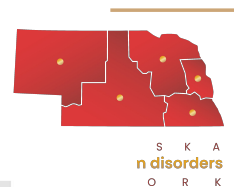


A Compassionate Approach to Behavior: Implementation Tips!



ASD Network
Special Education Conference:
Uniting Efforts for Student Success

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Presentation Summary

Compassion in Action: Supporting **Students and Adults impacted by Challenging Behavior**



Disclaimer: These are general recommendations for a compassionate approach to behavior.

We encourage teams to consider incorporating compassionate components into their safety, crisis, and/or Behavior Intervention Plans (BIP) as they deem appropriate and individualized for each learner.

Objectives

Learner Outcomes - At the end of the session participants will be able to:

- Identify the components of a compassionate approach to behavior
- Describe values and **strategies that prioritize safety, dignity, and positive relationships**
- **Apply strategies for de-escalating challenging behaviors quickly and safely**
- **Understand the importance of teaching critical skills to eliminate severe problem behaviors**

A Compassionate Approach to Behavior: An Introduction Webinar




Empathy + Action
=
Compassion

“Concern for the learner
in the moment, every
moment.”



Why was a Shift Needed? System Strain & Ineffective Outcomes

- Traditional FBA/BIP processes not working
- Increasing behaviors
- Staff burnout and teacher turnover
- Declining rapport: 
 - Staff ↔ Students
 - Staff ↔ Parents/Caregivers
- Lowered expectations to avoid PBs
- Reduced access to:
 - General education settings
 - Peer relationships
- High # of incidents/injuries
- Movement toward more restrictive settings
 - Practices not aligned with values

Shift in Practice



Prioritized **relationship-centered practices**, collaborative teaming with families and teams.

Strengthen teams through **cohort support and live coaching**.

Align practices with **core values that emphasize dignity and access to instruction** and inclusion.

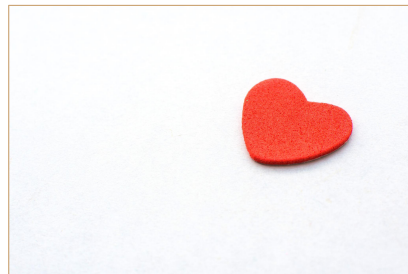
Outcomes: **Reduced Severe Behavior, Stronger Student Outcomes & Team Capacity**

- Stronger relationships between staff, students, and families
- Reduced behavioral escalation and critical incidents
- Increased staff confidence and reduced burnout
- Greater access to instruction, peers, and inclusive settings
- More effective and sustainable behavior supports
- Improved student engagement and success
- Practices that reflect our values and mission



These 4 Core Practices:

1. Listen
2. Create Joy
3. Empower
4. Teach Skills



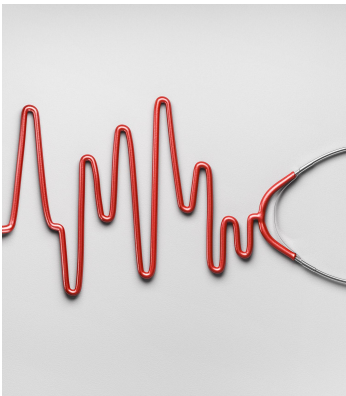
Help Ensure These Values are in Place:

- Trust
- Rapport
- Safety
- Televisibility/Dignity

Core Practices



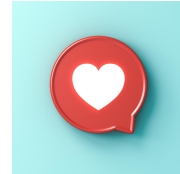
1. Listening



- Talk to people who know and love this child
- Ask questions & listen to answers
- Continue to ask, especially as you build rapport with parents, teachers, and therapists

“Teach the autistic person that you know them, you see them, you hear them, and you are there for them.” -- Dr. Greg Hanley

Learn by Listening



Get to know the individual and learn what they love and hate

- Engage with them
- Observe what draws their attention
- Notice what brings a smile or brightened eyes
- Pay attention to things they are indifferent about or avoid
- What is their behavior communicating?
- Listen to the adults working with the individual

2. Creating Joy

- Give them things that make them feel **safe and loved**
- **Include things** that have previously led to problem behaviors
- **Don't restrict** their freedom when possible
- **Follow their lead**, but don't hover



3. Empowering



- **Build trust** by showing respect and listening to the individual
- Individuals learn they don't need problem behavior to feel **safe, happy, and engaged**
- Trust grows when we **avoid forcing compliance**

4. Teaching Skills

- Trust enables **skill instruction**
- Pacing guided by **learner feedback**
- Focus on **functional communication**
- Balance **adult-led and learner-led learning**
- Join the learner in **shared activities**
- **Not just a free for all - teach critical skills!**



Sometimes we have to go slow to go fast in the beginning.

However teaching skills is always a priority!

Listen. Create Joy. Empower. Teach Skills



Application Activity

Take a moment to reflect. (30 seconds)

Ask yourself:

Which idea from these core practices am I interested in, want to do more of am or already doing?

**Highly effective strategies
that you can do
tomorrow...**



Happy. Relaxed. Engaged.



Happy, Relaxed and Engaged

By listening and observing, you will find the individual's unique

Happy, Relaxed, Engaged Place

- Happy – how many times do we **look for smiles**? If they are happy, they aren't trying to escape
- Relaxed – calm, at peace, and not anxious.
Participating in learning doesn't need to be stressful
- Engaged – Interacting with materials, toys or people



Reinforcement



Let's Talk About It

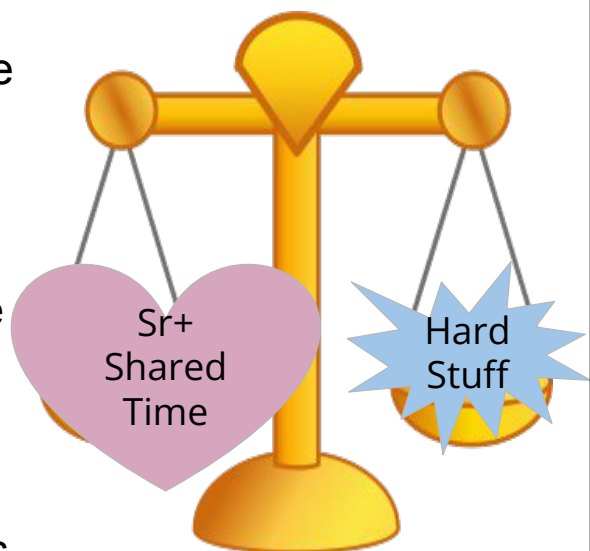
Traditional Approach to Reinforcement (Sr+)



- The teacher controls the reinforcers
- "Push through" interfering behavior
- Reinforcement is predictable. Small bits, one thing at a time
- First... Then contingencies
- Teacher "What do you want to work for?"

Compassionate Approach to Reinforcement (Sr+)

- Start with the give
- More is better than one
- Reinforcers are freely available
- Cooperation is shared
- Reinforcement is more than just one thing
- Reinforcement is unpredictable
- Teacher acknowledges low level behaviors



Find the balance

Function of Behavior



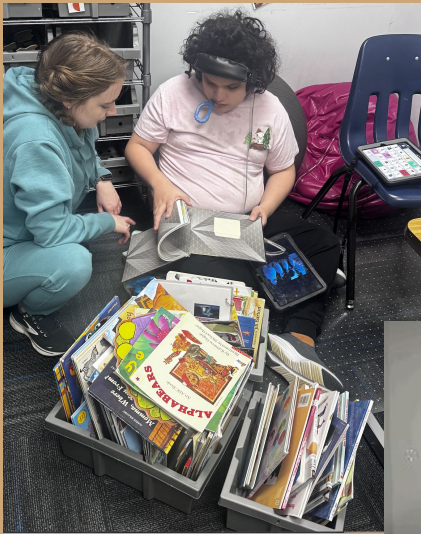
Let's talk about it

What if....

- Johnny crawled under the table **to escape** doing work **to gain access** to his bubble machine while **gaining attention from his teacher** who dances in the bubbles with him.
- Steven ran out of Algebra **to escape the teacher and work** while **gaining access to his phone** in order **to gain attention** from his friends through Snapchat.

...then we have to match the “all” within reinforcement!

Reinforcement Examples in the Real World



Quick and Easy Reinforcer Assessments

- What toys or items does the learner gravitate towards? What do their caregivers report?
- Are there types of sensory input that the learner seems to enjoy?
 - Reinforcer Profile
 - Reinforcer Attribute's List
 - RAISD Reinforcer Survey
- What types of attention do they like?
 - Enthusiastic (and Goofy) Social Reinforcement
- Is novelty important?
- Observe what the learner appears to enjoy

Create a Balance of Adult and Child Led Activities

When behavior is of concern, consider balancing the schedule, starting with child led activities.



Shared Experiences vs Supervised Experiences

When: Whenever possible

Who: All team members and parents/caregivers

Where: Across all settings—home, special education, general education, community



Listen Actively and Without Judgement



Listen actively and without judgement

Student: "...and then stupid Sam made fun of me for talking about trains. I hate him. I hope he dies."

Teacher: "Hold on! We don't say 'hate' or 'dies.'"

Student (yelling): "I do! I hate him and I hope bad things happen to everyone he loves!"

Teacher: "Why do you think he made fun of you? Maybe it's because you talk about trains so much?"

Student: "I don't talk about them too much! You think I'm weird."

Listen actively and without judgement

Teacher: “It doesn’t feel good when someone makes fun of your interests. That sounds really frustrating.”

Student : “Yeah. I was so frustrated”

Teacher: “I’m sorry that happened to you. It sounds like you have some big emotions right now.

Student: “Yeah. I’m really mad at Sam.”

Make Essential Demands Less Aversive



Make Essential Demands Less Aversive

Provide choices before and within the demand



- **What activities/tools/locations**

Offer materials without issuing a demand or vocal instructions

- Use visual supports to clarify instructions

Provide as much support as needed for the student to be successful

- Don't ask; just help
- Consider an errorless approach to begin

Empathy Statements



Empathy Statements

Statements that validate feelings

- That must be so frustrating
- I can see this is hard
- It makes sense that you'd feel that way
- That sounds really difficult
- I hear how upset you are

Statements that show support and presence

- I'm here with you
- I'll sit with you
- You don't have to talk if you don't want to
- I want to help
- Oh man, that is so hard
- Ugh, it's hard to give up our things

Example Empathy Statements

Statements that acknowledge the situation

- "That sounds like a really tough situation."
- "Wow, that's a lot to deal with."

Then it's okay to **sit in silence** with the student **for a little bit** or **wait for them to initiate** interaction again

If you want the student to engage in calm-down strategies, model them without words

- Start squeezing your hands together
- Take big breaths (without asking them to do it)

Empathy Statements Real World Stories



Empathy Statements Real World Stories



Behavior Escalation (Intervene Early)

Disclaimer

These are general recommendations for prevention of and how to respond to escalated behavior. However, each team should follow their individualized, established safety plans. We encourage teams to consider incorporating these compassionate components into their safety, crisis, and/or Behavior Intervention Plans (BIP) as appropriate.

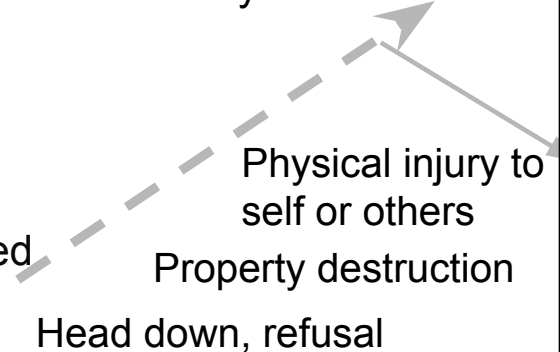
Strong Control of Problem Behavior Through Extinction

Initial Effect: Extinction Burst

- If the behavior has not contacted reinforcement (unlikely)
- The student is exhausted
- The student has exhausted all skills in their repertoire

Long-Term Effect:
Gradual Reduction of Levels
of Problem Behavior

Intensity of Behavior



Escalation leads to restraint, seclusion, staff injury, student injury, classroom clear-outs, damaged relationships, and loss of student (and staff) dignity

Strong Control of Problem Behavior Through Reinforcement

Reinforcement has two effects:

1. Immediate Effect: Stops behavior
 - “I see you, I hear you.”
 - Strengthens relationship

Diffuse Problem Behavior

Head down, refusal

Intensity of Behavior

Property destruction, aggression

Safer staff, Better relationships, Dignity for students, Safer environment for other students in the class

Compassionate Strategies for Defusing Problem Behavior

Recognize early warning signs

Acknowledge what they are trying to tell you

Let task/activity go for now

Give some space but stay available

Let them have important items

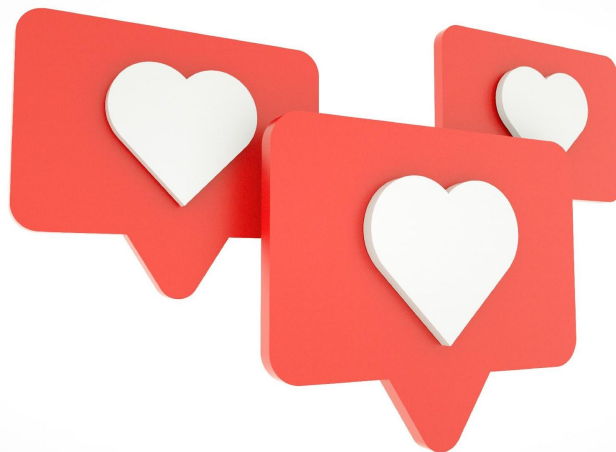
Don't try to work through or ignore PB

Application Activity

Turn to the person next to you and discuss:

- What idea stood out to you?
- Why does it feel useful or exciting?
- How might you use it with your students/child?

Q & A



Resources for further information

Find and Contact your Regional ASD Network team members on the [ASD Network Website](#)

- [FTF trainings](#)
- [A Perspective Today's ABA](#)
- [Practical Functional Assessment website](#)
- [Universal Protocol Overview](#)
- [PFA/SBT Overview](#)
- [Balance Overview](#)

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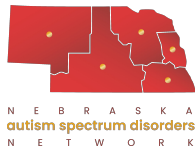
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