Behavior is Communication

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Goals For This Seminar

- Understand that all behavior is communication
- What Makes Sense?
- Illness and Challenging Behaviors
- The Power of Relationships
- Examining the Behavior
- Final thoughts

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Behavior is Communication

- The phrase "behavior is communication" refers to an individual's effort to communicate dislikes, needs, desires, etc., but who cannot do so in a traditional verbal manner because of a communication deficit (e.g.,no speech, limited speech), and so communicate through actions.

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Growing Up With a Brother with Autism: It is all about the Relationships!

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What Do We All Want in Life!

What WE ALL Want!

•Be accepted

•Make choices

•Engaged in meaningful activities

•Be surrounded by people who care about us!

• Be listened to and heard by others!

•Be loved

What NONE of us Want!

- Be Ignored
- Thought to be incompetent
- Abused
- Controlled
- Bored
- Ridiculed
- Restrained
- Manipulated
- Disliked

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How Should we look at Behavior?

- Problem behavior is a way for individuals to communicate or express themselves about variables such as:

- Lack of choice, control and opportunities

- A poor quality of life

- Instructional or behavioral strategies that may not respect individual preferences or needs (e.g., sensory processing problems, unresolved medical issues)

- Frustration with boredom

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Behavior is LIFE!

These people are all having "Behaviors"

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Uh-Oh Your Child is Having "Behaviors"

- Behavior is **whatever** the person is doing.
- Behaviors are good, bad and indifferent.
- What do you say when a teacher or others say your child had behaviors?
- You say "Thank Goodness, He is alive and active".

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What Happens When We Cannot Communicate What We Need?

If we cannot communicate something that we need, or want, or don't want, we might:

- Scream
- Cry
- Run away
- Take others toys
- Pull hair
- Scratch
- Make bad choices

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Does this make sense?

Does this make sense?	Unintended outcomes
Grab the persons chin to make them look at you	Person will grab other people by the chin when they want something.
Give tokens when behavior is deemed appropriate by staff	Will not perform the behavior unless there are tokens
Behavioral support from a professional who does not know the child or gain information from family/ support staff	People are insulted and "check out" of the process.
Persons are ignored unless the behavior is performed "correctly".	Person is frustrated, lonely and often ostracized.

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Can A Lack of Choice and Control Cause Challenging Behavior?

- Research has demonstrated that having choices and control regarding daily life events may decrease problem behavior.
- If an individual has choice and control over their life, their friends, where they live and who spends time with them, we are improving quality of life.
- When we improve quality of life, we are likely to see a decrease in problem behaviors.

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There is always a reason for the behavior…You just do not know it!

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Can Physical Illness or other things Cause Challenging Behavior?

- Illness (e.g., urinary tract infection, diabetes)
- Side effects of medication
- Food allergies
- Thirst or hunger, or the need to go to the bathroom
- Pain or discomfort (e.g., stomach ache, menstrual cramps)
- Dental problems
- Sitting too long in one position or in wet or soiled diaper
- Dislike of a taste, food type, drug
- Constipation (a common feature when an individual is on medication)

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Behavior

Acting Out → Discipline → Compliance

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Remember this:
The Root of Escalating Behavior Is usually us!!!

Even when an emergency exists it is because of *"mistakes made by agents of control, ignorance or emergency situations"*

Sidman (1989)

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Slide 16

How Do We Support Positive Behavior!

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- Belonging
- Respect
- Presume Competence
- Choice
- Control

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Slide 17

Belonging

"I want to learn the same things as my classmates and NOT SIT IN THE BACK WITH A PARAPRO"!

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Slide 18

RELATIONSHIPS ARE EVERYTHING!!

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How Can You Begin to Actively Presume Competence in Your Child?

Talk Directly
<u>TO</u> Your Child
and <u>Not</u>
Around Them!

PRESUME COMPETENCE ISN'T JUST A CATCHY HASHTAG. IT'S A PHILOSOPHY. IT'S A WAY OF LIFE AND FAITH AND LOVE. IT'S BELIEVING IN OUR KIDS AND IN SO DOING ENABLING THEM TO BELIEVE IN THEMSELVES.

diary of a mom

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Respect and Presuming Competence: How Do YOU Introduce Yourself or Your Child?

THIS WAY?

- My name is Sally and my BMI is 26.
- I have a cholesterol of 163, and my triglycerides are 49.
- My LDL calculated is 91.
- My weight is 161.
- Do you guys introduce yourselves this way?

- NO, of course not!

Or That WAY?

- My name is Sally and I have 3 grown sons and 3 grandchildren.
- I have a wonderful job at EMU teaching future teachers to teach special education and I founded a College Support Program for students with ASD.
- I love to work out by lifting weights and walking my dog!
- **YES!!! This is how I would start off an introduction**.

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My Brother Tim

This is a Tim Linton, my brother.

Tim moved to Michigan in 2000 and lived in an apartment by Washtenaw Community College.

Tim had a job at the old Memphis Smokehouse and he loved it.

He also had a microenterprise with selling his favorite product, Coke.

Tim had a room mate and staff and he had a great life!

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Try this instead!

Each of you will introduce your sons and daughters presenting them in a way that shows them in their best light!

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Reframing Behavior

- Lucas is a nine year old boy who loves football.
- Especially our Detroit Lions!!
- On the bus he heard classmates taking about playing football at recess and he wanted in on this.
- After he went into the school building his teacher met him at the door and walked him to his classroom in another hallway away from his friends from the bus.
- The special education classroom where Lucas was had recess at a different time than his friends on the bus.
- When Lucas had recess it was with his special education classmates.

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Lucas

- Lucas was sad and disappointed when his recess time consisted of time with the adaptive PE teacher in a noisy gym.
- Lucas ran away from the gym in search of the playground and boys playing football.
- The teacher reported Lucas to the principal as a student who had "eloped".
- The parents were called and a behavior plan was developed in order to prevent Lucas's elopement.

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What Do You Do?
Where Do You Start?

The first step is WHY?

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Running Away From Recess was what You See….
The running away was the behavior but the **Why** is what is **Important!**

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Understanding the Function of Behavior

- "In most cases, behavior is a sign they may not have the skills to tell you what they need. Sometimes, students may not even know what they need. What are your students trying to communicate? What do they need, and how can you help?"

  - https://www.understood.org/en/articles/understanding-behavior-as-communication-a-teachers-guide

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Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP)

• "OSEP Director Valerie C. Williams encouraged people to see the behavior of students with disabilities as a form of communication. Additionally, she wanted those working with students with disabilities to ask "why" a child may use a disruptive behavior.

• "Thinking of behavior as a form of a communication forces us to shift our mindset and consider the purpose of a child's actions by asking the critical question of why the child is using behaviors that are inconsistent with school or early childhood program expectations," Williams said."

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Resource Experts: Parents
Was Lucas Running Away from the Gym or To the Playground?

• Was Lucas communicating through his behavior that:

• He wanted to play football.

• Wear his Lions Jersey

• Make friends

• Have fun

• Have a choice in activities

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If We Respond to the Student <u>First</u>, as We Should then the Use of Positive Behavioral Supports should be considered. Positive Behavior Support (PBS) is a framework that aims to:

• Increase quality of life

• Decrease problem behavior

• Teach new skills

• Make changes in a person's environment

• Understand the function and purpose of behavior

• Reinforce positive behaviors while reducing or eliminating problem behaviors.

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What Does Lucas Need?

Positive Behavior → Feel competent → Have a Sense of Belonging

Feel competent → Control some aspects of life

Positive Behavior → Be Respected → Make Meaningful Choices

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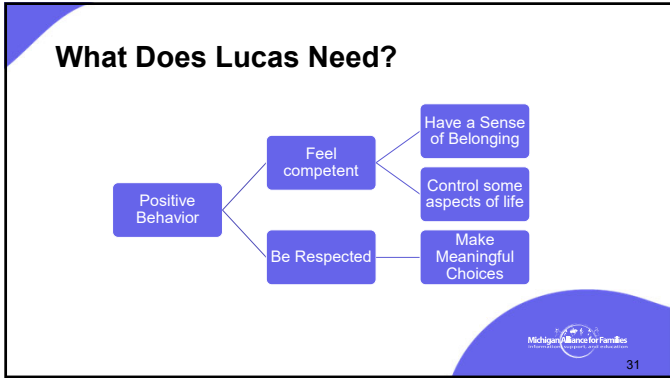
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What Happens When We Do Not Look at Behavior as Communication?

Confusion, loss of self-esteem, escape, avoidance, increased frustration

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Emergency or a System Failure

When it *appears* that a person might need to be restrained, secluded, or subjected to aversive interventions, it is because **of the lack of *our* skills to address the situation, or our *unwillingness* to address the situation,** rather than the actual need for such strategies.

TASH *Equity, Opportunity and Inclusion for People with Disabilities since 1975.*

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PBS IS NOT!!

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First: Informally Analyze the Behavior with support staff!

What Happened?	Why Do You Think It Happened?	What Happened Before the Incident?	How Can It Be Prevented?
Student ran off stage during class activity on stage in front of the school.	The parapro was not with him.	Decision was made to not have the parapro with student on the stage.	• Visual supports • Parapro presence • Rehearsal in the natural environment

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How Do We Support Positive Behavior!

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Belonging

Respect

Control

Presume Competence

Choice

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The Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA)

• Based on data gathered from:

• Direct observation across typical routines, and across time

• Significant others (e.g., interviews with family members and teacher)

• Used to develop a hypothesis regarding the problem behavior(s)

• Used to develop a behavior intervention plan (BIP/PBS) based on the hypothesis

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Positive Behavioral Support

• 1.An **Understanding** that people do not control others, but seek to support others in their own behavior change.

• 2.A **Belief** that there is a reason behind most difficult behavior and it should be treated with compassion and respect, as that they are entitled to lives of quality as well as effective services.

• 3.A **Conviction** to continuously move away from coercion- the use of unpleasant events to manage behavior.

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The Positive Behavior Support (PBS) Plan

1. Specific behavior you are addressing (operationally described):

2. What purpose did behavior serve?

3. How will quality of life for person be improved by supporting them with new and more positive behavior?

4. What will you replace the target behavior with? Be specific in supports you will provide that will give the individual a positive behavior which will serve the purpose of the old behavior.

5. What PBS strategies will be implemented in school, family and community for the individual?

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THE PBS Plan

6. How will typical peers be involved in this PBS approach?

7. How will you teach and reinforce replacement/new behaviors?

8. How will you train staff and family in this PBS plan?

9. How will you monitor this plan?

10. How will you use this information to support a great life for your student.

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PBS Goals Should Be Based On:

• Building relationships;

• Participation in preferred, age-appropriate routines

• Creating routines;

• Teaching skills/rules/expectations;

• Identifying replacement behaviors for behaviors that interfere with learning;

• Making problem behavior less effective, efficient, and relevant; and making the desired behavior more functional and adaptive.

• Increased social and environmental inclusion

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Final Thoughts: Ways to Reframe Behavior as Communication

• Presume competence

• Identify strengths

• Give choice and control

• Look for environmental/sensory barriers

• Put yourself in the person's place, would you like to do what they are doing?

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