

2022 World TSC Conference

Behavioral Treatments for Challenging Behavior

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Behavioral Approaches to Challenging Behavior

- There is a long history of behavioral interventions for problem behavior
- Historically, these have shown the potential for success, but inconsistently

Vignette: Tim

- Tim doesn't have much functional communication
- Tim hits his parents
- Sometimes he hits them when they make him turn off the television
- Sometimes he hits them when they tell him he has to brush his teeth

Topography

What the behavior looks like

- Examples of different topographies of aggression:
 - Biting
 - Kicking
 - Hitting
 - Scratching
 - Head-butting
 - Hair-pulling

Relationship between Topography and Treatment

Topography is less relevant than one might expect

- Topographically prescribed treatments:
 - Problem behavior “X” = Treatment “Y”
 - Example: biting = time out
 - Every time your child bites you should put him in time out

Relationship between Topography and Treatment

Topographically Prescribed Treatment:

—Hitting = time out

- When Tim hits his parents after his parents turn off the television he goes to time out

“When I hit, not only do I not get to watch television, I don’t get to do anything!”

- When Tim hits his parents after being told to brush his teeth he goes to time out

“When I hit I don’t have to brush my teeth!”

Relationship between Function and Treatment

Function: the consequences that maintain a response
—i.e., the purpose a behavior serves for the individual

Function-based treatment:

- Problem behavior maintained by consequence X = Treatment “Y”
- Example: biting maintained by attention = ignore
 - Every time your child bites you should walk away from them

Vignette: Tim

Function-based Treatment:

- Hitting maintained by access to preferred activities = time out
- Hitting maintained by escape from demands = follow through with demand
- When Tim hits his parents after his parents turn off the television and he goes to time out
 - “When I hit, not only do I not get to watch television, I don’t get to do anything!”***
- When Tim hits his parents after being told to brush his teeth they follow through and make sure he brushes his teeth

“When I hit, I still have to brush my teeth”

Two Categories of Functions

- **Social**: the consequences is mediated by another person
- **Automatic**: the behavior automatically produces the consequence

Automatic Functions

Often viewed as stimulatory

- Stereotypy (e.g., hand-flapping, body-rocking)
- Some forms of self-injury (e.g., head-banging)

Can result from underlying medical issues

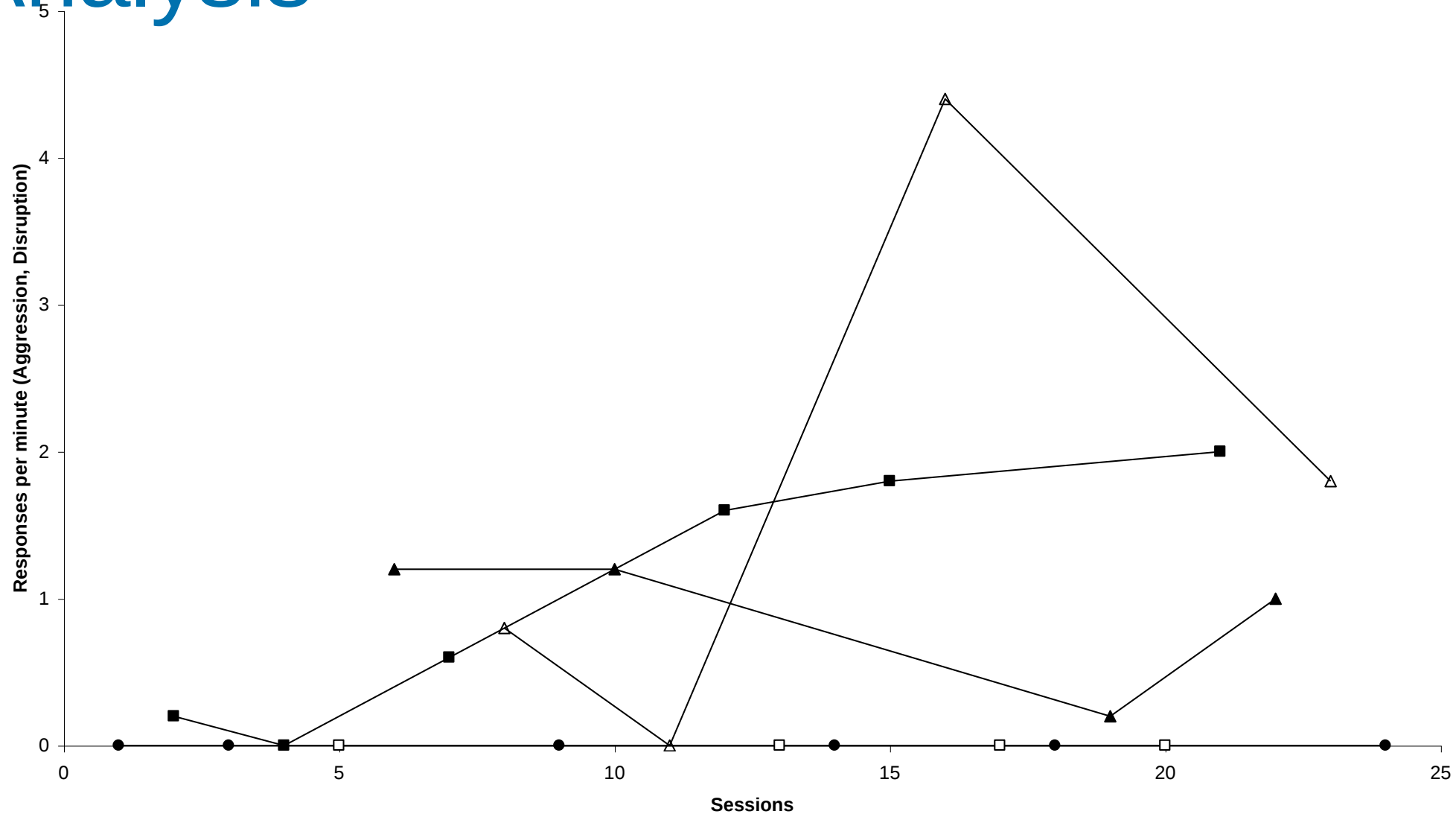
- May increase general irritability

Identifying the Function of Problem Behavior

Gold standard is a Functional Analysis

- Direct manipulation of the environment in “analog” test and control conditions
- Sometimes compared to a “behavioral allergy test”

An Example of Functional Analysis



More Practical for Everyday Use

<u>Setting/Time</u> <i>Where/when did the behavior happen?</i>	<u>Antecedent</u> <i>What happened right before (or what provoked) the behavior?</i>	<u>Behavior</u> <i>What was the behavior and what did it look like?</i>	<u>Consequence</u> <i>How did I respond?</i>
/ / : am/pm Setting:	☐ I asked him/her to do something ☐ We were in a noisy or crowded place ☐ I took something away or told him/her "no" ☐ I was busy with something else ☐ He/She was alone ☐ He/she was playing with other kids ☐ Unknown Describe:	Describe: How long did it last? ☐ 0-5 min ☐ 5-15 min ☐ 15-30 min ☐ 30-60 min ☐ 60+ min	☐ told him/her to stop ☐ comforted him/her ☐ talked to him/her about what was going on ☐ held or restrained him/her ☐ redirected him/her to another task or activity ☐ Allowed child to have what he/she wants ☐ Ignored Describe: <i>If you asked him/her to do something, check one below:</i> ☐ Child did task ☐ Someone else did task ☐ Noone did the task ☐ Removed him/her from the setting ☐ He/she got a reaction from a sibling or peer

Four Approaches to Addressing Problem Behavior

1. **Prevention**: steps taken to avoid the occurrence of problem behavior
2. **Behavioral Intervention**: a set of procedures that will decrease (over time) the frequency of problem behavior
 - Often designed/implemented by specialized personnel (e.g., BCBAs), sometimes in specialized settings
 - A relatively new credential, so mileage may vary

Four Approaches to Addressing Problem Behavior

3. **Behavior Management**: a strategy that will decrease the impact/effects of problem behavior on the individual, caregivers, or the environment (but not the frequency/probability)
4. **Crisis Management**: doing whatever is necessary to minimize harm to individuals and/or the environment
 - Problem behavior will not likely decrease and could even increase

Takeaway Messages

- Understanding problem behavior from the individual's perspective (i.e., its function) is the key to developing behavioral treatments
- Good behavioral treatment plans address all phases of need: (prevention, management, intervention & crisis)
- There are professionals with some training in implementing these (i.e., BCBAs)



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