



# **Understanding and Addressing Challenging Behavior**

**Dr. Cathy Pratt, BCBA-D**  
**Director, Indiana Resource Center for Autism**  
**Indiana Institute on Disability and Community**  
**Indiana University**  
**Phone: (812) 855-6508**  
**Fax: (812) 855-9630**  
**prattc@indiana.edu**  
**[www.iidc.indiana.edu/irca](http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/irca)**





**Individuals with problem behaviors are often excluded due to the presence of challenging behaviors.**





# Categories of Behavior

- **Refusal**
- **Withdrawal**
- **Self-Injury/Abuse**
- **Aggression**
- **Property Destruction**





**“What do we do  
when...?”**



- **Know that there is no categorical approach to behavior supports. Accept the fact that there is no single recipe for handling problem behavior, because each individual and situation is different. Must understand/know individual and context.**



**Whatever you choose to do  
will be driven by your  
values?**

**Within the first few  
statements, a person's  
beliefs about behavior are  
often evident.**





**Safety should always be  
the first concern.**

**Requires the development  
of a crisis or de-  
escalation plan.**





# De-Escalation Plan

- **All must be safe**
- **Must have a written plan**
- **Short-term solution**
- **Minimize your verbal comments**





# De-Escalation Plan

- **Do not approach quickly**
- **Goal is to de-escalate**
- **Catch a behavior before it escalates out of control. Understand the escalation cycle.**
- **Our reaction may strengthen behavior...beware**
- **Avoid power struggles**





# **Functional Behavioral Assessment:**

- **A process for determining the relationship between a person's internal/external environment and the occurrence of problematic behavior.**
- **Focuses on the “why”.**
- **Looks at the underlying reasons for behavior.**

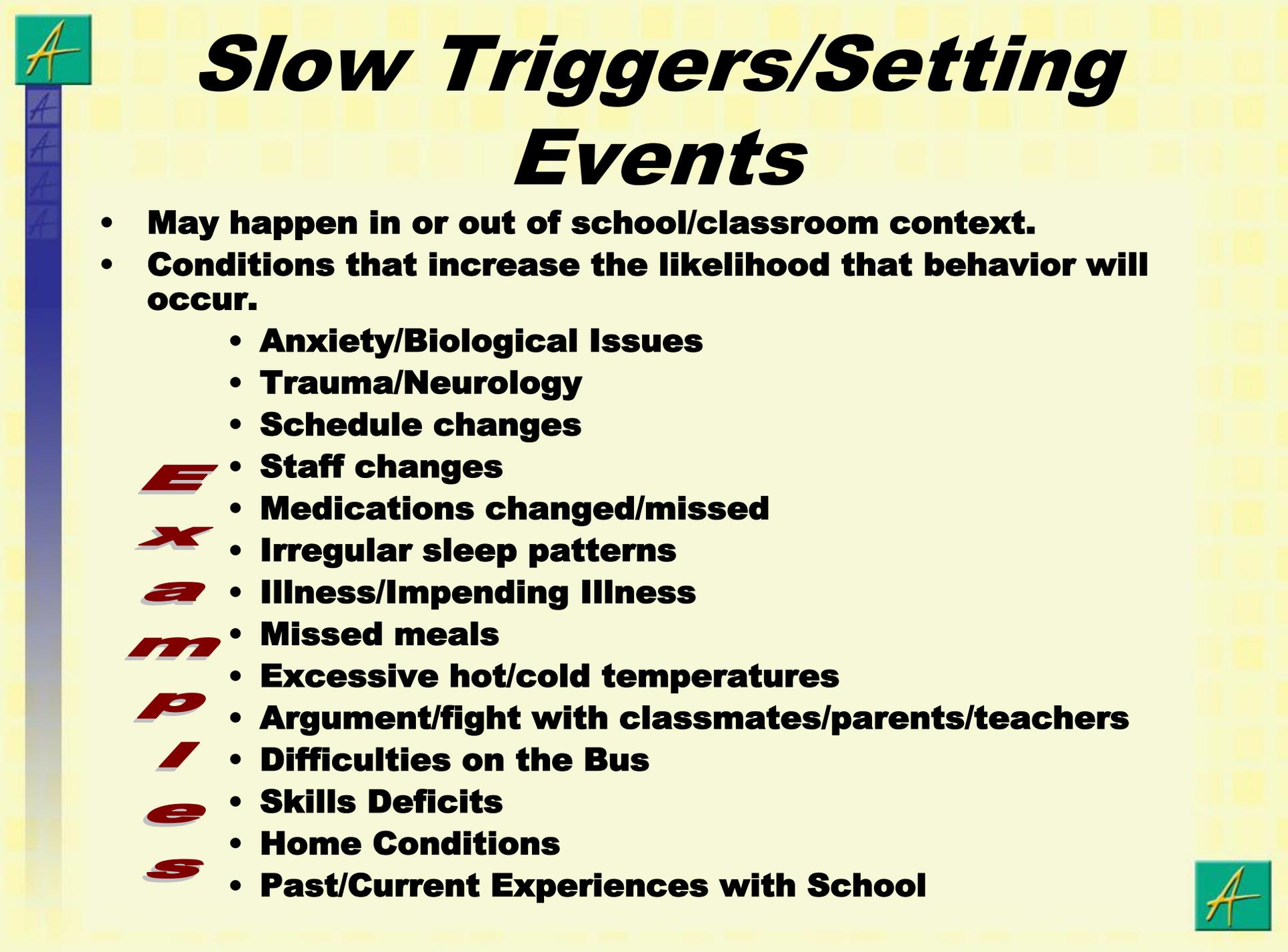


# Antecedents

- **Antecedents are events that happen before the behavior.**
- **There are two types of antecedents:**
  - **Slow Triggers (Setting Events)**
  - **Fast Triggers (Immediate Antecedents)**

# Antecedents

- **Antecedents are events that happen before the behavior.**
- **There are two types of antecedents:**
  - **Slow Triggers (Setting Events)**
  - **Fast Triggers (Immediate Antecedents)**



# ***Slow Triggers/Setting Events***

- **May happen in or out of school/classroom context.**
- **Conditions that increase the likelihood that behavior will occur.**
  - **Anxiety/Biological Issues**
  - **Trauma/Neurology**
  - **Schedule changes**
  - E** • **Staff changes**
  - **Medications changed/missed**
  - x** • **Irregular sleep patterns**
  - a** • **Illness/Impending Illness**
  - m** • **Missed meals**
  - **Excessive hot/cold temperatures**
  - p** • **Argument/fight with classmates/parents/teachers**
  - i** • **Difficulties on the Bus**
  - e** • **Skills Deficits**
  - **Home Conditions**
  - s** • **Past/Current Experiences with School**





# **Antecedents: “Fast Triggers”**

- **Events that are directly related to the challenging behavior.**
- **Events that immediately precede the behavior.**
- **Circumstances or conditions that might trigger the behavior.**





# **Antecedents/Fast Triggers**

- **Teasing/Bullied**
- **Assignment Too Difficult/Boring/Easy Task**
- **Specific Type of Task/Activity**
- **Specific Request or Wording of A Request**
- **Certain Noise/People**
- **Unstructured Time**
- **Behavior of Others**
- **Transitions**



# Consequence

- **Follows a Behavior or Response**
- **Reinforcement**
- **Punishment**
- **What is the payoff?**
- **What maintains behavior?**



# Punitive Approaches

- **Does not teach appropriate behavior.**
- **May teach aggression.**
- **Does not address the function of the behavior.**
- **Effects will probably not generalize.**
- **Does not lead to self-management or self-control.**
- **Can increase anxiety and lead to distrust.**
- **May result in increased problematic behavior (e.g., student may be reinforced by suspension).**





# Indirect Assessment Methods

- ✓ **Informal or structured interviews with multiple informants, including the individual.**
- ✓ **Rating Scales/Behavior Checklists**
- ✓ **Learning Styles Inventory**
- ✓ **Lagging Skills Inventory**  
<http://www.livesinthebalance.org/sites/default/files/ALSUP216.pdf>
- ✓ **Ziggurat Strength and Skills Inventory**  
<http://texasautism.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/ISSI.pdf>
- ✓ **Record Reviews**





# **Direct Methods for Gathering Information**

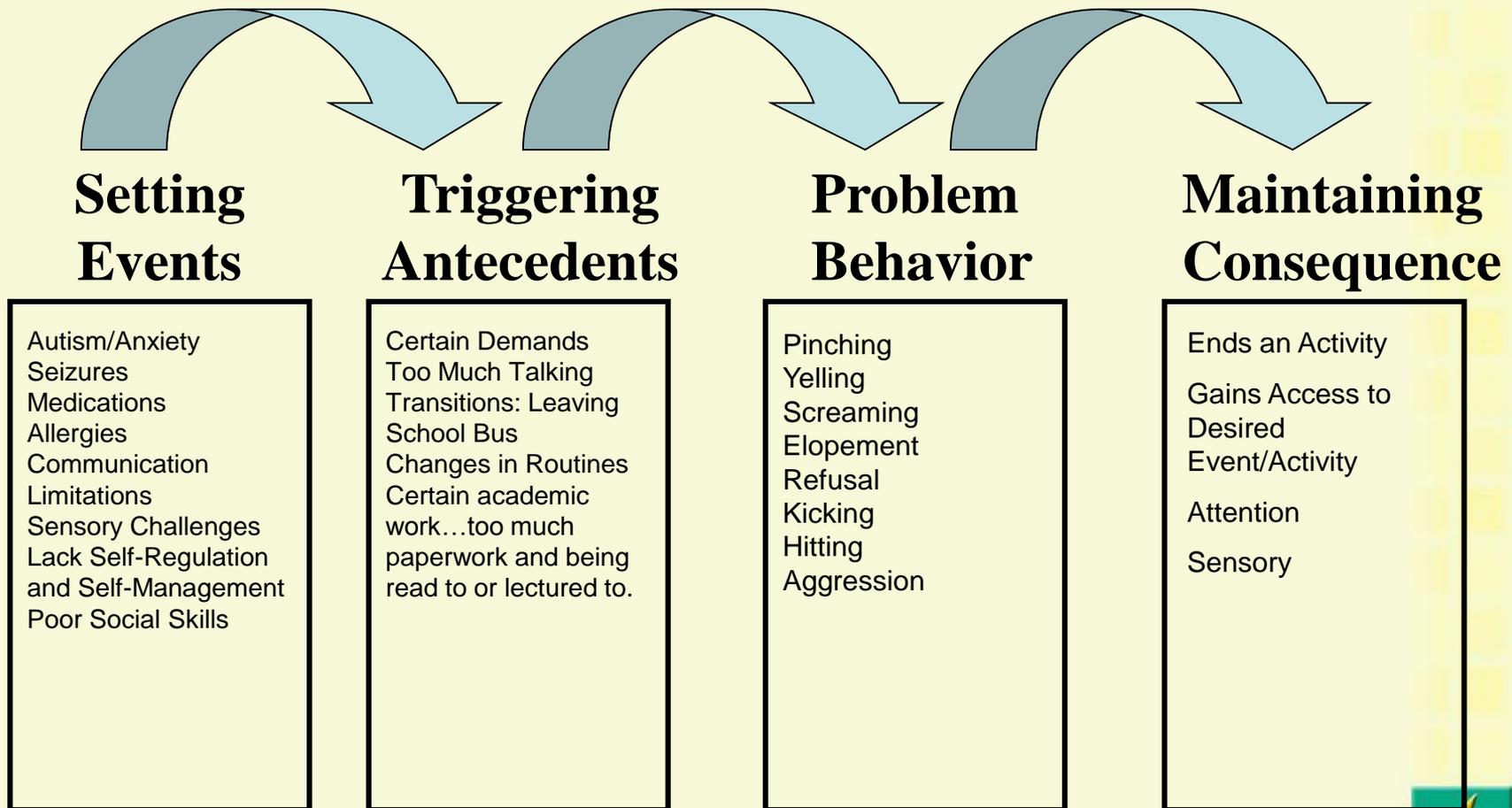
- **Frequency Recording**
- **Duration**
- **Scatterplot**
- **Setting Events**



# Scatter Plot

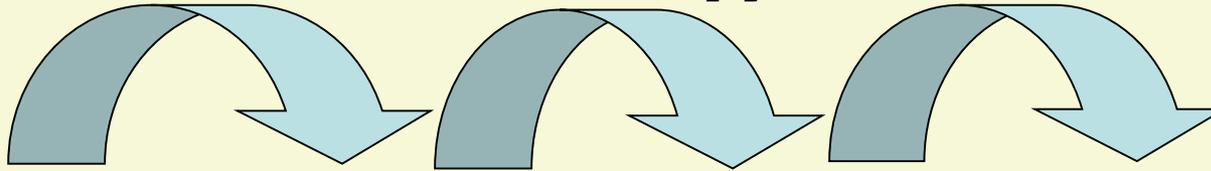
Activity	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Math	X	■		X	X
English					
Industrial Arts					
P.E.	/	X		■	/
Lunch	X	X		X	/
Science					
Study				/	
Computer					

# Hypothesis Statement (Problem Behavior Pathway)





# Hypothesis Statement (Problem Behavior Pathway)



**Setting  
Events**

**Triggering  
Antecedents**

**Problem  
Behavior**

**Maintaining  
Consequence**

**Strengths/Skills:**





# Teaching Alternative Behaviors

- **Specific alternative or replacement behaviors that must be made as efficient and effective as the problem behavior(s).**





# Alternative Skills

- **Problem-Solving Skills**
- **Choice-Making Ability**
- **Anger Management**
- **Relaxation**
- **Self-Management/Control**
- **Communication**
- **Social Skills**





# **Strategies to Teach Include Prompts**

- **No Universal Prompt Hierarchies**
- **Fading**
- **Prompt Dependency**
- **Types: Verbal, Visual, Modeling, Physical, Gestural**





# Engagement

- **Issue of Engagement**
- **80%**
- **Elicit Frequent Responses**
- **Maintain an Appropriate Pace**
- **Maintain Attention**
- **Importance of Routines**
- **Incidental Teaching/Modeling**





# Premack Principle

- **A less preferred behavior, followed by a highly preferred behavior, becomes stronger.**
- **If-then.....**





# **Task Analysis**

- **Task broken down into discrete steps**
- **Observe a number of competence individuals**
- **Consult with experts**
- **Perform the task yourself**
- **Understand the complexity of what you are asking someone to do. Sometimes students are “lost”.**





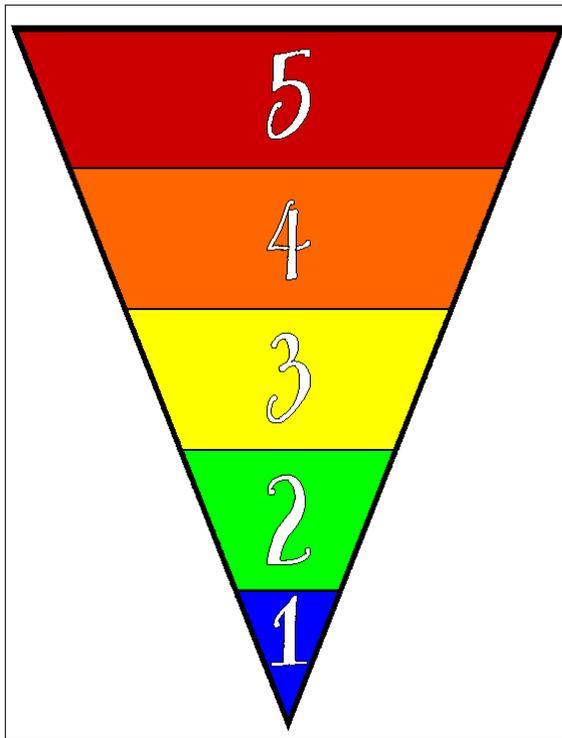
# Behavioral Momentum

- **Deliver 3 to 4 highly preferred activities or requests and then introduce a less preferred tasks with support.**



# Visual Supports

- 5 point scale



**Outside Voices**

**Play Voices**

**Inside Voices**

**Whisper Voices**

**NO Talking**



# Choice Making

- **Identify preferred and non-preferred objects or activities**
- **Determine if choices are acceptable.**
- **Present Choices**
- **Strategies for Building into Day**





# Rules for Reinforcement

- **Reinforcement system should be in place.**
- **Reinforcers must be individually determined.**
- **Based on observation of behavior change.**
- **When teaching or strengthening a new behavior, reinforce frequently.**
- **When maintaining behavior, use intermittently.**
- **Must directly follow behavior.**
- **Specifically state why a behavior is being reinforced.**





# Praise and Feedback

- **Immediate**
- **Given Frequently**
- **Enthusiastic and Sincere**
- **Acceptance of praise/feedback is a good skills**
- **Specify behavior you are praising**
- **Rapport Building**
- **Positives Outweigh Negatives**





# **Proximity/Instructional Control**

- **Also consider room arrangement and staff positioning.**
- **Be present with students.**





# Generalization

- **Teach Sufficient Examples**
- **Training in Multiple Settings with Multiple People**
- **Training Loosely**
- **Use Intermittent Reinforcer**





# Maintenance

- **Teach to Mastery**
- **Rehearse**
- **Practice Behaviors in Various Settings**
- **Teach Authentic Behaviors**
- **Importance of Meaningful Curriculum**





# **Create Support Plan**

**Behavior support plans should logically evolve from hypotheses you develop through the functional behavioral assessment process.**





# Behavioral Support Plans

- **Defined: A clearly written document that defines how an environment will be altered in an effort to change a specific pattern of behavior for an individual, and alternative behavior(s) the individual will be taught, and the use of other strategies/resources.**
- **Behavior support plans should be developed in the context of the overall educational program.**
- **Should address resilience, self-advocacy, reduce anxiety (e.g., yoga, mindfulness) and promote success.**





**And often times we have  
to examine and change  
our behavior as well.**

