

Behavior Change is Hard
Building Mindsets, Skills, and Solutions

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1

Why is behavior change hard?

- Shifting Our Mindsets Around Behavior
- Supporting Educators' Skills
- Effective Solutions to Challenges

2


Introducing...

HELLO MY NAME IS

- Think of your worst trait/characteristic.
 - *Ex: I am NEVER on time!*
- Instead of using your name, introduce yourself to 3 people around you as that trait (and allow them to do the same).
 - *Ex: Hello, I am never on time. It's nice to meet you.*


Imagine your students knowing they already have a label and that's what other people know them as. How will you remove those "name tags?"

3



Why is behavior change hard?


4




Why is behavior change so hard?


- Behavior change is complicated and complex because it requires a person to disrupt a current habit while simultaneously fostering a new, possibly unfamiliar, set of actions.

This process takes time – usually longer than we prefer.

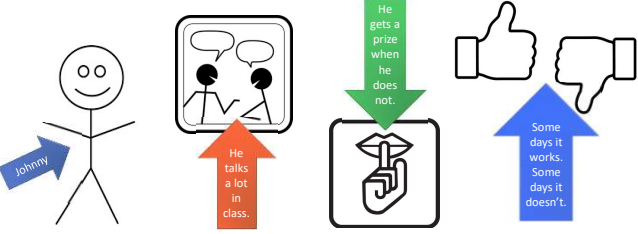




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Who knows a “Johnny?”



Johnny

He talks a lot in class.



He gets a prize when he does not.

Some days it works. Some days it doesn't.

6

True Behavior Modification is a Slow Process

- “True Behavior Change” = adopting a behavior pattern that is no longer reliant on external motivation and lasts for an extended period of time.
- We feel like Johnny has “learned” the correct behavior of not interrupting when we see him generalize it with the absence of prizes or punishments.

7



True Behavior Modification is a Slow Process

Think about behaviors we often try to change in ourselves.

- Overeating
- Not exercising
- Overreaction
- Being more organized


Why are these so difficult to change?

How do we make lasting change?

8

Shifting Our Mindsets Around Behavior



9



Let's be real...

- What is our first instinct when challenging behavior occurs?
- What support do we wish for?
- Do we begin to take it personal?
- Do we begin to view the student differently?
- Do we lose hope for the future of that student?
- Do we become a bit jaded?
- Do we become deficit focused?
- Do we look for labels to put on them?

10



“Because we, as the adult teachers, cannot leave the situation, the logical solution seems to be to make the student leave so that we’re able to return to our own level of regulation. Because we need to be in a regulated state to do our jobs, we do not take lightly to those students who triggers us or threaten our sense of control over the classroom.”

-Fostering Resilient Learners


11



Behavior can be influenced by **US.**



12




It's not the same for everyone.


Challenging behavior is **personal**.
It looks and feels different for everyone.

All adults feel challenged by a child's behavior at some point.

It's how they respond that matters.




13




“Kids are so different...”

2000s or earlier	2024

14



“Back in my day...”



Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

Year	Students Served	Students with EBD
25 th Annual Report 2003	5,867,234 Ages 6 – 21	8.1%
45 th Annual Report 2023	6,611,306 Ages 6 – 21	4.8%

This is not a new issue.
A higher percentage of less students served had services for an emotional/behavioral disability.

15

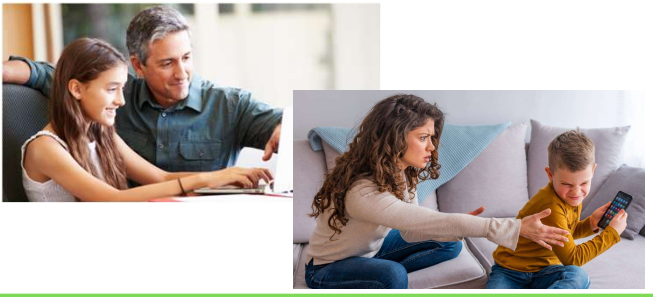
“Kids just don’t care...”



Where, when & how do those “I don’t care” attitudes begin?

16

“Parents should...”



17

“Kids don’t know how to communicate...”



What they do well...

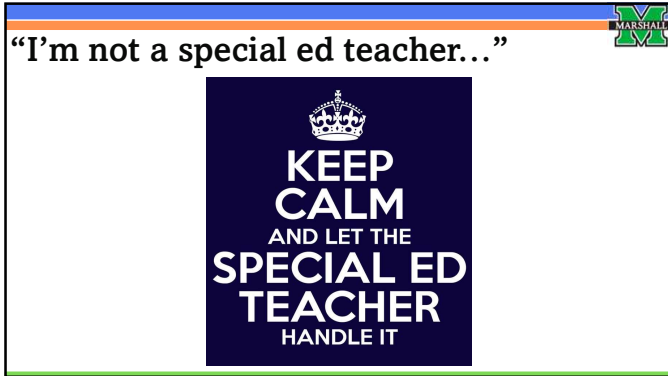
- Texting
- Email
- Social Media

What they may need taught...

- Talking to Adults
- Making phone calls
- Ordering at a fast-food restaurant



18



19



20



21



STRESS

What are things that
STRESS you?

25

Stressors

Hunger	Negative Feelings	Fatigue	Too much noise	Social interactions
Group activities	Tests	Hormones	Disrupted routine	Dietary issues
Excessive visual stimuli	Being asked to do something you don't want to do	Risk to your health or reputation	Not understanding how to do something	Crowds
Less structured activities	New situations	Illness		

26

STRESS SYMPTOMS

- Lack of concentration
- Nervousness or anxiety
- Increased anger or aggression
- Irritability
- Sadness
- Tense or aching muscles
- Headache
- Rapid heartbeat
- Sleep disturbances

What are your
signs of stress?


27

Signs of Stress

Irritability	Fatigue / Insomnia	Craving junk food and/or screens	Difficulty Concentrating/Focusing	Anger
Aggression	Fearfulness	Blaming	Jumpy	Zoned out
Cynicism / Sarcasm	Impulsivity	Whining	Excessive talking	Silliness
Withdrawal	Sweating	Speeding heartbeat	Shallow breathing	Stomach aches / Head aches

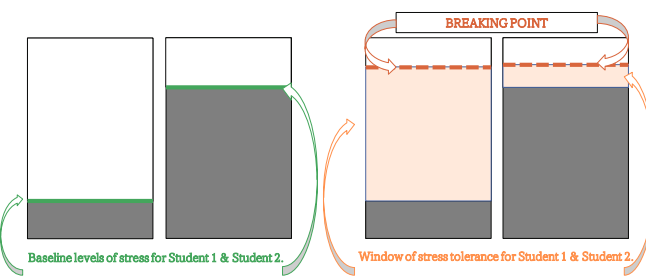
28

Do you think it's possible that this happens to your students, too?



29

Window of Stress Tolerance



Baseline levels of stress for Student 1 & Student 2.

Window of stress tolerance for Student 1 & Student 2.

BREAKING POINT

Forbes, 2012. http://bit.ly

30

THE STRESS RESPONSE IN KIDS

FIGHT	FLIGHT	FREEZE
Yelling, Screaming, Using Mean Words	Wanting to Escape, Running Away	Shutting Down, Mind Goes Blank
Hitting, Kicking, Biting, Throwing, Punching	Unfocused, Hard to Pay Attention	Urges to Help, Isolates Self
Blaming, Deflecting Responsibility, Defensive	Fidgeting, Restlessness, Hyperactive	Verbally Unresponsive, Says, "I don't know a lot"
Demanding, Controlling	Preoccupied, Busy with Everything But the Thing	Difficulty with Completing Tasks
"Oppositional Defiant", Noncompliant	Procrastinating, Avoidant, Ignores the Situation	Zoned Out, Daydreaming
Moving Towards What Feels Threatening	Moving Away From What Feels Threatening	Unable to Move, Feeling Stuck
Irritable, Angry, Furious, Offended, Aggressive	Anxious, Panicked, Scared, Worried, Overwhelmed	Depressed, Numb, Bored, Apathetic, Helpless

WholeHearted School Counseling

31

SOCIAL SKILLS THAT STUDENTS NEEDS

Ecole Globale International Girls School

32

Out of 100 students

<p>who report <i>low</i> self-management, 45 will have behavior incidents.</p>	<p>who report <i>high</i> self-management, 14 will have behavior incidents.</p>
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PANORAMA EDUCATION

33

Behavior is Communication.

Behavior can be stress behavior or misbehavior. These can *look the same* on the outside, but from the inside, they *communicate very different messages*.

34

WHEN OUR STUDENTS ARE "OUT OF CONTROL"	The landlord kicked us out of our home and we don't have a place to stay.
"DEFIANT"	I don't understand this material. I'm worried people will think I'm dumb.
"DISRESPECTFUL"	The cops arrested my dad last night.
"OPPOSITIONAL"	I didn't get any sleep, my parents were fighting.
"DISRUPTIVE"	I'm living with a foster family. I don't know when I'll see my mom again.
WHAT THEY REALLY MIGHT BE COMMUNICATING TO US IS	We don't have much food at home. I'm really tired and hungry.

35

Behavior has function.

```

    graph TD
      PB[PROBLEM BEHAVIOR] --> GTO[To get / obtain]
      PB --> GTE[To get out of or escape]
      GTO --> S[sensory]
      GTO --> A[attention]
      GTO --> T[tangible]
      GTO --> ACT[activity]
      GTE --> S
      GTE --> A
      GTE --> T
      GTE --> ACT
      S --- AD[adult]
      S --- PE[peer]
      A --- AD
      A --- PE
      T --- AD
      T --- PE
      ACT --- AD
      ACT --- PE
    
```

36

ZA5 Stress Behavior vs Misbehavior could go after this.

Ziman, Alicia, 8/25/2021

Children often engage in challenging behavior when they don't have social emotional or language skills to engage in more appropriate behavior.

Children engage in challenging behavior because "it works" for them.

ALL BEHAVIOR serves a function for that child.

37

Antecedent Setting the Stage

Behavior The Performance

Consequence The Result


38

Antecedent	Behavior	Consequence	FUNCTION

39

Behavior occurs in patterns.

- Let me tell you about a “Johnny” I had.



MARSHALL

40

Behavior can be changed.

Interventions

MARSHALL

41

Effective Solutions to Challenges


MARSHALL

42

Be FAIR.

- **Functional hypothesis**
- **Accommodations**
- **Interaction strategies**
- **Response strategies**

We can move from managing the behavior to long term change!



43

Be FAIR.

- **Functional hypothesis**
 - Take a step back.
 - Be curious.
 - What are the antecedents?
 - *You can intervene.*

We can move from managing the behavior to long term change!

Example: Academics are challenging. Johnny usually gets disruptive.

44

Be FAIR.

- **Accommodations**
 - Control the environment.

We can move from managing the behavior to long term change!

Example: Ask for 10 minutes of work.


45

Be FAIR.

- **Interaction strategies**
 - Teach replacement behaviors.

Example: Asking for a break when you're frustrated or overwhelmed.

We can move from managing the behavior to long term change!




46

Be FAIR.

- **Response strategies**
 - Reinforce the behavior you want.

Example: After 10 minutes, reinforce them. Over time you can build stamina.

We can move from managing the behavior to long term change!





47

Being FAIR

- Teaching underdeveloped skills eventually eliminates the need for replacement behavior.
- When prevention goes awry (because it will), remember to reinforce the desired behavior and avoid accidentally reinforcing the undesired behavior.

GOOD THINGS TAKE TIME

48

Key Takeaways

We are all doing the best we can with the skills we have.

The key to behavior change is thinking skill not will.

Skills can be built so we are all changeable.

ThinkKids

49

We are all doing the best we can with the skills we have.

MINDSET MATTERS

50

The key to behavior change is thinking skill not will.

- Push skills before motivation.

51

Skills can be built so we are all changeable.

52

"For anything to change, someone has to start acting differently."

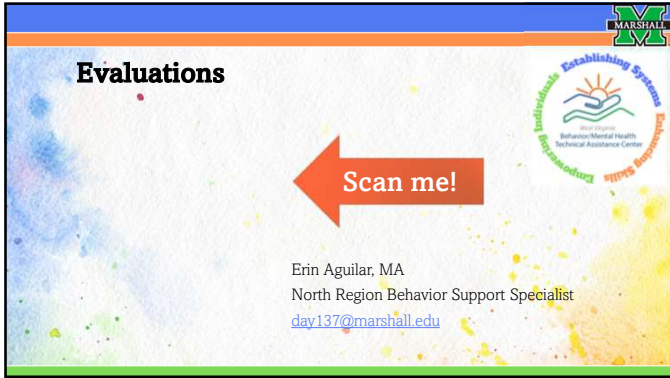
— CHIP HEATH & DAN HEATH

53

References

- [Why is Behavior Change So Hard? \(utah.edu\)](http://utah.edu)
- [True Behavior Modification is a Slow Process - Learning Lab \(mylearnlab.com\)](http://mylearnlab.com)
- [Breaking the Behavior Code - Child Mind Institute](http://childmind.org)
- [Reducing Behavioral Incidents in Schools: What Can SEL Tell Us? \(panoramaed.com\)](http://panoramaed.com)
- [Think:Kids : Why Is it so Hard to Change Problem Behavior? \(thinkkids.org\)](http://thinkkids.org)

54



Evaluations

Scan me!

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Behavioral Mental Health Technical Assistance Center

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