Managing Frustration, Anxiety and Teaching Relevant Skills

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Overview

Part 1
• Predicting successful transition to adulthood.
• Keys components to teaching skills

Part 2
• Caretakers must have the right attitude/understanding first
• Managing challenging behaviors and anxiety
• Q and A

What is success?

• Definition: Achievement of desired outcome.
  Like:
  – Getting to choose where/how you work, live and play
• Life satisfaction versus hedonistic pleasure
  – Sense of value, belonging – social connections

Predictors of success in special needs
(Goldberg et al, 2003)
– Self-awareness: compartmentalize challenges, see strengths
– Proactivity: make decisions, engaged with the world socially and financially
– Perseverance: like Carol Dweck’s “growth mindset”
– Appropriate goal setting, concrete realistic
– Effective use of social support systems: encouragement, guidance, opportunity for independence
– Emotional stability/coping: recognizing triggers to stress and planning ahead

High School Model

• Self-awareness: Freshman
  – Strengths that lead to careers; Challenges that lead to supports
  – Visually list more strengths than challenges
• Self-advocacy: Sophomore
  – Basic needs: Asking for help, breaks, desired objects or activities
  – Needed modifications/accommodations, active role in IEP
  – How/when to self-disclose (who will use information to help)
• Career/college exploration: Junior-Senior
  – Vocational assessments and job sampling
• Functional Living Skills: all of HS
  – Hygiene, dressing, food prep, purchasing items in the community, money management, travel training, safety training

Famous People with ASD

• Albert Einstein – Physicist
  – Social difficulties, Learning Disability
• Bill Gates – Founder of Microsoft
  – Social Difficulties
Famous People with ASD

- Thomas Edison - Inventor
  - Social difficulties, Learning Problems

- Wolfgang Mozart - Composer
  - Social Difficulties

Famous People with ASD

- Marie Curie – Nobel prize winner in chemistry
  - Social difficulties, discovered radioactive elements

- Temple Grandin – designer of livestock handling facilities, associate professor of animal science, noted author
  - Social Difficulties

Key Components of Skills Training

1. What to teach? Prioritize what is relevant in desired settings
   - General: self-awareness, advocacy, self-care skills, job skills
   - Personalized: Too much or too little for expected settings

2. Motivation: Intrinsic versus extrinsic
   - Intrinsic: link to personal interests/goals, build sense of hopeful outcomes and rationale to work on a skills
   - Extrinsic: use external rewards when no intrinsic motivation

3. Skill acquisition matched to language/cognition
   - Level 3: Little receptive language, can’t use words only to instruct. Visually based, incidental prompting
     - TEACCH, ABA, PECS, Video modeling of simple skills
   - Level 2: Has language but needs visual support to understand.
     - Picture books, video modeling, visually supported conversation
   - Level 1: Has good receptive language that you can explain what to do and why (how people feel in response to our behavior).
     - Baker’s social skills books: Explain what and why, model and roleplay
     - Garcia-Winner Social Thinking teaches fluid perspective taking
     - Video modeling with highlights of other’s feelings and reactions to different behaviors in context

Basic Hygiene (Level 2, 3)

- Fill tub with warm water
- Wash whole body
- Rinse soap off
- Put on clothes
- Rub legs
- Shave armpit
- Rub cream
- Put on deodorant
- Put on clear clothes
- I felt good

Maintaining a Conversation (Level 2)

- I like it.
- Who did you see?
- What did you do?
- Where did you go?
- How did you get there?
- How was your day?
- What did you do?
Key Components of Skills Training

4. Generalization to natural setting
   • Prime, Coach, Review
   • Use visual cue card and/or verbal prompts, reminder apps

5. Peer sensitivity
   • Sensitize peers to needs of those excluded or teased
   • Solicit peer leaders/buddies (Heroes vs Bullies)

6. Evaluating outcome
   • Observable measures (e.g., frequency of behavior)
   • Subjective ratings
     1 - never 2 - rarely 3 - sometimes 4 - usually 5 - always
   • Normed scales
     – Constantino’s Social Responsiveness Scale (SRS)
     – Gresham & Elliott’s Social Skills Rating System (SSRS)

Managing frustration and anxiety

First help caretakers have the right attitude

Understand why students misbehave
Manage your own emotions as a provider
De-escalate crises with your students
Set up prevention plans for any repeat problems

One size fits all... until one size does not fit all

• Discipline, rules and consequences can be a first step
• But when it does not work (for at least 30%):
  – Continue in an escalating power struggle?
  – Or ask why is it happening so we can prevent the problem rather than simply react to it.

Quote from Yoda – Star Wars

• FEAR IS THE PATH TO THE DARK SIDE
• FEAR leads to ANGER
• ANGER leads to HATE
• HATE leads to SUFFERING

“Fear leads to anger” applies to caregivers as well

• We can have our buttons pushed
• React out of fear by
  – Giving in
  – Getting mad and forcing compliance
• Or use our intellect to figure out how to solve problem for next time
90% of Teaching and Parenting is Tolerance

- Can we tolerate our own discomfort long enough to think about what to do?
- Discipline is a starting point: But what if it does not work?

Handling Our Own Feelings

- How do we think about difficult behavior
  - Hope leads to better outcome!
    - Attributional style: temporary not stable, specific not global character flaw
  - Not taking it personally. Manipulation or disability? Does not matter if a repeat problem.
    - Attributional style: external (gap between demands and coping skills) not internal (blame others)

Difficulties Associated with Challenging Behavior

- Difficulty with abstract thinking & perspective-taking.
  - Misbehavior is often unintentional. Educate don’t incarcerate!
- Inflexibility: Limited problem solving
  - New tasks require more cognitive effort.
  - Preparation and expanded problem solving avoids meltdowns.

Difficulties Associated with Challenging Behavior

- Low Frustration Tolerance
  - Limbic system: Controls emotions and fight, flight or freeze response
    - Forebrain: Reasoning and planning
      - Dr. Banner before he becomes the Hulk
      - Limbic system can hijack the rest of the brain
      - Prevent rage and distract when in rage.

Behavior Management

- Step 1: Relationship Issues
  - Warmth and caring
  - Structure with use of visual supports, differentiated instruction
  - Build confidence: 80/20 rule
  - Avoid escalating power struggles.

Behavior Management

- Step 2: Crisis Management
  - Non-verbal skills to increase safety.
  - Listen, agree, apologize when necessary
  - Collaborate: Ask “what do you want? Lets find the right way to get that.”
  - When logic is gone: Distract
    - Novel items
    - Special interests
    - Sensory activities
Behavior Management

- Step 3: Repeat Behavior Problems
  - Explore why it happens: Interview, observe & keep an ABC journal
    - Focus on triggers more than function in order to get ahead of problem
  - No More Meltdowns APP, available at APP store or www.symtrend.com/nmm
  - Develop a good prevention plan
    - Modify triggers, teach replacement skills

Typical Triggers

- Internal issues: hunger, tiredness, illness, grief, hormones, libido
- Sensory issues: noise, light, touch, over-stimulation, boredom
- Lack of structure
- Challenging or new work, feared situations
- Having to wait, not get what one wants, disappointments
- Threats to self-esteem: losing, mistakes, criticism
- Unmet wishes for attention: ignored, want others to laugh

Components of a Behavior Plan

see www.apbs.org

1. **Change the triggers**: sensory/biological, structure, task demands
2. **Teach skills to deal with triggers**: Key components of skill training
   - Target relevant skill goals
   - Motivate to learn
   - Teach skill with strategy appropriate for language
   - Generalize: prime, coach, review
3. **Reward new skills**
4. **Loss system** if not already frustrated

Demands for Work

1. **Change the triggers**
   - Model, prompt rather than test, explain learning curve
   - Give choice of work, use special interests
   - Visual supports: instructions, webs, outlines, labels
   - Reduce length, use timer
2. **Teach “Trying When It’s Hard”**
   - Try a little
   - Ask to watch first or ask for help
   - Take a break and try again
   - Negotiate how much

Doing Home Work

Carol Dweck’s Mindsets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mindset</th>
<th>Preferred task difficulty</th>
<th>Response to Mistakes</th>
<th>Acceptance of help</th>
<th>Learning outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fixed</td>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>Lose motivation</td>
<td>Avoid</td>
<td>Lower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>Hard</td>
<td>Stay motivated</td>
<td>Welcome</td>
<td>Higher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Demands for Work

3. **Reward system**
   - For trying, not for being correct
   - Trying Poster

4. **Avoid loss system** when frustrated

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**Trying When Work is Hard**
(from Baker’s Picture Book)

1. Try to do the work.
2. Ask for help if you need it.
3. Negotiate or compromise rather than refuse to do the work.
4. Ask for a short break if you get upset.
5. Go back to doing your work.

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**1. Try to do the work.**

**Right Way**
The instructor gives him work to do and he tries it.

**Wrong Way**
He complements the work in anger without even trying.

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**2. Ask for help if you need it.**

**Right Way**
He asks for help when he has trouble.

**Wrong Way**
He gets mad when he has trouble.

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**3. Negotiate or compromise rather than refuse to do the work.**

**Right Way**
He asks nicely to compromise when there was too much work.

**Wrong Way**
Can I just do this one now and the other later?

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**4. Ask for a break if you need one.**

**Right Way**
He asks for and takes a short break.

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5. Come back and try again.

He tries the work again. The instructor is impressed with his efforts.

Dealing with Fear
1. **Change the triggers:** Avoid or modify stressors
2. **Teach ways to manage fear/anxiety**
   - Win them over to working on issue
   - Explain anxiety: True versus false alarms
   - Gradual exposure to fear: Create fear ladder
   - CBT: Think like a scientist
   - Add exercise, meditation/relaxation
   - Consider neurofeedback, meds if needed
3. **Reward system**
   - For facing each step of a fear
4. **Avoid loss system** when anxious

Dealing with Fear: Change the triggers
1. Can avoid feared situation when easy, but some situations we may need to face
2. Fire alarms vs. doing school work
3. Larger context of stressors
   - Work demands
   - Social demands
   - Traumatic living conditions

Dealing with Fear: Teach Skills
1. Win them over to working on issue
   - Many strengths versus few challenges
2. Explain anxiety: True versus false alarms
   - Incredible hulk has great value when danger is real, but not when it’s a false alarm.
   - Accept presence of anxiety but don’t be controlled by it. Worries are like false news in the background.
3. Gradual exposure to fear: Create fear ladder
   - Rate anxiety in different situations on 5 point scale
   - Set up ladder from least to most feared situation
   - Always give client option to control when they will attempt a particular rung on the ladder
   - Use external rewards when client has trouble understanding intrinsic reward for facing fears

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   - For facing each step of a fear
4. Avoid loss system when anxious
Selective Mutism: Fear Ladder

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nod &quot;yes&quot; or &quot;no&quot;</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whisper to best friend who can then tell others what she said</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whisper to other peers or teacher</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk in louder voice to peers or teacher</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk to any classroom visitors</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dealing with Fear: Teach Skills

4. CBT: Think like a scientist
   - Assess validity of worrisome thoughts
   - Ask two questions:
     - "Am I overestimating probability of something bad happening?"
     - "Am I overestimating how bad it would be if it did happen?"
   - Create "think like a scientist" cue card for client

Dealing with Fear: Teach Skills

5. Physical anxiety reducers
   - Aerobic exercise
   - Meditation/relaxation [www.fragrantheart.com](http://www.fragrantheart.com)
   - Neurofeedback: Reinforce EEG patterns through video monitor feedback
   - Medications
     - Evaluate risk/benefit ratio

OCD: Think like a scientist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feared situation</th>
<th>Anxious thought</th>
<th>Realistic Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Touching germs</td>
<td>I will get a lethal disease.</td>
<td>I have skin that will protect me if I leave it intact and do not over-wash or crack the skin. Germs I encounter are not lethal and can only cause minor treatable illnesses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not being able to wash repeatedly</td>
<td>The germ will remain on me and lead to illness.</td>
<td>Data show that washing once after exposure to germs, using warm not hot water is all that is needed. Washing more can damage the protection of the skin. If I refrain from putting fingers in eyes or mouth, I am not likely to allow the germ to enter my body.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

OCD: Fear ladder

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situations</th>
<th>Fear level 1-5</th>
<th>Points earned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not washing hands until after touching door handles, community property or others belongings.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Touching a door handles, community property, others' belongings, or something that fell to the floor and not washing for 5 minutes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washing just once with warm water for about 20 seconds and rinsing for 10 seconds and then not washing again until the next time touching community property</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Touching a door handles, community property, others' belongings, or something that fell to the floor and not washing for 10 minutes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not washing before eating</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not washing for at least 20 minutes after using public restroom</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not washing hand for one full day</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Waiting, Accepting No, Stopping Fun

1. **Change the triggers**
   - Use a visual timer and shorten wait time (Time Timer APP)
   - Create a visual schedule. Use a “to do” box
   - Highlight reward for waiting/accepting no & prime ahead

2. **Teach skills (invisible payoff)**
   - Waiting: get some later
   - Accepting no: get something else later
   - Stopping on time: get to go back later

### Reward system
3. Points for waiting, accepting no and stopping on time
4. Disappointment poster

### Natural loss systems:
- Can’t stop, can’t do it again

### Self-esteem: Mistakes, Losing, Teasing

1. **Change the triggers**
   - Offer choice: let them win or not see mistakes
   - Stack the deck: with activities that they do well (80/20)
   - Prime ahead
   - Protect from teasing

2. **Teach skills (invisible payoff)**
   - Mistakes help us learn
   - Win the invisible game: friendship/self-control
   - Teasing: check it out 1st, stop, ignore, report

### Reward system:
3. Rewards for handling imperfection are greater than rewards for winning or doing work right.

4. Avoid loss systems when frustrated
Unmet Needs for Attention

1. **Change the triggers**
   - Schedule attention: special time
   - Use a timer and red/green cards
   - Provide an appropriate outlet: theatre, presentation

2. **Teach “Positive Ways to Get Attention”**
   - How to get adult attention
   - How to get peer attention: Public versus private topics
   - Rules of comedy: Can’t make fun of vulnerable, use slapstick, random thoughts, and self-deprecation

Unmet Needs for Attention

3. **Reward system:**
   - Rewards for appropriate topics

4. **Loss systems:**
   - Response cost

Public/Private

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Private</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Past: How was ____?</td>
<td>Avoid sensitive topics:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future: What are you going to do ____?</td>
<td>Sex, Violence, Race, Religion, Politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present: What are you ____?</td>
<td>Avoid insults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common/other interest: Did you ____?</td>
<td>Avoid curses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sensory Needs: Self-Stimulation

1. **Change the triggers**
   - Alter sensory environment
   - For boredom, reduce wait time and engage
   - Modify frustrating work

2. **Teach skills**
   - Alternative ways/times to self-stim
   - How to be a self-advocate for better environment

Sensory Needs: Self-Stimulation

3. **Reward system**
   - Reward new ways to self-stim

4. **Loss systems:**
   - Maybe response cost

Okay touch

| Handshake | High Five |

Not okay touch

| Hug | Kiss | Private parts |
**Unexpected Triggers: Self-Calming**

1. **Prepare for unexpected**
   - Collaborate on ways to distract and soothe in preparation for the unexpected upsets. Create a relaxation folder.
   - Establish a safe person
2. **Teach skills**
   - Self-talk: “All problems can be solved if you can wait and talk to the right person.”
   - Draw or write the thing that distracts/soothes you.

**References**

- www.apbs.org

**In Closing**

Can we tolerate our own discomfort long enough to . . . Think

Can we enjoy what we do? Rather than react out of fear or anger

**Q and A about any skill area**

- What are your learners strengths and areas to tap future careers?
- What behaviors could get in the way?
- How will you teach skills?
- How will you generalize skills?

**Resources**

- **DVD**
  - Challenging behavior *Now at the APP Store*

- **Music CD**
  - *Helping kids understand feelings*

- **Social Skills Books**
  - Elementary Level
  - Middle, High School and Beyond
More Resources

- No More Victims: Protecting Those with Autism
  Cyber Bullying, Internet Predators & Scams (Baker, 2013)
- Overcoming Anxiety in Children and Teens (Baker, 2015)
- School Shadow Guidelines
  Liau & Baker 2015)