

Focusing on the Function of Behavior

This document is adapted from the “Focusing on Function of Behavior within the Context of DBI” document developed by the National Center on Intensive Intervention.

Scenario 1:

Sometimes, one behavior may have multiple functions, as is the case with the next example. Jorge, a ninth grader, failed math class last semester. The next semester is starting, and he is excited for a fresh start with a new math teacher, Ms. James. On the first day of class, Ms. James asks each student to solve a problem on the board. Jorge panics because he doesn't know how to solve this type of problem and is too nervous to tell Ms. James. When it is his turn, Jorge walks to the board, and instead of working on the problem, he mutters a joke. The class laughs, and Ms. James takes the dry-erase marker from him. Ms. James tells Jorge there will be no behavior like that in her class, and she calls on another student. In the future, he makes a joke whenever Ms. James asks Jorge to solve a problem he does not understand.

Antecedent	Behavior	Consequence
Ms. James asks Jorge to solve a difficult math problem in front of the class.	Jorge makes a joke about math.	Jorge's peers laugh. Ms. James tells Jorge there will be no behavior like that in her class, and she calls on another student.

What is a possible function maintaining Jorge's behavior? Circle all that apply.

To Access, Obtain, or Get	To Avoid or Escape From:
Peer attention Adult attention Desired activity Desired object or items Sensory stimulation (e.g., auditory, tactile)	Difficult task Boring task Easy task Physical demand Nonpreferred activity Peer attention Staff attention Reprimands

Scenario 2:

Read the scenario and identify the antecedent, the behavior, and the consequence. Then, identify the possible function(s) of behavior.

Oliver doesn't have an iPad at home and feels so lucky to be able to use them in his classroom. His teacher keeps them on a shelf in the classroom library. During independent reading time, Oliver always asks to read in the library. Without his teacher noticing, Oliver plays on an iPad instead of reading his book. His teacher doesn't notice. He asks to read in the library every other day that week and plays on the iPad instead of doing his work.

Antecedent	Behavior	Consequence

What is a possible function maintaining Oliver's behavior? Circle all that apply.

To Access, Obtain, or Get	To Avoid or Escape From:
Peer attention	Difficult task
Adult attention	Boring task
Desired activity	Easy task
Desired object or items	Physical demand
Sensory stimulation (e.g., auditory, tactile)	Nonpreferred activity
	Peer attention
	Staff attention
	Reprimands

Scenario 3:

Read the scenario and identify the antecedent, the behavior, and the consequence. Then, identify the possible function(s) of behavior.

Each day Jeremiah gets to Chemistry class early to claim a seat in the back row against the wall where he doesn't have to sit with other students. He puts his backpack on the chair next to him. One day, a new student comes to class, and the spot next to Jeremiah is the only seat available. Ms. Young tells the new student to sit there. Jeremiah shouts that the student can't sit there and refuses to move his backpack. Ms. Young tells the new student to sit in another spot. Jeremiah yells the next day when Ms. Young tells the student to sit next to him.

Antecedent	Behavior	Consequence

What is a possible function maintaining Jeremiah's behavior? Circle all that apply.

To Access, Obtain, or Get	To Avoid or Escape From:
Peer attention Adult attention Desired activity Desired object or items Sensory stimulation (e.g., auditory, tactile)	Difficult task Boring task Easy task Physical demand Nonpreferred activity Peer attention Staff attention Reprimands

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