

00:00.00

theautismhelper

Hello guys welcome to the autism helper podcast I'm so excited to have all 3 of you on for a conversation about practical functional assessment and skills based treatment in schools. So welcome I'd love to have each of you quickly introduce yourself since we have.

00:12.49

Courtney Peters

Thank you, Thank you.

00:19.12

theautismhelper

3 guests on today share kind of what your role is in the schools.

00:22.32

Lisa Xagas

I her thank you so much for having us. We're excited I'm Lisa Zagas I currently serve as the assistant superintendent for student services for the naperville school district in Naperville Illinois which is right outside of Chicago. And I'm thrilled that we're talking about this topic with you today and.

00:42.49

Courtney Peters

Yeah I'm Courtney Peters I'm a student services coordinator and a member of the trauma invested behavior support team in April Two three um so I get to work with Megan and Lisa regularly and it's fantastic. Thanks for having us.

00:54.73

Courtney Peters

Um, I'm Megan Paulumbala I'm also a student services coordinator primarily working with the early childhood age and I work with Courtney and Lisa.

01:01.58

theautismhelper

Welcome. Thanks so much for joining us I think this is a really important topic and I like that there's so much more discussion about Pfa in the school setting I mean really, it's great that we're just talking about Aba in general in the school setting but especially. How these really important strategies can work In. You know, a crowded complicated public school. Um, so to get us started. Let's kind of started. The foundation. Can you describe what skills based treatment is and how who's using it within and in like school friendly terms like what what is this idea here.

01:36.36

Courtney Peters

Yeah, sure I'll take that one. Um and my colleagues already made fun of me because I wrote out like quite a long description of this because it is it is complex and I I want to make sure that we're hitting all the points here. Um and practical functional assessment and sbt go together and there's just really. Tons of acronyms that go along with this process. So Pfa is the practical functional assessment and that's the first thing that you do and you get started on skill based treatment which is sbt. Um, and when you start with the Pfa. You always start with interviews and not observations and that's the first major thing that makes it different in the school setting. So typically. If we were called in if a kid was having difficulties with problem behavior. We would first be really heavy on observations to try to figure out what was going on when we're using this model. We're relying on those reports from the people who know the kid the best. So you're starting with with interviews. Um, you're kind of a detective through those interviews you're trying to figure out. What makes the behavior turn on and what makes it turn off a favorite question during those interviews is if you had a million dollars and um there was a lot on the line. What could you do to start the behavior and what could you do to turn the behavior off so in the teaching setting sometimes it would be. Hey your administrator's walking down the hallway if you have a perfect observation then you get to you know a tropical vacation. The kid is about to melt down. What can you do to keep that kid from melting down or to keep that kid from having a problem behavior and typically when you ask those sorts of questions you can.

03:03.59

Courtney Peters

But the caregivers know the teachers know the parents know the parents they they know what to do? They just haven't been given the confidence or the permission to turn those behaviors off because there's that fear of reinforcing problem Behavior. So Once you have that interview done. Then you go into the pfa that practical functional assessment piece. Um, and in the school setting. We usually do it in a separate classroom or an office. You have 2 different parts of the room set up one part is that synthesized reinforcement Context. You have all the things that you identified through the reinforcement that that kid loves things that they love to do. Um, that really helps them to be happy, relaxed and EngagedHRRe is another popular acronym for this for this treatment. So That's one part of the room all of the kids favorite things and then the other part of the room is arranged to have different things that can be triggers for that. Student's problem Behavior. Um, so sometimes we call that the table of high expectations. And you might have that table set up with things that the kid is expected to do Maybe it's part of the kid's Iep goals um a certain academic task that the kid doesn't like but things that have pretty reliably evoked problem behavior in the past and when the kid comes into that Assessment. You get the kid settled into HRRe And then so they're happy, relaxed and engaged in that synthesized

reinforcement again with all of those things that the kid loves to have and loves to do um and then you introduce demands in a really structured way until you get problem behavior.

04:28.70

Courtney Peters

And as soon as you get any sort of problem Behavior. Whether it's a really big dangerous behavior or a small baby Precursor Behavior. You reinforce that and return them to the reinforcement context and you kind of bounce the kid back and forth from that reinforcement context to. Um, progressing the establishing operation of the Eo So basically back and forth from reinforcement to the table of high expectations until you've demonstrated that you can turn the behavior on and off 4 times. Um, typically during that process. The behavior is shaped down because the kid has realized. I don't need to put all this effort into having these really high intensity big explosive behaviors if they're going to be responding by reinforcing my smaller less efforts like Precursor behaviors so you kind of shape that behavior down in that process. Um, the reason that you do the? Ah, the assessment is. By demonstrating that you can turn that behavior off consistently. You've demonstrated that you can move forward safely with the skills based treatment process. So That's really the most important thing because safety is priority throughout this whole experience and that's really become one of our values as a district as well. Um, we also are you are using that assessment context to make sure that everything in the synthesized reinforcement context everything that the kid needs to be HRRRe is there. So if the student's walking out or having behavior during the reinforcement context or.

05:48.48

Courtney Peters

If you really just can't get them hrrehappy, relaxed and engaged then something isn't quite right and you need to take a step back and do some more detective work to figure out what's missing um, the last part of why we do. The assessment is it's the very beginning of forming a relationship with that student where. We have rapport together. We have trust together and I'm I'm showing you that your behavior is really powerful. Your behavior is communication I'm not pushing you through I'm I'm taking for great like I'm I'm believing you if your behavior is showing me this is too hard. This is too much I don't like this I can't do it. I'm going to believe you and I'm going to say okay, you don't have to do this right now you can go back to reinforcement. Um, typically these assessments are done within 30 minutes to an hour I don't know that we've had any that have lasted over an hour in our district so far. Um, so when you compare that to the traditional fba model like. A breath of fresh air like that is just is so much faster and you get some really good information. Um, after we have the assessment done then we move into sbt. Um, so traditionally when you are working with kids who have severe problem behavior in the schools. A lot of our um. A lot of our interactions

are really transactional. So the teacher might start with some sort of ask or some sort of demand. Um, and then they would want the kid to do a behavior that we like like a motor imitation matching or more complex things like writing essays doing complex math problems. But we're asking they perform and then we had reinforced that.

07:11.81

Courtney Peters

If a kid has problem behavior in the traditional model we might push through them or withhold reinforcement until we get that student to comply um in some circumstances we might try to introduce arbitrary reinforcement through some sort of token economy. Or in like a really good situation. We. We might even try to match the reinforcer with whatever our perceived function of that problem behavior is so for example, if we think this kid is scratching because he's trying to escape from his work then we might have the kid working for um, for breaks to escape from his work in a more positive way. Um, in this model we have a lot of first then cycles and we have students choose what they're quote unquote working for and they might pick like 1 thing like the ipad for 5 minutes or something like that. Um, and there's a huge emphasis on compliance and there's this assumption made that students can do these things. They're just choosing not to or they have. Like a lack of of motivation and so they need that external reinforcement kind of dangled in front of them like a carrot to do things sbt kind of flips that on its head so in sbt skills-based treatment. We're going to start with the give so when the kid comes to session. We're going to allow them to settle into reinforcement right away and that's where we're going to start so the kid might come in into the room sit in his favorite rocking chair. He might be rocking back and forth jamming the lady Gaga singing along and watching Youtube videos about like diesel train engines or like whatever floats his boat like whatever his thing is he's settling into that.

08:34.87

Courtney Peters

And once the kid is happy, relaxed and engaged That's when we would start to introduce demands in really small and manageable chunks. Um, and we're gonna build up like along a trunk of a tree so we' at least ready to learn skills as communication toleration relinquishing and transitioning we're teaching those skills in really incremental small chunks. They're manageable for the student. Um and and are allowing the kid to make progress in a way that is is doesn't feel really scary to them. It's not too difficult for them and after they may after they master their skiller after they request or get to whatever it is. We're reinforcing on that step. We let them go back to reinforcement and not just the 1 thing that we've said they're working for. We let him to go back to all of those favorite things that he likes doing um the in sbt the data sheets like the structure of it is set up so are increment or intermittently reinforcing. So we're not always. Let's say the target for our session is transitioning. We're going to

reinforce transitioning some of the time but we're not forgetting about those steps beforehand we're not forgetting about communication toleration relinquishing. We're also going to be reinforcing those steps some of the time. So it's it's really important that. We. We follow those data sheets and you follow the process to make sure that you're not losing those skills that the kids already mastered um and then we increase those expectations until that like there's adequate fluency in those skills and so they can be reinforced in whatever their environment is and then there is a plan for generalization as well in this process.

10:02.67

Courtney Peters

So when I think about um, like a metaphor for sbt versus a traditional model like if you imagine a kid in in treatment sessions is kind of like floating in a glass of ice water If if it's a traditional model the ice water like the water part is the demands. The kid is mostly floating around in like demians. And occasionally he might bump into an ice cube and that ice cube is reinforcement so most of the time he spent in that demand context with just bumps into reinforcement and Sbt. We flip that around. So if in an sbt session if you imagine that the kid is floating in a glass of ice water. Water itself is the reinforcement. That's where he's spending most of his time that's his home base and he might bump into demands as well and some of the ice Cubes Melt faster than others. So like the big ice cubes are bigger demands and the smaller ice cubes are smaller demands and it's kind of to the kid. It kind of feels random and unpredictable just like life.

10:54.52

theautismhelper

Um, that that was an extremely thorough answer I appreciate it. Yeah, love it. Thank you so much. Um, and I ask I mean ask a few follow-up questions and I like was trying notes. Um, okay I want you to go back to the assessment component and I want you to can you explain a little bit. Why.

10:58.66

Courtney Peters

Um, yes, um, you're welcome are.

11:08.13

Courtney Peters

Um, okay.

11:13.79

theautismhelper

In that moment. Ah that we're reinforcing that negative behavior because I think you made a really smart comment in the start of like yeah we know teachers know what to do right? They know what to do to stop the behavior but we're afraid to do it because of this mindset

like oh I can't reinforce the negative behavior right? I can't give him the ipad he didn't earn it so in that moment and kind of.

11:27.46

Courtney Peters

Um, right.

11:32.40

theautismhelper

Speaking to that mindset. Why are we then? Okay, cool. Go back to go back to your ipad you You don't want to do it. Why are we doing that. What is the point of that process.

11:39.91

Courtney Peters

The point of that process is I mean the first point of that process is to maintain safety so we know that if we don't reinforce it if we don't allow the kid to go back to to what they were doing and take that demand away the kid might escalate into severe dangerous problem behavior. So that's the first answer. But the answer for why it's okay is because of the matching law. So if we just do this occasionally and we're also reinforcing those smaller lower effort problem behaviors and and we're incrementally teaching skills that we're then reinforcing down the line. We're still going to be able to successfully shape that behavior into what we want to see. Um. Even if we're sometimes reinforcing that problem behavior is that helpful.

12:21.90

theautismhelper

Um, yeah, do less aba say it and like how you'd say it to a teacher or like a para like said sorry explain the matching law that that's a great point. So explain what that means I give an example even like Johnny did this my putting you on the spot here. Sorry.

12:23.34

Courtney Peters

Um, ah the precurs.

12:35.89

Courtney Peters

Um, yeah, let me think do you have a good answer. Yeah I mean as somebody who previously was in a scold B Cba role only right? like I think that we really value like holding the line but in my.

12:38.90

theautismhelper

Um.

12:51.16

theautismhelper

Um, ah.

12:51.44

Courtney Peters

Think something that I've learned over time is like we can hold that line but only for so long on and it will get to severe problem behavior and we ultimately end up having to reinforce physical aggression that did tissue damage self injury that left a bruise and if we know like when they give these precursor vocalizations or these.

13:01.68

theautismhelper

Um, yes.

13:09.87

Courtney Peters

They do that gay shift where they're looking out of the corner of their eye or they're talkingggg on their clothes. Um, or they're doing this hand-wringing if we know that those are the warning signs physical aggression is coming why not reinforce those warning signs when we know that they're linked to the more severe problem behavior in the chain and so I think a lot of people. Like that they need to hold the line I can't reinforce problem behavior that's teaching them that they you know can engage in problem behavior and get what they want. But ultimately if we do hold the line. We only have so much control of the environment. We need to maintain safety. We end up in situations that result in restraint and timeout and so the kid does get reinforcement from that. Because during that entire de-escalation time we're giving ah tension in some way. There's no demands. Um, and it is a more humane and dignified and safe respectful respectable way to allow students to opt out and reinforce the warning signs. And shape that over time like Courtney said versus waiting till they are highly escalated and distressed and then we can't hold the line anymore and then we're reinforcing that because then what we're teaching them is that you're right? Your behavior has power but in order for me to hear you you need to hurt yourself or others for me to hear you.

14:22.67

theautismhelper

Yes, that's like exactly what I was thinking because I'm thinking to that point you made that you just said too like we're taught hold the line. We're taught. Don't do this. But in reality we're going to be reinforcing these behaviors anyways and I'm you know, just kind of thinking from a. Ah, staff training buy and perspective on on on explaining that right? So you kind of touched on this um in your description which really appreciate how thorough that was of Pfa and sbt. But and some of the differences between those traditional behavior responses.

14:40.30

Courtney Peters

Yes.

14:55.29

theautismhelper

And are there any other important differences that you've seen using this model using versus those kind of traditional behavior responses that we've seen.

15:03.45

Courtney Peters

Yeah, um, so I think like a lot of our our school-based interventions right? They really heavily rely on that antecedent or proactive intervention reinforcement systems um teaching kind of what's expected or unexpected a thumbs up thumbs down coping skills. Um, so the child can tolerate things that are aversive or that those drop interventions so differential reinforcement of other behavior. That's the way a lot of our token boards and reinforcement systems work. You need to have quiet hands and when you get your 5 stars. You can have what you want so as long as you don't engage in physical aggression and you fill up your token board. You can have what you want school-based interventions also tend to focus on function and isolation or primary function. So we're doing an fba for all these different target behaviors self-injuries just for attention but physical aggression is for a skip and that results in really complex behavior plans with all these targets. Different functions and that makes it incredibly challenging for staff to respond to problem behavior because in the moment if you're getting self-injury and you're getting physical aggression. Well it's for escape and attention. So I'm supposed to give you a break but then also maybe ignore you. Um, and so I think then we overrely on those reinforcement systems. So like what Courtney talked about like we're dangling in the cares and we're trying to motivate them essentially out of problem behavior. Um, and I think that's ah, a common experience for awesome public schools.

16:32.32

Courtney Peters

Um, but in the long term that doesn't solve the problem for kids with severe problem behavior. Um, as Dr Greg Hanley says the path to freedom from problem behavior is skills. Um, he really emphasizes and that initial 10 hour um the practical functional analysis and skills based treatment modules. So if you take. The level one or the introduction. It's 10 hours of modules online um that severe problem behavior is multiply controlled so it's not just escape. It's not just a tension. Um, there aren't really functions in isolation for kids who have really entrenched problem behavior. Um I think he gives the example. Um, that nobody escapes to nothing nobody aggresses just for a little bit of attention and he kind of summarizes that kids

engage in severe problem behavior because they want to get out of what they don't want to do in order to interact with others in their preferred way. And have access to all their preferred items and activities. So. It's all the fit things and that that severe problem behavior can really meet all the functions for a learner and that's what you're targeting and that synthesized reinforcement contacts that. Courtney talked about like we're bringing the joy to kids with their preferred interaction. We're not placing demands on them and we're letting kids lead it within preferred activities. So even if their play includes Stereotopy or they have unusual interests. We're going to let kids come as they are and engage with them in those preferred ways.

17:59.79

Courtney Peters

Um, Education can really be a compliance-based system in a lot of ways and you know like we talked about like so often we're taught to hold the line but that's not really serving us right now and there's a lot of changes that are needed when needing those needs of complex behavioral needs of our learners.

18:14.64

theautismhelper

Um, yeah, yeah, that's a great answer.

18:17.30

Courtney Peters

Yeah, and you mentioned that the behaviors are usually multiply controlled but it's also through the process you tie all of the problem behaviors together. So You have the severe problem behaviors laid out and you also have those precursor or milder behaviors laid out. So. When you're a school and you're and you're talking about how are we going to treat this Behavior. You're also able to tie those problem behaviors all into a neat little bundle and say they're all mostly controlled by multiple functions and it makes the planning process just a whole heck of a lot easier when you don't have to do Um, you don't have to treat each problem behavior as separate. But.

18:49.49

theautismhelper

Yes I think those.

18:51.23

Courtney Peters

You're learning to respond to the warning signs and not the so you're learning to respond to the reward the master sort over again. So you're learning to respond to the warning signs and not the physical aggression and the Self-inry like you hope if you understand the warning signs well that you can reinforce and respond to that. Versus getting to those points of escalation that are unsafe.

19:11.72

theautismhelper

The point I'm multiply controlled is is so key I saw I saw Dr Hanley maybe now ten years ago um the same course that you're talking about do in person and when he started talking about that I had like the biggest light bulb moment. Maybe you guys too because it was always writing behavior plans as a behavior and I was. So hard for me like it's a little bit of all of it I don't know you know like there's some of this There's some of that and then it changes and then oh my gosh now I have to train staff on this like ever-changing behavior plan that the function keeps switching so just from ah a clear like simplicity standpoint. It makes it so much more approachable. For a team to create that comprehensive plan.

19:50.54

Courtney Peters

Know I agree taking that traditional Abc data for kids with severe problem behavior when you graph it. It's always all over the place and you're like okay you can see elements of everything but what am I going to say is primary. Is it a little bit more escape is a little bit more attention times than they have like 5 target behaviors in there. Play on and then we have to get staff to try to carry out really complex things and respond based on individual functions to specific behaviors and that's really challenging.

20:17.10

theautismhelper

Yeah, it. It just becomes a mess and and you're right with those kind of that traditional like Abc data There's also always an attention component because an adult's involved but you don't know if it's really attention. It's just it gets messy quickly and I think this simplifies it in such a. In a way that makes sense too.

20:38.93

Courtney Peters

Absolutely like you. Yeah, if you look in the school setting and you look at ah a typical problem behavior would see of elopement like of course in the school setting. They're always getting attention just because we have to maintain safety but that could be a red herring because it's just something That's always there.

20:48.39

theautismhelper

Um, exactly yeah yeah, exactly So you're like oh I just took all this data that was also by the way super time consuming to take and now I don't even know what to do with it So you're just kind of stuck. You're like all right.

20:58.50

Courtney Peters

Um, or you go and observe and you don't see any problem behavior and then you feel pressure because how can I make recommendations when I haven't seen it happen and this process lets you back up a little bit and just really trust the providers. They're they're professionals. They know the kid too and they can they can fill you in and then you can trust them and make recommendations from there.

21:16.94

theautismhelper

I Think that first piece of the interview really right away builds rapport between the consultant the behavior Analyst whoever's that person coming in and the teachers in the para. The ones that are like you know they're on the the warlines. Whatever they're the ones in the trenches like doing it and that. It starts out with like not like let me watch what you're doing wrong, but like hey let me learn from you. What's going on it creates this like really great Dynamic. So What motivated your district to move towards this model versus continuing with those traditional behavior interventions.

21:42.44

Courtney Peters

Yeah, absolutely.

21:54.53

Lisa Xagas

I yeah um I'll say these 2 brilliant women on this call with me are part of the reason that we're moving this direction um over the past 10 years or so we have experienced a significant rise in severe problem behavior in the school setting like other districts across the country.

21:59.33

theautismhelper

Um.

22:10.60

Lisa Xagas

And we had tried all the traditional behavioral analysis and interventions and continued to experience not only the rise in frequency and intensity. But we also saw the impact of short-term gains that we would we would make with a student being lost then as that student transitioned from level to level. And we had school staff administrators families saying to us. What are we going to do we have to do something different. We had staff getting injured at at much higher rates than previously before and we had classrooms evacuated et cetera. Courtney who was on her team at the time and had attended a conference and and heard about Dr. Hanley's work and Pfa and sbt. She came back to me and said can I attend a training and try it with a student I said absolutely yes and we saw. Ah, success right away and

then Meghan joined the district and the two of them really convinced me to pilot with a larger group of students and staff and really truly I think when you see it work. You say how can we not do this.

23:16.60

theautismhelper

Um, that's so amazing I mean I love the process too of like let's try this with one kid and it's working. Let's try it with more and this like really organic like ripple effect. Um, how did you get by it. Did you have trouble getting.

23:24.93

Lisa Xagas

I Absolutely I.

23:31.20

theautismhelper

Buy in from different school settings from this or what was that process on yeah like you see it. Okay I want to do it too but were there other any other obstacles on getting buy in for this process.

23:41.35

Lisa Xagas

But absolutely I'll be honest about that. It's it's something worse. Yeah yeah, it's not all sunshine rainbows I'll be honest about that I mean it is something we're still working on is the buy in piece I Do think once you see it You believe it we had ah you know one school that was piloting with several students and.

23:42.46

theautismhelper

Yeah, like no is great.

23:58.90

Lisa Xagas

I think day 3 someone was emailing me saying for the first time I am so full of hope and so it's getting people over that initial hump of this is a lot of work. Ah prior to engaging with pfasbt.

24:03.44

theautismhelper

A while.

24:13.68

Lisa Xagas

And the pilots that we're doing. We did start with the rationale for a need to change our practices. We've talked with staff about the fact that kids are different today and there's a lot of reasons for that. Also when we know better we do better and so. We had to really start with the why what are our core values that guide our decision making

around responding to problem behavior what are our guidelines and our core values about how we're going to work with students how we're going to work with our families so we created and implemented these humanistic behavior core values. As a system and then we implemented professional learning beginning with our administrators and our student services staff and I think we got by it along the way as to the why we needed to do something different. We still certainly have some challenges for people that believe in the very old school. Ah planned ignoring. You know those kind of practices and I will tell you that 1 turning point for me as a leader is Dr. Hanley came and gave learning to our team and at 1 point he looked at me and said when a student is struggling with behavior and you're called in. You know what do you do? Do you just go and observe and I said well yeah, you know I want to see the behavior and he said if someone was choking. Would you just sit and observe. You know these students are having a medical crisis to some degree. We need to engage. We need to act and do what we can to to stop that from occurring and so that's really where we went.

25:41.54

Lisa Xagas

You know, full scale ahead and we have now built in some opportunities for Staff. We're very lucky and blessed in our district that we have opportunities for staff to move along the pay scale not just by earning graduate degrees and you know postgraduate credit hours. But also we can design learning Experiences. Helped them to move along the pay scale and so the district has identified pfabt learning and certification as valuable for increasing the capacity of our staff and we've put some financial resources behind the certification process which is improving the Buy-in. So.

26:17.68

theautismhelper

That's amazing I mean how like for other schools to be able to model that that process too of of all of that would be so great.

26:27.50

Lisa Xagas

It's you know I I think ah 1 thing that we continue to say to ourselves is if we're going to do something we have to do it well and in order to do it well, that's a significant amount of time in learning and processing in consultation and collaboration. And we know that that ads stream to our staff who are already stressed and have too much on their plate and so if we can also then give them some sort of financial compensation for that extra work eventually. They'll see that it works and they'll want to implement it all the time but it is that initial buy-in piece.

26:57.81

theautismhelper

Um.

27:01.83

Lisa Xagas

Um, that it's helpful and we're very blessed to be able to do that and.

27:03.91

theautismhelper

So you know I think when we think about some of these types of strategies. You know you instantly think of like a clinic or maybe in-home setting and the school's just messy. You know I'm a public school teacher I consider myself a teacher first and a behavior analyst second because I was a teacher when I became a behavior Analyst and.

27:14.40

Lisa Xagas

I right.

27:22.97

theautismhelper

Things that I always struggled learning about I was like but what about in a school like where logistics rule the world and like yes a staff member be great, but we don't have one and it's overcrowded and you know there's all these messy dynamics in schools. So what have been some of the biggest challenges of implementing this process specifically in that school setting.

27:39.80

Courtney Peters

I mean you nail that those logistics are really like the biggest challenges it's it's time. It's space and it's the people. It's the support that you need to do that so we had to be really intentional to plan for it and Lisa's been such a great supporter and cheerleader and she is doing. Like absolutely everything we need her to do to really rally for those things that we need so we've been really lucky in that in that aspect. Um the recommended treatment dosage is at least 4 hours a week so that's 4 hours a week where for most students you have to do this in a pullout setting. You have to find a space to do that whether it's an empty classroom an empty office. Um, getting creative and and but you know having it like in a part of the library if there's not other kids in there. Whatever you need to do? Um, it's just it does take some creativity and some planning for that. Um, we also have ah a really so like steep learning curve I feel like teams started out. Spending a lot more time on some of those softer things outside of sessions like graphing pulling videos things like that that we've we've improved on as we've moved through the process so on that end the time commitment has decreased a little bit as we've gotten more familiar, but it's still a pretty hefty. Um. Commitment like I said so finding that time and that space. But I think when you're in

the school setting. You always have to balance it out with how much time and how much space am I currently allocating just in response to some of these behaviors and what could be different if I decided to do things more proactively.

29:08.95

Courtney Peters

In a teaching capacity versus just a reactive capacity. Um, so I think that perspective is helpful to have and that conversation is helpful to have with teams if they're considering going this direction.

29:17.65

theautismhelper

I Literally had that conversation with someone this morning because they're like I don't have time for that and I was like I want you to like if I could come in your class and just use a timer every time you were responding to a problem behavior. You probably spend half your day doing that already so you do have the time. It's just being used in a different way.

29:33.73

Courtney Peters

Right? right.

29:36.93

theautismhelper

What especially for Courtney and Megan what advice do you have for maybe school-based bcbas or behavior consults or even teachers that are you know wanting to bring this into their school but maybe are not as lucky to have such a supportive as an administrator like Lisa as you guys do how what advice you have for those. So staff members that want to bring this in.

29:55.24

Courtney Peters

I mean the first thing I would say like learn everything you can about it. Ftf has those great modules on their website. They're fighting fairly affordable so get like pull those trainings. Do those do that learning and then make sure that you're also pulling in whoever you're going to team with. You're pulling them in and making sure they understand the whole process because it's really difficult to loop people in and have them as part of the day to day treatment without understanding the bigger picture because that's when people get stuck and I think that's how um, how this program got a little bit of reputation just being called the canley's my way program. And people are thinking. It's just like kids sitting in the corner in a beanbag chair saying my way and they never have to do anything I think it's because people have a very short term shortsighted view of what the program is so whoever else you loop in to help you with it. They also need to have that bigger picture and then.

30:36.27

theautismhelper

Um.

30:47.21

Courtney Peters

You can't do this sort of thing in isolation. So even if you don't have other people doing it in your building or in your district reaching out for community and other districts for other bcbas. Um, there's there's people online on Facebook who are doing this that are always happy to answer questions. Um, so just making sure that you are reaching out and connecting with other people. And I would say we also learned don't start with your hardest kid right away like if if you want that buy in piece and you want to experience every so every cab every step along the way. Oh another acronym I didn't explain so a cab is a contextually appropriate behavior. So if you want to go.

31:23.72

theautismhelper

Um, you know we all we all want we all wanted new acronyms to learn. So thank you.

31:26.40

Courtney Peters

I'm sorry I know so if you want to go through the whole process with that kid and get that full experience pick one of your kids who has problem behavior but is not like the worst kid in your district right? You want to pick the kid who you can experience success with and get better yourself. So Then next time you're ready. So work with that kid who's a little bit more challenging.

31:48.10

theautismhelper

Um, I think that's really good advice.

31:48.62

Lisa Xagas

I yeah, the other thing I'll add the other thing I'll add to that too is just um, you know if you don't if you don't think your administrator is there yet like find your people you know Megan and Courtney are incredible resources to everyone in our district they have grown. The popularity of this program boots on the ground every day in the trenches and they have grown um as individuals and they have grown others because of their dedication. So I think finding other people who are in the trenches with you to partner and say hey let's try this I think that's really key. Yes.

32:19.60

theautismhelper

Yeah, that's great advice and sometimes that might be you like like you said going to other schools. You know so often, especially in rural districts you're like God I have no one else I can collaborate in this building but what about people in other buildings or other districts. All right, Let's hear about this.

32:24.20

Lisa Xagas

I yep.

32:29.76

Lisa Xagas

Plus a.

32:31.41

Courtney Peters

Um, yeah.

32:35.88

theautismhelper

Successes I want to hear what's been going. Well.

32:39.32

Courtney Peters

Um, I being an early childhood person. We have a lot of kids who are very early learners. So Kiddos who might be more of like that level one vb map and I've had kids grow their language. Increase like their social bids referencing other spontaneously imitating others in play when they previously didn't haven't had a repertoire of imitation and then just expanding their wreck and leisure just by participating and that synthesized reinforcement context. So even though I didn't provide direct instruction. Like I was able to grow all these skills that I have always struggled with with early learners getting them to engage with others and expand their reckon leisure is always such a big challenge and some of those things just kind of naturally happened and learners grow just through synthesized reinforcement. Um, there's also learners. We've experienced having the my way be their first vocal command request and I think that's really powerful for implementers. Yeah, and I think I mean I had. Thought of another answer. But then I was coming in this morning into work and then one of the teachers that I've been working with grabbed me and she was like hey you know our student. We've been working with came off the bus um yesterday morning and he started signing the my way right away he went and I was like oh my gosh you wanted to go in practice and like those little things like kids enjoying.

33:52.48

theautismhelper

Oh.

33:57.52

Courtney Peters

Their their school day and like really enriching their school day that's been a huge success. Um, and I but I think the biggest success overall is really just showing staff that there's a better way to do things and we don't have to hold that hard line. We don't have to push kids through really uncomfortable situations like. Before we started doing this our best hope for kids who had severe problem behavior is like maybe we can make a plan or some sort of program so we could suppress that behavior in school like under very certain conditions under with the right? Um antecedent manipulations in place and then. Oftentimes they'd move to junior high or they'd move to the next setting and then that behavior would just come back because it wasn't gone. You know we hadn't made it. We hadn't taken it away out or out of their repertoire. We just made it so it wasn't popping up under these certain very specific conditions and we were making kids world smaller and smaller by taking away these things that they couldn't handle. Some of those things were things they hated and they couldn't handle them but other things were those things that they loved and they couldn't handle them like maybe a kid really loved lady Gaga but we weren't able to play it because he got so jacked up that we couldn't get him to calm down so now like oh I'm sorry no more lady Gaga in school so we would make these kids these kids worlds smaller and smaller and then we celebrated that like hey we're we're doing great. The data is showing the problem behavior is not happening anymore. Um, but now we have this other way where we can teach the skills. So the kid can really manage the environment tolerate those kippings that he doesn't like very much but he needs to do.

35:23.80

Courtney Peters

And also learn to to um, ah cope and to regulate himself doing these things that he loves to do and it's just so much more fun for everybody. It's enjoyable for everyone and it's also just a lot safer for everyone. So I think that's been the biggest celebration is like there is a different way to do it and it's a lot better.

35:41.77

theautismhelper

I love the very specific examples like lady Gaga like you can I know that's like a child. You've worked with because I always quote like so I'm like well if you want to watch more you know like ah that the tv show. There's always specific examples that stick with us what have.

35:46.87

Lisa Xagas

Theistic.

35:52.60

Courtney Peters

Um, yeah.

35:57.26

theautismhelper

You all learned. You know you kind of touched on this now. But with that answer just there but what else have you learned from implementing skills based treatment and how has it affected your kind of in general demeanor and overall kind of perspective and mindset on working with students.

36:14.37

Courtney Peters

Yeah, um, so prior to the school year like we had played around with sbt a little bit but we have officially done cohorts this year so it was really impactful for me. Recorded ourselves like to watch yourself back and see yourself in action I feel like I was able to make a lot more changes to instruction by watching myself. But it's pretty vulnerable to do that. That's really challenging for staff. Um I think I've also really learned to make decisions based on values and to be more flexible. In education I think teachers can actually be really rigid um, and I'm gonna include myself in that. So I think I've learned to be more flexible also just that students are more capable than we know when we teach in the right context with appropriate amount of challenge. Um I've also learned to kind of be more emotionally present with kiddos. And more attuned to those precursor or those they say r 2 in sbt and then just knowing when I can challenge that student maybe encourage a little bit of persistence versus knowing when I need to pull back and kind of reinforce. Um, earlier in that chain I think one of the more powerful parts of sbt is kind of honoring that ascent withdraw and reinforcing it if you get an instance of problem behavior and then doing that reflection on why did I get that why did that happen. What should I be changing on the next trial. What was the need.

37:34.17

Courtney Peters

Um, what was the child trying to communicate when we saw Dr Hanley Personant in September he said to be autistic is to lose what you love because when you have severe problem behavior like Courtney talked about your world just gets smaller and smaller and that really resonated. With me I think that's the reality for most of our kids with severe or problem behavior. We take things away from them because they can't be safe and their world shrinks. Um, as bcbas we should be scientists and so we should be asking why and value more curiosity about our practices and feedback about those practices. From those we serve. That's the socially significant part of our practice and currently aba is a field is a lot of opportunities for growth in that area I think yeah, definitely.

38:18.60

theautismhelper
Um, really good answer.

38:21.69

Courtney Peters

Ah, Sasha I was like you when I first started in in this general field I was a special ed teacher first before I came a bcba and I feel like when I was you know in my twenty s and starting teaching I felt like hey I know everything about this like I'm an expert and then um, it's just been so much fun to learn like how wrong I was and.

38:36.25

theautismhelper

Um.

38:40.94

theautismhelper

Um.

38:41.70

Courtney Peters

About like how much there's always so much more to learn and then like when we started learning about this and implementing this like it's just every day There's something new to learn and we are learning from each other and we're learning from the kids. The kids are teaching are teaching us every time like hey you when you can tell the kid's not making progress like the kids teaching you something's Noting. So Let's let's learn from this kid. What's happening. What's not., But what's not working. Um my biggest lesson has been like you can teach really powerful effective skills without pushing through problem behavior or waiting students out until they comply um compliance and waiting out have been to have become like really big red flag words for me if I hear staff talking about a. A kid. They're frustrated with or a kid. They're problem solving and they talk about um he's just not complying or he's noncompliant or they talk about how they have to wait the kid out like I Automatically think you know where's the breakdown happening or like how can I How can I problem solve this a little bit differently because there has to be a better plan.

39:34.36

theautismhelper

And the weighted out like has never worked which is kind of interesting from a behavioral perspective like what what has reinforced our behavior on thinking waited out works because it really doesn't.

39:42.64

Lisa Xagas

Yeah, right.

39:45.90

Courtney Peters

Yeah I don't know and I you know you've even heard like you're you're waiting like a kid's not sitting in the chair you give them the direction you wait and wait and wait and if you so waste 2 hours and they finally sit in the chair like are we going to celebrate that like it's. Don't education shouldn't have winners and losers and I feel like that's what you're doing is like you want to win and you want the kid to lose and that doesn't feel good that we were the grownups we should. We should think smarter than that when I think too like we've learned in this process like staff really needs to feel that permission that it is okay.

40:10.97

theautismhelper

Um, yeah.

40:17.27

Courtney Peters

To meet kids where they're at they're so focused on I have to get these academics and exposure to the general education curriculum and then their Iep goals and if they're on some sort of alternative assessment and they're you know like they want that compliance. Um because they want to be able to get all these things and and so I think it is hard for them. To reinforce that problem behavior because they want to make sure that kids are getting progress get all their things in. So I think we've had to have a lot of values based conversations with staff about why we reinforce though those warning signs that kind of give them permission to sit in like that discomfort and be okay. And that they can reinforce those those warning signs and that's not a bad thing to do. They might be scared like hey if I if I tell him to sit down and he doesn't sit down this time then he'll never respect me as an Authority I'll never be able to do anything with him again and like that's we, There's now that's not ah how it works.

41:09.25

theautismhelper

Yeah I Love these huge takeaways that you all have had and and how you know exactly effort who said it like you know we know Better. We do better and we continue to learn and reflect on on things that we've done in the past that you know we just didn't We didn't know better then and we do now. So. How can we have that change our practice So That's so so exciting to hear so for school I Hope really hope that this episode encourages especially schools to to look into this process move forward with this process. I Know you all mentioned. The Ftf website what other resources Do you suggest going to for kind of getting this started.

41:48.15

Courtney Peters

I I think starting at the fchaf website is is where teams need to start? There's a whole There's a bunch of free resources on that website. There's links to Youtube videos of some of Dr. Hanley's older presentations I think that's the best place to start is really with those. Those presentations and those trainings that are really like by the book. Um, once teams or individuals have a really strong grasp on like what the process looks like there's a really good Facebook group that offers suggestions but the Facebook group is usually it's it's full of people who have done this a lot. And so they're kind of riffing on us sometimes they're not doing it in like a very scripted regimented way and so it's really hard I think to start there because if you don't know the process from a to z really? Well then it's going to be really hard for you to go off script and start and start um, kind of improvising and that's what the Facebook group is more about super helpful if you know. If you know the process and you're just looking for help for like ah a certain case or you're looking for like other outside the box ideas. But I think that's a really hard place to start if you're just getting started with the process I know too.

42:52.92

Lisa Xagas

I Would encourage people to like I mean reach out to us or other districts that you know are trying it like there. There are certain complexities when doing this in a school setting and so if you're interested in doing that like talk to other people who've tried it. What worked what didn't work. Even. Our fall pilot to our spring Pilot. We made Adjustments. We're changing things we're We're kind of figuring out which are the best students to be a part of a pilot and what are the best staff members to complete it and what all is needed and and some of that comes through practice. So.

43:22.75

Courtney Peters

I think too because the process is very complex. It's hard to visualize if you're able to watch any video footage of treatment I know upstate cerebral palsy which I believe is now upstate caring partners does a lot of Pfa Sbt and they do have their own Youtube channel that has. Videos about sbt and I believe there's some clips that you can watch of treatments and they might be beneficial to staff as well to get that visual of what it actually looks like to run a session.

43:51.49

theautismhelper

Awesome! That's all really good advice I really agree on the Facebook group I'm not starting there because it's also all acronyms and if you don't understand the acronyms yet. Um, thank you all so much I think this has been not only a great overview really of what Pfa and Sbt is if that's new to anyone. But.

43:58.55

Courtney Peters

Um, yeah, um.

44:10.39

theautismhelper

For anyone that's already familiar with it. That's in that school setting. Um I Really appreciate the actionable advice you've given and some of the background and successes and and challenges of what's happening in your school district. So thank you all so much for taking the time to share this process with everyone.

44:25.00

Courtney Peters

Thank you for having us. Yeah, thank you.

44:27.89

Lisa Xagas

And yeah, it's really been an honor to talk about it honestly and so we're very grateful that you're sheting light on this topic.

44:35.12

theautismhelper

Thanks everyone.