

SECTION 6:

FUNCTIONAL FACTORS

FUNCTIONAL FACTORS Lines 8, 9

The Big Idea

- All problem behavior serves a purpose (function) for the student who uses it. *This behavior has worked in the past, or is working currently to achieve an outcome desired by the student.*
- Problem behaviors have often developed as a reaction to environmental demands which have overwhelmed a student's coping system.
- Problem behaviors continue and generalize over time because they work. Remember, *these problem behaviors help the student achieve a desirable outcome.*
- Knowing what the student is achieving that is desirable to him/her is critical so we can design a way for him/her to get this outcome in an appropriate way. This is a Functionally Equivalent Replacement Behavior (FERB).
- All successful plans address two parts: In addition to changing the environment to remove the need for the student to use the problem behavior, we need to teach the student a FERB that is more socially acceptable than the problem behavior, yet allow the student to meet the same outcome as the problem behavior.

All behavior, whether desirable or undesirable to those around the person, serves one of two functions for the individual:

- 1) **Get Something**—e.g., an object; attention from peers or adults; an activity, self-stimulation, money, desirable comments from peers
- 2) **Reject Something**—Avoid, Escape or Protest Something Undesired—e.g., escape an assigned task the student states is “too long, too hard, too boring, not meaningful, or too easy and I don’t want others to see me doing this,” to protest negative peer comments or interactions, to protest an adult’s public comment on the student’s low skills.

The BIP Team’s task: Identify the function, teach a FERB and reinforce the student’s conditional use of this FERB (i.e., under conditions student would use the problem behavior, the FERB is used instead).

Ultimately, we want the student to not use problem behavior, but rather use all appropriate, socially acceptable positive behaviors associated with academic and social success. However, when a problem behavior achieves a specific outcome, it is necessary to accept a different, but more socially acceptable way of getting or rejecting something while we continue to alter environments and teach and reinforce those desired general positive behaviors.

BEHAVIOR INTERVENTION PLAN

for Behavior Interfering with Learning of Student's Learning or the Learning of His/Her Peers

ALTERNATIVES PART 2: FUNCTIONAL FACTORS AND NEW BEHAVIORS TO TEACH & SUPPORT

Observation & Analysis

Line 8. Team believes the behavior occurs because:

Specify the function of behavior in terms of getting or rejecting (protest, escape, or avoid) something that will guide development of a functionally equivalent replacement behavior on line 9. DO NOT use: revenge, vengeance, control, power because a FERB will be developed to get that function met in a socially acceptable way, e.g., vengeance in another way is not acceptable.

Getting Examples:

- To gain adult attention
- To gain sustained peer attention and positive comments (use instead of “power”)
- To gain a desired item or activity
- To get a choice in the pacing of activities (use instead of “control”)

Reject: (Escape/Protest/Avoid) Examples:

- To escape or avoid a task student states is (a) too hard or (b) too long, or (c) not meaningful to the student or (d) to escape peer comments that the task is too easy
- To avoid or protest a demand or request or reprimand
- To escape an environment in which the student states negative comments from peers frequently occur
- To protest past actions of peers (use instead of “vengeance or revenge”)
- To escape or avoid specific people or activities

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Line 9. What the team believes the student should do instead of problem behavior?

The functionally equivalent replacement behavior (FERB) is a positive alternative that allows the student to obtain the same outcome that the problem behavior provided, i.e., s/he gets something or rejects something in a manner that is acceptable in the environment. A FERB is NOT the absence of the problem, nor the presence of general positive behaviors. The FERB must be as easily performed as the problem behavior. Environmental changes and/or general skill acquisition may reduce or remove the conditions that reinforce the problem behavior.

Examples:

- (Swears at teacher: protesting a lack of attention) – FERB: Verbally state a desire for attention from the teacher
- (Fights: protesting not getting his way during a recess game) – FERB: Use protest language taught in verbal conflict resolution training.
- (Screams: protesting an unexpected activity) – FERB: Use the printed schedule to protest and then negotiate about an upcoming unexpected activity.
- (Runs from room-escaping hard work) – FERB: Go to time away/break center.
- (Gains sustained positive peer attention from gang members for assaultive behavior) – FERB: Gain sustained positive peer attention from an alternative group for prosocial behavior
- (Loud verbal requests for alternate activity, to get a choice of which activity to perform) – FERB: express desired activity through demonstrating task order using picture cards

ANALYZING BEHAVIOR WORKSHEET

Student: _____

Behavior of Concern: _____

Informant: _____ Date: _____

Who:

Who is present when the problem behavior occurs? How many people? Who was about to come or about to leave? Who were the adults, children, teachers, parents? Were people present who ordinarily would not have been there (e.g., strangers or people of unusual attire)? Who was not present who ordinarily would be present? Does the problem behavior occur more often when a particular person is present? To whom was the behavior directed? Answers to these questions will help determine if a particular person or grouping of people is related to the problem.

What:

What was the behavior? What was happening when the problem behavior occurred? Was the student being asked to do something? Was the task too hard or too easy? Was the student playing freely, or were the tasks and time more structured? What were other people doing? Was the event or task almost over? Was it about time to move on to something else? Did the problem behavior occur at the beginning, middle, or end of the event or task? What is happening when the problem behaviors do not occur or are less likely to occur?

When:

This question is complex because it also relates to when the behavior does not occur. Are problems (or no problems) more likely to occur in the morning, before lunch, bedtime, free play, going out, Mondays, Fridays, and so on? Within an activity, does the behavior occur at the beginning, middle or end?

Where:

In what location does the problem behavior happen most often? Does it occur in the kitchen, bedroom, hallway, classroom? What other locations? Even more specifically, does it occur in a particular part of a certain location (e.g. near the window or door, close to a closet where a favorite toy is kept)? Where does it not occur?

Why:

What is the purpose of the behavior? This question, obviously, is the most difficult to answer. But after the information has been gathered from the other questions (e.g. who, what, when, where) the answer to this question may be more apparent. **Remember to analyze what the student may be either attempting to gain/obtain or protest/escape/avoid by engaging in this specific behavior.**

Based upon an excerpt that appeared in *Why is My Child Hurting? Positive Approaches to Dealing with Difficult Behaviors*, A monograph for Parents of Children with Disabilities by Susan Lehr, Center on Human Policy, Syracuse University (1989) for the Federation for Children with Special Needs, Boston: MA.

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Thinking About the “Why” of Behavior (Function of the Behavior)

Form vs. Function:

Do not confuse the **form** of the behavior with the **function** of the behavior. The form of the behavior can be influenced by culture/subculture, experience, disability, group affiliation, and sensory system (seeking and/or avoiding input). Regardless of the form of the behavior (what it looks like) **analyze the function** of the behavior.

The team will need to: ask questions, observe, use data collection/interview forms, and consider the antecedents, consequences and contributing environmental factors.

Get/Obtain	Protest/Escape/Avoid
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tasks, a demand/request being made
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attention in the form of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ social status in a group ✓ interaction with peer(s) ✓ interaction with adults 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A specific person or group of people
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objects, including money 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undesired objects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal events (e.g., brain chemical release/on some occasions in self-abusive behavior) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal events (e.g. upcoming seizure or migraine)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make instructional material more meaningful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of meaning/relevance of instructional material
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-stimulation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protest a past action by a person (do not use the terms “revenge” or “vengeance”)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play, fun 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protest a lack of choice (do not use the term “control”)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replication of a chain of behavior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoidance of step one in an anticipated chain of behavior
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Justice or fairness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protest a lack of fairness, justice (do not use the terms “revenge” or “vengeance”)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensory input 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensory input

The Goal of Behavioral Assessment: is to “identify a better way for an individual to get the same function met through alternative acceptable methods, or: Identify methods of removing the need for student behavior by environmental changes.”

Hypothesizing the “Why” of Behavior

Student: _____

Date: _____

Informant(s): _____

Behavior of Concern:	What could the student be trying to Gain?	What could the student be trying to Avoid, Escape, Protest?

Replacement Behavior Checklist

Target/Replacement Behavior # 1	Q # 1 Will it result in the same outcome as the targeted behavior?	Q # 2 Is it something that is easily done by the student?	Q # 3 Can he/she be taught it?	Q # 4 Will it work in the classroom?	Q # 5 Is it something that is easily acknowledged?
	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	No	No	No	No	No
Target/Replacement Behavior # 2	Q # 1	Q # 2	Q # 3	Q # 4	Q # 5
	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	No	No	No	No	No

Components to Evaluate	Scoring	Examples: <i>All examples below relate to the same student and same behavior</i>	Key Concepts
<p>E. FUNCTION OF BEHAVIOR IS LOGICALLY RELATED TO PREDICTORS (line 8 links to 5)</p> <p>Identified function of the behavior</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Team believes behavior occurs because...” (line 8) is logically related to “What are the predictors for behavior.” (line 5) <p>Caution: Simply identifying the function of the problem behavior, e.g., “the behavior is a protest” is not sufficient. WHY is there a protest? The behavior is a protest BECAUSE.... Dig deeper. E.g., Is the assignment too long for this student? Or is the assignment too difficult? Or, does the problem behavior occur to protest that the work looks long and/or hard? Or, has the student stated that he does not want others to see that he struggles? Thus, he chooses to state that he is protesting the length or difficulty of an assignment so as to prevent peers from knowing about his skill deficit. Careful functional analysis is critical if we are to identify an adequate Functionally Equivalent Replacement Behavior (FERB) and environmental intervention(s) to eliminate or reduce the student’s use of the problem behavior.</p>	<p>2 = All identified function(s) on line 8 specify WHY the behavior occurs in terms of what the student: 1) gets or 2) rejects, i.e., escapes, protests or avoids AND each identified function on line 8 is <u>logically related</u>, i.e., consistent with the predictor(s) on line 5 that address each of the problem behaviors on line one.) Contaminators: “revenge, vengeance, control, power”. Score 0 if present.</p> <p>Note: There can be multiple functions for one behavior (e.g., student uses one behavior for attention <u>and</u> the same behavior to protest.) OR the student may use multiple behaviors for the same function (e.g., screams, kicks, bites, runs to avoid work) Number behaviors, functions and predictors to aid in scoring.</p> <p>Note: A plan may attempt to address multiple problem behaviors with multiple distinct functions. Score 2 points ONLY if each function is logically related to a predictor for each behavior. Number all behaviors and match to all functions and predictors. It makes it easier to evaluate.</p> <p>1 = All identified function(s) are identified in terms of 1) getting something or 2) escaping, protesting, or avoiding something (line 8) <u>but</u> not all are <u>logically related</u> to identified predictors for behavior (line 5) AND no contaminants are present (see above).</p> <p>0 = One or more identified function(s) are not specified in terms of either: 1) to get something or, 2) to reject something (escape, protest, or avoid) (line 8). Therefore, no comparison to line 5 can be made, OR contaminants are present (see above: revenge, power, control, vengeance).</p>	<p>2 = “Billy is avoiding independent paper-pencil assignments and protests termination of self-selected activity with profanity because he states he prefers working with a partner on requested activity (line 8),” when compared to predictors of avoidance on line 5: “Whenever Billy is requested to do work without peer support, occurring after recess, when he is by himself, when there is a substitute teacher, or for any seatwork that is longer than 10 minutes. This demonstrates a logical relationship between function and predictor(s).</p> <p>1 = “Pat is avoiding doing all written assignments,” (line 8) when compared to “When Pat is seated next to certain students” (line 5) This does not demonstrate a logical connection between function and predictor. (If a key predictor is the presence of certain students (line 5), line 8 should specify why he avoids written assignments when next to certain students. WHY should be observable and measurable, and not a hypothesis of internal states. e.g., ...because Pat states he doesn’t want others to see he struggles, NOT ...because Pat has low self esteem.</p> <p>0 = “The function is to express a low self-concept” “The function of the behavior is to demonstrate his poor parenting.” “The function of the behavior is to demonstrate he doesn’t understand verbal directions.” “The function is to gain power.” “The function is revenge.”</p>	<p>Although the Functional Assessment/FERB section of the behavior plan is written by the team <u>after</u> the environmental sections, one must have hypothesized the function before deciding on environmental changes. Hypotheses of function help guide examination of supporting environmental variables to identify causation and need for change. The function is a summative conclusion about sustaining variables and how the consequence of the behavior is related to the antecedents (A-B-C). All behavior is purposeful. When a behavior’s purpose is understood, alternative FERB(s) can be identified and taught.</p> <p>Building a plan requires identifying positive behaviors we ultimately want, barriers we need to remove and/or supports we will need in order to achieve our goals, and any FERB that we can accept as an alternative to the problem behavior. This FERB still allows the student to get his/her desired outcome, yet now in a more adaptive and socially acceptable manner. Analyzing the function of the behavior requires examining what is happening right before, during and after the behavior. Look at the student’s affect and his/her verbal and non-verbal responses in addition to staff and peer responses. This is a critical step in identifying potential predictors and developing a hypothesis about the function of the behavior.</p> <p>Contaminators: revenge, vengeance, power and control are <u>not</u> functions that can be used to develop a functionally equivalent replacement behavior (FERB) for conditional use in a plan, e.g., how to get vengeance in a better way would not have social validity. The function should be observable, and not a construct on internal feelings of the student. Consider alternatives: (a) instead of vengeance: function=protest past action of a peer; (b) instead of control: function=gain choice of activities and pacing of activities; (c) instead of power: function=gain sustained peer attention, etc.</p>

Components to Evaluate	Scoring	Examples: <i>All examples below relate to the same student and same behavior</i>	Key Concepts
<p>F. REPLACEMENT BEHAVIOR(S) (line 9) SERVE THE SAME FUNCTION (line 8) AS THE PROBLEM BEHAVIOR(S)</p> <p>Functionally Equivalent Replacement Behavior (FERB) must be identified that will be taught and reinforced to allow the student's need (function) to be met in an acceptable manner</p>	<p>2 = All specified FERB(s) (line 9) serve the same function as the problem behavior (line 8) AND no functional contaminators are present (e.g., control, power, vengeance, revenge).</p> <p>FERB(s) (line 9) <u>must</u> serve the same function as the problem behavior(s) (line 8). There is no score of 1 on this component.</p> <p>0 = No FERB is identified, OR The function was not accurately identified on line 8 in terms of 1) to get something or, 2) to reject something (escape, protest, or avoid) and therefore line 9 can not be evaluated. OR The function was not in behavioral terms (i.e., operationalized) so no FERB can be identified to match a non-behavioral function OR a functional contaminator is present (see above).</p>	<p>2 = "Billy will verbally request working with a peer buddy when he wishes to protest the teacher's requirement that he work independently on seatwork" (FERB for a protest of working alone-line 9) serves the same function as "Billy is avoiding independent paper-pencil assignments and protests termination of self-selected activity with profanity because he states he prefers working with a partner on requested activity" (profanity used to protest-line 8)</p> <p>For this component, score 2 or 0. There is no score of 1.</p> <p>0 = "Student will do what staff requests." (line 9) (The function was avoiding work; this is not a replacement behavior allowing the avoiding of work in an accepted form) OR "The function of the behavior is low self-concept" (line 8) can not be compared to any replacement behavior (line 9) OR "He will get revenge in an appropriate way."</p>	<p>The FERB is a positive alternative that allows the student to obtain the function that the problem behavior provided. I.e., He/she either gets something or rejects something (protest/avoid) in a manner that is acceptable in the environment.</p> <p>The FERB should maximize the benefits (e.g., more positive feedback from staff and peers) and minimize the costs to the student and others in the environment (e.g., lost instructional time, punishment from staff and peers).</p> <p>Note: The student may eventually not need to use a FERB when other changes are achieved. For example, she will no longer need to escape because we have made significant changes in the environment that removes her need to escape. Or, she has improved her general skill acquisition and no longer seeks to escape.</p> <p>The FERB must serve the same function as the problem behavior and at least as easily performed as the problem behavior. A function must have been operationalized, e.g., put in behaviorally observable terms, and must have avoided contaminators (revenge, power, control, vengeance) if an adequate FERB for conditional use is to be identified, taught and reinforced as an alternative to the problem behavior.</p>