

Autism Classroom Resources Podcast
Episode 17 Transcript
December 8,, 2019

Welcome back to the Autism Classroom Resources Podcast and thanks for joining me. I'm Chris Reeve and we are in the midst of a series on 10 Steps to Meaningful Behavioral Support. Last week I talked about replacement behaviors, how they are more than just instructing students to "use their words," and how you decide which ones you want to teach. So if you haven't heard that one, go back to episode 16. In episode 17, I am going to share 5 skills or behaviors that you might want to teach your students in addition to the replacement behaviors.

So right now we're talking about the center of your behavior support plan, which is your teaching section. And replacement behaviors are a critical component that we need to teach to help improve the student's behavior long term. But there are also other behaviors or skills that we can teach a student or increase how frequently they happen that can decrease the challenging behavior and, sometimes they can decrease it even faster than the replacement behaviors. So we would want to choose which ones of those make sense based on our FBA data and add them in addition to our replacement behaviors. So let's get started.

I. Reinforce appropriate behaviors.

There's truth to the maxim that reinforcing appropriate behavior can actually reduce negative behavior. So one thing that you want to do is make sure that you have a reinforcement system in place that is going to address increasing those behaviors that you want to see.

You can choose behaviors that are just generally appropriate. For instance you could reinforce students for following specific rules that you have in the classroom. You could choose one or two rules or have up to five. And they could earn reinforcement for complying with them for each activity. One way to do this might be to use a token system or a regular type of reinforcement throughout the day. When you either observe the students following the rules, you could also set it up so that when they complete an activity and they have followed the rules, they get reinforced after that with a token or points or

something like that.

In general and every day practice in the classroom we want to try and reach what's called the golden ratio of five reinforcements or positive statements for every correction. If you're doing that you can use that same ratio to think about how many reinforcers a student might need to earn during an activity or during the day to balance out the amount of correction that you're having to provide. The key in setting up any reinforcement system for your classroom or for a specific student is to make sure that they're getting reinforced and getting the outcome that is positive much more often than they're not. Because students aren't going to buy into a system unless they are winning more often than they're losing. So you always want to make sure that they're winning more frequently and you can always increase the expectations over time as they become more successful.

These behaviors might include things like following directions, transitioning independently, completion of work, remaining in an assigned area, appropriate interaction and social skills, waiting for an activity or an item that they want and academic skills that might play a role as initiating challenging behaviors. So those are all things that you might want to target based on what you know about your FBA.

2. Reinforce incompatible behaviors

In addition to reinforcing general appropriate behaviors like the rules of your classroom you can also specifically choose behaviors that are incompatible with the problem behavior. So for example you might have a student who is engaging in a lot of out of seat behavior so is always out of his chair running around the room. To address that you could reinforce an incompatible behavior like reinforcing for remaining in his seat. So it might be sitting down at first and then later reinforcing him for staying in his seat without getting up for longer periods of time. So again, you always want to make sure that the behavior that you are reinforcing is something that he can be successful with.

3. Teach independent engagement and on-task behavior

In episode 15 I talked about keeping the student engaged and keeping them busy as a way to prevent challenging behavior. This can also be woven into this instructional element by teaching the student to keep himself engaged. Examples might be teaching a student to keep himself engaged might be teaching him to use an independent work system. He can then use the independent work system to complete a series of tasks without someone having to be with him to keep him engaged throughout that time

Another example might be a student who gets into difficulty when there's a play, less structured activity. So assuming it's a young student, you could teach him appropriate play skills as a way to keep him engaged and help him to learn to structure his own time so that he becomes more self-sufficient.

Similarly, you could teach a student appropriate leisure skills. You might have a student who is engaging in behavior at home, when mom is cooking dinner. And something like that would lend itself well to being taught leisure skills to keep himself engaged during that time.

Along those lines, you might have the same student who is having difficulty during a choice time or a fun Friday time in your classroom. If you teach him the appropriate engagement to engage with other students. So I'm talking social skills and leisure skills then you might see a reduction in behavior because he's more engaged.

4. Teach Self-Regulation Skills

Some of our students engage in challenging behaviors for specific functions such as to escape from a situation. And part of that problem might come from the fact that they are not able to wait for something or self-regulate their frustration or their patience.

So for those students, learning relaxation tools, tools to slow them down so that they plan out when something they really want might be available or similar

kinds of skills might be to their benefit. So

Examples of some self-regulation skills you might teach are counting to 10 before they respond to a peer on the playground so that they are stopping and thinking. You could also teach, stop and think. You could also take teach taking three deep breaths before they walk into a situation that your data tells them often results in problem behavior. So, it may not be related to the function of the behavior, but it may help to reduce the need for that function and it may help him to do it more independently. You could teach the student to take a deep breath when he makes a mistake on his paper. If that's a common antecedent to behavior.

If the student is getting in trouble while he is playing games on the playground on a team sport, then you might teach him to take a break on his own to get a drink of water before he responds when he misses a shot. So these

These are all tools that we use every day to slow down our reactions to things. So, when you start and you're in a frustrating situation you may find yourself taking a deep breath. I'm saying, okay, I have to stay calm. So for instance, I travel a lot for work. My plane is late, very common occurrence and it's very frustrating cause I know that I'm going to miss my connection. But I know that yelling at the attendant is not going to help me. But that's what I really, really want to do. So at that point I might implement a self-regulation strategy such as taking deep breaths, maybe walking away from the counter for a minute to help myself stay calm so I can communicate affectively to get the problem solved.

So self-regulation tools may be related to the function of the behavior or they may just be tools that help slow down the student's reaction. Some strategies like anger management skills will serve them well in the long term and may reduce the quickness with which they respond to triggers for challenging behavior.

5. Self-monitoring Skills

Finally the fifth thing that we could teach are self-monitoring skills. If your student is able to recognize the challenging behavior or recognize any of these other appropriate or incompatible behaviors, he might be a good candidate to learn to self-monitor his own behavior. You could teach him to increase the behaviors described above or teach him to decrease the negative behaviors if he can recognize them. Self-monitoring skills involve the student recognizing that he is engaging in the behavior, so he has to be able to tell that he's doing it.

So for instance, recognizing that he's in his seat when the timer goes off. That means that he can then give himself a point or token for meeting that expectation. Essentially, he is self-reinforcing or just recording it, even just recording. It can impact their behavior and over time because of the reinforcement, but also because they're tracking their own behavior.

Self-monitoring skills involve the student recognizing that they are engaged in the behavior. So for instance recognizing that he's in his seat when about your goes off. That means that he can then give himself a point or token for meeting that expectation. Essentially, he is self-reinforcing or just recording it, even just recording. It can impact their behavior and over time because of the reinforcement, but also because they're tracking their own behavior, you should see a change in that behavior. Now clearly self-monitoring is a long-term game. It is not something that's going to happen in a short period of time. But it is a skill that is going to be lifelong for the student to be able to recognize his own behavior and make modifications. It's really no different than writing down everything you eat. If you're on a diet and you find that over time you change your eating habits because you're more aware of what you're eating when you do that, and we see the same thing with self-monitoring. Even students who are not honest in their self-monitoring actually. So positive changes in behavior. And in the future, I'll do an episode about self-monitoring and what goes into that type of instruction.

So there's your five things that we can teach that are not necessarily related to replacing the behavior that serves the same function as the problem behavior. Usually to teach the skills we're going to be using reinforcement a great deal. And using reinforcement we might use a point system or a token system for the student to see how much reinforcement they're earning with their appropriate behavior. And I will have more information in another episode on things to think about in using reinforcement because it's definitely one of my favorite topics to talk about. And it's one of the things that I think so many times it gets used wrong. So I will be talking about that more in the future. In addition to reinforcement, you might also use systems in the classroom to help them be more effective.

You could also use strategies like video modeling. We could also use social narrative's or social stories. Both of these strategies would be used to demonstrate the expectations of situations and help a student behave appropriately. We might also use behavioral contract with students. And behavioral contracts are where we are establishing with a student what the expectation is what the consequence is for that student for following the expectation. Or the expectation of what happens if he fails to meet those expectations.

To sum up the skills we might teach in addition to replacement behaviors could be general appropriate behavior, behaviors that are incompatible with the challenging behavior. Self-engagement or leisure skills so that he can keep himself engaged. Regulation skills to delay reinforcement and manage responses to certain triggers, and self-monitoring skills. All of these are skills that we would teach in addition to the replacement behaviors that serve the same function as a challenging behavior.

If the student is having difficulty delaying gratification (e.g., he wants something and he can't wait for it). Teaching him some level of some type of self-regulation may be helpful to help him wait for the time that he can have the things that he wants. Or if the student's behavior is occurring most frequently when there is not a lot of structure in the activity in the classroom. So when you look at your antecedents, that might be an indication that you want to teach some engagement and self-initiation of play skills, social skills, or just engaging independently with work or activities. I hope that gives you some ideas of things that you might want to

teach. In addition to our replacement behaviors we talked about previously, these behaviors serve to round out the teaching elements that are at the center of your behavior support plan and I think that the teaching piece is a really critical piece to managing behavior in the long term and really addressing the underlying functions and situations in which the behaviors occur.

In our next episode I'll be talking about what to do to respond to the challenging behaviors so that we reduce our reinforcement of them and we also are sure that everyone is safe.

I would love to hear what you think about this episode and other behaviors that you have taught in addition to replacement behaviors, so hop on over to our free Facebook group at [specialeducatorsconnection.com](https://www.facebook.com/specialeducatorsconnection) You can find all the show notes and the links to related posts for this podcast as well as a written transcript at [AutismClassroomResources.com/episode17](https://www.AutismClassroomResources.com/episode17) And if you're interested in learning more about how to teach these types of skills and how to best set them up in your classroom so that they work, as well as a wide variety of other areas in special education, I encourage you to check out the [specialeducatoracademy.com](https://www.specialeducatoracademy.com). That's a great place to find me in the community for suggestions and consultations as well as lots of other special educators who are going through the same things that you are. It's also chock-full of a wide variety of all different types of professional development and support for special educators.

Thank you for spending the time with me. I would love it if you would leave a review and any feedback that you have on iTunes as well as subscribe to the podcast and share with your friends. I hope to see you next week with her episode on responding to challenging behavior.