

# **SECTION 8:**

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## **REACTIVE STRATEGIES**



## BEHAVIOR INTERVENTION PLAN

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

### EFFECTIVE REACTION PART III: REACTIVE STRATEGIES

#### Line 12. What strategies will be employed if the problem behavior occurs again?

*What series of behaviors should adults employ to return the student to rule-following behavior? How can staff best prevent escalation? What words, items or actions work to calm this specific student? Will structured choice help? Will non-emotionally offering a cooling off location until the student is ready to debrief? Who will therapeutically debrief the student after control is achieved? Will consequences such as expulsion/suspensions be necessary, if so under what specific conditions?*

#### Examples in a Hierarchy of Responses, Early to Late Stages:

##### 1. Prompt to the FERB, or redirect to task with additional supports: (Redirecting Phase):

- **Redirect with additional supports:** Staff will pay attention to signs of escalating anxiety (i.e., clenched fists, increased voice volume, increased ritualistic behavior, etc) and respond in a verbally supportive manner, assisting with beginning the task. For example, if the student begins to rock, show her the “what I am working for” card, then redirect her gesturally to finish only the immediate task, then terminate the instructional session and provide the desired activity.”
- **Prompt to the FERB:** Use a non-verbal gestural system to remind the student to “Stop and Think” about use of the functionally equivalent replacement behavior to achieve the same goal that the emerging problem behavior serves. (The stop and think cue has already been successfully taught. 1. “Stop” 2. “Think” 3. “You can make a good choice, you can make a bad choice” 4. “What are you going to do?” 5. “Good choice” 6. “Pat yourself on the back”)

##### 2. Reactive Strategies for When the Problem Behavior is Escalating Beyond Initial Redirection Phase (Managing the Problem Safely):

- Be directive—Use a gentle/firm “Stop/No” command”; consider presenting a structured choice
- Maintain the safety of peers and student, removing the audience or the student if appropriate
- Utilize authorized, approved procedures if student is a physical danger to self or others
- Contact law enforcement if behavior is a serious danger to self/others

##### 3. Strategies for After the Problem Behavior is Over (Debriefing Phase):

- Allow time for the student to calm down and regain composure/rationality
- Re-establish the student/adult relationship (therapeutic rapport)
- Debrief with the student to understand why the problem behavior escalated (debrief) —Complete “Thinking About My Inappropriate Behavior”\* or other form (see section 14 of this manual, communication resources) Brainstorm ways to keep the behavior from occurring in the future
- For students who do not have verbal debriefing skills, consider a practice session of FERB with increased reinforcement. This is an acceptable debriefing activity to regain rule-following behavior and student/staff rapport for these students.

##### 4. Possible Additional Strategies (Consequences or Punishment)

- The team will determine whether consequences (withholding points, assigning restitution activities, etc.) will be effective in reducing the student's probability of using the problem behavior again. Caution: Punishment is often delivered inappropriately or non-skillfully or with students for whom punishment backfires. Delivery of aversives can result in a Fight or Flight response, decreasing student/teacher rapport and therefore careful consideration must be given in this area.
- Administrative disciplinary procedures will be followed (e.g., referral to office; on-site detention; teacher suspension; suspension; recommendation for expulsion)

# Reactive Strategies Checklist

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All reactive strategies for problem behavior must select intervention(s) that are:

- **Legal**  
Check state education code; (e.g., California education code prohibits prone, four-limb restraint under most circumstances and prohibits locked seclusion in educational settings)
- **Ethical**  
Does not violate professional standards and is acceptable to uninformed observers
- **Safe for the student, staff and peers**  
Uses techniques proven to be safe, reducing potential harm to the student and others
- **Individualized**  
Builds on the student's prior successful resolution of the problem
- **Respectfully implemented and socially acceptable** to the student, peers and adult observers  
Voice tone, body language and techniques demonstrate respect, care and concern for all
- **Chronologically and developmentally appropriate**  
Selects intervention is comprehensible for the student's developmental functioning and appropriate for the student's chronological age
- **Least restrictive for the situation**  
Selected intervention matches the level of dangerousness of the behavior. Physical interventions or removals are selected only when redirection, prompting to a functionally equivalent replacement behavior, planned ignoring or other lesser interventions do not address the problem. For example, non-compliance to a staff request never justifies a physical intervention unless the student is in a dangerous situation requiring immediate physical response from staff (e.g., refusing to move out of the street with cars approaching.)

**Discussion Points:** for staff review during a behavior plan development meeting, or following a reactive strategy implementation:

- Would we be comfortable using this in a general education environment with students of the same age who do not have disabilities?
- Would an uninformed, reasonable person and the student's peers observing this intervention believe this is a respectful response to the student's problem behavior that all maintains safety for all? (Check implementers' voice tone and body language and how safety is provided, as needed, for observers.)
- Is this the least restrictive intervention to assure safety for all? (Check whether redirection or prompting the student to use a replacement behavior would suffice.)
- Would we be comfortable with parents observing this intervention?
- Did we give the student time to respond, and use relationship and rapport to address the problem?
- Did we consider what has calmed this student under similar conditions in the past? (Check interaction style of the implementers, techniques and specific words and actions.)
- Would we be comfortable with the filming of this intervention, or with this intervention being featured on national tv?



## Components to Evaluate

## Scoring

## Examples:

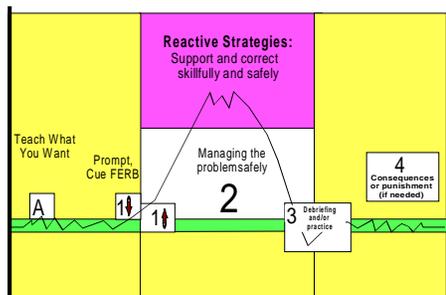
All examples below relate to the same student and same behavior

## Key Concepts

### I. REACTIVE STRATEGIES (line 12)

Reactive strategies are clearly communicated and understood by all implementers

- *Analysis: "Reactive strategy to employ/debriefing procedures to use if problem behavior occurs again."*
- *Four components are considered: Prompting, Managing Safely, Debriefing, and Consequences*



All implementers should be consistent in their approach when problem behavior occurs. All stakeholders, e.g., parents, teachers, therapists, specialists, should approve of the reactive strategies. If the student can comprehend the plan, s/he should be aware of all parts of the plan, including what strategies will be used for problem behavior across all problem behavior phases.

Note: For scoring purposes if multiple behaviors are addressed, find one complete reactive sequence for a problem behavior on the plan to score.

- 2 = **A Strategy for Managing at least one Problem Safely** must be present, AND any two other components below are present for that behavior, AND no contaminators are present: (a) catharsis for aggression or (b) aggressive verbal or physical behavior is listed (line 5), but no strategy for managing safely given.
- 1 = **A Strategy for Managing at least one Problem Safely** must be present, but two additional reactive strategy components for that behavior are not given AND no contaminator is described on the plan: catharsis for aggression, or no managing safely strategy given on the plan for aggression listed (line 5).
- 0 = **A Strategy for Managing at least one Problem Safely** is absent OR a contaminator is present on the plan: (see above)

#### Reactive Strategy Components

- 1) **Prompting to the FERB, or redirecting to task with additional supports:**  
**Key:** What staff actions are specified to (a) redirect student to the new behavior being taught and reinforced, or (b) staff actions to redirect to the task with additional supports (e.g., reminder of next break, desired activity earned, praise)
- 2) **A Strategy for Managing the Problem Safely** when problem behavior does not respond to redirection is described. Safety for the student, implementers and peers must be maintained. Caution: Never force compliance through a physical means. Approved physical restraints are only used to maintain safety of student, peers or adults, never for any other reason.
- 3) **Debriefing** and/or additional practice of the FERB after the problem is over.  
**Key:** What should staff do after the problem behavior episode to process or practice with the student what happened? Information on further plan alterations may be gleaned in this process.
- 4) **Consequences or punishment** may or may not be required or desired.  
**Key:** What staff actions will occur because of school discipline policy, or a team's decision about a contingent logical consequence's instructive value?

- 2 = 2) **Managing the Problem Safely:**  
"During Billy's problem behavior episode (task refusal and profanity) the teacher will sit very close to him, present two choices of which work folder to complete with a peer, using a non-emotional tone, waiting for swearing to end and Billy to choose a task." AND
- Other components for that problem behavior are described (2 or more required):**
1. **a) Prompting FERB:**  
"Teacher will non-verbally cue Billy to switch to the FERB, a peer assistance request, using the five hand signals of "stop," "think," "you can make a good choice," "you can make a bad choice" "what will you do?" as taught to the student and practiced previously and followed by hand signals "pat yourself on the back" if student signals "good choice" and switches behavior.  
**OR 1. b) Prompting to Redirect, e.g.,** severe disability example: "If Mary begins to rock, (a weak protest, typically occurring prior to screaming and running, show her the "what I'm working for card", then redirect her gesturally to finish only the immediate task before terminating instructional session and providing desired activity."
  - 3) **Debriefing method(s):**  
"Teacher and Billy will analyze the problem behavior occurrence using the attached 'My Inappropriate Behavior Worksheet. Process will occur after student is observed to be calm and ready to talk."
  - 4) **Consequences or Punishment:**  
"Billy will not receive tokens for the period due to lack of completing the task which would have earned approximately 5 toward the computer game." or, "If Billy engages in dangerous behavior, such as pushing, hitting or throwing furniture during the protest, he will be referred for immediate school disciplinary response."
- 1 = **Managing problem safely strategy** for at least one problem behavior is present, but two additional components for that behavior are not present.
- 0 = **Managing problem safely strategy** is absent, e.g., student threatens others but no strategy to handle safely if observed; student hits peers, no strategy to address.

- Well designed reactive strategies consider the progression phases in specifying how to respond to a problem behavior.
1. **Prompting** - Can continuation or escalation of problem be averted by using a prompt? Remind the student of how to get desired outcome with the FERB?
  2. **Managing safely** - How will staff maintain safety of everyone during escalated behavior? This is critical.
  3. **Debriefing** - What procedures, after calm is restored, help identify how to prevent further occurrences and restore rapport and rule-following behavior?
  4. **Consequences** - may or may not be required or recommended. Do school safety requirements, outside agency or parent requests require specific consequences? Does the team believe a consequence will result in the student avoiding using the problem behavior in the future?

**Debriefing** can be a dialogue or a written process or a behavior practice session. For younger or less cognitively able students, where verbal problem solving has not yet proven successful, "debriefing" can entail a session to model replacement behavior, or guided practice with the student of how to use the FERB, or a review of a picture sequence depicting alternative behavior steps or other teaching procedures designed to achieve skill fluency, if that is in question, after the behavior episode.

**Punishment** is a consequence the student finds aversive and results in elimination or reduction in problem behavior because the student is motivated to avoid that consequence in the future. Caution: Avoid reinforcing the problem behavior. Sending a student to the office may be thought to be punishment, but the student may actually find it reinforcing!

**Hint: A student screams (function of scream determined to be to escape a task). If student's task is terminated by the scream, this behavior will become reinforced. Do not allow escape following the scream. Instead, require a very brief compliance prior to the escape ("Raise your hand to leave, Peter.")**