

**Autism Classroom Resources Podcast
Episode 15 Transcript
November 24, 2019**

Welcome to the Autism Classroom Resources Podcast, the podcast for special educators who are looking for personal and professional development. I'm your host, Dr. Christine Reeve for more than 20 years. I've worn lots of hats in special education, but my real love is helping special educators like you. This podcast will give you tips and ways to implement research based practices in a practical way in your classroom to make your job easier and more effective.

[Music]

Welcome to the Autism Classroom Resources Podcast . I'm Chris Reeve and we are still talking about behavioral support plans. This is part of our series on behavioral problem solving and the five steps to meaningful positive behavioral support. And so today I'm going to talk about the prevention component of behavior support plans. In episode 14 I talked about how we take our hypothesis statement and have it lead us to creating a behavior plan that includes preventive strategies, replacement strategies and skills we are going to teach and responsive strategies. So today I'm going to talk about the preventive components that can go into this. I'll give you some examples and I'll talk about why they are important to both offset setting events and to help our students cope better with potential triggers in their environment.

[Music]

Now, if you remember way back in episode six when I started this series, I talked about the fact that we really want to focus on shifting towards a proactive approach to behavior management where we're focusing on the function and not the form of the behavior, where we are teaching appropriate behavior rather than expecting it. We're thinking about what happens before the behavior and most important where we can have an impact on the behavior before it even happens and that leads us into the prevention component of our behavior support plans. The key to the prevention components of the support plans are that they allow us to keep the behavior from happening, but they allow us to curb the behavior to stop

the behavior or reduce it in the meantime, while we're waiting for that teaching of the appropriate behavior to really get underway. So there are a way to reduce our behaviors quickly but they may not always be a longterm strategy because essentially what we're doing with our preventive strategies overall is we are changing our environment.

We are changing the context in which the student is living and working. We are changing things about his day that maybe we don't want to be a long term strategy. In addition, we also want our students to learn skills that they need for longterm. So that's going to be our next component, our teaching replacement skills component. But before that teaching really kicks in. We need a way to make the behaviors reduce quickly and our preventive strategies are one way that we can do that. Now there are two components that we have to think about when we think about prevention. They're kind of two paths to preventing challenging behavior. One is addressing setting events and we discussed setting events in an earlier episode and I will make sure to link to that one in the show notes if you're not familiar with them. But those are longer term types of issues that are impacting a student's behavior like being ill or not getting enough sleep.

And then we have our antecedents. Our antecedents are typically the things that we think of as our triggers. And I use those words. I just did air quotes, which of course you can't see, but I use those air quotes because they may or may not be triggers, but the things that happen right before the behavior starts. And so we can also make modifications to those triggers. We can change our demands, we can change what happens in their environment so that there are fewer problems. But when we think about addressing those longer term setting events, we want to think about how we can either eliminate them and some of them we might be able to eliminate. So we might be able to not sit him next to the student who gets him all riled up at lunch, which then impacts his ability to function in the afternoon in the classroom. That we can change.

I can change where he sits at lunch, but a lot of setting events are going to be things that I can't change, like making sure that he sleeps through the night, which I guarantee you for a lot of our students who have sleep issues, if his parents could solve that problem, they would solve it. So don't blame them. Setting events are of

course not a reason that we can blame other people for the problem. So think about the fact that we may need to accommodate for them. Think about a day when you actually stay home sick. I know most of you know it's easier to come in sick than to miss a day in your classrooms. And I get that. But in the normal world, when people are ill, they stay home. And the reason for that is because they're not going to be very productive when they're on the job site.

And we're accommodating them. We're accommodating those setting events. So we want to think about some of those things. So if we think of some common setting events, like not sleeping, not feeling well, allergies, we might accommodate allergies by giving them different kinds of medication to try to reduce them. Previous problems during the day like the lunch example I just gave, changing who he's with at lunch during the day may make his day better. His routine is off. I can't change the fact that we had a fire drill today, but maybe when we come back from the fire drill, we do some preferred activities before launching into things that might be likely to trigger problem behaviors. Maybe we have a new student. Clearly I can't say, well, this child can't handle it, so no new students for me, we all sometimes feel like that would be a nice thing to be able to say, but I can say, hey we've got a new student today, maybe we're going to do more maintenance tasks for escape related behavior than we're going to do new material.

Medication changes. Maybe I adjust my demands based on when we're changing medication, when I know the student is in a high state of anxiety, maybe I don't introduce things that traditionally trigger the behavior during those times. So there's lots of things that we can do and I'll link to a post where I actually talk about some of these strategies that can help you with that to accommodate setting events that we can't necessarily control. So when we've addressed or accommodated our setting events, there are also those more immediate kinds of triggers in our environment that we're trying to address. And so one way that we can prevent behaviors from occurring are to change some of those triggers to change some of the things that happen. So if asking the student to do a specific kind of work is something that commonly is an antecedent to challenging behavior, then maybe we can change the demands or the way we ask as a way to make that happen.

If the teacher turning to attend to another student when she's working with the student that you are writing the behavior plan for. Maybe we develop a system where other students are taken care of by someone else in the room until we get him to the point where he can wait for her attention to come back. While we're teaching that replacement behavior. We'll talk about it in our next, our next episode. We may want to make it so that she has attention just for him at times. So when we're thinking about our antecedent strategies, we always want to ask the question: How can I build on what works? What can I do to help the student not respond to the trigger? Or what can I do to change the trigger so it doesn't cause or set off the challenging behavior?

Some of the things that we might do are changes to the physical environment. So we might cover things in curtains or move his seat or change who he sits next to. We might increase the predictability of his day, so we might make sure that we're running on a consistent routine. We might do some pre-activity preparation, so maybe I'm setting it up so that I'm prepping him. Let's say we have a student who always has challenging behaviors when he goes into the general ed science class. Well maybe we prepare for that general ed science class. It might be preparing an academic activity so that he's familiar with it when he walks in the door. Or if the issues are more environmental, like a student who's overwhelmed by sitting in a large group. Maybe we do a calm down strategy before we walk through that door. So there may be things that we can do to prepare him to be able to handle that environment differently.

We might add more visual supports to increase his understanding of receptive language. We might add visual schedules or transition warnings and timers to help him know when something is going to be different or when something is going to happen or when he's going to have to stop doing a specific activity. So if transitions are something that we see in our FBA hypotheses that are a problem, then we might add in ways to make things more predictable in that way. We might give him choices proactively.

If we know that our student is somebody who when you ask him to do something routinely responds with no and starts a behavior, then we might present things as do you want to do it this way or that way rather than in, and of course the choices

are never do you want to, do you know your math work or do you want to go to Disney world? The choices are do you want to do it in this chair or that chair or do you want to do this task first or that task first.

We might use non-contingent reinforcement where we give lots of reinforcement that's not based on any kind of performance and sometimes that relieves the needs say to get attention from people. If you're getting attention regularly non contingently, then your need for attention that you get for the negative behavior can decrease. It might be presenting a social story to prepare them for a change. We have research that shows as part of behavior plans. Social narratives can be a good component. So it might be helping him understand that you're going to go home and you had a holiday tomorrow so you won't be back until after the weekend or it might be having a social narrative that tells him we're going to have field day today, which is going to disrupt our schedule horribly and this is how we're going to manage it.

So letting him know ahead of time that this antecedent is going to happen might be something that helps modifying or accommodating demands. It may be if we have a student whose behavior is to escape from specific kinds of demands, maybe we present them in a different way. Meanwhile, again, with all of these, remember we are teaching him to manage his behavior in a better way with replacement behaviors and incompatible behaviors. But until that teaching takes place because we know that that takes time modifying our demands or giving him an accommodation might change that. We might also be able to modify our presentation of the demand. So maybe instead of giving him all the work, we say, we're going to do this, take a break, do this, take a break so that he can see, I'm going to get a break. You're not going to ask me to do the whole thing.

It may be, instead of just telling him, here's a worksheet that you need to do, I cut it in thirds and give him one piece to do. And then another piece, because maybe I've found that a common antecedent for the behavior is I see a worksheet, I freak out. And so if I see a worksheet and I freak out, but maybe it's because I see the whole thing and if I just see a piece of it doesn't bother me as much. It might be scheduling exercise breaks into his day. We have research that shows that cardiovascular exercise can actually increase attention to task and sometimes

reduce challenging behavior. And so it might be scheduling those proactively into his day. So it keeps him more self-regulated so that we see fewer of the challenging behaviors. And finally, another thing that you can do to prevent challenging behavior is if you have identified a chain of behavior that occurs based on your FBA.

So you've seen that when he starts to cry, he is more likely to end up hitting people down the line. Then you know that you can start to intervene when you get to the earlier behavior to prevent the more severe behavior. So let's say that I see a student who he's really always out of his seat more before we get to the point where he melts down and falls on the floor and start screaming. So now I know that when he gets up out of his seat, that's a time that I can start accommodating and providing some of these prevention strategies so that we're preventing him from escalating to the higher level. Again, at the same time that we're going to be routinely teaching those replacement skills. So always keep in mind that our preventive strategies are just a third or a part of our plan.

They're not better or worse than any of the others, but they are what are going to get us through of arranging the environment temporarily so that he has the time and the ability to learn the skills he needs to learn. And then over time our preventive strategies may start to fade away to some degree. Some will fade better than others. That should give you a wide array of preventive strategies, which obviously I could do an entire day on just preventive strategies. But I am going to link in the blog post that goes with this podcast and I'll link to it in the show notes, a list of earlier posts that I've written that have lots and lots of visual supports that talk about visual supports and other antecedent strategies that we can use so that you could go back and look for some specific ideas that might match the data that you have from your FBA.

Just always remember that when we're thinking about preventive strategies, our section of our hypothesis that says when this happens, tells us where we need to get that information from. So I hope that gives you some ideas of where we're going to start. I'll be back next week to talk about replacement skills and how they are more than just telling a kid to use his words and what exactly they involve. If you're looking for more of a deep dive into behavioral problem solving, definitely come join us in the special educator academy at specialeducatoracademy.com and

we have a whole eight hour course that you can do in 15 to 30 minute segments. We also have lots of lots of workshops focusing on a lot of these preventive strategies as part of our material. So if you have questions about that or anything else, hop over to our free Facebook group at [specialeducatorsconnection.com](https://www.facebook.com/specialeducatorsconnection.com) and answer the three questions and join us and share your thoughts on this podcast there. I would love to hear what you have to say and what your thoughts are about behavior support plans. I hope to see you again next week, we'll be talking about replacement skills and until then, have a great day.

[Music].