Functional Communication Training (FCT) for Families

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What is Functional Communication Training (FCT)?

FCT is:

- an <u>evidence-based practice</u>

- that <u>replaces</u> problem behaviors

- with more appropriate and effective <u>communication</u>

What are Evidence-Based Practices?

Many interventions exist for supporting people with IDD

Scientific research has found only some of these interventions to be effective.

The interventions that researchers have shown to be effective are called *evidence-based practices* (EBPs).

27 Evidence Based Practices- NPDC (2014)

- Antecedent Based Intervention
- Cognitive Behavioral Intervention
- Differential Reinforcement
- Discrete Trial Teaching
- Exercise
- Extinction
- Functional Behavior Assessment
- Functional Communication Training
- Modeling
- Naturalistic Intervention
- Parent-Implemented Intervention
- Peer-Mediated Instruction and Intervention
- Picture Exchange Communication System

- Pivotal Response Training
- Prompting
- Reinforcement
- Response Interruption/Redirection
- Scripting
- Self Management
- Social Narratives
- Social Skills Training
- Structured Play Group
- Task Analysis
- Technology-Aided Instruction and Intervention
- Time Delay
- Video Modeling
- Visual Supports

What is Functional Communication Training (FCT)?

- FCT is communication about wants and needs

  Examples
  - I want that
  - I'm hungry
  - My head hurts
  - Go away!
  - That's mine
  - Help me
  - I'm bored. Can we go somewhere?
  - I need to use the bathroom
  - Can we spend more time together?

Why use FCT?

- Provides the person with an effective way to get their needs met

  - e.g., to get something or get away from something

  - Fundamental need for all people

- Reduces behaviors that are disruptive or harmful

  - Often related to difficulties with communication

Steps in the FCT process

1. Identify a challenging behavior

2. Determine why the person does the challenging behavior

3. Teach the person a more acceptable way to communicate what they want (replacement communication behavior)

4. Monitor the challenging behavior and the replacement communication behavior

Step 1: Identify a challenging behavior

- Behaviors are
  - Things we say
  - Things we do
- Choose the behaviors most beneficial to change
  - Safety concerns
  - Quality of life, ability to meet personal goals
  - Stigmatizing or isolating

Step 2: Determine why the behavior is happening

- Non-functional approaches to behavior
  - e.g., What form the behavior takes

- Functional approaches to behavior
  - Behavior is purposeful
    - Reinforced behaviors are repeated
    - If a behavior persists, then it is "working" somehow for that individual
  - If we know why a behavior is happening, we can help the person get their needs met in other ways
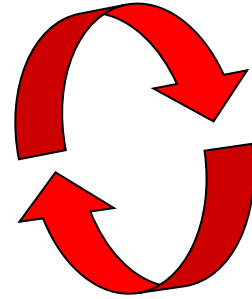
Step 2: Determine why the behavior is happening

Use the ABCs of Behavior

A = Antecedent

- What comes BEFORE the behavior

    - What is the "trigger"?

    - "WH" questions

        - Who was there?

        - When did it happen?

        - Where did it happen?
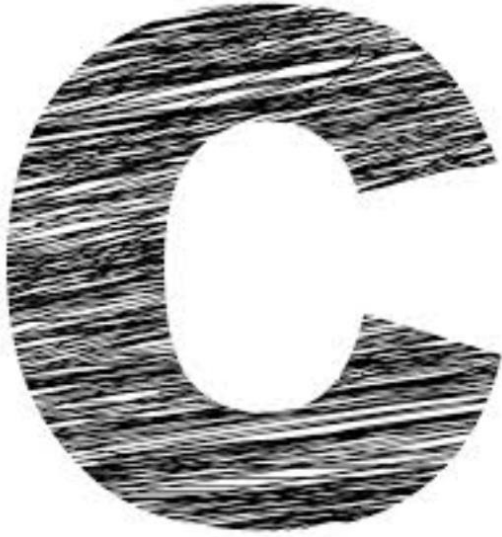
        - What specifically was happening?

B = Behavior

- What is the target behavior?

C = Consequence

- What happens AFTER the behavior

  ■ The result of the person's behavior

  ■ Consequences can be "good" or "bad"

    ○ Work task was delayed

    ○ Peers laughed

    ○ Person was scolded

    o Person was given favorite snack

Example

Was asked to shower	Punches Dad	Goes to room, does not shower

Let's Try It!

Identify the ABCs

Example 1

- Tina has been sitting in the living room while her mom talks on the phone. Tina throws magazines and stands on the coffee table until her mom walks over, helps her down, and tells her to stop throwing. This happens repeatedly until her mom gets off the phone.

- Antecedent_____
- Behavior_____
- Consequence_____

Example 2

● Shantel's dad tells her it's time for her chores. Shantel screams, tells her dad he's mean and unfair, then locks herself in the bathroom and refuses to come out. Shantel doesn't come out of the bathroom until her dad offers to play video games with her.

● Antecedent_____
● Behavior_____
● Consequence_____

Why do we need the ABCs?

- The ABCs show us patterns in behavior.

  - This gives us a clue as to what the function or purpose of the behavior is.

  - When we understand why a behavior is happening, we know what kinds of replacement communication behaviors to teach

Step 2: Determine why the behavior is happening

- "Function" = why a behavior occurs
- 4 possible functions
  - **S**ensory/Automatic
  - **E**scape
  - **A**ttention
  - **T**angible (Access to something)
- Can occur alone or in combination

Escape

- Temporarily delay, avoid, or permanently escape from:
  - Activities, tasks
  - Situations
  - People
  - Being told what to do
  - Change/novelty
  - ANYTHING aversive
    to that person

Attention

- Access to attention
  - Can take many forms:
    - Help
    - Provide reassurance
    - Share information
    - Have fun
    - Upset others
- From caregivers, peers, or anyone else
- "Good" or "Bad" attention
  - Does it matter? Not necessarily!
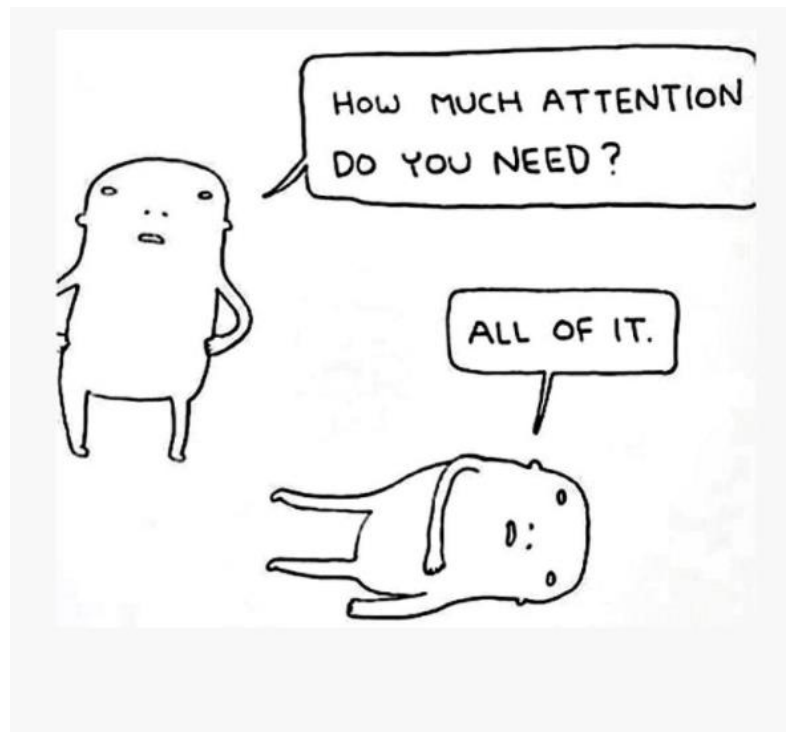
Tangible/Access

- Access to preferred items or activities
  - Food
  - Money
  - Technology
  - Being outside
  - "My way"

- To gain access
  - When told "No"

- To re-gain or maintain access
  - When something is taken away or the activity ends

Sensory/Automatic

- Different than first three
  - Happens independently of the **external or social** environment
  - "It feels good," "Is enjoyable," (increases stimulation) or is a source of relief (decreases stimulation, pain, stress)
  - Engaging in the behavior is its own reinforcer
- Examples:
  - Masturbating
  - Humming or singing
  - Biting fingernails
  - Self-stimulatory behavior/stereotypy
  - Scratching an itch
  - Activities that are "intrinsically motivating"

Activity

Identify Possible Functions

The Function is the reason

why a behavior is occurring.

Example 1

- Jose's mother is waiting in the checkout line at the grocery store. Jose asks for a candy bar. His mother says no, and Jose throws himself on the floor and starts screaming. Jose's mother gives Jose the candy bar, and he stops screaming.

  - Possible function of Jose's behavior?

  - Possible function of his mother's behavior?

Example 2

- Tina has been sitting in the living room while her mom talks on the phone. Tina throws magazines and stands on the coffee table until her mom walks over, helps her down, and tells her to stop throwing. This happens repeatedly until her mom gets off the phone.

- Possible function of Tina's behavior?

Example 3

- Shantel's dad tells her it's time for her chores. Shantel screams, tells her dad he's mean and unfair, then locks herself in the bathroom and refuses to come out. Shantel doesn't come out of the bathroom until her dad offers to play video games with her.

    - Possible function(s) of Shantel's behavior?

Step 3: Teach a replacement communication behavior

- Now that we have an idea of the function, identify other ways for the person to communicate that want or need

- The function of the replacement communication behavior should be the same as the function of the problem behavior
  - It meets the same need
  - Focus on changing behavior – **not** function

- Our hope is that problem behavior will disappear once replacement behaviors are learned and reinforced.

Step 3: Teach a replacement communicative behavior

- Examples:

  - <u>Sensory/Automatic</u>: Talk, sign, or use communication device **to request to change sensory input** (e.g., head phones)

  - <u>Escape</u>: Talk, sign, shake head, or use a break card to **remove a demand**

  - <u>Attention</u>: Comment, wave, raise hand, or hand over a picture to **gain attention**

  - <u>Tangible/Access</u>: Request, sign, point, or use eye gaze to **get/maintain an item or activity**

Step 3: Teach a replacement communication behavior

- The replacement behavior needs to help the person get their needs met

    - Waiting, accepting no, and following directions are **<u>not</u>** replacement communication behaviors!

- The replacement behavior is something the person has to do for themselves

    - Behaviors that care providers do are **<u>not</u>** replacement communication behaviors!

Activity

Identify possible replacement communication behaviors

Example 1

- Jose is playing with his cars when his grandpa says, "Time to put the cars away." Jose begins to cry and his grandpa says, "Okay you can play but only 5 more minutes."

    - What can Jose communicate instead of crying?

Example 2

- Tina has been sitting in the living room while her mom talks on the phone. Tina throws magazines and stands on the coffee table until her mom walks over, helps her down, and tells her to stop throwing. This happens repeatedly until her mom gets off the phone.

  - What can Tina communicate instead of standing on the table and throwing magazines?

Example 3

- Shantel's dad tells her it's time for her chores. Shantel screams, then locks herself in the bathroom and refuses to come out. Shantel doesn't come out of the bathroom until her dad offers to play video games with her.

  - What could Shantel communicate to her dad rather than screaming and locking herself in the bathroom?

Sensory behaviors and FCT

- Behaviors are intrinsically reinforcing

  Barriers to FCT

  - Can be extremely difficult to identify exactly why the behavior is happening

  - May not serve a clear communicative function

Sensory behaviors and FCT

- Can teach functional communication to request <u>changes</u> in sensory input
- Other options
  - Teach a behavior that is incompatible
  - Identify an item or activity that is MORE reinforcing than the target behavior
  - Teach "appropriate time and place"

NOTICE

NO CELL PHONE USE IN WAITING ROOM
PLEASE BE COURTEOUS AND
TAKE YOUR CALLS OUTSIDE
THANK YOU!

System of Communication

- What is the person's primary system of communication?
  - Talking
  - Writing
  - Sign language
  - Gestures, hand leading
  - Eye gaze, facial expressions
  - Communication board, PECS
  - Voice output device, other AAC
  - Multi-modal/total communication

- System of communication will depend on the person's
  - Current communication skills
  - Abilities
  - Needs, preferences
  - Family circumstances

  - *Important to provide **some** system of communication rather than nothing!*

System of Communication: AAC
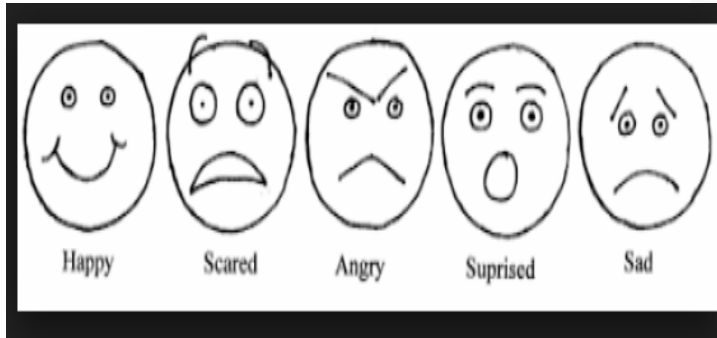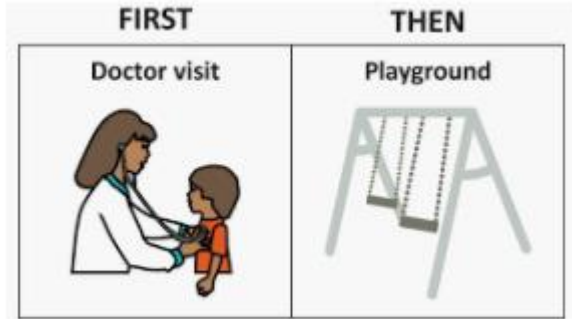
System of Communication: AAC

5	I need to stop now. I can't think and I can't answer your questions. I need a break
4	I am very worried. You are talking too much. I can't understand when you say so much. Please slow down
3	I am getting more anxious and worried. I need my calming object so I can think. I can't answer any more questions till I have my ....
2	I'm a little bit worried. You need to ask me questions with one key concept.
1	Everything is quiet and I feel OK

System of Communication: AAC

AAC controlled by gaze:

Https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qxz5br6uoyE

Step 3: Teach a replacement communication behavior

- FCT will only be effective if….

    ○ The new communication behavior is **EASIER** than the problem behavior

        ■ How the person communicates may vary depending on the situation

            ● Child talking and pointing to pictures to request break. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f5DmCCME5nY

    ○ The new communication behavior is **MORE EFFECTIVE** (e.g., more rewarded) than the problem behavior

        ■ The new communication behavior needs to be reinforced better than the problem behavior.

Step 3: Teach a replacement communication behavior

- Create learning opportunities multiple times per day

  - Highly motivating, communication temptations

    - What does this look like?

  - Communication temptation with bubbles: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bJZSOMEnagY

  - Missing items demonstration: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V9YDDpo9LWg

Step 3: Teach a replacement communication behavior

- Teach the replacement communicative behavior **<u>BEFORE</u>** the occurrence of problem behavior
  - If you teach after problem behavior, the 2 behaviors can become linked
  - Use prompts to prevent mistakes
    - e.g., visual, verbal/echoic for speakers, physical, gestural
  - Practice, practice, practice!
    - What does this look like?
- Young child learning to say no to a peer: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JHYfGQGVlnM

- "FCT Training with AAC Device" (teaching PECS phase 1 with pics on wrist) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pzS6GnafGes

- "ABA skills training request Mand" (Instructor fading prompts to child for requesting cookie) Https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d27kRgIvvTs

Step 3: Teach a replacement communication behavior

- Reinforce the replacement communicative behavior

    - In the beginning, reinforce quickly, easily, and consistently.

        - What does this look like?

    - "Developing intentional communication" (teaching a girl how to hit her hands on the mat to request bouncing)

        https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jb5DtDo-VAQ

Step 4: Monitor the interfering & replacement behaviors

- If the person is making progress
    - Continue using FCT
    - *Talk to a Behavior Consultant about next steps* (e.g., shaping, generalizing, learning to wait, tolerating disappointment & frustration)!

Step 4: Monitor the interfering & replacement behaviors

- If the person is not making progress, consider the following
  - Has the function of the problem behavior been appropriately determined?
  - Is the replacement behavior appropriately addressing the same need as the problem behavior?
  - Is the replacement behavior being appropriately reinforced?
  - *Talk to a Behavior Consultant about how to make things better*!

More You Tube Examples

- Adults role playing how to prompt for break, attention, and items using different communication modalities and indirect prompts: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z55A14yJpTU

- Young child learning to request a drink using a communication switch: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gVjKfPQjD4w

- Adults role playing a person learning to request help by waving a card: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C7G_x09SeYE

Free EBP Trainings
http://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/afirm-modules

- AFIRM Modules are designed to help you learn the step-by-step process of planning for, using, and monitoring an EBP with learners with ASD from birth to 22 years of age.

- Supplemental materials and handouts are available for download

afirm.fpg.unc.edu/afirm-modules

Additional Resources

- Clark, C. (2016). What is Functional Communication? Retrieved on June 7, 2019 from: https://www.speechandlanguagekids.com/functional-communication/

- Reeve Autism Consulting. (2017). Functional Communication Training: Why It's More than Just "Use Your Words". Retrieved on June 7, 2019 from: http://www.autismclassroomresources.com/functional-communication-training-why/

- Durand, V.M. (1990). *Severe behavior problems: A functional communication training approach.* The Guilford Press.

- Reichle, J. & Wacker, D. (2017). *Functional communication training for problem behavior.* The Guilford Press.