

THINKING FUNCTIONALLY ABOUT PROBLEM BEHAVIOR



There are three functions of behavior:

To get something

- Tangible items, such as food, drinks, toys, iPad, computer
- Attention from teachers, parents or peers

To get away from something

- Tangible items, such as food, drinks, toys, iPad, computer
- Attention from teachers, parents or peers

To feel pleasure or body awareness

- Rocking
- Hand-flapping



Understanding the function comes from the ABCs:

Antecedent

What happened before the behavior?

Behavior

What behavior did we see?

Consequence

What happens after the behavior occurs?

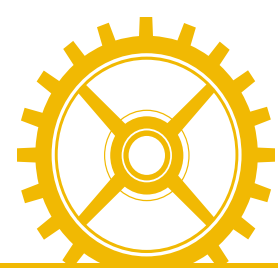
Behavior functions can be identified through repeated observation of the ABCs.



Recording ABC Data

When recording ABC data, remember to:

- Objectively define the problem behavior (i.e., it must be measurable and observable)
- Record the start and end time
- Identify the context, antecedent, and consequences in which the behavior is occurring
- Identify a potential function (i.e., is the student trying to get or avoid something?)



Setting Events

Setting events (SE) are environmental events that have an indirect impact on problem behavior. They momentarily change the value of the reward or punishment, and either increases or decreases the likelihood that a behavior will occur.

Setting events "set up" problem behavior. Antecedent's "set off" problem behavior.

Examples include missing breakfast, crowding, having a fight on the way to school, getting bad grades, having a substitute teacher, or forgetting to take medication.



Examples of an SE-ABC

Consider the following case. Identify the SE-ABCs in this scenario:

Jamal and his sister were walking to school on a rainy day. He tripped and fell into a puddle, causing his pants to get wet. He was unable to get a new pair of pants before school started, so he attended class with wet clothes. When he entered his classroom, a boy laughed and said, "dude, what happened?" Jamal furrowed his brow and yelled, "Shut the __ up!" The teacher heard the comment and gave Jamal a warning for using foul language. Jamal responded, "Whatever. __ you." The teacher sent Jamal to the office. Jamal remained in the office with the assistant principal for the next hour.

- Setting event: Tripping and getting wet
- Antecedent: Classmate asking Jamal what happened
- Behavior: Saying, "Shut the __ up!"
- Consequence: Teacher giving a warning
- Hypothesized function: Escape

- Antecedent: Teacher giving a warning
- Behavior: Saying, "Whatever. __ you."
- Consequence: Being sent out of the office
- Hypothesized function: Escape

The scenario above has two ABC chains - one leading to a warning, and the other leading to being sent out. The first part of the case seemed to have the function of escape because Jamal was attempting to avoid being mocked by his peer. The second behavior chain was triggered by the teacher giving him a warning for swearing. At this point, Jamal was already escalated. His swearing back appeared to have the function of escape as he was able to leave and avoid attention from his peers.