The Autism Helper.

4.2 What NOT To Do

The FBA process is so important because we have to know why a problem behavior is happening. Because there are certain interventions or strategies that are not going to work for that type of behavior. And actually there are certain interventions or strategies, that if you use with a certain type or function of behavior, could actually make the behavior worse. So let's talk about what not to do.

So first, let's talk about attention behaviors. What does not work for attention maintained behaviors? First off - verbal reprimands, then redirection, threats, yelling. These things will not be effective for attention behaviors. Also my personal pet peeve - talking about the student in front of him. First of all, that's just really not nice, but also ineffective. So why do these things not work? Because you are giving the student exactly what he or she wants. You are giving it in exchange for the negative behavior. Now, this is hard. You have to see the big picture. You have to see the function to know when we should, kind of, shut our mouth, and not give in. Not give that attention for the negative response. This is the difference between responding vs. reacting. A response is planned. It's thought out. It's function based. A reaction is in the moment. Often when we give that attention, and we yell, or we give a threat, or something we don't even intend to do, it's that reaction.

Now what does not work for escape behaviors? Time out. You might think time out's aversive, time out is just a mean name for a break. Cool down areas, long lectures, any type of "waiting it out". Now, why don't these things work? Because in exchange for the negative behavior, the student or individual is getting a break. Yep, the break might look like a time out, or a cool-down area, or waiting him out, or listening to a long lecture. But no matter where you put it the child is not engaging in the work or demand that was put in front of him.

Now what does not work for sensory behaviors? Planned ignoring. There's not an attention component here, I mean if this is only a sensory behavior, so planned ignoring really will not affect the behavior. Also targeting non-disruptive or non-dangerous sensory behaviors for decrease. These are behaviors that our kids need to self-soothe and feel comfortable in their own bodies. So I made a quick handout for you to download with this video of some things what not to do. This is a great handout for your team or for other people that work with your learner.

Now, let's go through a few quick examples of some behavior makeovers. Something that wasn't function-based and let's make it function-based. First up, David's mom is talking on the phone. David begins pulling his mom's shirt and crying. David's mom reprimands him and tells him to wait. Instead, David's mom could ignore David and once he's quiet, put her call on hold to give him her full attention.

Theresa is given an assignment to complete by the teacher. Theresa begins yelling at the teacher to come help, and the teacher tells Theresa to stop yelling and calm down. Instead, the teacher could provide help to students who have their hand raised and then model this replacement behavior for the class. When Theresa raises her hand, the teacher can give help.

Jack bites another student in his class. The teacher yells for help. Three paraprofessionals run over and all four adults start pulling Jack off the other student. Instead, the teacher could ask for a paraprofessional help in a low tone of voice. The teacher and the paraprofessional remove Jack's mouth, without talking. The other paras quietly move other students away.

Chad is told to complete his writing assignment. Chad breaks his pencil in half and throws the pieces on the floor. And the teacher sends Chad to timeout. The teacher reminds Chad as she gives him an assignment, that he can use a break card. When he gives the break card, he gets a short break, and goes back to the same activity.

Kyle is given a puzzle to put together by his paraprofessional. He throws the pieces on the floor and tries to run out of the room. So they move on to a task that they know Kyle loves. The paraprofessional instead has Kyle do the puzzles on the floor, so it's harder for him to throw the puzzle and run away. She provides some hand-over-hand prompts as needed.

And last, Nathan is at the park playing. His mom tells him it's time to leave. Well, Nathan kicks his mom in the leg and screams, “No!” Nathan's mom allows Nathan to play 10 more minutes so he'll stop screaming. Instead, Nathan's mom gives transition statements, such as, we’re leaving the park in ten more minutes, five more minutes, etc. At the final warning, Nathan's mom lets him pick whether they go to the store or the mall first. These are great little anecdotes that you can talk about with your team. If your team is up for it, I recommend watching this video together, and after each of my examples, pausing it, and talking about why the intervention didn't work and why the new one is better.