

Intervention Case Study 9

Introduction

Darin is a 9 year old boy with autism and is in the 3rd grade. He has severe intellectual disabilities and communicates in very short phrases. Darin's problem behaviors at school include self-injurious behavior such as slapping himself, as well as hitting, kicking, and screaming.

Measurement

The team interviewed Darin's teachers. They also observed him throughout the school day. When Darin displayed problem behaviors, a teacher or assistant recorded when it occurred, what it was, what happened before the event, what the teacher thought the function of the behavior was, and what consequences came as a result of the behavior.

Functional Behavioral Assessment

Darin tends to act out when he isn't clear about what he is supposed to do, when he has to speak in front of other students, and when asked to write something. The team see his problem behaviors as a way to escape these aversive situations.

Intervention

To help clarify expectations to Darin, the team developed a picture sequence. Darin experiences four major transitions during the school day. Before each transition, for example, going to the gym, Darin was shown a picture to signal what was coming next. Darin moved to working in small groups as opposed to speaking in front of the entire class. His writing assignments were also modified to help him build his writing skills. Darin also learned to say "break please" in order to take a 2-minute break from activities. If he engaged in problem behaviors his teachers would no longer remove him from the situation, but instruct him to ask for a break. The goal of these changes was first of all to make problem behaviors irrelevant-by modifying the environment to decrease activities he found aversive while still meeting education goals. Secondly, the changes made problem behaviors less effective and less efficient by not allowing Darin to escape an aversive situation through problem behaviors and teaching him a more appropriate way to take a break from aversive situations (saying "break, please").

Results

Darin's problem behaviors decreased after the intervention. He also showed improvement academically and socially. Encouraged by Darin's results at school his parents also implemented positive behavior support at home.

Horner, R.H., Albin, R.W., Sprague, J.R., & Todd, A.W. *Positive behavior support*. In M. E. Snell & F. Brown (Eds.), *Instruction of students with severe disabilities (5th ed)* (pp. 207-243). Upper Saddle River: NJ: Merrill.