



Understanding Challenging Behavior: The Path to Behavior Support

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National Center for
**Pyramid Model
INNOVATIONS**
ChallengingBehavior.org

Welcome, Introductions, Agenda

- Glen Dunlap, Ph.D.
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Agenda/Objectives:

- Define Challenging Behavior
- Understanding Challenging Behavior
- Implications for Prevention and Intervention



Defining Challenging Behavior

Definition: any **repeated** pattern of behavior that **interferes** with learning or engagement in prosocial interactions with peers and adults

Behaviors that are not responsive to the use of developmentally appropriate guidance procedures

Examples: prolonged tantrums, physical and verbal aggression, disruptive vocal and motor behavior (e.g. screaming, stereotypy), property destruction, self-injury, noncompliance, elopement (aka running away), and withdrawal



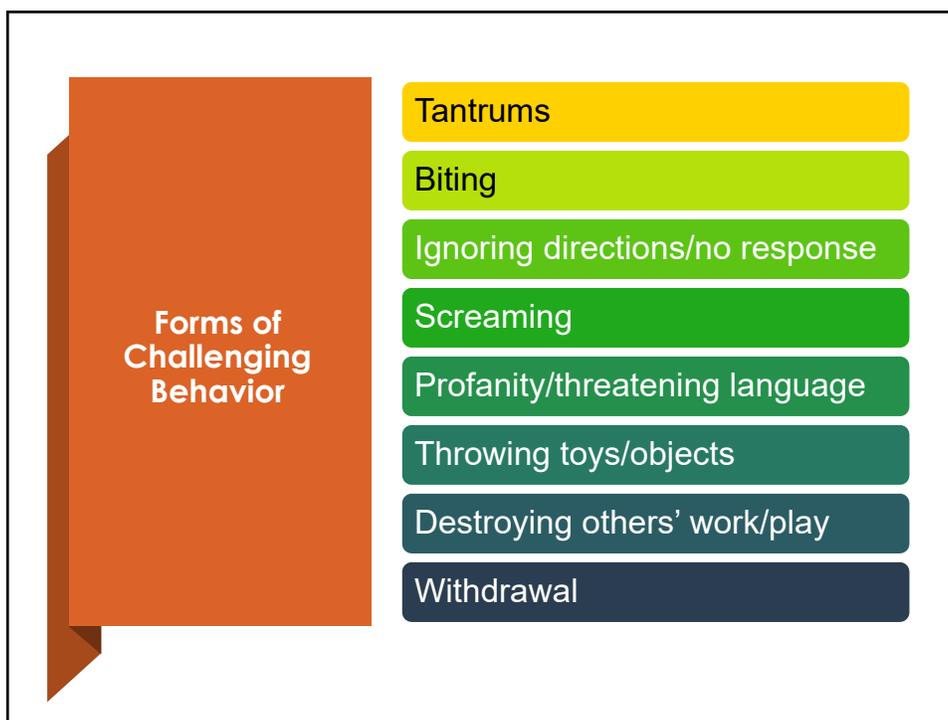
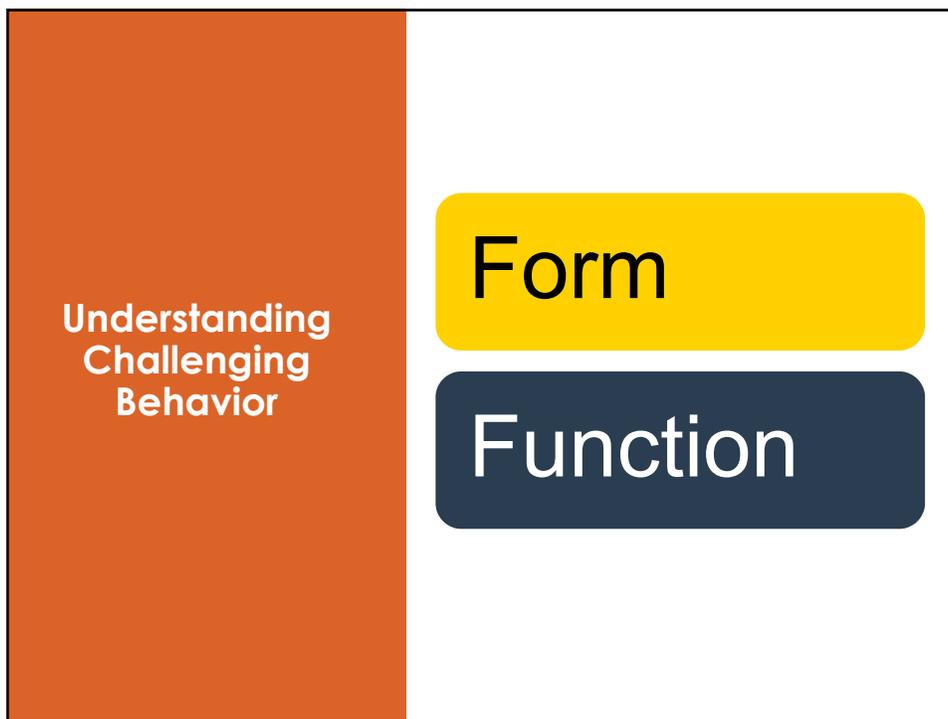
Examples

Jordan will scream/yell, cry, scratch/hit anyone who is near her, and sometimes throws toys that are within reach

(AKA “tantrum”)

Hector may climb on/to furniture, run away/hide from adults, does not respond to teacher directions, may disrupt/destroy peers’ work/play, and may laugh/smile while this is happening

(AKA “being disruptive”)



Communicative Functions of Challenging Behavior

To get something
(obtain)

To get rid of something
(avoid, escape)

Communicative Function?

- Most challenging behaviors serve the same purpose as other forms of communication
 - E.g. speech, nonverbal gestures, facial expressions
 - Challenging behaviors may function the same as requests or demands
- Challenging behaviors are often used because they work to act on the **social** environment similarly to other forms of communication
 - Although communicative, challenging behavior is not necessarily a conscious or deliberate act
 - The form of the behavior does not necessarily equal the specific communicative intent
 - Challenging behavior may be the same in different situations, but the communicative purpose might differ
 - Not everyone agrees on what is challenging

To Get Something (Obtain)

Attention: social
interaction, help,
assistance

Tangible: toy, object,
access to an activity

Sensory Need:
movement/large motor,
physical affection/hugs,
music/sounds

To Get Rid of Something (Avoid, Escape)

Attention: certain
person,
directions/instructions

Tangible: activity,
transition, food/snacks

Sensory Need: too
loud/chaotic, physical
affection/touch,
textures/fabrics

Practical Strategy for Identifying Function

- We want to determine the function or reason why that challenging behavior occurs, but how?
- Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA)



What Do We Want to Know (Understand): Determining Function

Under what circumstances?
- What are the predictors?

What follows challenging behavior (consequences)?

What is the communicative function?



How to Determine Function

Observation

Direct observation of what is happening when challenging behavior occurs and what happens after

Interviews or Questionnaires

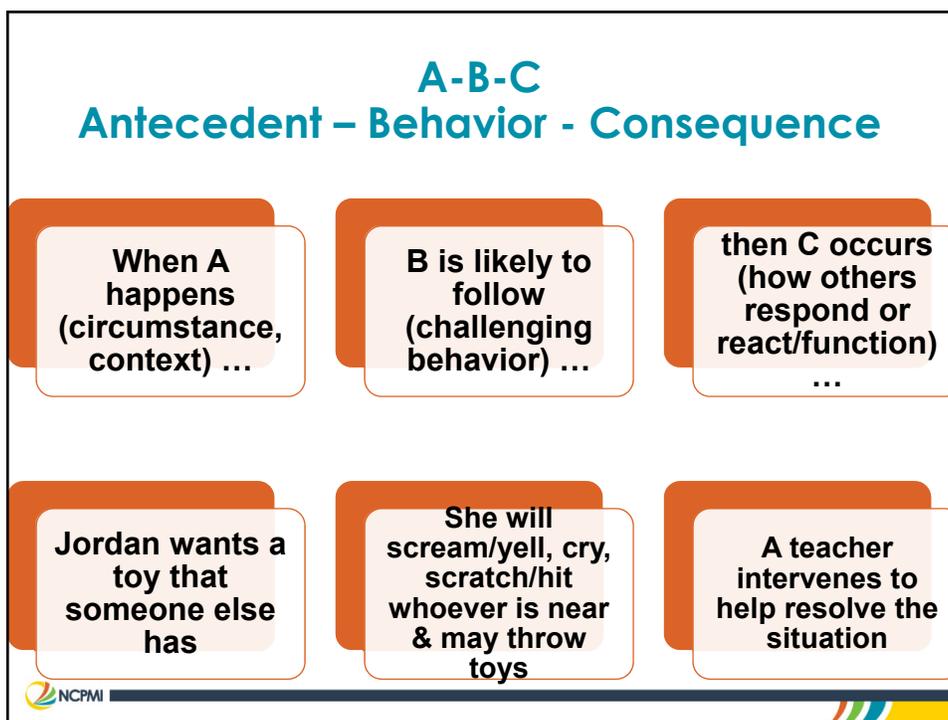
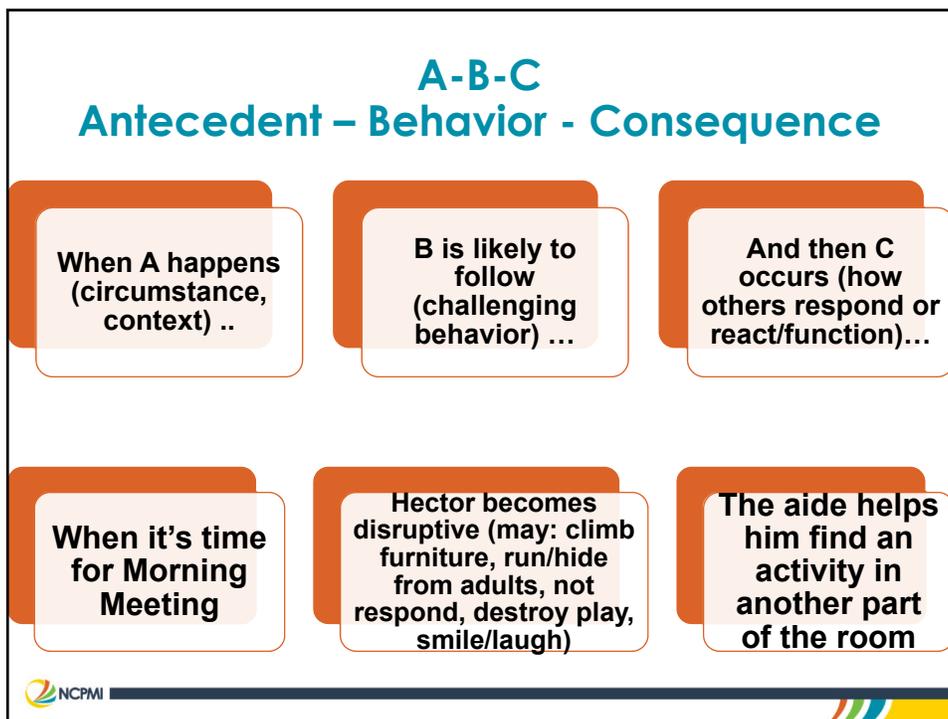
Get information from those who know the child well and have seen the child's challenging behavior in relevant contexts



Use Information/Data to Develop a Hypothesis Statement

- Summarizes our understanding of the challenging behavior from the child's perspective
- When challenging behavior occurs (under what circumstances or contexts?)
- Why challenging behaviors continue to occur (what is the child communicating?)





Implications for Prevention

- If we can predict when challenging behaviors occur (under what circumstances) ...
- We **should** be able to do something to prevent it!
- We can implement a strategy or two that prevents the challenging behavior from occurring
- Example: Hector becomes disruptive during Morning Meeting – the teacher can include Hector as the Meeting helper (a job he enjoys) to increase his engagement and participation and prevent Hector's disruptive behavior



Implications for Intervention

- If we understand why (function) challenging behaviors occur ...
- We **should** be able to identify what to teach the child to do instead of challenging behavior
- We **should** be able to identify different ways to respond to the child's behavior, both appropriate and challenging
- Example: Jordan tantrums when she wants a toy someone else has – the teacher can embed multiple learning opportunities a day for appropriately asking a peer for an item/object



Summary

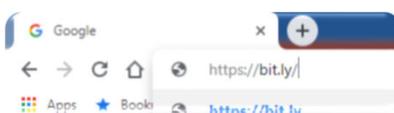
- Define/describe the child's challenging behavior
- Collect data and gather information – WHEN is it happening? Under WHAT circumstances?
- Understand that challenging behavior serves a function/purpose – WHY is it happening? How do others RESPOND?
- Based on the data and relevant information, determine the function and develop a hypothesis statement
- *Next steps: identify an appropriate behavior/skill to teach, when to teach, how to teach, and how others respond.

Questions



Survey and Certificate

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The National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations

The goal of the National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations (NCPMI) is to build states and programs in their implementation of sustainable systems for the implementation of the Pyramid Model for Supporting Social & Emotional Competencies in Schools and Young Children (Pyramid Model) across early care and school education programs with a focus on promoting the social, emotional, and behavioral outcomes of young children with the aim of ensuring the use of programmatic practices, promoting family engagement, and teacher decision-making, integrating early childhood and infant mental health consultation and coaching practices.



Thank You! Questions?

The contents of this presentation were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, #H326B170003. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the U.S. Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government. Project officer, Sunyoung Ahn.

