

**Practical Solutions
for
Challenging Behaviors**

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Introduction

- ▶ Elizabeth Jess Almquist, M.Ed. has been an educator for 35 years to students with global disabilities. She has a wealth of knowledge on how to examine, address and extinguish challenging behaviors effectively. She will address common behaviors for students in various age ranges, ability levels and school experiences. Elizabeth offers a light yet no-nonsense approach to working with students in hopes of “seeing behavior from the student’s perspective and making it work for you.”

What you can expect to learn:

- ▶ **Identify the “CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS?”**
Behavior is in the eye of the observer.
- ▶ **Why behaviors?**
Behavior is **communication**. It gets a response.
- ▶ **Some strategies**
What is **your goal** when your student displays behavior VS what is **your students goal** when they’re displaying behavior.

First, consider these

- ▶ Rule out any acute, chronic or medical issues
- ▶ Including dietary, hearing, or visionary concerns

What are these BEHAVIORS you speak of?

Behavior is that thing we do that interferes with the plan!

- ▶ Yup, we all have them.
- ▶ Non-compliance, strong-willed-ness, defiance
- ▶ In SOCIAL THINKING this is referred to as EXPECTED BEHAVIOR, as opposed to UN-expected behavior.

Behavior is

- ▶ The outward display of *interference to learning.*
- ▶ It is *disruptive to the family/school/work place*
- ▶ It inhibits independence, but it is **COMMUNICATION.**
- ▶ It *may be harmful* to themselves/others/ or the environment.
- ▶ It is *discrepant from typically developing individuals.*

Examples of "THE PLAN"

- ▶ Time to get ready for school
- ▶ Time to leave for a destination, next class
- ▶ Time to shut off the TV/Computer/Game
- ▶ Time to eat
- ▶ Time to stop eating
- ▶ Time to do homework
- ▶ Time for bed
- ▶ Defiance, NO
- ▶ Strong-willed-ness
- ▶ Stealing
- ▶ Sits down, runs away
- ▶ Undresses, masturbates
- ▶ Yells, screams, cuss
- ▶ Hits, spits, throws
- ▶ Wants something, anything
- ▶ Negotiates

The plan says it's....

The student displays

What does the student GET?

- ▶ ATTENTION
- ▶ AVOIDANCE
- ▶ SENSORY BALANCE

ATTENTION

- ▶ This is not a bad thing.
- ▶ There is a reason why they don't want to do what your directing.
- ▶ Invest the time at the beginning to find out what the reason is.
- ▶ No matter what it takes, don't be in a hurry, put that time in at the beginning.

AVOIDANCE

- › I don't want to go to class.
- › There is a reason, but you can't really get to the heart of it while the student is going through it.
- › Even with positive supports in place, your student may not budge so, choose your battles.
- › Alternate plan; easier said than done. **PLANNING** is critical. Have a plan B.

SENSORY ADJUSTMENT

- › Sensory Diet, an increase of movement, music, light variation
- › Sensory decrease, quiet time, out of the main stream, quiet music, computer work with headphones
- › Gross motor work, take a walk, shoot some baskets, run
- › Fine motor, play dough, beans, beads, cooking (hot chocolate)

Attention or Avoidance; what's up with that?

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| › I don't (understand) | › Accept and validate any reason the student gives |
| › I can't (hear) | › Limit the amount of time to start a new task |
| › I can't (see) | › Give the student visual cues regarding the amount of time they need to be present |
| › I'm hungry | › Expand time as the student is present to minimal participation, then to as much participation as the student is capable |
| › I have to go to the bathroom | |
| › I have no friends | |
| › It's intimidating | |
| › I'm (scared) | |
| › I don't know | |
| › It's hard | |

Why don't you want to do *

What can I do about it?

More ideas..

- ▶ This is a symptom of low self esteem
- ▶ Sometimes, the student just doesn't have the skills to retrieve and articulate information to help themselves
- ▶ Helping is always ok
- ▶ Help provides modeling, conversation, comraderies, & builds self esteem
- ▶ Minimalize the expectation to start, praise all successes
- ▶ Build in the positive supports, (preferred activities)
- ▶ **Give them the words**, put in the time and talk it over

I can't do it. I don't know how.

Can I help you? Can you help me?

Just a few more ideas

- ▶ Go to class
- ▶ Participate in a group activity
- ▶ Will you please deliver this very important message to the teacher. I'll meet you there
- ▶ Set up success
- ▶ It's acceptable (for the student)to watch, listen. Peers will influence cooperation
- ▶ Set a time limit and alternative activity
- ▶ Give the student a job in class, which makes them valuable
- ▶ If you don't go to 7th hour, you can't get to 8th hour

I don't want to....

Give them a reason to...

Let's talk specifics, Elopement

- ▶ When the student runs away, chooses to leave the immediate environment
- ▶ Safety is always paramount.
- ▶ Teach safety skills to your student.
- ▶ Determine: Is this a sensory thing or an avoidance thing?
- ▶ If you know your student has this tendency, plan for it; locks and opportunities.
- ▶ Use it as a motivator, preferred activity to doing expected activities.

STRONG WILLED

- Defiant
- Doesn't give up easily
- Resolute
- Obstinate
- Intransigent
- Head Strong
- Unyielding
- Wait it out, be patient
- Have positive supports in place; preferred activity choices
- Temporary schedule change
- Add no additional social chatter to the off task time

Obsessive Compulsive Behavior

- Students do better following a routine.
- Students may require a sensory diet throughout their day; make it a part of the routine.
- Students should use a visual schedule.
- Students may do better if they have a designated spot in classes (or home for specified activities).
- Use of relaxation or calming activities.
- Set rules and boundaries with praise and reward for compliance (start with short bits of time).

TAKING/STEALING

- Teach the difference at the age it occurs, to the cognitive understanding of the student.
- If it is a specific item; set up a purchase/earn plan.
- If it is random items; engage in perfect practice, role play, social skills training with a script and peers.
- Fit the payment to the age of the student (the * cost *, if you do * you can pay it off).

MASTURBATION

- › Talk with the family first.
- › Teach real words and what's going on with the body.
- › What terminology will you use, share with the necessary team members for consistency.
- › Private – an important concept. TEACH and MODEL privacy, knock before entering their room or restroom, then ask to come in.
- › Teach when and where this is ok. Teach follow up activities-wash your hands.
- › Teach a consequence for NOT following privacy rules

Violent – Hitting, Kicking, Spitting

- › **TIME OUT**
- › This consequence is reserved for serious offences (hurting self, hurting others, destroying property).
- › In a safe environment, that is supervised for a reasonable amount of time...rule of thumb is one minute per year of age.
- › You cannot teach when a student is rumbling or raging, so wait until a calm time to teach an expected behavior (What could you do to show me you are angry?)
- › 3 scale emotions (pictures of happy, frustrated, angry)
- › Any amount of time that seems extreme, probably is...and the time out will be ineffective or your student will forget why they are there.

Yelling, Screaming, Cussing

- › Teach 5 volumes of your voice (1-no talking, 2-whispering, 3-normal tone, 4 outside voice, 5-FIRE!) and when to use these.
- › Cussing – always effective to get your attention. Where did they learn this? Teach expected behavior & what's wrong with that.
- › These may be incidental behaviors, they still need to be addressed.
- › Model, then PRAISE when they are displaying expected behavior.
- › There is always a reason why students use these skills.

Too close, touching others, HUGGING

- › Teach expected behavior. (Elbows to fingertips)
- › We need to be mindful in our modeling.
- › What's wrong with hugging? Hugs are for home.
- › Circle of friends- practice, role play, be concrete and praise for correctness. How close can family be? How close can friends be? How close should strangers be?
- › How do we respond when close is too close?

Consider this...

- › BEHAVIOR/Communication is learned
- › What isn't learned is innate.
- › Acquired behavior/communication is cultural to your specific group

HOW do we determine the reason for the behavior?

- › Use an A-B-C- F plan
- › A = Antecedent - what happened just before the behavior?
- › B = Behavior – what IS the unexpected behavior?
- › C = Consequence – How do you respond to the behavior?
- › F = Function – What is your student getting from this display?

WHAT DO I DO WITH THIS INFORMATION?

- › Share it with your student.
- › Be honest.
- › Ask their opinion.
- › Ask if you're guess is right.
- › Make an agreement together.
- › Here's what's going to happen.
- › Do it.

BE CONSISTENT

- › Everyone in the family, on the team including the student needs to know the plan.
- › It's great if students know you have an alliance with the family.
- › Your student needs to TRUST you, they need to know that what you say is TRUE.
- › We are not in the business of setting kids up, tricking them (it doesn't build trust, only frustration) or tearing down their spirit.
- › Teach boundaries, not just set boundaries.
- › Take ownership, give ownership.

Use VISUALS

- › Use schedules so life is predictable.
- › Change is hard, start early.
- › TEACH that change sometimes happen, so what can we do instead, look at the up side and reschedule.
- › Mini-schedules inside a time frame, during an activity (Give choices to get buy in).

Set your student up for SUCCESS

- ▶ When you know they're not going to be happy about some impending opportunity, bring along a preferred activity.
- ▶ Alternate preferred activity with non-preferred activity.
- ▶ Take an active role in getting through a non-preferred activity by taking turns; I'll do one, you do one.
- ▶ Build learning tasks into reinforcement (nickel board to buy an end-of-the-day activity).

CHOICES of preferred activities

- ▶ ASK – "What are you working for today?" (this hour) and have visual representation of these (computer, IPAD, painting, books, cooking) preferably an activity the student can do independently...
- ▶ BUILD IT INTO THEIR SCHEDULE – "When you're done, you'll have time for...until the bell rings."

KEYS to Teaching EXPECTED BEHAVIOR

- ▶ It takes 21 days or 15-20 trials to change a routine or habit.
- ▶ Be consistent and patient.
- ▶ Students with Ds, require a minimum of 10 seconds per comment/request to process.
- ▶ Refrain from being too chatty, too many words makes it hard to process and hang on to the main idea.
- ▶ Your student is a member of the team, keep them informed, ask their opinion, "How's it going?" "Is this working for you?"
- ▶ Catch your student doing EXPECTED BEHAVIOR and compliment that, "I like that you waited your turn."

More KEYS

- ▶ Use reminders and redirection during incidental behavior, small episodes. EVERYTHING does not need to be addressed.
- ▶ Communicate with your team, family, helpers **OFTEN**.
- ▶ PLAY THE FOOL to get your students attention, accentuate, exaggerate.
- ▶ HAVE FUN! Teaching is fun, build it into your day.
- ▶ BE FIRM! It doesn't mean you're mean, just serious. TEACH this, especially if SAFETY is an issue.
- ▶ Tell your student what they CAN DO, rather than what they CAN'T DO. Keep it positive.

Now WHAT?

- ▶ Decide which unexpected behavior needs to have first priority?
- ▶ TEACH - "What you do, effects those around you."
- ▶ TEACH – "What can you do different?" Offer choices to get the same outcome.
- ▶ Recognize teachable moments throughout the students day.
- ▶ Check for understanding. During a great day, plan a conversation around the one thing you want to help change and plan it out; role play, practice expected behavior, and praise efforts.

Check for understanding

- ▶ Talk jar – situation strips to talk over
- ▶ What would you do if....?
- ▶ Take turns, only do a couple at a time, even over dinner so everyone can participate.
- ▶ A student may not answer a scenario because they: don't know, afraid to be wrong, can't retrieve the language so, give choices. Start with yes/no.

POSITIVE Supports

- › These are the things we do to help your student to be successful.
- › Give opportunities to make choices; and go with it. It's okay if the choice is not the right one. There is VALUE in letting a student experience this safely.
- › **Visual supports**- calendars, schedules, routines, color-coded, or checklists make it easier & fun!
- › **Spatial support** -organized materials, toys, books (organization is less frustrating)
- › **Organization** is big, but so hard. SO HELP WITH THAT, MODEL THAT, TEACH THAT.

More Supports

- › **Decreased distractions** visually and auditorily, turn things off when having a discussion
- › Provide opportunity daily for **movement**, gross motor, dance
- › Be aware of your students surroundings, your **sensory strength** may not be shared by others
- › Take notice when behavior occurs; is there a correlation to hunger or fatigue, **time of day**.
- › Check **your reaction** to behavior; react to the **cause** or you will increase the behavior

Last few KEYS

- › Offer **reinforcement** that means something to your student.
- › **Keep it positive.**
- › BE HONEST WITH YOUR STUDENT, "This makes me feel angry," "I'm really happy about your trying," "LOOK AT MY FACE!"
- › Switch up your strategies.
- › Catch your students doing expected behavior.
- › Practice during down times, away from the unexpected behavior.
- › Provide opportunities for recognition.

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