



# Ethically Choosing a Target Behavior

## PURPOSE

As we focus on best practices, completion of a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) becomes a priority. The results of an FBA help us discover the function or reason for the student's behavior. Once we know that, we can design interventions to help the student meet the function of their behavior in more socially valid ways. Before completing an FBA, we need to choose our target behaviors. Let's talk about how to do that.

## CHOSING A TARGET BEHAVIOR/SKILL

Behaviors that are socially significant

- Relevant
- Increase independence and access to community
- Age appropriate
- Always address safety concerns first!



## IS THE PROBLEM A PROBLEM?

1. Is the behavior dangerous to the person doing it?
2. Is the behavior dangerous to others in the immediate area?
3. Is the behavior dangerous to the environment?
4. Is the behavior seriously disruptive to the operation of the program?
5. Does the behavior make the person different and valued negatively by the public?
6. Does the behavior prevent the person from advancing to more independent opportunities?

Attention to the behaviors above will improve quality of life for our students in areas of safety and increased participation. Dangerous behavior is always paramount, but also consider behaviors that are keeping students from moving on to that next environment or are keeping students in more restrictive settings.



# ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS (COOPER, HERON, HEWARD, 2007)

As we continue to think about behavior change, decision making must be based on ethical considerations. The following questions assist in that endeavor.



## WHAT IS THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

When we make decisions concerning behavior change, we do the right things. We make sure the behavior support is designed to improve quality of life. We make sure that our determination of the function(s) of behavior is based on collected data from a variety of sources. We make sure that interventions we provide include Evidence-based Practices.

## WHAT IS WORTH DOING?

To determine what is worth doing we look to the hierarchy above and consider other issues. For example, is the behavior of concern something that many students of the same age do? Changing a developmental behavior common to a particular age range would not be worth doing. Decreasing a behavior because it just annoying to you is not worth doing. Using time to address a minor behavioral concern when there are bigger issues may not be worth doing. (Example: teen rolling eyes, minor disrespectful comments, takes a while before doing what is asked).

When we observe these behaviors in the classroom, we can take Peer Comparison Data to see how the same aged peer behaves in comparison to our student. If our student takes an average of 1.5 minutes to comply with a demand and the peer also takes an average of 1.5 minutes to comply, we would consider that to be developmentally typical behaviors.

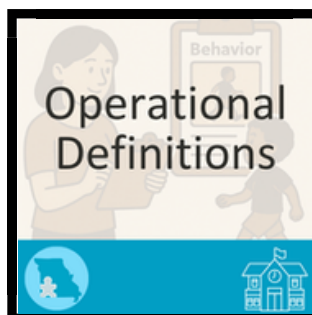
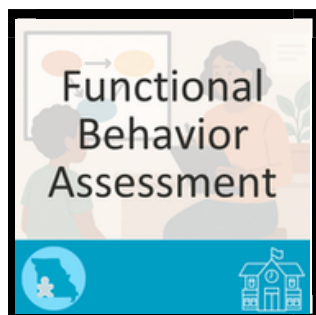
Further, consideration for the dignity of the individual being served is necessary. Confidentiality is critical, and the student is not to be discussed with those who are not directly involved. To the point we can, it is also our job to uphold positive attitudes and understanding among those serving our students. If we value our students, no matter the behavior, so will others.

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A GOOD BEHAVIOR MANAGER?

Being a good behavior manager means sensitivity to the student's needs first and foremost. Avoidance of opinions and assumptions are critical; information is gained from data collection, and decisions are made from that data. Intervention requires thoughtful use of Evidence-based Practices. Good behavior managers do not rely heavily on punishment. Punishment does not teach the student what TO do; it just teaches them what not to do. Positive support is implemented including reinforcement, modification of the environment, and teaching of appropriate skills that may be lacking for the student. Additionally, we try to intervene in the least invasive way to get the job done.



## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



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