Glossary of Terms

ABCs of Behavior
An easy method for remembering the order of behavioral components: Antecedent, Behavior, Consequence.

Active Support
Providing assistance to individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities, or brain injuries, to ensure they are engaged and actively participate in their own support. Active support may include helping an individual learn to communicate needs using socially appropriate behavior. The process of active support includes activity planning, support planning and training.

Active Treatment
Providing support and services to individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities, or brain injuries, to ensure they are engaged and actively participate in their own support. The process of active support includes activity planning, support planning and training, and requires individuals to meet specific goals within a specific time period.

Antecedent
Events that occur before the behavior. Antecedents may or may not influence a behavior. When behavioral responses to antecedents are linked to desired consequences, these antecedents can serve as a signal to the person to engage in certain types of behavior (called discriminative antecedents). Once this relationship is learned, the person may continue to engage in the behavior following the antecedent, even if the behavior is no longer reinforced.

Aversive
Unpleasant or disliked. For example, a person does not like or will avoid an aversive situation, task or punishment.

Baseline
A beginning measure against which progress can be compared

Behavior
Something someone does that is both measurable and observable. Something is measurable when you can count it or express it in numbers. It is observable when you can see it, hear it, or otherwise use your senses to monitor when it happens.

Behavior Support Plans
Plans developed to let support people (staff, family, friends and others) know how best to identify, track, prevent, and respond to an individual's challenging behaviors. These plans should have an emphasis on teaching new more appropriate skills for communicating needs. These may also known as behavior management plans, or behavior intervention plans, however, the term support is meaningful and may be evidence that the plan has an emphasis on positive behavior support as opposed to simply "managing" behaviors.

Challenging Behavior
Behavior that is harmful to self or others, is consistently or extremely disruptive, results in serious or repeated property destruction or consistently interferes with the achievement of personal goals. Sometimes called: problem behaviors, undesired behaviors, or socially inappropriate behaviors.

Coercive/Coercion/Coerce
Lure, trick, or manipulate someone to do something. An action or decision that is forced and not made freely.

Consequence
Something that happens after the behavior, as a result of the behavior, that influences the likelihood that the behavior will happen again in the future. Consequences can be things that occur naturally, or things that are planned and provided by DSPs or others to enhance or decrease the likelihood of future behavior. Also see Reinforcer and Punisher.

Consequence Management
Using consequences to change behavior. Ensuring that desired behaviors are reinforced and challenging behaviors are not reinforced, or when appropriate, are punished.

Contingent/Contingency
In behavior support, contingent means that a behavior must be displayed before a consequence will be delivered. The delivery of consequence is dependent on the display of the behavior. Contingencies are consequences that are a planned or natural result of engaging in a behavior. Natural contingencies, are those that happen directly as a result of the behavior and do not rely on other people to deliver them or are commonly delivered by others in that situation.

Deprivation
Deprivation means to be without something that is either necessary or preferred.

Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT)
A therapeutic methodology for treating individuals with multiple personality disorder. DBT combines standard cognitive-behavioral techniques for emotional regulation and reality-testing with concepts of mindful awareness, distress tolerance and acceptance.

Duration
How long something lasts.

Extinction
No longer reinforcing a behavior that was previously reinforced, with the expected result of reducing the occurrence of the behavior. Usually extinction is thought of something that happens as part of a plan to reduce challenging behaviors, but extinction can apply to desired behaviors, if there is not enough reinforcement for the behavior over time.

Frequency
The number of times something happens. A characteristic of a positive social relationship would include reasonably high frequency: seeing or interacting with each other often enough to establish a real relationship.

Function
The purpose something serves. What is does. In applied behavior analysis, the two basic functions of challenging behaviors are considered to be 1) to obtain something desirable; and 2) to avoid something that is undesirable.

Functional Assessment
Methods and strategies used in the person's daily environment that help us understand the antecedent(s) that predict challenging behaviors and the consequences that maintain challenging behaviors. Using a definition of the behavior that is observable and measurable, functional assessment seeks to discover the function the behavior serves (that is, what the person obtains or avoids) by looking at: 1) When, where, and with whom behaviors are most and least likely to occur; and 2) What consequences maintain these behaviors. The results of a functional assessment are used to develop a hypothesis statement, which in turn is used to develop a behavior support plan. The hypothesis statement can be further tested through functional analysis if needed.

Generalization
Being able to apply a skill or knowledge to a variety of different situations.

Hypothesis
A theory that explains a set of facts and that can be further tested. A hypothesis statement regarding challenging behaviors is a summary statement that defines the problem behavior(s) and identifies: the events that reliably predict the occurrence and nonoccurrence of the behavior; the consequences that maintain the problem behavior; and the function of the behavior. A hypothesis statement would be the outcome of formal functional assessment procedures. While not every hypothesis statement needs to be developed through a formal functional assessment process, all behavior support plans should contain a well-thought-out hypothesis statement.

Integrated Experience
The concept that behaviors and attitudes of staff impact behaviors and attitudes of individuals, and vice versa.

Intensity
The strength or force of something.

Maintenance
Being able to perform a skill or task, over time, without additional teaching.

Negative
In the context of understanding the consequences to behavior (reinforcement and punishment), negative means removing something from the environment and can apply to both the types of consequences. In common language, it means something bad or undesirable. Be careful not to confuse the two definitions.

Negative Reinforcement
Taking something out the environment that makes it more likely that a behavior will occur, such as turning off the radio when someone asks.

Positive
In the context of understanding the consequences to behavior (reinforcement and punishment), positive means adding something to the environment and can apply to both the types of consequences. In common language, it means something good or desirable. Be careful not to confuse the two definitions.

Positive Reinforcement
Adding something to the environment that makes it more likely that a behavior will occur, such as telling someone they did a good job.

Positive Behavioral Supports
The use of ongoing methods of support that prevent or diminish the use of challenging behaviors, through emphasis on quality of life, person-centered supports, and the proactive teaching of skills for success.

Preferences
Things that one prefers or likes best.

Preventative
Trying to stop something before it happens.

Primary Reinforcers
Reinforcers that do not require learning in order to be effective because there is a biological drive behind them. Examples include: food, drink, relief from pain, sleep, etc. For people who have not learned to be motivated by social events (such as a smile or praise in response to a behavior) it may be necessary to use primary reinforcers. However, it is desirable to find or develop secondary reinforcers because primary reinforcers are things that people should have access to without needing to "earn" them and because of their use may not be practical or may add to stigma.

Proactive
Consistently planning for and responding to daily events in a manner that sets the stage for success and achievement of goals. Anticipating and intervening prior to a problem. Making changes in support strategies to prevent challenging behaviors.

Prompting
Verbal, visual, or physical reminders and supports to help the person understand or remember how to perform a skill, over and above a discriminative stimulus (which is a naturally occurring prompt in the situation).

Punishment
The relationship between a behavior and a consequence, in which the presentation of the consequence decreases the likelihood that a behavior will occur again in the future. Punishment can be positive (something is added to the environment) or negative (something is taken out of the environment).

Reinforcement
The relationship between a behavior and a consequence, in which the presentation of the consequence increases the likelihood that a behavior will occur again in the future.

Reinforcement can be positive (something is added to the environment) or negative (something is removed from the environment)

Reinforcer
Any event, action, activity or object that when consistently used as a consequence for a behavior, increases the likelihood of that behavior occurring in the future.

Self-Injurious Behaviors
(SIB) behaviors that are harmful to oneself, including deliberate self-injury, such as hitting oneself, or behaviors that indirectly cause injury or harm, such as repeatedly rubbing an area of skin until it bleeds.

Self-Stimulation or Stereotypic Behaviors
These are repetitive, sometimes odd-looking behaviors that people engage in such as rapid flapping of hands, sniffing objects inappropriately, pacing, spinning, or rocking. They can become challenging behaviors when they are harmful or limit the person's ability to obtain or maintain a high quality of life.

Setting Event
Events, situations, or experiences that influence the likelihood that challenging behaviors will occur in response to a stimulus. The presence of setting events will make challenging behaviors more likely to occur. These events can be social, environmental, or physical events (for example, being asked to sit next to someone who is disliked, being in a room that smells of paint fumes, being tired.). Setting events can be present at the time the behavior occurs, although they may or may not be obvious (for example, having a headache or being in an unfamiliar place, may make a person more likely to feel frustrated and therefore, more likely to engage in challenging behaviors). They can also be things that occur earlier or in another environment but still have an effect on the behaviors (for example, being late for the bus and feeling rushed earlier in the day, may leave a person feeling irritated or worried and lead to undesirable behaviors).

Shaping
Prompting and rewarding behaviors that are more like the desired behavior at each step, with the desired outcome being to teach a new behavior.

Social Stories
A teaching tool for those who work with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Social stories prepare individuals with disabilities to feel comfortable in a variety of experiences, environments or situations by describing them ahead of time, in a story, and suggesting appropriate responses and behaviors for the different experiences or situations.

Stereotypic Behaviors (See Self-Stimulation or Stereotypic Behaviors)

Stimulus (singular)/Stimuli(plural)
An event(s) or object(s) present in the environment, or internally, that may affect a person's behavior. These include things that are sensed (smelled, heard, seen, felt, tasted) as well as interactions and situations (e.g., being approached by someone or being yelled at) that have been consistently linked to certain consequences, and therefore, may have an effect on behavior.

Support
Assistance, encouragement, emotional help, guidance. Assistance from others that a person needs in order to maintain best health, stay connected to others, maintain employment, or otherwise participate in the activities of life. Supports can be formal or informal and paid or unpaid. Paid supports are sometimes called "Services."

Time Out
A behavior intervention that includes taking someone out of the current situation in order to stop the challenging behavior or temporarily limiting access to reinforcers in the environment. In many cases this will be the short-term (minutes) restriction of a desired item, or the short-term removal of the person from the environment. This practice should only be used in emergencies or when developed as part of an approved behavior control plan.

Token
Something that can be exchanged for something else, e.g., a poker chip, check mark or sticker.

Topography
The physical or natural features of a behavior—what the behavior looks like.

Triggering Events
Events that occur before a challenging behavior that may cause the behavior to occur.