57 Questions to Ask Yourself When Addressing Behavior Problems

When a problem behavior occurs, consider the following:

A. Physical Structure

Physical structure increases the likelihood of success during learning and free times. Limits that are physically clear to the student may be an initial step towards self-control.

1). Is there a clearly defined space where the student keeps his/her belongings?

2). Are work tables/desks spaced sufficiently for movement during work times? Are work areas located in the least distractible setting?

3). Are work tables/desks spaced sufficiently to discourage interactions with others during work times?

4). Does the student need to stay in a relatively closed space to reduce wandering off?

5). Is the furniture appropriately sized for the student? Is the furniture sturdy?

6). Can other furniture (e.g., dividers, bookcases, etc.) be used to cut down distractions for students with difficulties focusing on their work?

7). Besides furniture, are there other means of defining separate spaces in the room (e.g., tape on the floor, rugs, etc.)?

8). Are windows, doors, cabinets, and other tempting materials less available or less accessible to distractible students?

9). Are individual work areas clearly differentiated from group work areas?

10). Can the teacher see all or the majority of work areas in the room?

11). Are teaching areas and some independent work areas located in close enough proximity that the teacher can monitor both?

12). Are there clear means of transit between work areas (i.e., while the student is moving between work areas, is there an opportunity for him to distract another student)?

13). Is the student distracted by available materials when moving between work areas?

14). Are there too many work materials in the work area? Do these act as a disorganizing influence?

15). Are work materials in a centralized area? Are the student's work materials easily accessible to him/her?

16). Are materials which the student is not allowed to use in a different place from those he/she can use?

17). Is the free play (leisure or break) area situated where little or no supervision is necessary (i.e., away from exits, dangerous materials, or teacher's materials)?

18). Is the free time area clearly defined?

19). Do all the areas in the room have a simple label (possibly paired with a visual symbol) so that students know where to go (e.g., "Go to the blue table.")?

20). Is lighting sufficient in work area? Is the temperature easily controlled?

21). Is noise level a problem?

In summary: **Does the layout of furniture and materials assist in the development of behaviors and skills which I** want my students to have?

B. Scheduling

22). Is the schedule clearly outlined and posted so that the teaching team knows all the daily responsibilities?

23). Does the student need added consistency and predictability in his/her schedule?

24). Does the student need shorter work periods in certain curriculum area to prevent undue stress and acting out?

25). How frequently does the student need break times and for how long a time?

26). How can I schedule activities to meet all educational and physical needs?

27). Are activities sequenced to provide desirable activities following a less preferred activity in order to prevent behavior problems?

28). How much actual teaching time does each student receive?

29). Is there a balance of individual instruction, independent work, group activities, and leisure time according to the student's abilities?

30). Does the student know where to go and what to do during transitions?

31). Can transitions be scheduled so as to assist in the prevention of conflict or behavior problems?

32). Does the student know what to do and where to go between activities?

33). Does the student know when to begin and end a task?

34). Does the schedule offer a structured routine of activities which interfere with self-stimulatory (or other less desirable) behaviors?

35). Does the schedule clarify to the student when self-stimulation is "acceptable" and when it is not?

36). Does the student have access to activities with peers or the teacher that allow for positive attention during their day around their particular area of interest?

37). Do I need to build in some reinforcement (e.g., edible or high interest cues) for the student's checking of their schedule?

38). Does a timer assist in the student managing himself/herself during work times or to anticipate transitions?

39). Is the daily schedule visually represented (through objects, pictures, words, or a combination)? Does the schedule fit the student's cognitive abilities and overall developmental level?

40). Can the student obtain some level of self-management by having his/her own schedule of job/activities to be done daily?

41). Once the student is independent and behaviorally-appropriate in following a scheduled. routine, can I plan minor schedule changes to help the student learn how to handle changes better?

42). Can I schedule activities outside the classroom, or in the community, to generalize skills learned in class? If I need to teach additional skills appropriate to the community after an assessment, can these be incorporated into the student's curriculum?

In summary: Am I making the world predictable and reinforcing for my student, and can they anticipate events or changes in their days?

C. Task Demands

43). Has the student stayed with the same type of activities and reinforcers for too long? Are the "reinforcers" no longer reinforcing? Is he/she bored?

44). Have I included *only* mastered tasks in independent work times?

45). Are tasks organized so that I can remove pieces or make them shorter? Can they be made more challenging, if necessary, through additional materials.

46). Can I vary the presentation of tasks so that a more preferred tasks is presented first to help ease the student into the work time?

47). Are my independent tasks generally easier than those I am currently teaching?

48). Does the *"What happens next? "* cure need to be more motivating for the student? Have I considered a variety of *"What happens next? " opportunities?*

In summary: Am I adjusting my expectations for my student so as to avoid behavior problems?

D. Communication Issues

49). Do the student's communication skills/deficits lead to problem behaviors?

50). Does the student have acceptable means of getting adult (and/or peer) attention?

51). Does the student need a "release valve"-an alternative behavior which serves as a means of getting away from a situation he/she cannot handle? Can the student communicate this need in some manner?

52). Is the student's behavior an attempt to tell you **"I want..."**

      e.g., "I want food/object."
         "I want attention or social interaction."

53). Can you make desired events/activities more available so that the student doesn't have to ask for them?

54). Can you teach the student a better way to ask for or get what they want?

55). Is the student's behavior an attempt to tell you, **"I don't want..."**

      e.g., "I don't want food/object."
         "I don't want to do this because it is too hard."
         "I don't want to do this because I am confused or don't know what to do."
         "I don't want to do this because I don't know when it will end."
         "I don't want to do this because I am afraid I might fail."
         "I don't have control over this situation."

56). Can I acknowledge the "I don't want" message to change the situation or environment to prevent the problem behavior from occurring?

57). Can the behavior be an attempt to restore internal homeostasis?

      e.g., "I am in discomfort or pain."
         "I need some stimulation."
         "I am over-stimulated or excited."
         "I am trying to calm myself down."
         "I am tense, nervous or anxious."

In summary: Am I really listening to my student and making an effort to respond to their communication?