

## SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Understand why behavior occurs
- Change routines and settings to prevent problem behavior
- Teach new skills
- Change how you respond to behavior



## LEARN MORE ABOUT PREVENTING PROBLEM BEHAVIORS

### ★ Andy's Story

Andy is a seven-year-old boy who loves to play sports games with his friends and read comics. He has a five-year-old sister and a ten-year-old brother. Andy admires his older brother, and often tries to act like him. At school, Andy has difficulty completing math problems and maintaining his focus during independent seatwork. At home it is always difficult to ask Andy to sit down and complete his

homework. Andy is easily distracted by what is going on around him and often



"Having Andy do his homework has been so frustrating that I also want to avoid it!"

-Andy's mom

becomes frustrated with his homework. When Andy's brother sees him struggling, he often teases him by calling him "stupid." As Andy's frustration increases, he cries, kicks the wall, and tears up his assignments. Sometimes he takes his anger out on his sister and hits her with his fists. To learn more about how Andy's family dealt with the homework routine, look for this symbol in the newsletter. ★

## PREVENT PROBLEM BEHAVIOR

### What is Positive Behavior Support?

Positive behavior support (PBS) includes strategies for preventing problem behavior by changing routines and by teaching new social and communication skills. The goal of PBS is to improve quality of life, not only for the child, but for all the individuals within a child's social network.

### Who Benefits from Positive Behavior Support?

PBS is used in a variety of situations and contexts, with different types of problem behavior, such as aggression, property destruction, and self-injury. Both, children with and without disabilities, can benefit from PBS across home, school, and community settings.

### What is a Functional Behavioral Assessment?

A functional behavioral assessment (FBA) is a process by which information about why a child engages in problem behavior, is gathered. The primary objective is to determine situations and settings that trigger and maintain problem behavior, as well as socially appropriate behavior. This information is then used to create an effective positive behavior support plan.

## UNDERSTAND WHY BEHAVIOR OCCURS

Children engage in behavior because it is functional for them. Engaging in a behavior helps a child obtain something desirable or escape something undesirable. In some situations, a child may engage in problem behavior to gain access to certain people, items, toys, activities, or pleasant internal sensations. In other circumstances, a child may seek to avoid or escape these same things, if they are unpleasant to him/her. To understand why a child engages in a particular problem behavior (i.e. the function of the behavior), it is important to understand what triggers the behavior, what the behavior

looks like, and what happens immediately following a problem behavior.

### ★ Andy's Story

Andy's parents scheduled a team meeting with Andy, his grandmother, his teacher, and his boy scout leader to begin assessing the function of Andy's problem behavior at home. The team made a list of the settings and routines, and scheduled times to observe Andy's homework routine. Andy's parents began observing carefully what happened immediately **BEFORE** the problem behavior, what behaviors occurred **DURING** difficult routines, and what happened right **AFTER** Andy engaged

in problem behavior. They learned that Andy engaged in problem behavior whenever he was given a large number of difficult math problems. Less intense problem behaviors (crying, kicking the wall) occurred first, and escalated into tearing up his assignment and hitting his sister. Andy's parents also noticed that whenever he tore up his assignment and kicked his sister, they would send him to his room. They realized that this was reinforcing Andy's problem behavior, as he not only was able to escape from his homework, but also once in his room, he would engage in fun activities, such as reading comics.

## CHANGE ROUTINES AND SETTINGS TO PREVENT PROBLEM BEHAVIOR

The way routines and settings are presented to a child can increase or decrease the likelihood of problem behavior. Common family routines include getting ready for school, completing homework, doing chores, going out in the community, and getting ready for bed. Children are less likely to engage in problem behavior when their routines occur on a *predictable schedule* and when there are *clear expectations* about how they should behave. One way to prevent problem behavior during routines is to *make changes in the physical setting*. For example, a child is likely to be distracted from his homework assignment if he is sitting next to a window, the television set is on, or other children are playing

nearby. A solution to this situation would be to alter the physical setting during homework time so that the child is not easily distracted, (for instance, close the kitchen curtains or create a quiet place for homework).

### ★ Andy's Story

Andy usually completed his homework at random times of the day and in different places within his home. Andy's parents thought that it would be helpful to establish predictable times for Andy's homework routine. They scheduled a family meeting to decide when and how to implement an after-school routine for all the children. The children chose a thirty minute period after school to do whatever they

wanted. Then, from 4:30-5:30 PM, all of the children work on their homework. Andy's mother hired a teenager to take care of Andy's sister during this time, so that she would be able to concentrate on helping the boys with their homework. Andy now works at the kitchen table facing away from the windows so as to not be distracted, and Andy's older brother works at a desk in his bedroom. In addition, Andy's teacher agreed to make some changes to Andy's homework assignment so that Andy receives a mixture of easy and difficult math problems. By modifying the homework, Andy can experience a higher level of success while still working on the harder math problems.

## USEFUL WEBSITE LINKS: KIPBS ONLINE LIBRARY

The KIPBS Online Library includes three major sections:

**Introduction to PBS** - This section includes basic information about PBS.

**Community Library** – This section provides information from a variety of perspectives to assist members of a PBS team.

**KIPBS Library** – This section provides more detailed information about PBS for anyone interested in learning how to facilitate PBS plans.

Visit the new KIPBS Online Library at <http://www.kipbs.org/Library/>

## TEACH NEW SKILLS

An important strategy for preventing problem behavior involves teaching a child appropriate ways to communicate what he/she wants or needs. For instance, over time, a child may learn that if she cries and screams when she cannot reach a wanted toy, that an adult will help her by handing it to her. A strategy to prevent crying and screaming to obtain toys could involve prompting the child to ask for help. This new communication skill (asking for help), is intended to replace the problem behavior (crying and screaming). A child is more likely to learn a new communication skill if this skill is easier to perform and achieves the same outcome as the problem behavior. This may mean more work on your

part. At first, you may need to anticipate what your child wants to communicate and prompt him/her to use the appropriate communication response. It is also very important to praise the child for appropriate communication and honor requests as much as possible, to establish the new communication skill.

### **Andy's Story**

Andy's team decided that one way to prevent problem behavior would be to teach Andy to ask his mother for help on difficult math problems. At the beginning of the homework routine, Andy's mother reminds him to ask for help when he experiences difficulties with a math problem. In addition, Andy's mother watches for any initial signs of

frustrations (ex. frowning, beginning to cry), so that she can prompt him to ask for assistance. At any point in time when Andy asks for assistance, Andy's mother makes sure to listen and try to help right away. Another strategy that Andy's parents introduced was to teach Andy to break his large homework assignment down into smaller pieces to make the activity less overwhelming. Andy was taught to write down the different assignment sections on a separate paper and physically cut this page up into puzzle pieces. Andy then completes one piece at a time, putting the puzzle back together. After each puzzle piece completed, Andy reinforces himself by taking a small break.

## CHANGE HOW YOU RESPOND TO PROBLEM BEHAVIOR

PBS plans include strategies for responding to both appropriate and problematic behavior. The way in which you respond to a child's attempt to communicate will either increase or decrease the likelihood he or she will use this skill again in the future. For example, if you are busy when your child asks for help and you say "I'll help you in a minute", the child may engage in problem behavior to try to get your attention and assistance right away. If a child continues to engage in problem behavior after you have taught a new skill, it is important to determine if the new communication skill is really more efficient

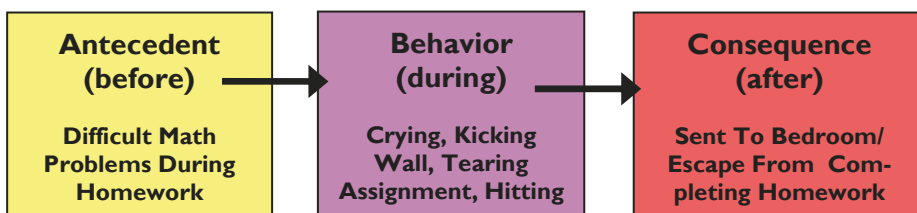
and effective than the problem behavior, at obtaining what the child wants. Although it is not always possible to prevent problem behavior, it is important to decrease the likelihood that the problem behavior results in what the child wants, needs, or likes, in order to decrease its effectiveness, and this, in turn, will decrease future occurrences.

### **Andy's Story**

Andy's parents decided it was important not to send Andy to his room after he engaged in problem behavior because this was allowing him to escape his homework. In order to avoid sending

Andy to his room for hitting his sister, they made sure that his sister was not in the same room when Andy worked on his homework. Andy's parents also made extra copies of the assignment, in case Andy ripped it up. If Andy destroyed his homework paper, his mother would quietly place another copy on the table when he appeared calm. Andy could leave homework time early if he finished his assignment, but he had to finish all his work before other activities were made available to him. Once Andy completed the entire homework assignment, he could choose from a number of activities he really enjoyed.

### To Understand Why Behavior Occurs: Look for the ABCs of Behavior



- A is for Antecedent**  
Observe events that occur immediately before the problem behavior, that may trigger it.
- B is for Behavior**  
Describe the behavior clearly.
- C is for Consequence**  
Record what occurs following a problem behavior.



Kansas Institute for  
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## What is KIPBS?

The Kansas Institute for Positive Behavior Support (KIPBS) at the University of Kansas was established in collaboration with the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services (SRS) to create statewide training in PBS.

## KIPBS Mission

One mission of KIPBS is to provide easy access to information for families, case managers, and other professionals about PBS. To learn more about PBS, go to our website: <http://www.kipbs.org>

## Become a Member of the International Association for PBS (APBS)

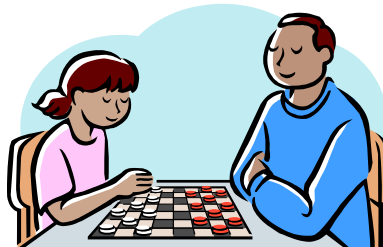
Learn more about how to prevent problem behavior and meet family members who are using PBS at the next APBS international conference. For more information go to: <http://www.apbs.org>



## HELPFUL HINT - MAKING A GAME OUT OF HOMEWORK

Any homework assignment can be turned into a game – all you need is a little creativity. Many commercial games can be modified to include homework activities. For instance, a board game may require the toss of dice to obtain a number for moving forward to win the game. Instead of tossing a pair of dice, ask your child to answer one homework question. Establish ahead of time how many moves the child can make for a correct and partially correct answer. If the question is incorrect, allow the child to advance forward only one spot. This allows the child to participate even

when he or she has not answered correctly so that correct answers are not a requirement to participate. All children can join the fun



**Any homework assignment can be turned into a game - it just requires a little creativity.**

and use questions from their own homework, making the game a learning experience that meets everyone's needs. Adults can be involved in the game and actively participate with the children. Before starting the game, ask the children who will be playing to create questions from previous homework assignments, computer games, television shows, or sports events. When it is the parent's turn to move forward, the child can ask the questions and decide whether the answer is correct.

## RECOMMENDED READING

**Functional Assessment: Strategies to Prevent and Remediate Challenging Behavior in School Settings** by Lynette K. Chandler & Carol M. Dahlquist Published by Merrill Prentice Hall (2005)

This book provides an introduction to functional behavioral assessment including strategies and tools for completing the process. Tips for identifying specific intervention strategies that are matched to the function maintaining the problem behavior are described. Although this book is intended to assist professionals in school settings, it is useful for family members as well.

