Managing frustration and anxiety, and teaching social skills

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www.socialskillstrainingproject.com
First help caretakers have the right attitude

Understand why students misbehave

Manage your own emotions as a provider

De-escalate crises with your students

Set up prevention plans for any repeat problems
Difficulties Associated with Challenging Behavior

• Low Frustration Tolerance
  – Limbic system: Controls emotions and fight, flight or freeze response
  – Forebrain: Reasoning and planning
  – Limbic system can hijack the rest of the brain
    • Incredible Hulk vs Dr. Banner
  – Prevent meltdown and distract when in Hulk zone.
Handling Our Own Feelings

• How do we think about bad behavior
• Hope!
  • Attributional style: temporary not stable
  • Specific not global character flaw
• No one’s fault (internal attribution):
  • Attributional style: external not internal
In the throws of a meltdown

Traditional discipline may escalate problem for 30% or more

When logic is gone: Distract

- Novel items
- Special interests
- Sensory activities
When there is a repeat problem

• Ask why it happens
  – Functional Behavioral Assessment
  – Trigger tells you how best to prevent
  – No More Meltdowns APP, available at APP store or www.symtrend.com/nmm
Typical Triggers

- Internal issues: hunger, tiredness, illness, grief
- Sensory issues: over-stimulation, boredom
- Lack of structure
- Challenging work, fears and phobias
- Having to wait, not get what one wants, disappointments
- Threats to self-esteem: losing, mistakes, criticism
- Unmet wishes for attention: ignored, want others to laugh
Components of a Behavior Plan

see www.apbs.org

1. **Change the triggers:** sensory/biological, structure, task demands

2. **Teach skills to deal with triggers:**

3. **Reward new skills**

4. **Loss system** if not already frustrated
Demands for Work

1. **Change the triggers**
   - Model it all to avoid early frustration
   - Explain growth mindset
   - Visually support language
   - Reduce length, use timer

2. **Teach “Trying When It’s Hard”**
   - Try a little
   - Ask to watch first or ask for help
   - Take a break and try again
   - Negotiate how much
## Carol Dweck’s Mindsets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mindset</th>
<th>Preferred task difficulty</th>
<th>Response to Mistakes</th>
<th>Acceptance of help</th>
<th>Learning outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fixed</td>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>Lose motivation</td>
<td>Avoid</td>
<td>Lower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>Hard</td>
<td>Stay motivated</td>
<td>Welcome</td>
<td>Higher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Demands for Work

3. Reward system
   - For trying, not for being correct
   - Trying Poster

4. Avoid loss system when frustrated
Dealing with Fear

• Change the triggers
  – Can avoid feared situation when easy, but some situations we may need to face

• Teach “Dealing with fear”
  – Win them over to working on issue
  – Explain anxiety: True versus false alarms
  – Gradual exposure to fear: create a FEAR LADDER based on self-report or observed behavior
  – Think like a scientist: Overestimating likelihood or danger of neg event?
  – Add exercise, meditation/relaxation
  – Consider neurofeedback, meds if needed
Dealing with Fear

3. Reward system
   - For facing each step of a fear

4. Avoid loss system when anxious
Waiting, Accepting No, Stopping Fun

1. **Change the triggers**
   - Use a visual timer and shorten wait time
   - Create a visual schedule. Use a “to do” box
   - Highlight reward for waiting/accepting no & prime ahead

2. **Teach skills (invisible payoff)**
   - Waiting: get some later
   - Accepting no: get something else later
   - Stopping on time: get to go back later
Waiting, Accepting No, Stopping Fun

3. Reward system
   - Points for waiting, accepting no and stopping on time
   - Disappointment poster

4. Natural loss systems:
   - Can’t stop, can’t do it again
Self-esteem: Mistakes, Losing, Teasing

1. **Change the triggers**
   - Offer choice: let them win or not see mistakes
   - Prime ahead
   - Protect from teasing

2. **Teach skills (invisible payoff)**
   - Mistakes help us learn
   - Win the invisible game: friendship/self-control
   - Teasing: check it out 1st, stop, ignore, report
Self-esteem: Mistakes, Losing, Teasing

3. Reward system:
   – Rewards for handling imperfection are greater than rewards for winning or doing work right.

4. Avoid loss systems when frustrated
Unmet Needs for Attention

1. **Change the triggers**
   - Schedule attention: special time
   - Use a timer and red/green cards
   - Provide an appropriate outlet: theatre, presentation

2. **Teach “Positive Ways to Get Attention”**
   - How to get adult attention
   - How to get peer attention: Public versus private topics
   - Rules of comedy: Can’t make fun of vulnerable, use slapstick, random thoughts, and self-deprecation
## Public/Private

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Private</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Past: How was ____?</td>
<td>Avoid sensitive topics:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future: What are you going to do ____?</td>
<td>Sex, Violence, Race, Religion, Politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present: What are you _______?</td>
<td>Avoid insults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common/other interest: Did you ____?</td>
<td>Avoid curses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Unmet Needs for Attention

3. **Reward system:**
   - Rewards for appropriate topics

4. **Loss systems:**
   - Response cost

- Warning
- Loss of: 10 min Simpsons
- Warning
- Loss of: 20 min Simpsons
- Loss of: snack
- Loss of: 30 min Simpsons
Sensory Needs: Self-Stimulation

1. **Change the triggers**
   - Alter sensory environment
   - For boredom, reduce wait time and engage
   - Schedule regulating activities
   - Lots of self stim may mean instructional method not engaging

2. **Teach skills**
   - Alternative ways/times to self-stim
   - How to be a self-advocate for better environment
Sensory Needs: Self-Stimulation

3. Reward system
   - Reward new ways to self-stim

4. Loss systems:
   - Maybe response cost
Unexpected Triggers: Self-Calming

1. **Prepare for unexpected**
   - Collaborate on ways to distract and soothe in preparation for the unexpected upsets. Create a relaxation folder.
   - Establish a safe person

2. **Teach skills**
   - Self-talk: “All problems can be solved if you can wait and talk to the right person.”
   - Draw or write the thing that distracts/soothes you.
Unexpected Triggers: Self-Calming

3. Reward system:
   - for using calming strategies

4. Natural loss systems:
   - outbursts will limit continued participation in certain events.
Tiered Model of Social Skills Training

- **Tier 1: School-wide**
  - Adding structure and options at lunch/recess
  - Training of aides, staff
  - Peer sensitivity training, creating inclusion environments

- **Tier 2: Case conference students in need of skill enhancement**
  - Lunch bunches, social skill groups, theme based groups
  - Consultation with specialists

- **Tier 3: Individualized Social Skill Action Plans for 504/IEPs**
  - Target Relevant skills: parental input
  - Establish motivation to socialize
  - Teach skills
  - Generalization: teacher/aide/parent prompts
  - Peer sensitivity training, peer buddies
  - Evaluating outcome: teacher/aide/parent input
Autism Spectrum Disorder

1. Social Communication Difficulties
   - Initiating/Reciprocating, one-sided conversation
   - Non-verbal: lack of eye contact, gestures
   - Deficits in developing/maintaining friends

2. Repetitive pattern of behavior (2 of 4):
   - Stereotyped/repetitive movements
   - Insistence on sameness: routines, rituals, transitions
   - Fixated interests
   - Hypo or Hypereactivity to sensory input

Specify Severity Level for each above
Specify if intellectual and language impairment
If #2 is missing: Social Pragmatic Communication Disorder
Level 3: Significantly Challenged

- **Challenge**: Cannot simply explain with words about how to do things or why.
- **Interventions** need to be visual, concrete, and prompted in the moment
  - Structure of Teacch, pictures, maybe video
  - ABA (DTT, PRT, VBT) emphasis should not just be on external rewards, but intrinsic as well
  - Play based programs, especially those combined with ABA, like Early Start Denver Model (Rogers and Dawson, 2010)
Level 2: Challenged

• Challenge: Understands basic directives, can request, but language is still concrete, tied to present moment. Cannot talk about situations in the abstract.

• Interventions similar to Level 1, yet . . .
  – Can add verbal directives and verbal imitation. Example, Say, “Can I play?”
  – Can begin to work on conversation prerequisites like “wh” questions
  – Social Skill Picture Books (Baker 2001, 2006)
  – Video modeling
Level 1: Emerging

• Challenge: Has ability to talk about actual situations in the abstract. Yet still problems with abstractions like perspective taking.

• Interventions can be visually supported, yet one can now explain not just what to do, but why; how other people think and feel.
  – Social Thinking
  – Explaining, modeling and role-playing
  – Video-modeling (with highlighting others thoughts, feelings, reactions).
Resources

DVD
- Social Skills Training and Frustration Management
  - A dynamic and comprehensive presentation for parents and professionals working with individuals with social difficulties
  - Dr. Jed Baker

Challenging behavior
- No More Meltdowns
  - Positive strategies for dealing with and preventing out-of-control behavior
  - JED BAKER, Ph.D.
  - Now an APP too!

Music CD
- BE A FRIEND
  - Songs for Social Skills Training
  - 16 original songs
  - By Jed Baker Ph.D. & Jeffrey Friedberg MA, MT-BC

Social Skills Books
- Social Skills Training and Frustration Management
  - Elementary Level
- Preparing for Life
  - Middle, High School and Beyond
- Social skill picture book
  - Social skill picture book for high school
More Resources

• No More Victims: Protecting Those with Autism from Cyber Bullying, Internet Predators & Scams (Baker, 2013)

• Overcoming Anxiety in children and teens (Baker, 2015)
More Resources

• School Shadow Guidelines (Liau & Baker, 2015)