

# Understanding Scary Behavior



Presented By:

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All Behavior is a Form of

# Communication





There is never a behavior that just occurs for “no reason” ...

We just need to figure out what the reason is.



What are some behaviors of concern that you have found to be scary?

# Common Behaviors of Concern for Children with Disabilities

- Non-Compliance: not following directions, falling to the floor or ground
- Wandering/running from adults: “elopement”
- Screaming, loud noises, crying
- Climbing on furniture
- Property destruction (throwing/breaking items)
- Aggression (spitting, kicking, hitting)
- Self-Injury
- Other????

What we sometimes see as  
a failure to **BEHAVE**  
properly,

is actually a failure to

**COMMUNICATE**  
properly.

# Medical Considerations



## Epilepsy

\*25-40% of children with ASD develop seizures

\*Puberty/hormones (Catamenia Epilepsy)

## Sleep Disorders

\*2/3 of children with ASD have a history of sleep difficulty (Dominic et al.)

\*levels of melatonin

\*↑sensitivity to outside stimuli

## Diet/GI Symptoms

\*Selectivity/eating rituals

\*Gastrointestinal Symptoms

\*Constipation/Diarrhea

\*Food Allergies/Special Diets (GFCF, Yeast, Oxyalate, etc .)

## Use of Medications and Their Side Effects

\*Stimulants

\*Antipsychotics

\*Anti-Depressants

\*SSRI's

\*Neuroleptics

\*Natural Supplements and Vitamins

## Underlying Characteristics/ Medical Concerns

\*Anxiety

\*Depression

\*Hyperactivity/ ↓attention

\*PICA

\*Sensory Integration Dysfunction



Bottom line- many of our children are in pain don't feel well



# Psychological Considerations

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- Anxiety
- Depression
- Change in routine
- Challenges in the home
- Too much screen time
- Unfamiliar people and setting
- Masks- (difficulty recognizing people, facial expressions, and hearing voices)
- Social distancing and other protocols



# Sensory Considerations

- Unusual responses to sensory stimuli.
- Hyper (over) or hypo (under) sensitive to one or more senses.



## Affected Senses Include:

**Auditory (Hearing)**

**Tactile (Touch)**

**Vestibular (Balance)**

**Proprioceptive (Gross motor)**

**Olfactory (Smell)**

**Visual (Seeing)**

**Gustatory (Taste)**

# If above considerations are ruled out, what is the purpose of the behavior?



Attention-Seeking



Gain Access to a Tangible Item or Activity



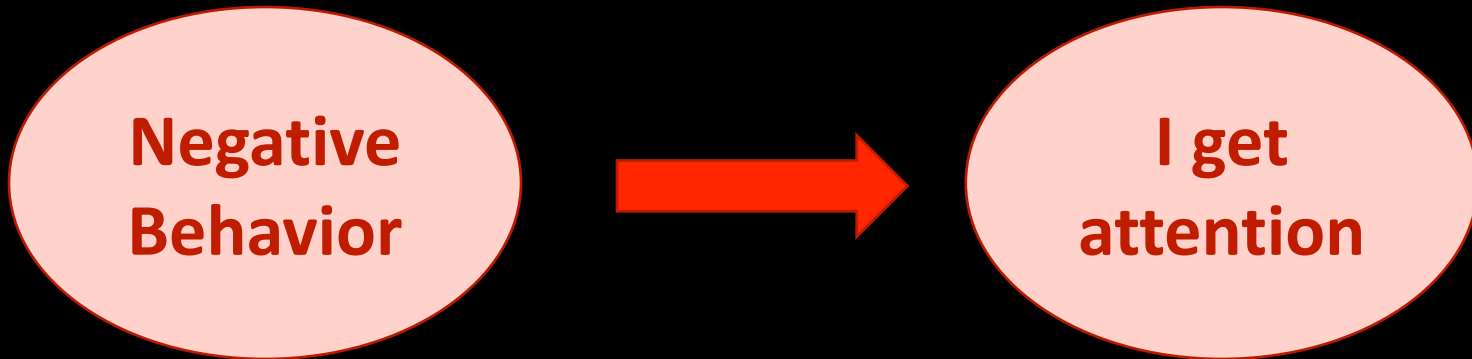
Escape or Avoid something



Sensory (Self-Satisfying)

*Behavior is a Form of Communication*

# Attention-Seeking Behaviors



## Possible Indicators

- Words, eye contact, body language immediately follows the behavior.
- Looks at or approaches before engaging in the behavior.
- Smiles just before or after engaging in the behavior.

# Examples of Attention-Seeking Behavior



Boy and dog



# Attention-Seeking Behaviors: What NOT To Do

- Shriek, make a disgusted face, say “ew”
- Make a big deal out of it
- Stare, point, show other staff
- Talk to the child
- Console them/ hug them
- Yell at the child or threaten them with punishment
- Complain about the behavior out loud
- Give attention



Attention

# Attention-Seeking Behaviors: What TO Do

- **Catch them being good: reward all expected behaviors**
- **Provide positive attention before the behavior may occur**
- **Use planned ignoring for low-intensity behaviors**
- **Teach an alternative behavior they can use instead to get your attention (say hi with a wave)**



## Attention Seeking Behaviors: When should I use planned ignoring?



- When a behavior is insignificant, and the priority is focusing on other behaviors of concern.
- Examples:
  - Burping/farting
  - Self-stimming behaviors
  - Non-compliance
  - Silly faces
  - Others?



# Behavior To Gain Access to Item or Activity

**Negative  
Behavior**



**I get  
something**

## Possible Indicators

- The behavior ends when given an item or activity.
- The behavior occurs after it is clear that they cannot have the item they want.
- Behavior occurs when the item is not presented.

# Gaining Access Examples

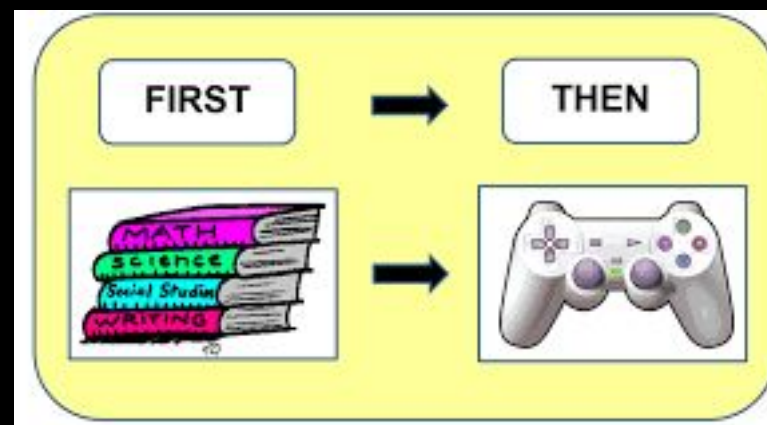


grocery store

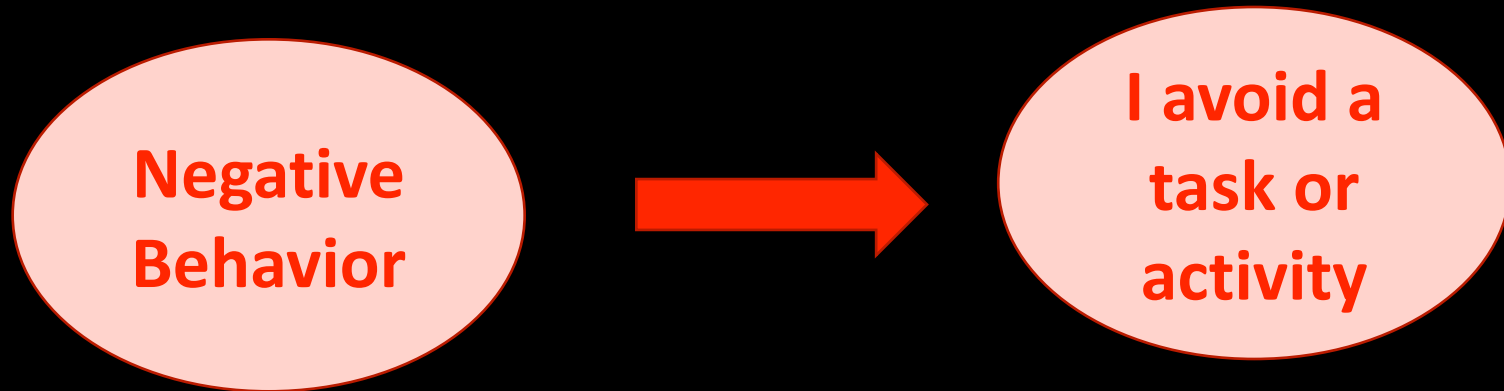


# What To Do for Behaviors of Concern to Gain Access

- Use visual schedule to let them know when they can have item
- Use “First, Then” visual and language
- Use a visual timer
- Teach an expected way to ask for item



# Escape or Avoidance



## Possible Indicators

- The behavior occurs when a task is presented.
- The individual engages in the behavior when a new activity begins.
- The behavior ends when the student is allowed to leave the activity.

# Escape or Avoidance Behavior Examples



# Escape or Avoidance Behaviors:

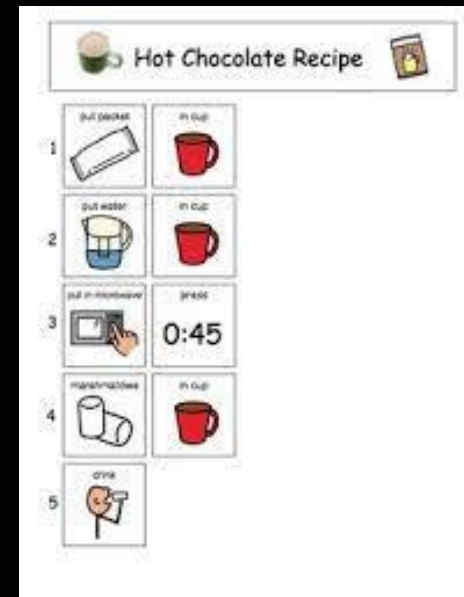
## Suggested Interventions BEFORE the problem starts

- Make sure your directions are clear and concise (use visuals)

- Reduce the number of demands or duration

- Use fewer words

- Use a reward system and remind your student of it before presenting a challenging activity



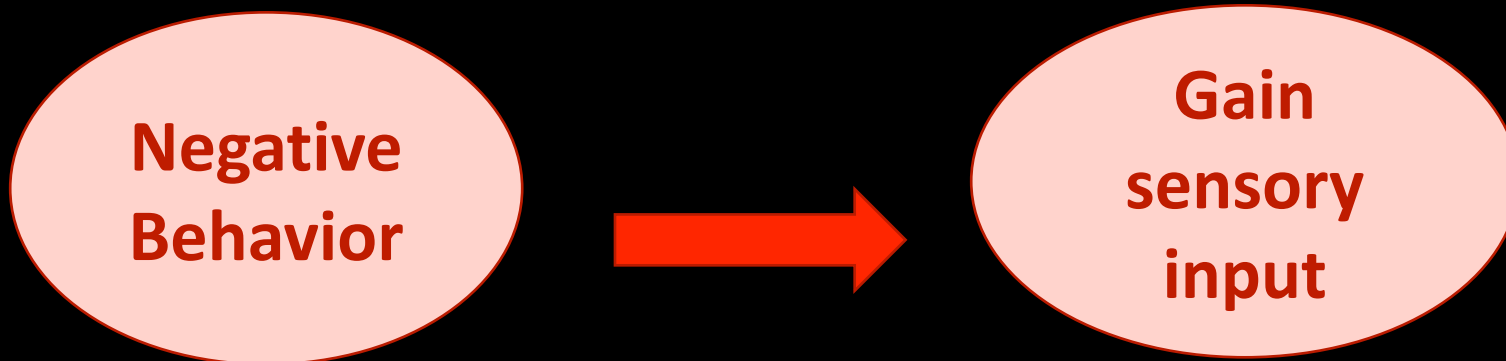
# Escape or Avoidance Behaviors:

Suggested Interventions AFTER the problem starts

- **Maintain a calm tone of voice and demeanor**
- **Remind the child of what they need to do first and what they are working for.**
- **Do not allow escape or avoidance from the activity**
- **Once the task is done praise and reward your student for completing the task**



# Sensory/Self-Satisfying



## Possible Indicators

- The behavior occurs even when other people are not present.
- The behavior appears to provide sensory input (ex. mouthing objects, banging tables, hands in ears, rolling on the floor, running around the room).
- The individual appears to be enjoying the behavior



# Sensory Seeking or Avoiding Behavior Examples

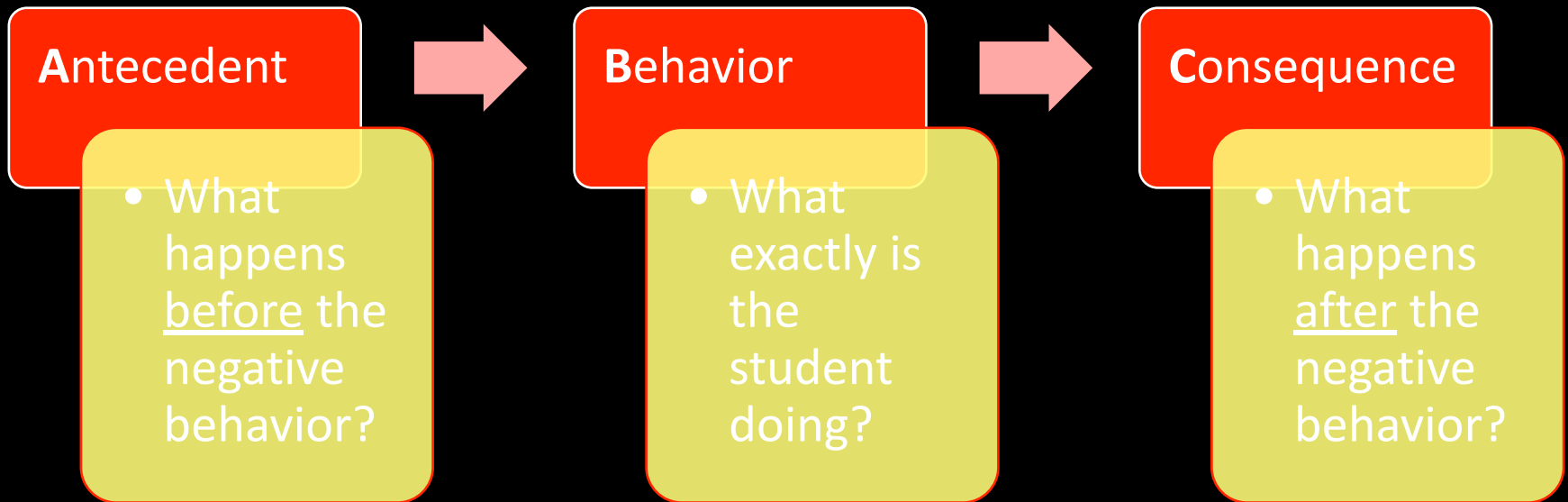


Sensory overload example

***Sensory/Self  
-Satisfying  
Behaviors  
Suggested  
Tools***



# The ABCs of Behavior



# Sensory Help When a Child is Upset

- Quiet voices or no talking
- Give child personal space
- Turn lights down
- Offer preferred sensory tools
- Sometimes students like soft music, so play it



# If a Child is in Crisis



- Stop talking or use few words and calm, quiet voice
- Remember that the immediate goal is de-escalation
- Offer visuals
- Give plenty of personal space
- Sensory supports (turn down lights, aromatherapy, fidgets, weighted blanket, etc.)

# **What Types of Behaviors**

**Do We WANT to See  
in Our Children ??**

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# How We Help Our Children Achieve Expected Behaviors

- Reinforce expected behaviors: Reinforcement has to be something that the individual child likes
- Food reinforcers are ok!
- Provide structured break activities
- Use visual supports
- Consistency with communication system
- Ignore unexpected behaviors

# Resources

<http://www.autismspeaks.org/family-services/tool-kits/challenging-behaviors>

<http://www.autism-community.com/communication/communication-and-behavior/>

<http://www.crisisprevention.com/>

<http://www.ttaonline.org>

<http://www.youtube.com> - ButterflyEffect's Channel

<http://vimeo.com/channels/287691> - Autism Intervention Training, Univ. of New Brunswick

Aspergers Syndrome and Difficult Moments: Practical Solutions for Tantrums, Rage and Meltdowns, Written by Brenda Smith Myles and Jack Southwick

No More Meltdowns: Positive Strategies for Managing and Preventing Out-Of-Control Behavior, Written by Jed Baker

Addressing the Challenging Behavior of Children with High-Functioning Autism/Asperger Syndrome in the Classroom: A Guide for Teachers and Parents , Written by Rebecca A. Moyes

Tools for Parents, A handbook to Bring Sensory Integration into the Home, Written by Diana Henry and Tammy Wheeler

The Out of Sync Child Has Fun, Activities for Kids with Sensory Integration Dysfunction, Written by Carol Stock Kranowitz