



Leveraging MTSS in the Classroom: Responding to Behavior Without Power Struggles

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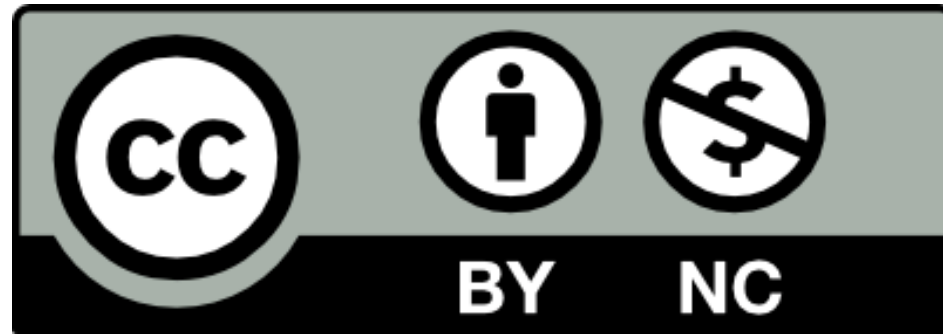


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- Dr. Dan Siegel
- Midwest PBIS
- National Center on PBIS
- National Center on Intensive Intervention

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Purpose

This session equips teachers with foundational brain science knowledge and practical strategies to understand the impact of stress on student behavior, interpret behavior function, and support in-the-moment self regulation to promote student independence and improved learning outcomes.

Intended Outcomes

- Apply brain science behavioral principles to common behaviors that occur in the classroom to determine function
- Identify regulation techniques that can be taught and reinforced with students
- Review and plan for consistent implementation of strategies for improving student behavior

Agenda

- 1.0 Brain Science Basics
- 2.0 The Function of Behavior
- 3.0 Response Strategies
- 4.0 Wrap Up and Next Steps

1.0 Brain Science Basics

Behavior and the Adolescent Brain

- Neurons
 - Neurons (brain cells) in the frontal lobes of the brain are not fully connected
- Sensation Seeking
 - Sensation seeking is “neural buzz”, not necessarily impulsive behavior
- Risk Taking
 - Teens weigh risks versus rewards differently than adults
- Social Interactions
 - The adolescent brain is wired for social interactions

(Dobbs, 2011)

Brain Science

Downstairs

- Breathing
- Blinking
- Fight or Flight

Upstairs

- Thinking
- Empathy
- Body Control

Regulation and the Brain

- Upstairs Brain:
 - Regulated students are able to think, problem-solve, and adapt their behavior when a situation demands it
 - When regulated, students are better able to control their thoughts, feelings, and actions
- Downstairs Brain:
 - Dysregulated students are reactive, unable to control their thoughts, feelings, and actions
 - When dysregulated, students are in “survival mode”

Explaining the Brain to Children and Adolescents



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=py8deTlxNco>



Activity 1.1

Upstairs or Downstairs?

- Review the list of common student behaviors
- Decide if each behavior is more likely coming from the upstairs brain or downstairs brain:
 - Raising a hand to ask a question
 - Working quietly on an assignment
 - Interrupting the lesson to get attention
 - Throwing something when frustrated
 - Using words to explain how they feel

2.0 The Function of Behavior

Function of Behavior

To Access, Obtain, or Get:

- Peer Attention
- Adult Attention
- Desired Activity
- Desired Object or Items
- Sensory Stimulation (e.g., auditory, tactile)

To Avoid or Escape From:

- Difficult task
- Boring or Easy Task
- Physical Demand
- Nonpreferred Activity
- Peer Attention
- Adult Attention
- Reprimand

Stress Response in the Classroom

Flight

Withdrawing

Fleeing

Skipping class

Daydreaming

Seeming to sleep

Avoiding others

Hiding/Wandering

Disengaged

Fight

Acting out

Aggressive
behavior

Acting silly

Defiance

Hyperactive

Arguing

Screaming/Yelling

Freeze

Exhibiting
numbness

Refusing to
answer

Refusing to get
needs met

Giving a blank
look

Feeling unable to
move/act

Fawn

Overly apologetic

Super-responsible

Trying to please
others

Avoiding conflict

(Souers, K., & Hall, P. A., 2016; Web MD 2023)



Activity 2.1

Pause and Process:

- What are the most common functions you notice in your students' behavior?
- How do your students typically show stress responses in the classroom?
- When you notice these behaviors, what is your usual first response?

3.0 Response Strategies

Talking to the “Downstairs Brain”

- Connect with the student
 - Connection helps signal safety and begins to calm the nervous system
- Support Regulation
 - Acknowledge feelings and offer simple choices to help with regulation
- Reflect and Problem-Solve
 - Once regulated and the upstairs brain is re-engaged, talk through what happened, reinforce expectations, and problem-solve for next time

Regulation Routines

What: Strategies that help students take in different stimuli and manage their emotional and behavioral responses

When: Teaching happens when students are regulated – don't wait to teach a regulation strategy when they are dysregulated

How: Provide rationale, context when they might use it, model, prompt, and reinforce

Breathing For Regulation

- Easy technique to start with and scaffold as appropriate
- No special tools are required
- Wide variety of techniques to fit individual needs
- Helps relax the body (reduces stress responses)
- Improves focus and attention
- Supports emotional regulation
- Can be used anytime, anywhere
- Promotes a sense of control and grounding

Breathing Exercise Examples

- Belly Breathing
- Figure 8/ Lazy 8 Breathing
- Box Breathing
- 5 Finger Breathing
- Physiological Sigh
- Others?



Teaching Regulation Skills

- Regulation strategies should be taught and practiced as part of classroom routines
- Once taught, they become your first response for classroom management or when students become dysregulated
- Teaching considerations:
 - How will these skills be prompted within the setting? Checklists on students' desks, visual cues, a space in the classroom?
 - Have you established a common signal that indicates a need for regulation support?
 - How will you establish common, consistent language around regulation strategies?

Responding to Low-Intensity Behaviors

Low-Intensity Behaviors

- Disruptive during instruction
- Refusing to complete work
- Cell phone misuse
- Dismissive to teacher or peers
- Misuse of classroom materials

Responses

- Proximity
- Signal/Non-Verbal Cue
- Planned Ignoring
- Redirect
- Reteach
- Provide Choice
- Corrective Behavior-Specific Feedback
- Student Conference

Activity 3.1

Pause and Process:

- Review the *Strategies for Responding to Interfering Behavior* and the *Precision Request Sequence* documents
- Consider how and when you might use these strategies to respond to student behavior
 - To help prevent behavior, I will...
 - When a student is becoming dysregulated, I will...
 - For low intensity behaviors, I will...

4.0 Wrap Up and Next Steps

Key Takeaways

- Behavior is communication
 - Students show us what they need through their behavior.
 - Behavior can be driven by an unmet need, skill, or feeling.
- Regulation comes first
 - Regulated students are ready to learn.
 - Dysregulated students are in survival mode.
- Stress responses are automatic
 - The brain shifts into protection mode when it feels stressed/threatened.
 - These responses are not choices, they are automatic.

Key Takeaways (continued)

- Prevention is key
 - Regulation strategies should be taught and practiced as part of classroom routines
 - Once taught, they become your first response for classroom management
- Low-intensity behaviors warrant low-intensity responses
 - Every behavior does not require a big reaction
 - It is about teaching, not punishing

Next Steps

- Stay connected with the TA Center
 - Join our listserv, follow our social media pages
- Participate in additional professional learning
 - On Demand
 - EduPaths
 - YouTube
 - Microlearning
 - Professional Learning Sessions
 - In-person
 - Virtual

References

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