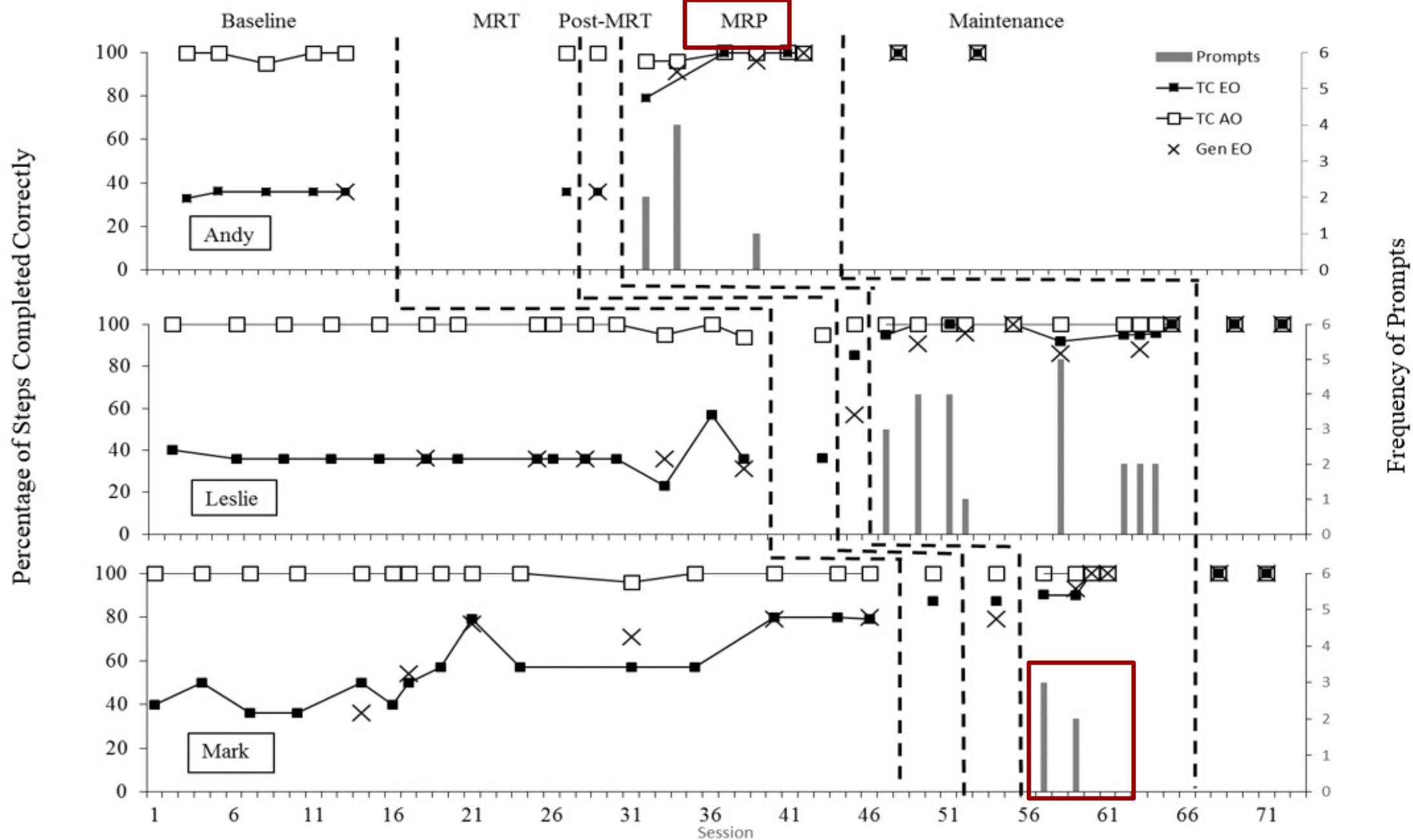
MRP for Leslie

Video 2





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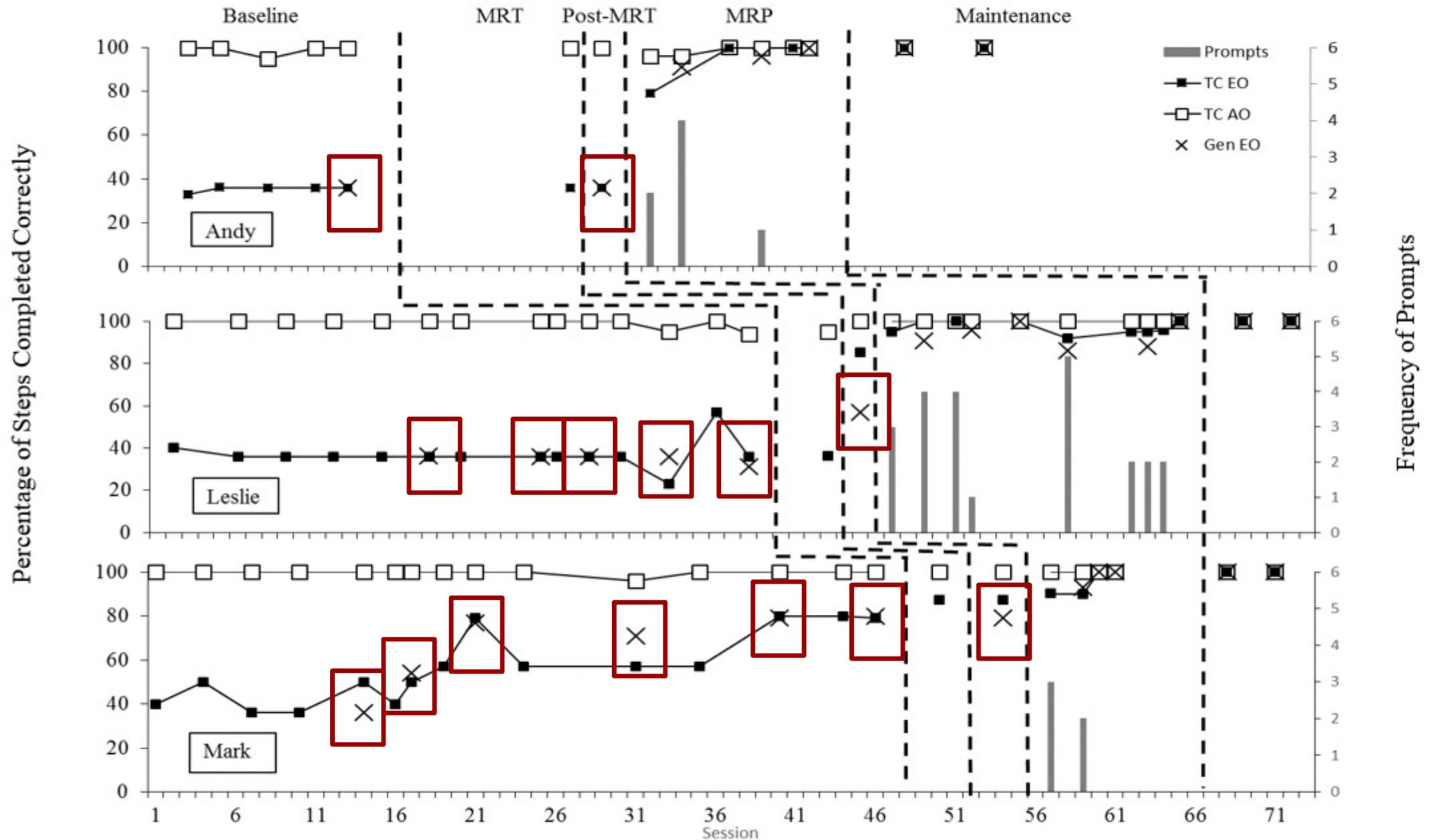
Generalization and Maintenance

Programmed for generalization by teaching to three tasks from each category

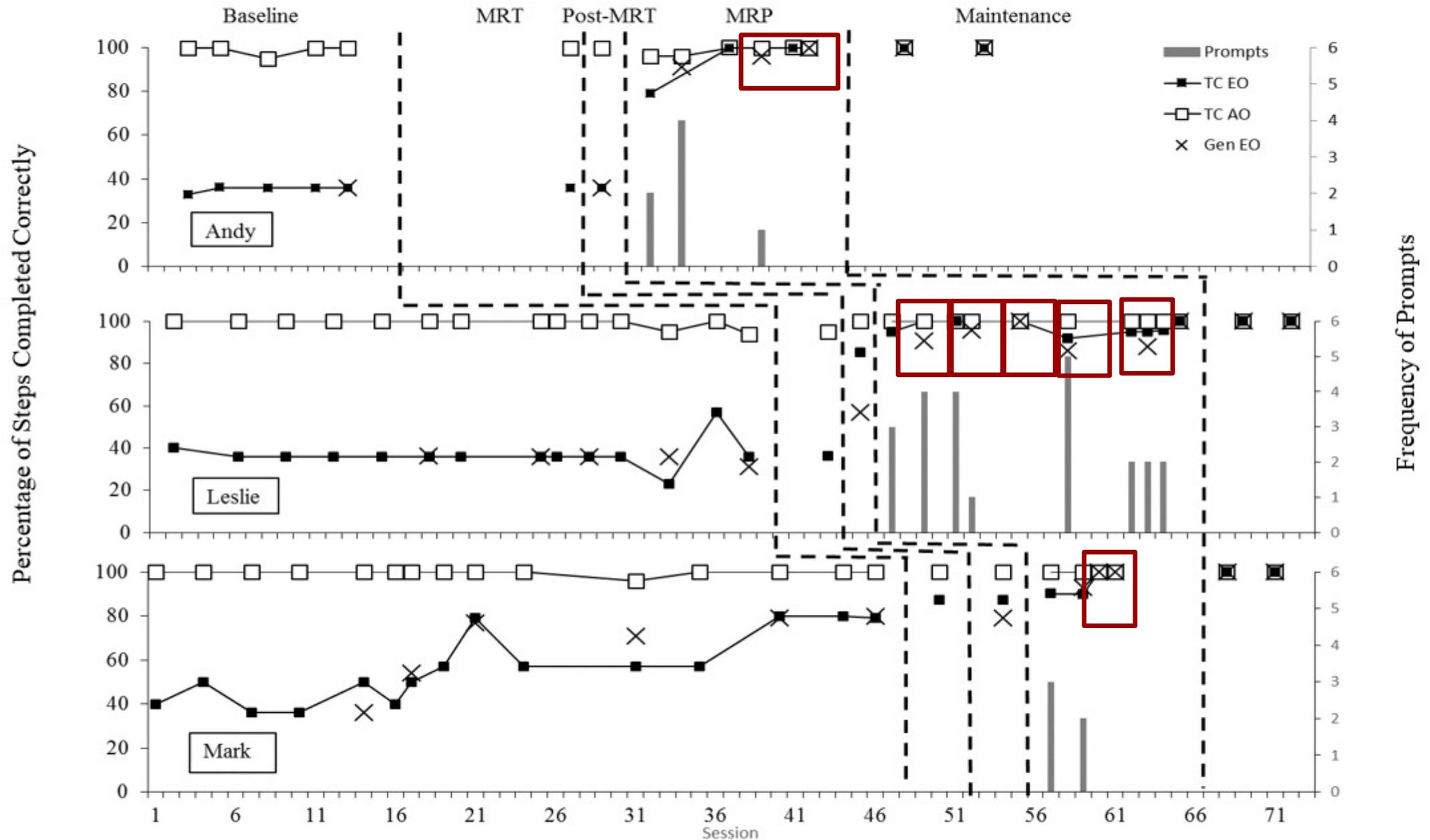
- Assessed generalization with novel tasks

Maintenance

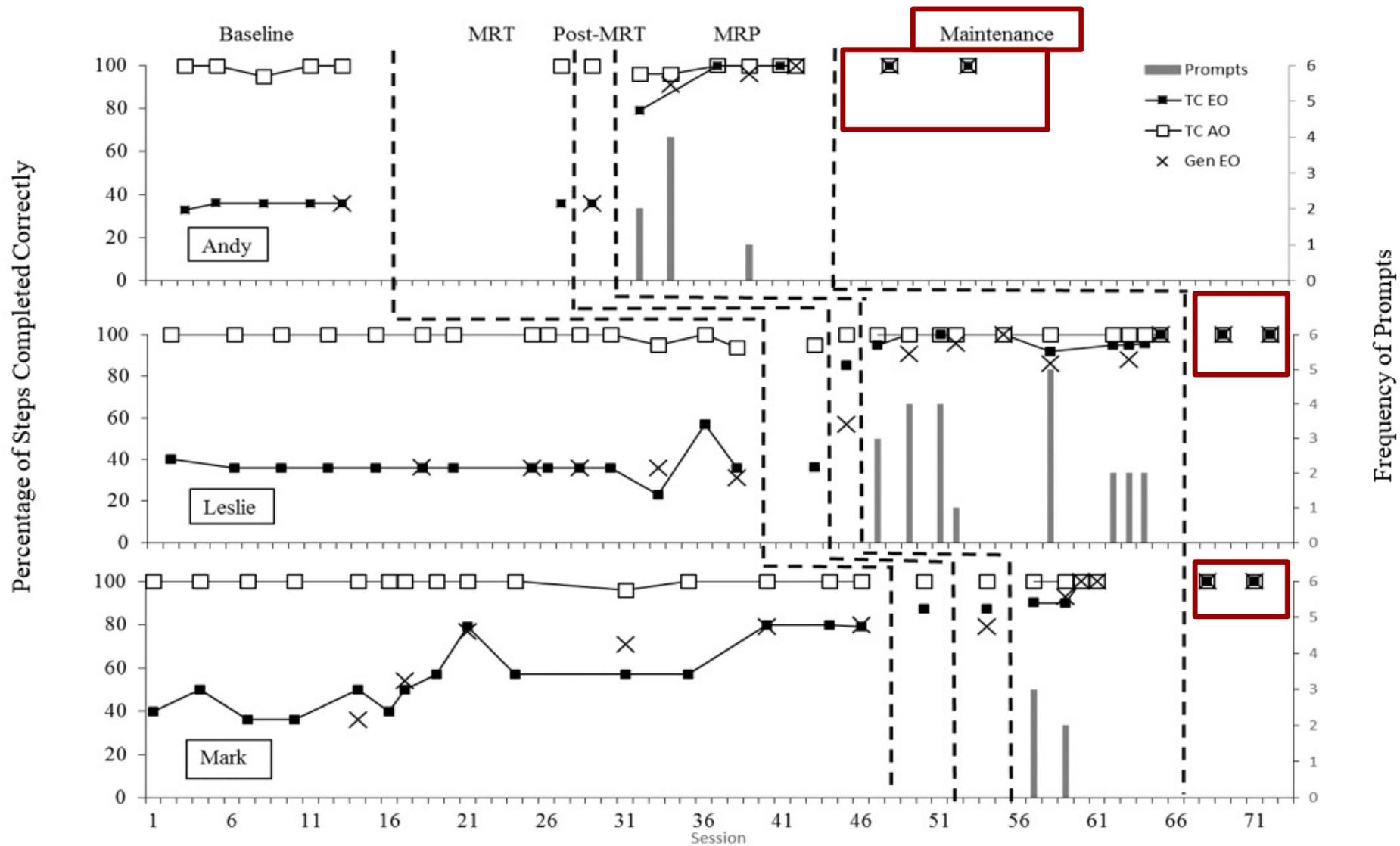
- Evaluated following mastery
- Andy: 4 and 6 weeks
- Leslie and Mark: 4 and 8 weeks



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Conclusion

All participants learned the strategy

- Applied the problem-solving strategy when problems were present
- Did not apply the strategy when problems were not present

Noteworthy Components

- Noteworthy components
 - Mands for assistance
 - Problem solving across tasks
 - Social validity

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Recommendations

- Unanswered questions:
 - Categories of problems are not the only types of problems that might arise
 - Unclear if the mnemonic is necessary to prompt recall of the rule-based problem-solving strategy
 - Evaluating written instructions, flow charts, or other technology-based supports

Rules aren't for Everyone

Rule-based strategy worked for young adults with ASD who had more verbal behavior

What about folks with fewer verbal skills?

- Still have problems obtaining and maintaining employment
- Still need problem-solving skills

Other ways of teaching problem solving

- Activity schedules

Effects of a problem-solving strategy on the independent
completion of vocational tasks by adolescents with autism
spectrum disorder

CINDY C. LORA

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HUNTER COLLEGE

KENNETH F. REEVE

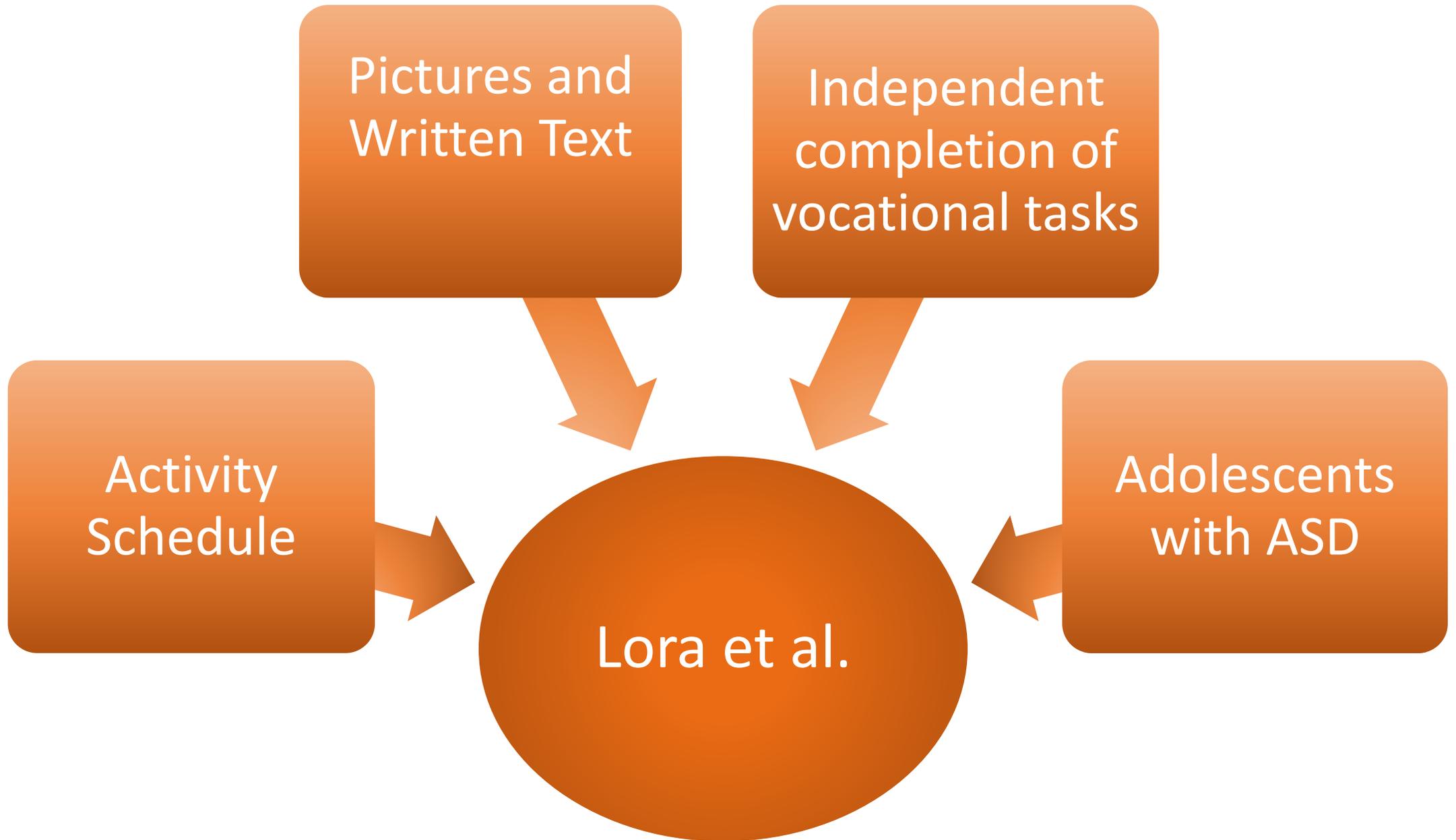
CALDWELL UNIVERSITY

DAWN B. TOWNSEND

INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT

Activity Schedules

- Increase independence of individuals with ASD across activities:
 - Leisure (MacDuff et al., 1993)
 - Social (Krantz et al., 1993)
 - Academic (Kinney et al., 2003)
 - Vocational (Wacker & Berg, 1983)



Participants

- Alex: male, 15 years old
- Jacob: male, 14 years old
- Kristina: female, 12 years old
- Travis: male, 12 years old

- Characteristics
 - Diagnosed with ASD
 - Lack of independent problem-solving skills while completing tasks
 - Problem behavior evoked by inability to complete tasks

Setting and Materials

- Various locations at the participants' private school
- Common classroom materials
- List of vocational tasks
- Problem solving binder
- Individualized reinforcement systems

Category	Task to Complete	Typical Scenario	Problem Scenario	Location
Missing Item	Erase board Clip papers Refill pen basket Clean garbage	Eraser present Paper clips present Pens present Bag present	Eraser missing Paper clips missing Pens missing Bag missing	Office cabinet Copy room Supply closet Office cabinet
Broken Item	Staple papers Highlight zeros Rubber band papers Cut papers in half	Functioning stapler Highlighter intact Rubber bands intact Functioning scissors	Stapler broken Highlighter broken Rubber bands broken Scissors broken	Supply cabinet Copy room Office cabinet Copy room
Mismatched Items	Add papers to binder File index cards in a box Bind papers together Stuff envelopes	Binders correct size Index cards correct size Binder clips correct size Envelopes correct size	Binders too small Index cards too small Binder clips too small Envelopes too small	Copy room Office cabinet Supply cabinet Supply cabinet

Category	Task to Complete	Typical Scenario	Problem Scenario	Location
Missing Item	Erase board	Eraser present	Eraser missing	Office cabinet
	Clip papers	Paper clips present	Paper clips missing	Copy room
	Refill pen basket	Pens present	Pens missing	Supply closet
	Clean garbage	Bag present	Bag missing	Office cabinet
Broken Item	Staple papers	Functioning stapler	Stapler broken	Supply cabinet
	Highlight zeros	Highlighter intact	Highlighter broken	Copy room
	Rubber band papers	Rubber bands intact	Rubber bands broken	Office cabinet
	Cut papers in half	Functioning scissors	Scissors broken	Copy room
Mismatched Items	Add papers to binder	Binders correct size	Binders too small	Copy room
	File index cards in a box	Index cards correct size	Index cards too small	Office cabinet
	Bind papers together	Binder clips correct size	Binder clips too small	Supply cabinet
	Stuff envelopes	Envelopes correct size	Envelopes too small	Supply cabinet

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Behavior of Interest (Dependent Variable)

Percentage of Steps Completed Correctly

1. Identified missing/broken/mismatched item
2. Initiated going to the correct location
3. Obtained the correct item
4. Brought correct item back to work area
5. Initiated completion of task

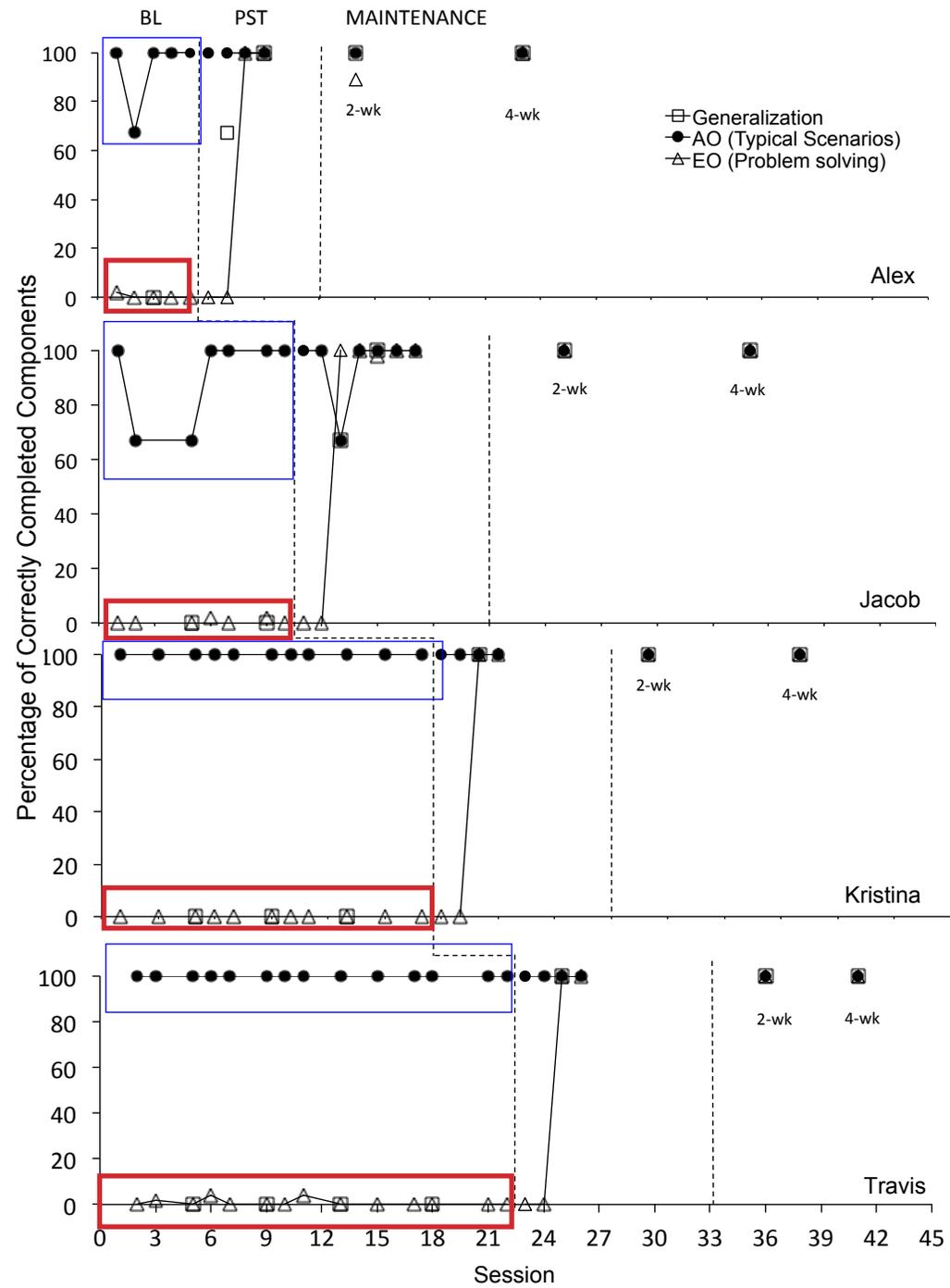
Mastery was 100% across two sessions

Pre-requisite Skills Training

- Purpose: Ensure participants could complete the tasks independently during typical scenarios (no problem present)

Baseline

- Purpose: Assess percentage of steps completed correctly on tasks with problem scenarios and typical scenarios
- Given list of tasks
- Attempts to seek assistance resulted in “Okay” and resumed activity
- No response for 10 s resulted in session termination
- Response to problem resulted in removal of task from the study



Baseline for Alex

Video 3



Don't be late
Don't be noisy
Don't be messy
Don't be rude

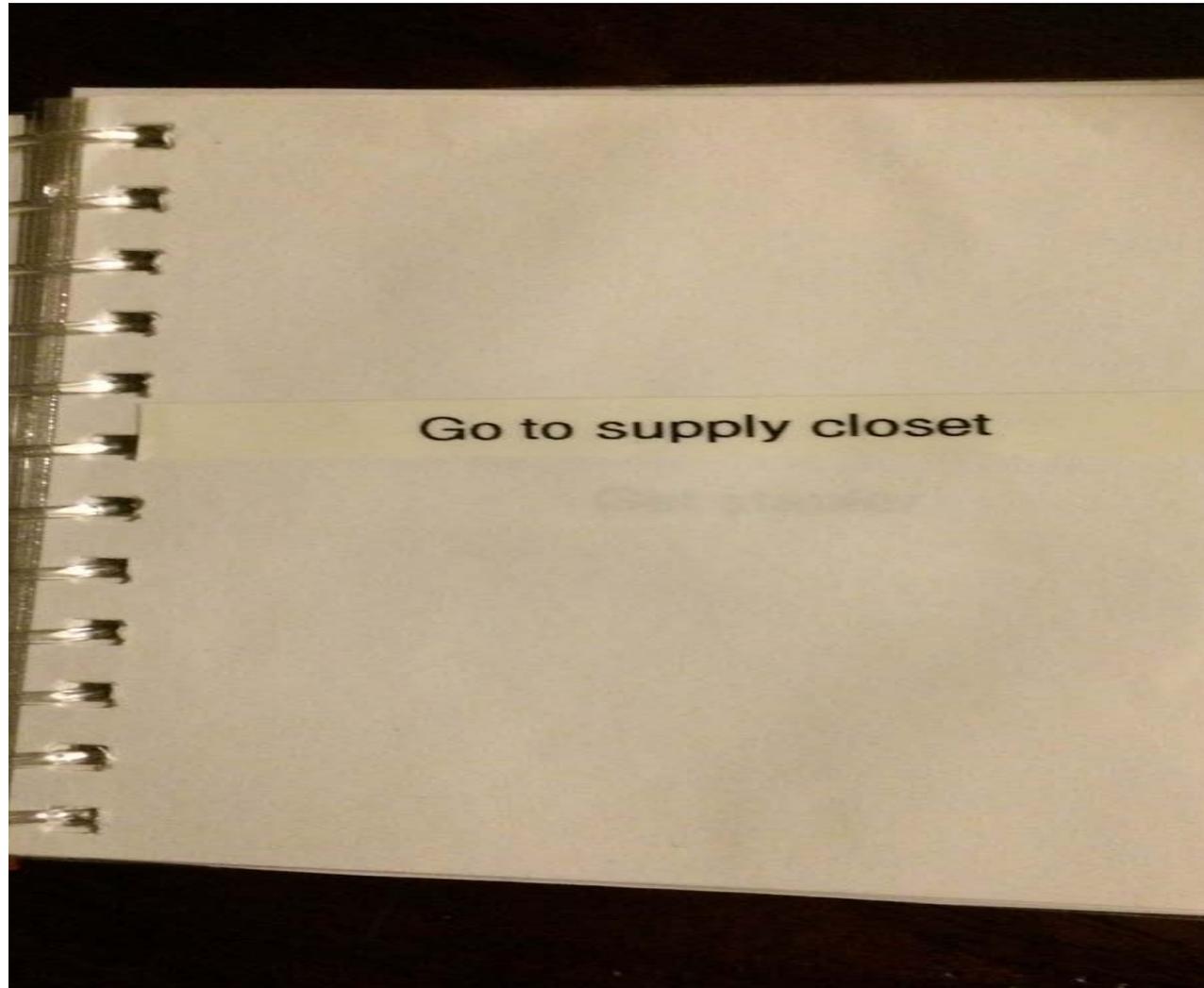
Problem-Solving Training

- Purpose: Teach participants to use problem-solving binder to solve problems
- Task list and problem-solving binder presented
- Constant prompt delay
- Correct responses resulted in tokens and praise
- Problem scenarios
- Typical scenarios

Step #1:
Identify correct item



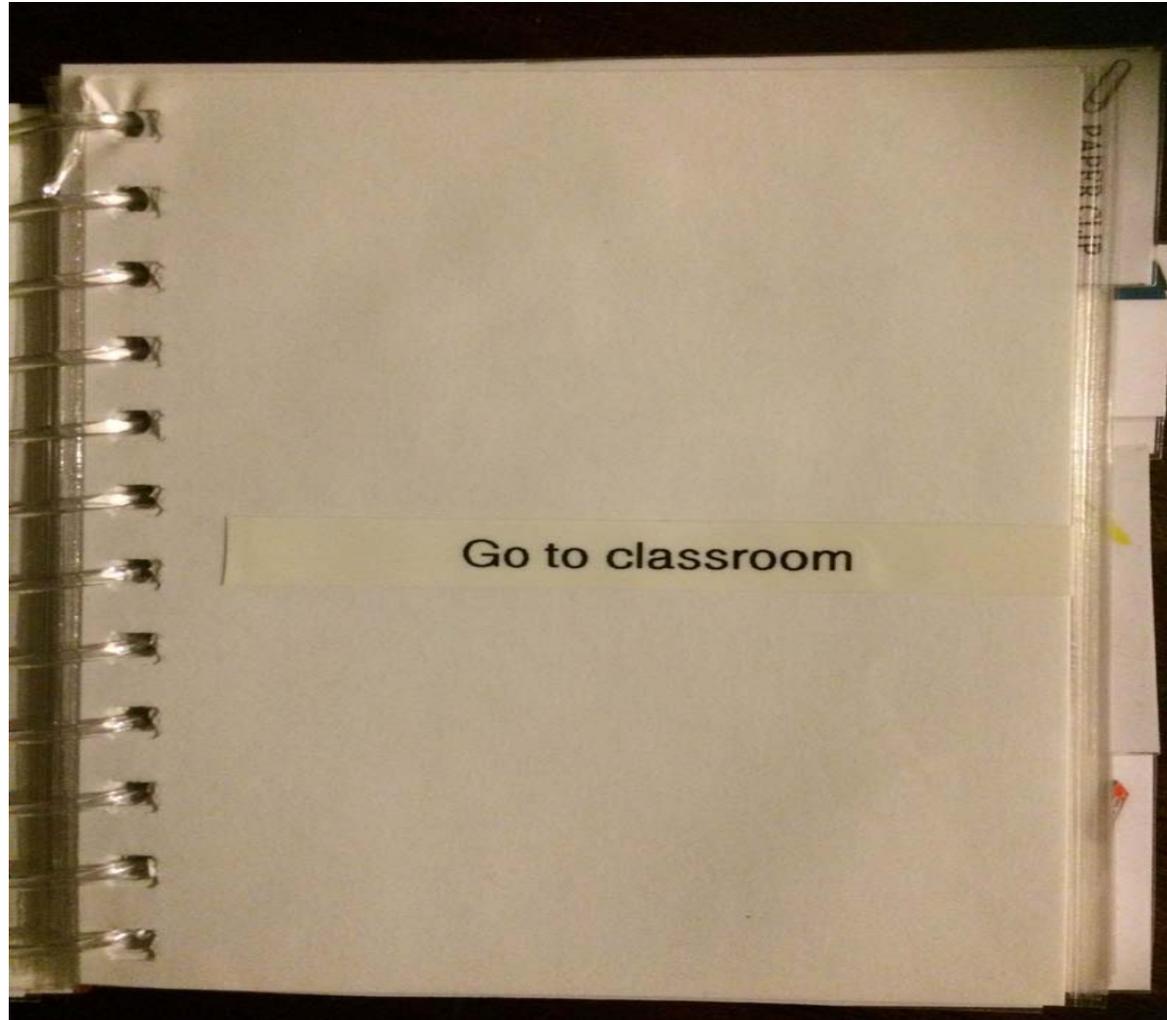
Step #2:
Going to correct location



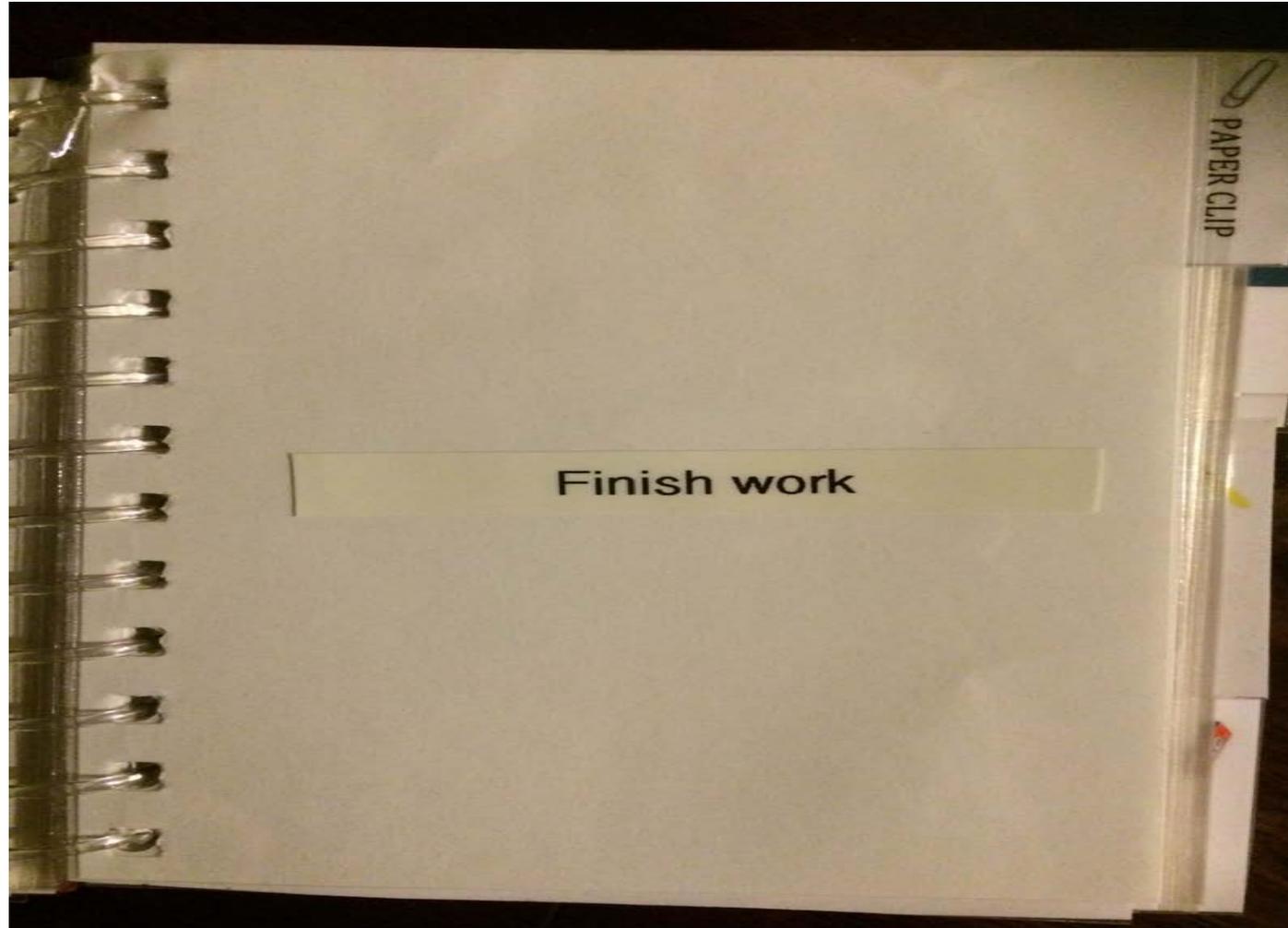
Step #3: Obtaining correct item

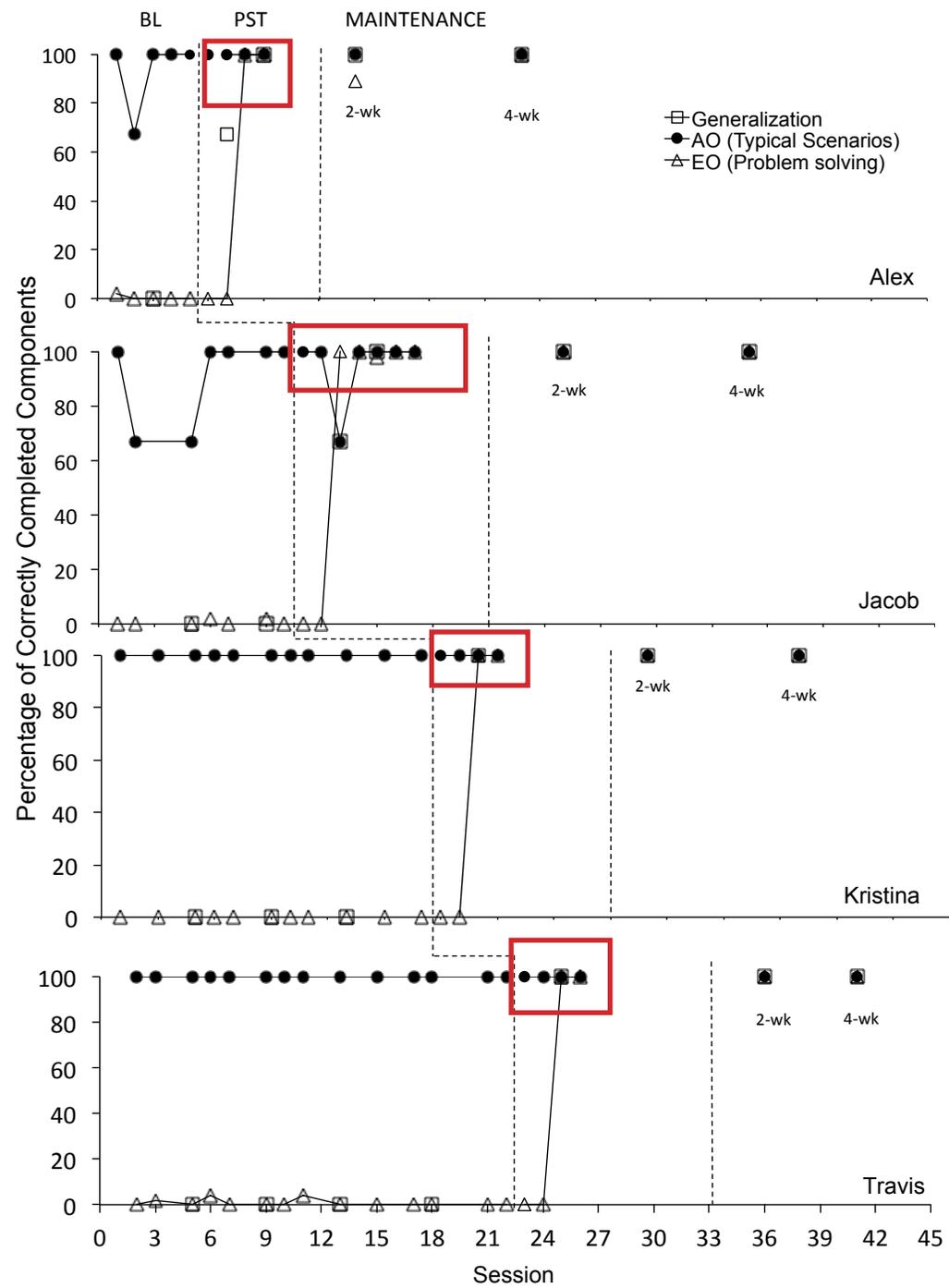


Step #4:
Returning to work area



Step #5: Completing task





PST for Alex

Video 4



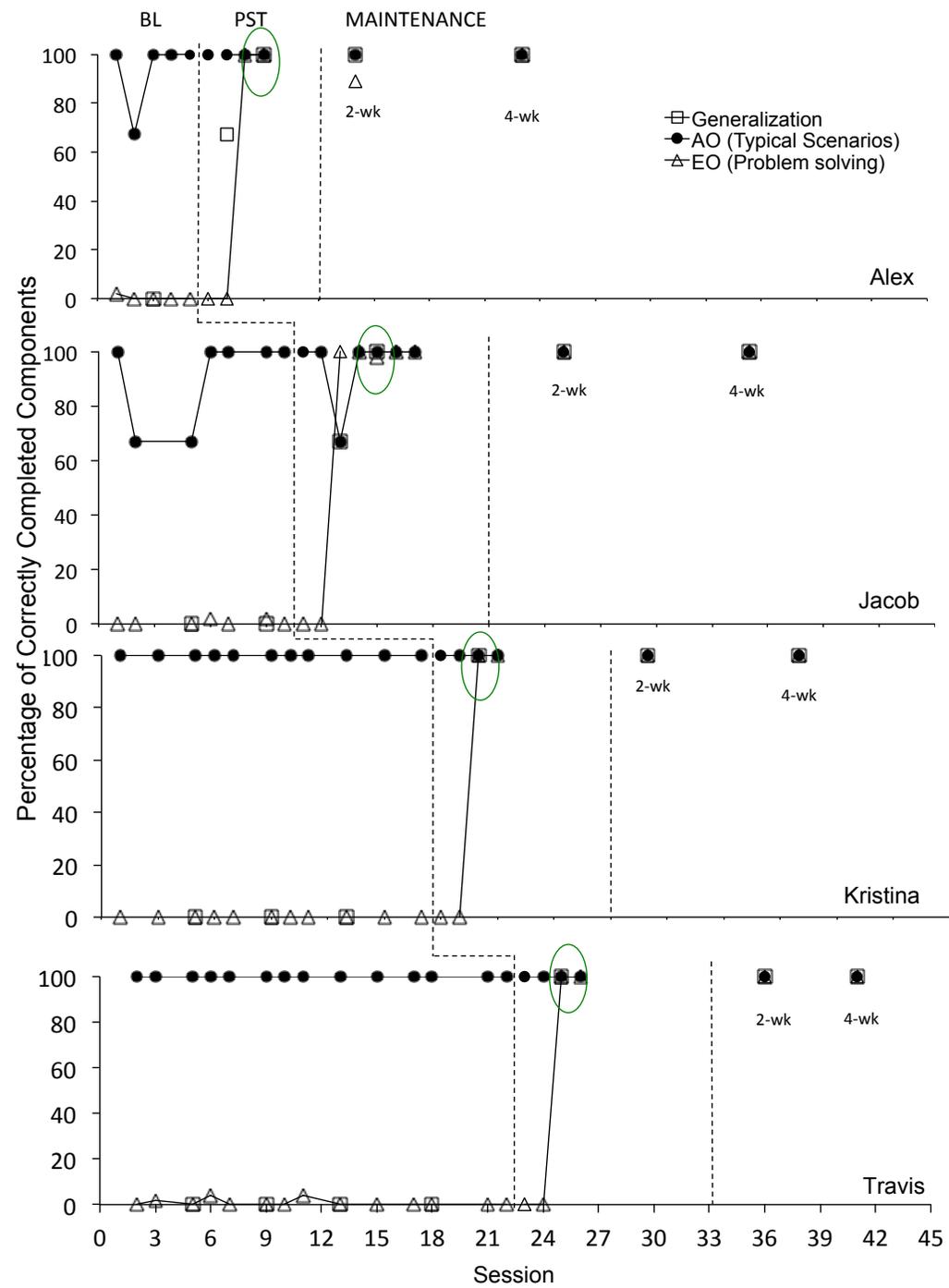
Generalization and Maintenance

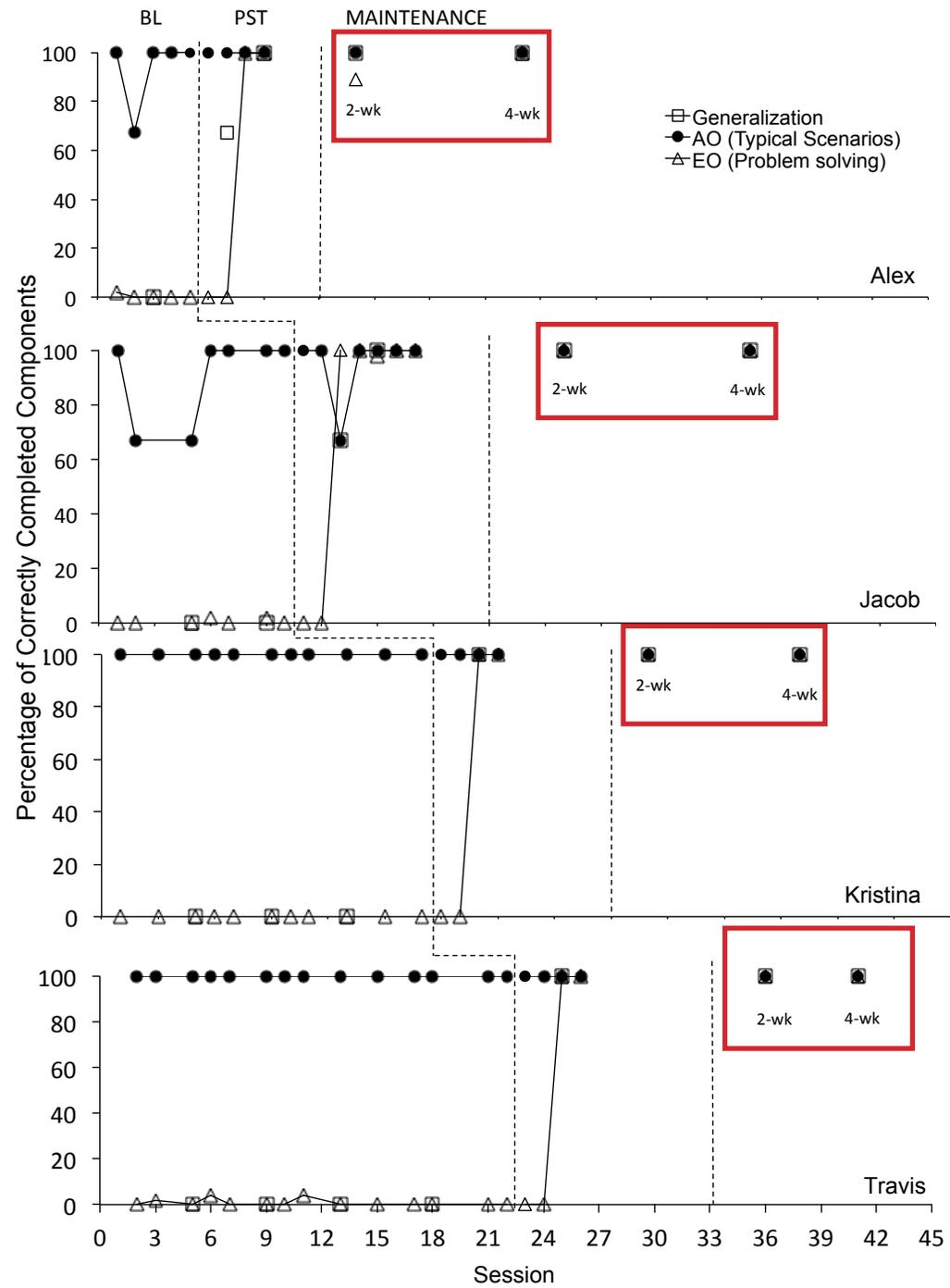
Programmed for generalization by teaching to three exemplars

- Assessed generalization to the fourth exemplar

Maintenance

- Assessed 2 and 4 weeks after mastery criterion was met
- Procedures identical to those in baseline
 - Task list and problem-solving binder present





CTLE Keynote 1: TULIP



Conclusions and Recommendations

Problem-solving training was successful

Generalization occurred from trained to non-trained problem scenarios

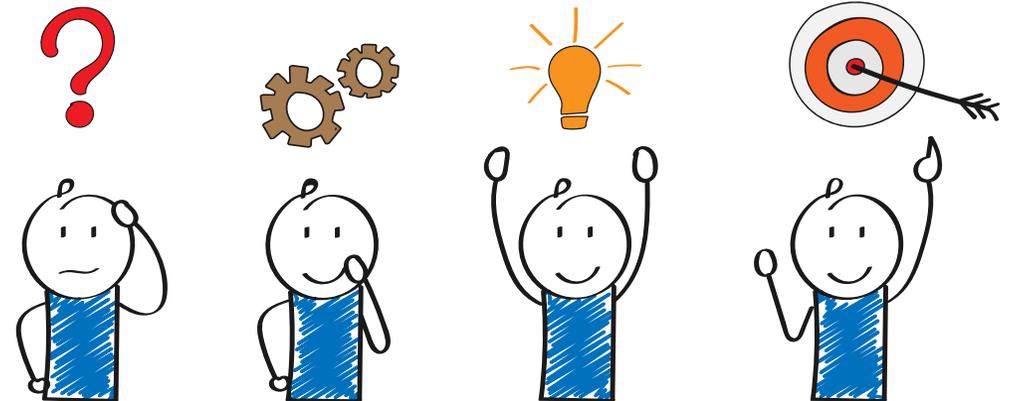
Investigate implementation of problem-solving strategies in actual vocational settings

Investigate efficacy of technological devices to prompt problem solving

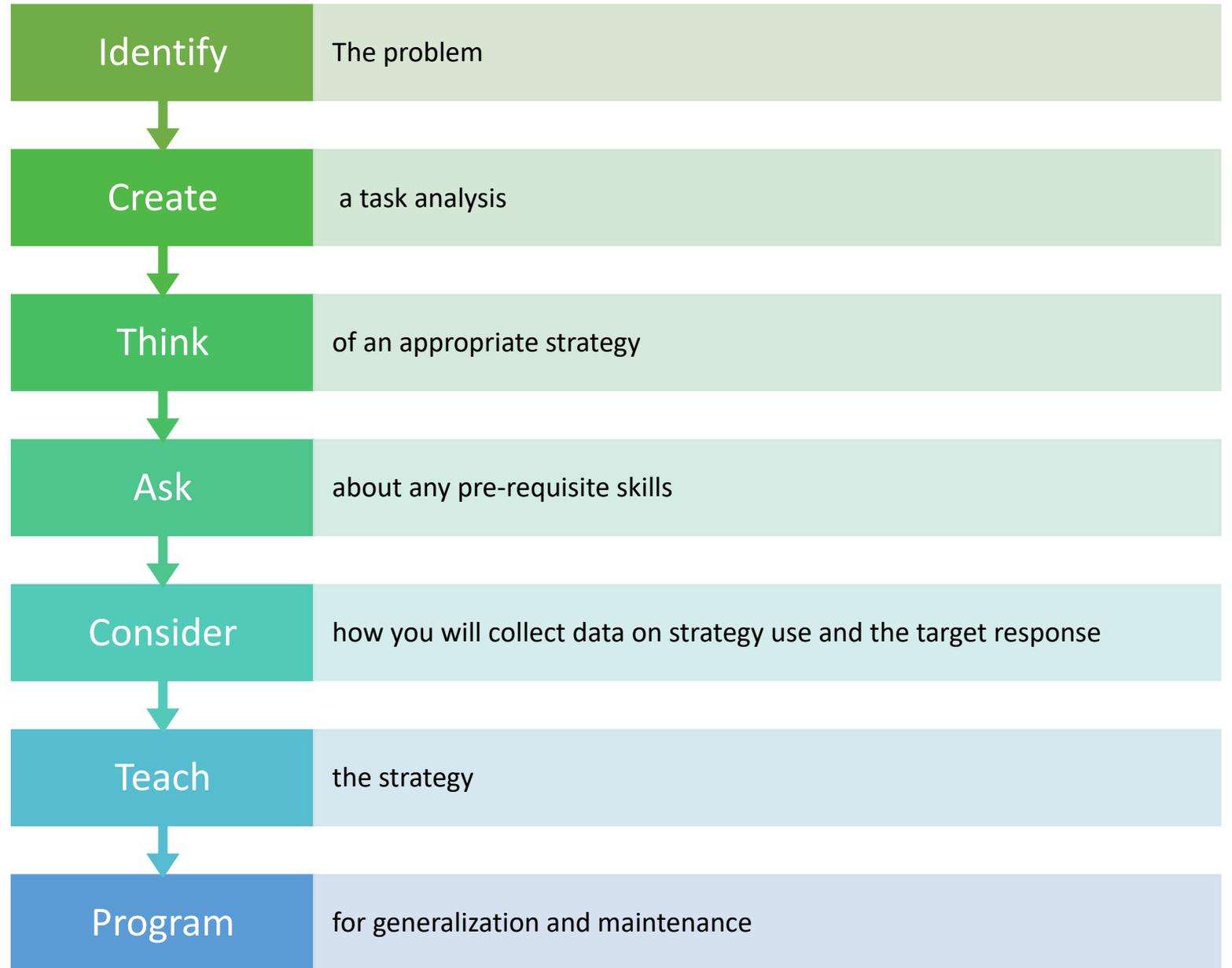
General Recommendations

Think of how to Introduce Problem Solving

- Selecting weather-appropriate clothing using a weather app
- Navigating a bus route to the market using Google maps
- Recalling past events by self-questioning and imagining
- Performing academic tasks like spelling or answering complex questions
- Completing math tasks using rules
- Using Google to find answers to questions



How do we
teach others
to problem
solve?





Empirical Evaluations of Skinner's Analysis of Problem Solving

Judah B. Axe¹  • Stephanie H. Phelan^{2,3,4} • Caitlin L. Irwin²

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Questions?



Strategies for Increasing Problem Solving in Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder

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