

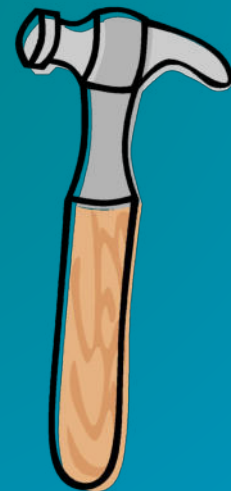
# Paraprofessionals: Tools of the Trade



Presented by: Gale Linson & Paula Sacca

"If the only tool you have  
is a hammer, every problem  
begins to look like a nail."

By: Abraham Maslow



# Differentiating Between Roles!!

## Teacher

- Plans lesson and activity and modifies for individual needs
- Administers all assessments
- Gives instruction for entire group, small groups and individuals
- Plans positive behavioral supports
- Meets and communicates with parents

## Para

- Implements plans under the direct supervision of the teacher
- May assist with scoring of objective items
- Reinforces teacher's lessons by instructing small groups and individuals
- Implements behavioral strategies as directed by the teacher
- Reports any pertinent information to the teacher that should be shared with parents

# The Role of a Paraprofessional

Providing services under the direction of a teacher or other licensed staff member:

- Provide instructional support
- Assist with positive behavioral support
- Work with individuals or small groups
- Supervise and monitor students in common areas outside of the classroom

# The Many Faces of Paras



Which one best describes you?

# The Space Cadet Para

- Truly lost in space with no clue as to what students need or how to provide support
- They move around classrooms as though ensconced in their personal space suits in isolation
- They make no mental contact with the duties and responsibilities of their jobs
- Rely upon classroom teachers for virtually all direction regarding activities and supports





# The Parrot Para

- Literally repeats everything the teacher says to the class



# The Know-It-All Para

- Either directly or indirectly let everyone know that they are the "keepers of all knowledge".
- Act as though they have no need for input from classroom teachers and other professionals.
- They feel they already know everything about student's disability.





# The Helicopter Para

- Hovers over students at all times and in all activities
- Selfless in their mission to be all things to the students in their charge
- Just as smother love turns mother love into a hindrance, the hovering support hinders rather than facilitates learning.
- Creates learned helplessness and prompt dependency in students with special needs.



# The Invisible Para

- These individuals are only too happy to do errands for the teacher and attend to matters outside of the needs of their students.
- May be found in corridors, school offices, and teachers' lounges in school systems throughout the country.



# The Fire Fighter Para

- These quick response Para's are primed to "put out the fire" as quickly as possible without a thought regarding the reinforcing effect their behavior may have on a student.
- Unfortunately, some students actually enjoy the attention of the Fire Fighter Para mobilized for battle.



# The Traffic Cop Para

- These Para's direct the flow of all interactions in much the same way that traffic cops direct automobiles and pedestrians on a busy street.
- Their fatal flaw in the exercise of their duties and responsibilities is that they are directive rather than facilitative.



# The Automatic Pilot Para

- These Paras perform their duties as though they have been programmed by some outside force over which they have no control.
- They are task-oriented rather than student-oriented.
- Their motto is to get the job done at all costs.
- They follow their own "flight plans" regardless of "ground" conditions.



# The Para Pro

- The true Para pro meshes the art and science of paraprofessional support into a seamless, holistic tapestry in which the whole is infinitely greater than the sum of its individual parts.
- They have an almost intuitive understanding of their students' needs, having amassed a good deal of knowledge about both the students themselves and the disabilities they manifest.





# The Bottom Line


Para Pros achieve the difficult-to-achieve delicate balance required to fulfill their ultimate responsibility---that of providing *preeminent support in the education care of their students*, a role which true Para Pros elevate to art form status



# Reflection

(#1)



A decorative vertical bar on the left side of the slide, featuring a dark blue background with a pattern of light blue puzzle pieces.

Problem behaviors are  
*not* the same as  
behavior problems

# Reasons for Misbehavior

- Students don't know what you expect
- Student doesn't know how to exhibit responsible behavior
- Student is unaware he is engaged in misbehavior
- Student is experiencing pleasant outcome for misbehavior
- Student is avoiding an unpleasant outcome with misbehavior

# Behavior Serves a Function



# Introduction

- All human behavior serves some purpose or "function".
- Sometimes the "function" is obvious, other times it is not.
- It can be difficult to understand how some inappropriate behaviors can serve a function:  
Ex: tantrums, talking out, wandering about the classroom, etc...



## Two Common Mistakes When Considering Problem Behavior:

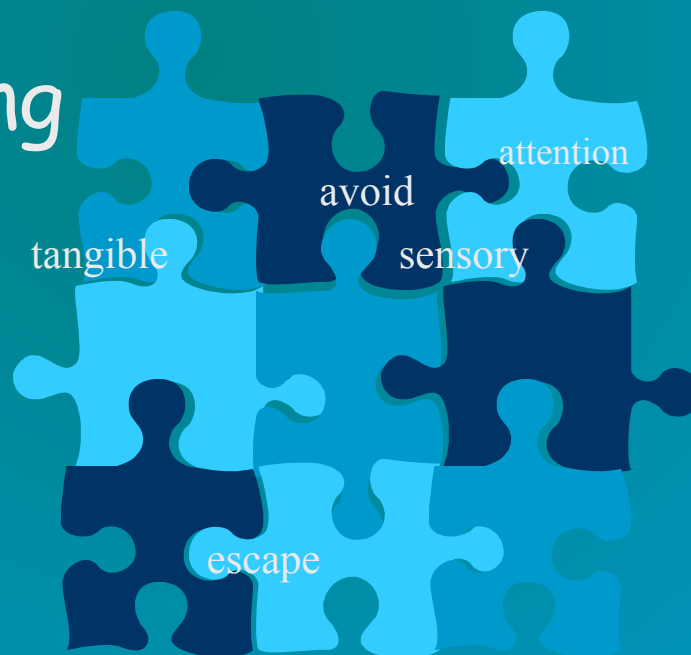
- 1) Attributing the inappropriate behavior to the student's disturbance or disability.  
(Examples may be shared.)
- 2) Attributing the inappropriate behavior to "willful and deliberate" decisions to engage in that behavior.  
(Examples may be shared.)

# Putting It Together...

Most human behavior, including challenging behavior, has one of two functions:

1) To Get Something

2) To Escape or Avoid Something



# Positive Reinforcement Functions

- This is the easiest function to understand:
- The student does something because there is a "payoff". A "payoff" can be classified as:

Attention

Tangible Reinforcement

Sensory Consequences

# Attention

Social reinforcement is one of the most powerful consequences available to students and includes attention in almost any form.



# Attention, cont.

Students come with their own "fuel tank" for attention and are willing to fill it with whatever form of attention is obtainable, whether it be positive and pleasant in nature OR negative and in the form of reprimands or nagging.



# Attention, cont.

- Attention from adults is quite different than attention from peers.
- The attention one provides to oneself (personal thoughts, self praise) can also serve as positive reinforcement.





# Tangible Reinforcement

- Tangible reinforcement serves as a function when problematic behavior results in getting access to something that can be “touched” (food, money, toys) or “activities” (watching TV, computer, hanging out with friends).
- Examples: Child tantrums in cookie aisle; Student cheats in school; Theft

# Sensory Consequence

- The sensory feedback gained by one's behavior is positively reinforcing.



# Sensory Consequence

- Stereotypic behavior (rocking or making noises) provides self stimulation.



# Sensory Consequence

- Self injurious behavior provides reinforcing sensory feedback.



# Sensory Consequence

- Sensory consequences are most often sought out by students with severe developmental disabilities.



# Sensory Consequence

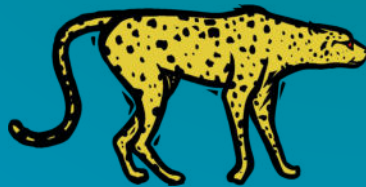
- Bodily movements during a scuffle or heated argument may produce an “adrenaline rush” for students with mild or no disabilities. This may provide sensory reinforcement.





# Escape and Avoidance Functions

- A considerable amount of challenging behavior in schools is sustained by escape and avoidance.
- Escape and avoidance may occur in response to academic and task demands, other people, compliance problems, physical states, and interpersonal interactions.



# Academic and Task Demands

- Students misbehave to escape or avoid classroom situations because they are unable to meet the demands of classroom tasks.
- When students work to escape or avoid there is typically a poor fit between student's achievement level and task demand.



# Other People



- Students may engage in problematic behavior in an effort to escape or avoid other people around them.
- The people could be peers or adults.
- Student may have the perception that dealing with others is aversive (dislike physical contact, find social experiences debilitating).

# Other People, cont.



- Students engage in problematic behavior only to escape certain people with whom they are unable to cope.
- When students misbehave to escape or avoid certain adults, it is usually related to a history of disciplinary interactions between the student and the adult.
- Adults frequently consider them "noncompliant" or "oppositional".

# Other People, cont.

- Students have learned that their behavior will result in being removed from an unpleasant interaction with the adult.
- The student is "rewarded" by being separated from the adult.
- The student perceives that complying with the adult's requests means more time interacting with the person.



# Other People, cont.



- Students who work to escape other students may find a peer annoying.
- Students may display problematic behavior to get away from peer pressure, teasing, verbal put-downs, accusations, and criticism.
- Aversive peer interaction can occur in class, during social situations, or transition between classes.



# Aversive Physical Sensations and Personal States

- Some problematic behaviors serve a function of helping a student escape or avoid unpleasant physical states.
- External- a part of the environment. (room might be too crowded, too noisy, or too hot)
- Internal- a part of the student. (student might become tired, bored, angry or scared; may be experiencing discomfort).



# Aversive Physical Sensations, cont.

- Some behaviors occur because they make the student feel good by providing a pleasing sensation or prompting thoughts that make one feel good.
- Problematic behavior can be motivated by escaping or avoiding unpleasant physical sensations or thoughts that provoke uncomfortable personal states.



# Aversive Physical Sensations

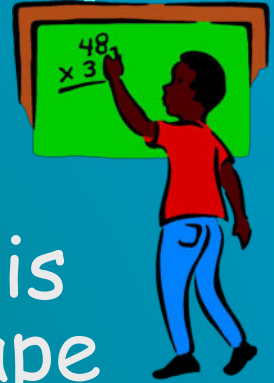
- Examples include: heat, fatigue, illness, restlessness, boredom, and pain.
- Classic example: Adult behavior motivated by escape from pain is taking aspirin.
- Children may attempt to escape pain or discomfort by whining or crying.
- Behavior motivated by escape from boredom includes skipping class, daydreaming, or off-task behavior.

# Aversive Physical Sensations, cont.

- Examples of escape from restlessness include getting out of one's seat, moving around without permission, or excessive talking.
- Students with severe handicaps and communication difficulties may exhibit self-injurious behavior to relieve physical discomfort.



# Unique Problem of Escape and Avoidance



- When educators recognize that it is inappropriate to let a student escape a situation or demand by displaying problematic behavior, the behavior often gets worse before it gets better.
- In an attempt to gain the reinforcer, the behavior escalates.
- It's important not to give in to an escalation of oppositional behavior.



# Unique Problem, cont.



- If the educator gives in, then the student has learned to display the problem behavior at an even higher level than before.
- Not only was the educator's attempt to change the behavior ineffective, the student has actually become more adept at using it.



# Review



- It is important to understand that problem behavior is not merely the result of a student's disability or a student's deliberate decision to behave badly.
- Problem behavior is an inappropriate way of getting the same things other students get in more appropriate ways.

# Review, cont.



- The goal of functional assessment is to identify the function (or purpose) served by a student's problematic behavior and to design an intervention that allows the student to get the same thing, but in an appropriate way.
- Determining the function of a behavior is integral in designing a successful intervention.

# Reflection

(#4)



# Discipline Strategies That Work

If at all possible,  
ignore a minor behavior

(participants will generate a list of  
examples)



# Discipline Strategies That Work

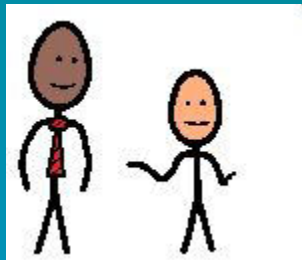
Use signal interference to stop behavior  
(participants will generate a list of examples)



# Discipline Strategies That Work

Use proximity control (stand near child with behavior problem)

(participants will generate a list of activities when proximity control may be necessary/effective)





# Discipline Strategies That Work

Circulate around the classroom constantly



# Discipline Strategies That Work

Use behavior shaping (reinforce successive approximations to a specified behavior)

Example: You want Harold to remain in his seat for 20 minutes. Begin your reinforcement schedule as follows: Praise Harold verbally for remaining in his seat for 3 minutes until he consistently establishes this behavior for a 3 minute period of time. Then, begin reinforcing in-seat behavior lasting 5 minutes, 10 minutes, and finally 20 minutes.

(Participants will list behaviors that would be appropriately addressed with this strategy)

# Discipline Strategies That Work

Use a self monitoring system (a chart or graph) and show child how to keep track of his or her own behavior. Shift the responsibility to the child.



# Discipline Strategies That Work

To increase work completed, have the child compete with a timer, not other students.



# Discipline Strategies That Work

Avoid confrontations. State what you want the child to do instead of telling him what not to do.

(Participants will do table activity)



# Discipline Strategies That Work

Adjust goals for students who do not finish in time. Gradually increase goals.

(participants will give examples of accommodations)





# Reflection

(#7)



# Discipline Strategies That Work

Reprimand a child privately. Praise publicly.



# Discipline Strategies That Work

Avoid challenges---if you dare a child to misbehave he may take you up on it!



# Discipline Strategies That Work

If you use punishment, try to reinforce acceptable behavior immediately after it occurs.

**REMEMBER:** Punishment decreases behavior but does not replace that behavior with an appropriate one. Reinforcement increases behavior. Help the child acquire a new behavior to take the place of inappropriate behavior.



# Discipline Strategies That Work

Rule of thumb:

For every negative interaction that you have with a student, you owe him three to five positive interactions.

(participants will think of # of negative interactions with one target student)



# Discipline Strategies That Work

## The Transfer Technique:

Find the parent employment in another state.  
The entire family relocates and you have eliminated the problem behavior.





Questions, comments,  
concerns...

