




Helping Your Family Thrive

A Practical Guide to Parenting With
Positive Behavior Support



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A Practical Guide to Parenting With Positive Behavior Support

by

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About the Authors

This book is written by three board certified behavior analysts and a parent/professional who all have extensive experience working with families. We collaborated on this book because we share similar values regarding respecting the uniqueness and integrity of families while using evidence-based practices to improve family decision making. Here is a bit more about each of the authors.

Meme Hieneman, Ph.D., BCBA, Consultant with Positive Behavior Support Applications, Faculty Member at Purdue University Global, and President of the Home and Community Positive Behavior Support Network, Palm Harbor, Florida

Meme was a consultant, researcher, educator, and advocate who worked with organizations that support children with significant behavioral challenges and provide information and resources through teaching and nonprofit work. She was married for more than 30 years and had two young adult sons. Meme had a doctorate in special education and was certified as a behavior analyst. She published a variety of articles, chapters, and three books. She developed a comprehensive video and training package on positive behavior support (PBS) for parents of children with autism and other developmental disabilities and was a regular contributor to *Parenting Special Needs Magazine*.

Meme worked with children with severe behavioral challenges and their families for more than 30 years. She was a residential program manager; behavior specialist for a school district; staff member for a program assisting families and professionals of children with autism; adjunct instructor at the University of South Florida (USF); director of a state-wide PBS project helping schools to implement proactive, evidence-based interventions; co-training coordinator for the National Research and Training Center on PBS; research director of the Positive Family Intervention Project at USF; director and developer of the applied behavior analysis (ABA) and autism programs at All Children's Hospital; and Co-Principal Investigator of a National Institutes of Health-research study focused on behavioral parent education. She last taught masters' level courses in ABA, consulted with agencies that provide family-focused behavioral support, and led a nonprofit organization called the Home and Community Positive Behavior Support Network (<https://hcpbs.org/>).

Sarah Fefer, Ph.D., BCBA, Associate Professor of School Psychology at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, Department of Student Development, School Psychology program

Sarah is a researcher, trainer, behavior analyst, and systems consultant supporting children, youth, families, and schools in meeting the needs of students with challenging behavior. Sarah has worked in the area of PBS since 2012 when she completed an advanced practicum at All Children's Hospital. Family-focused behavioral intervention was her area of emphasis during her doctoral training in school psychology at the University of South Florida. Sarah was under the supervision of Meme Hieneman, who delivered and evaluated the outcomes of informational workshops and intensive PBS to families experiencing a wide range of challenging child behavior. After her graduate training, Sarah moved to Massachusetts and worked as a doctoral intern in specialized schools for individuals with brain injuries and autism spectrum disorders. She provided training in proactive positive behavioral interventions to teachers, families, and residential staff. Sarah's applied experiences with youth and families across school, hospital, and clinic settings contribute to her current work focused on family-focused strategies as the key to student success.

Sarah is now Associate Professor of School Psychology at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, where she has trained graduate students and engaged in research and service delivery related to PBS for families since 2013. Her most recent projects focus on providing family education through schools, teaching parents to prevent and manage challenging behavior at home. This project involves implementing multiple types of family education using a multitiered model, with some proactive strategies available for all families with children in the school and more intensive education offered to families of students with more significant challenging behaviors.

Shane Isley, M.S., BCBA, Consultant with the Performance Thinking Network and Founder/Director of West Coast Behavioural Consultants, Ltd (WCB)

Shane is an entrepreneur, organizational performance consultant, and behavior analyst who earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in behavior analysis from the University of North Texas. After graduate school, Shane moved back to the Pacific Northwest with his heart set on utilizing behavioral science to make socially significant changes in the places where people spend the most of their time—home and work. In 2007, he founded West Coast Behavioral Consultants, which housed two divisions—Optimal and Blueprints. Optimal focused on performance improvement within organizations. Blueprints focused on intensive family-centered intervention for families with children at risk of out-of-home placement due to their severe challenging behavior. In 2010, Shane founded a sister company (WCB) in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

Applying his expertise in PBS to children and families' needs, Shane and his team of highly skilled practitioners collaborated closely with Dr. Hieneman to build a rigorous family-centered behavioral intervention program, including Family Foundations, which is a comprehensive parenting program. Blueprints gained a reputation for producing transformational change and keeping children in their homes rather than out-of-home placements. Intending to bring these services to even more families, Shane

merged with a multisite allied health services agency in Puget Sound in 2015, bringing Blueprints with him to his new partnership. Blueprints expanded its offerings by adding a preschool program, an early intensive behavioral intervention, and psychological services.

With 20 years of specialized experience and expertise in supporting families with children with significant behavioral challenges, Shane now consults with behavioral health agencies to establish/improve and sustain quality clinical practices, systems, and tools.

Missy Sieders, B.A., Parent Advisor at PEAK Parent Training and Information Center in Colorado, Certified Nurse's Aide for daughter who experiences an intellectual disability, Facilitator for Parents Encouraging Parents Conferences by the Colorado Department of Education

Missy is a parent advisor at PEAK Parent Center, consulting with families, service providers, and educators on inclusive education practices for students with disabilities. She designs and delivers online and live training sessions for families and educators in areas such as effective communications and advocacy skills, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, accommodations and modifications, developing friendships, and individualized education program (IEP) facilitation. She contributes to the PEAK Parent Center Blog and is a certified IEP facilitator. She is also a Certified Nurse's Aide for her daughter. She was a Colorado Special Education Advisory Committee member for 7 years and has served on numerous advisory committees for the Colorado Department of Education's Exceptional Student Services Unit. Missy graduated with high honors from Michigan State University with a bachelor's degree in industrial engineering. She has completed postgraduate work in the field of human resource development at Webster University.

Foreword

Positive behavior support (PBS) emerged in the late 1980s as a systematic process for developing and implementing research-based procedures for addressing the serious challenging behaviors of individuals (Carr et al., 2002; Horner et al., 1990). PBS was designed as an educative approach that relied on individualized assessment and avoided reliance on aversive techniques. Initially, PBS was intended for use with severe challenging behaviors exhibited by individuals with autism and significant intellectual disabilities; however, the appeal of PBS soon led to applications with much broader populations. In only a few years, PBS was adopted for use with behavior disorders, in early childhood classrooms, and even with children and youth who displayed problem behaviors but had no associated disability labels. Individualized PBS applications were employed in schools, communities, and family residences.

It soon became apparent that the effectiveness of individualized PBS was dependent to a large extent on the quality of the environmental context in which the process was implemented. And, so, efforts began to focus on larger units of analysis, such as whole classrooms and schools. Schoolwide positive behavior support (or positive behavior interventions and supports; PBIS) was developed in order to establish school cultures that promote adaptive, prosocial behavior and prevent disruptive, challenging behavior (Sugai et al., 2000). The multi-tiered system of support that characterizes schoolwide PBS was then tailored to meet the needs of early childhood programs including preschool classrooms, child care centers, and Head Start (Fox et al., 2003). It soon became apparent that these school and programwide strategies, when implemented effectively, could prevent the occurrence of many disruptive behaviors and, in some cases, obviate the need for individualized PBS altogether.

Let us now consider challenging behaviors in the context of families and home settings. There have been efforts to implement individualized PBS with families for more than 25 years, and some of these efforts produced satisfying outcomes (e.g., Durand et al., 2013; Lucyshyn et al., 2002; Vaughn et al., 1997). Resource manuals and books describing strategies for using PBS in homes and communities were produced. The most valuable of these resources was authored by Meme Hieneman, Karen Childs (Elfer), and Jane Sergay in 2006. As far as I know, it was the only authoritative resource that was written for parents as a guide for parents to use in implementing the process of individualized PBS with their own child. While adhering to the research-based principles and process of PBS, the book was a detailed, reader-friendly guide for

implementation of effective support. I am happy to report that this book is now in an upgraded second edition and available as *Resolving Your Child's Challenging Behavior: A Practical Guide to Parenting With Positive Behavior Support* (Hieneman, Elfner, & Sergay, 2022).

There is a problem—a significant limitation—in implementing PBS with families. The problem is analogous to the problem we encountered in using individualized PBS in classrooms. That is, if the context, the school or family culture, is not conducive to the right kind of change, then there is little likelihood that PBS will be implemented with integrity, sustainability, or effectiveness. If there is an absence of organization, clear expectations, and sensible routines, then PBS is likely to fail. I encounter this issue very often in the work that we do with families (Dunlap et al., 2017). Our answer to this frustration has been to recommend a set of foundational practices (structured routines, clear behavioral expectations, high rates of praise, etc.) prior to the PBS process, and sometimes this works pretty well. Indeed, there have been many occasions when the introduction of these foundational practices has served to fully resolve the “serious” problems that led to a referral for intensive and effortful PBS. However, sometimes these simple recommendations are not nearly enough.

It seems as if a more comprehensive solution would be to create a “familywide PBS” process, in a manner similar to what we have in place with schoolwide and programwide PBS. After all, much has been studied and written about family systems, and many recommendations have been put forth, but to my knowledge, there have been no books that have described family-systems process in the framework of PBS. Until now.

Meme Hieneman and her coauthors, Sarah Fefer, Shane Isley, and Missy Sieders, have provided a groundbreaking, user-friendly guidebook for families that articulates a solid process through which families can enhance and improve the ways that they solve problems and learn to interact more pleasantly and constructively. It is the book in your hands: *Helping Your Family Thrive: A Practical Guide to Parenting With Positive Behavior Support*. The process described in the book will be familiar to PBSers. There are a) a series of assessments, including a Family PBS Self-Check, b) goal-setting involving creating a family vision and expectations, c) making arrangements in the family environment, d) teaching behavior expectations and, of course, e) monitoring outcomes and problem solving. Movement through this process is facilitated by rich examples, a downloadable workbook, and case illustrations.

I used a few adjectives to describe this book, and I should explain them. It is “user-friendly” because it was written with parents as the primary consumer. The text avoids jargon and presents the PBS process in clear, linear, and straightforward language. The book is “groundbreaking” because it is the first systematic effort to bring PBS principles to the behavior of family systems. I believe that this book will be the first of many, and that future efforts in family support will use this model as the starting point. I also believe that the book will inspire research, and I hope it does. Although I have confidence that the model will be effective, its real value and potential will come from an empirical foundation. That is something to which I can look forward. In the meantime, this is a model and a process that I will strongly recommend. It has the power to help families in truly meaningful ways.

I wish to close this foreword with a word of thanks to the authors. This is an innovative and practical guide, and I sincerely appreciate its availability, but I must also issue a note of great sadness. The lead author of this book, and our good friend,

Meme Hieneman, died in August of 2021, following a lengthy struggle with cancer. Meme was a talented and generous woman who lived her life with courage and grace and humanity. I had known Meme for several decades, and I had the privilege of serving as her doctoral advisor at the University of South Florida. Meme made numerous contributions to the development and dissemination of PBS. This book is a wonderful example and a meaningful tribute. We will miss Meme greatly.

Glen Dunlap, Ph.D.
University of Nevada, Reno

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Note to the Reader

This book is written especially for you, the parent, caregiver, or other family member who would like to enhance your family functioning to produce the best possible behavior in your children while helping them grow socially and emotionally. *Helping Your Family Thrive: A Practical Guide to Parenting With Positive Behavior Support* will help you assess and enhance your current approach to supporting your children's behavior using a proactive, problem-solving process called *positive behavior support (PBS)*.

WHY DID WE WRITE THIS BOOK?

Throughout our careers and personal lives, we have witnessed the potential of PBS and recognized its benefits for families. Meme started on this journey when her children were still infants, writing a book with her colleagues Karen Elfner and Jane Sergay titled *Parenting With Positive Behavior Support: A Practical Guide to Resolving Your Child's Difficult Behavior* (2006), now in its second edition as *Resolving Your Child's Challenging Behavior: A Practical Guide to Parenting With Positive Behavior Support* (2022). Meme and her colleagues designed that book for parents who were facing behavioral challenges with their kids. It was helpful for many, but it did not apply to typical families who simply wanted to organize their lives to promote the best possible behavior in their children or get out in front of problems. Employing the principles and processes of PBS allows families to clarify expectations, set the stage for desired behavior by organizing their social and physical environments, and effectively respond to children's behavior.

PBS has been used to support individual children within families and has been adopted broadly in schools (i.e., positive behavior interventions and supports or PBIS) to improve their systemwide discipline practices. Not much has been written regarding how PBS can be applied within entire family systems. And much of what has been written includes technical jargon that makes the approach hard to digest for ordinary families. A variety of books are available that provide guidance for behavioral support in families, but few of them offer 1) a pragmatic, family-friendly, problem-solving approach that may be individualized to any situation and 2) a strong research basis to support the principles, processes, and practices. This book provides

the guidance you need to strengthen the desired behavior in your household and improve your quality of life.

Helping Your Family Thrive and *Resolving Your Child's Challenging Behavior* are complementary. One book helps families apply PBS holistically to improve family life overall; the other helps families use PBS to address specific challenges. *Helping Your Family Thrive* is about prevention and focuses on the whole family and home environment, whereas the other book is about responding when challenging behaviors occur. Both books guide readers through a PBS process that involves identifying goals, analyzing behavior patterns, designing strategies, using your plan, and monitoring progress—a continuing cycle as your family changes over time (see Figure I.1.) Each book stands alone; however, readers are also encouraged to use them together, starting with the book that aligns with their immediate needs.

A robust research basis supports the problem-solving approach, principles, and practices described in this book. Furthermore, the approach has been practiced with close to 150 individual families of neurodiverse children with significant behavioral challenges as part of a family-centered PBS program in Seattle, Washington. Dr. Hieneman and Shane Isley (Blueprints founder) collaborated to design and support the implementation of a family systems PBS model (Blueprints Family Systems Model) that used evidence-based practices (e.g., functional behavior assessments, positive behavioral interventions, measurement systems) to target four critical areas of family functioning: 1) structural, 2) interactional, 3) ecological, and 4) cognitive-emotive. The Blueprints program helped families

- Refine their household structure (e.g., household arrangement, scheduling, expectations)
- Increase and support behaviors that result in positive interactions within families (e.g., communication, consistency)

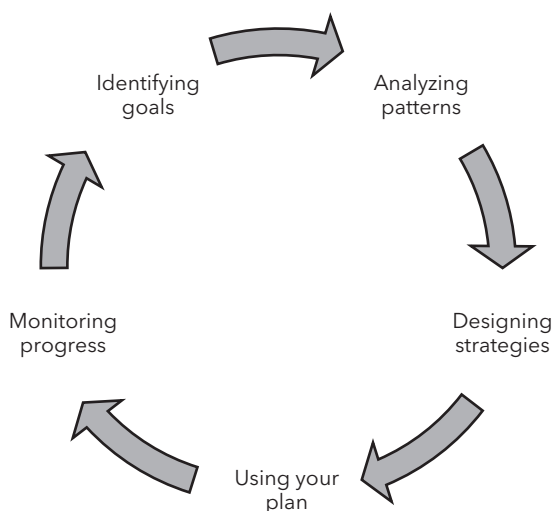


Figure I.1. The cycle of the positive behavior support process. (From Hieneman, M., Raulston, T., & Strobel, L. [2017]. *Special issue: Positive behavior support in family routines* [six-article series]. *Parenting Special Needs* magazine [online]. <https://magazine.parentingspecialneeds.org/publication/?m=13847&i=461820&p=1&ver=html5>)

- Enhance family ecology (e.g., broaden social networks and community participation)
- Address the cognitive and emotional barriers that make parenting challenging (e.g., optimism, buy-in, parental efficacy)

This family-centered approach produced socially valid and statistically significant outcomes for families of children with challenging behaviors. In some cases, we observed transformational change for individuals with challenges and their families.

FOR WHOM IS THE BOOK INTENDED?

This book is intended for parents and other primary caregivers who want to approach their children's behavior proactively, positively, and functionally (i.e., in ways that work). Please note that we use a broad definition of *parents* to include stepparents, grandparents, adoptive and foster parents, and kinship relationships, as well as biological parents. This book may also be beneficial for other family members to promote consistency in everyone's approach. In addition, we expect that therapists, behavior analysts, counselors, teachers, parent educators, and other professionals will find this book to be a good resource in their support of families. This book's organization, examples, and activities are also well suited for parent education programs.

Similarly, we use the terms *home* and *household* broadly to refer to the family's shared living space, whether this is a house, an apartment, an arrangement to stay with someone outside of the immediate family or in a motel or shelter, or any other shared family space, temporary or permanent. Regardless of immediate circumstances, all families can consider their home environment in supporting their family's quality of life.

HOW IS THIS BOOK ORGANIZED?

Helping Your Family Thrive is divided into three sections. Section I introduces the principles of PBS, explains how a family functions as a system, and gives an overview of how PBS can be used to improve family life. Section II offers a step-by-step process for strengthening your family so you can all thrive. Section III provides further recommendations for enhancing family functioning and shares stories of how two specific families followed the PBS process. Each section includes a variety of examples and practice activities to reinforce the information provided.

This book is accompanied by online resources to support families in using PBS. The *Helping Your Family Thrive* workbook is available on the Brookes Download Hub, along with an Excel spreadsheet for monitoring progress. The workbook consists of fillable PDF forms for completing a family self-assessment and developing a Family PBS Plan. You may choose to download the full workbook or download each form individually when you need it. See the Downloadable Resources lists throughout the book to identify what you will need for a given chapter.

HOW SHOULD THE BOOK BE USED?

This book outlines a problem-solving process and a set of principles that should be applied in an individualized manner. It is not a program or a set of practices, but instead is a framework for decision making that allows families to create their own solutions. Although we offer lots of examples, we expect our readers to use their creativity and

problem-solving abilities, relying on the book as a guide. To get the most out of this book, we encourage the following.

- *Apply what you learn.* Work through the exercises and forms as you read. Use the various activities, Before You Move On reminders and What Do You Think? exercises, to apply PBS to the case examples as well as to your own family. Record your thoughts and notes directly in the book, in a separate notebook or file, and/or in the downloadable forms. (Access to those supporting resources is available through the Brookes Download Hub; see the About the Downloads page.) There is no one correct way to work through the book as long as you are actively engaging with the content and applying what you learn to your own family.
- *Be creative.* Do not adopt the practices unless they really fit your situation.
- *Work collaboratively.* Engage other caregivers and your children in the process.
- *Integrate other approaches.* If you already do things that work and align with the general principles in the book, then keep doing them.
- *Track progress.* Monitor how your family is doing and make periodic adjustments when needed to ensure that the plan is doable and beneficial.

Thank you for picking up this book. We hope PBS is as helpful for your family as it has been for ours.

Acknowledgments

This book is based not only on our own personal and professional experiences but also on our colleagues and friends. We have benefited from amazing research in both PBS and parenting (see the Resources list at the end of the book). We have learned the most from the families with whom we have interacted over the years. They have shared their challenges and triumphs, and their stories have helped shape the contents of this book. Thank you to all of our teachers.

We are thankful for the competent and supportive staff at Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., who kept our vision for the complementary two-book concept alive and helped to make it a reality.

And finally, we would like to thank our families and friends for their continued encouragement and support.

In Memoriam

MARY ELLEN (MEME) HIENEMAN (1965–2021)

Our inspiring friend and colleague, Dr. Meme Hieneman, lost her long, courageous struggle with cancer before the second edition of *Resolving Your Child's Challenging Behavior* was published. Thankfully, and somewhat astonishingly, given her diminishing physical condition, she was able to orchestrate the revisions to the original text and to realize her vision of publishing a companion book, *Helping Your Family Thrive*, before she passed. Meme was determined to share her passion for family-based positive behavior supports with the world, and she set her sights on completing both texts as one of her final missions.

Meme left a devoted family, colleagues, students, and countless individuals who were recipients of her commitment to individuals with significant behavioral challenges and their families. Meme's contributions to the field of positive behavior support (PBS) were numerous and wide ranging. She embodied the principles of PBS in everything that she did and worked with many collaborators to ensure that her influence on the field will persist. Her legacy includes many articles for *Parenting Special Needs* magazine, creation of the Home and Community Positive Behavior Support Network, development of the *Practiced Routines* curriculum, numerous innovative and influential research projects, and much more.

Whether conducting research and writing, consulting, teaching, or advocating, Meme was tireless in her resolve to extend the effective use of positive behavior support technologies in home and community settings. She was brilliant, bold, and tenacious, just the kind of supporter you would want in your corner. You will see this spirit throughout both *Resolving Your Child's Challenging Behavior* and *Helping Your Family Thrive*. Meme's legacy lives on in the individuals who continue to be influenced by the organizations she originated, the influential mentoring and coaching provided, and the valuable resources left for all to access.



Introduction and Overview

Positive Behavior Support for Families

Section I of this book introduces you to positive behavior support. In Chapter 1, we explain its basic principles and approaches as a foundation for supporting or improving the day-to-day behavior of your entire family. In Chapter 2, we discuss how this approach applies to families, with a special consideration of the unique variations in family compositions, values, perspectives, dynamics, and needs.

1

Introducing Positive Behavior Support

Positive behavior support (PBS) is a practical, research-based approach for supporting people's behavior within their typical daily routines and settings. It was originally defined as an approach for addressing behavioral challenges of people with disabilities that combined the principles of applied behavior analysis (ABA) with person and family-centered values. As PBS has evolved, it has expanded its focus to include people with other behavioral support needs and demonstrated its effectiveness when applied to entire systems. This chapter introduces the core features of PBS. It will clarify that no one size fits all; strategies must be tied to the unique characteristics, needs, and behavior patterns of each individual person and family.

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE FOR POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT

Historically, our society has often been reactive and punitive when addressing behavior. There was a common perspective that if one “spares the rod, they spoil the child” and a tendency to correct or respond to misbehavior, rather than teach new skills. We have increasingly come to understand that we can support behavior more effectively if we understand its purposes and develop strategies to get out in front of problems. We recognize that challenging behavior often occurs because people do not have better ways of handling their circumstances. Finally, we recognize that the way we respond or react to behavior affects whether the behavior will continue or even escalate. These are the core principles of ABA, which is the technical foundation for PBS (Dunlap & Horner, 2006).

Another important evolution has occurred in our approach to behavior. We used to see behavior only at the level of the individual person, not recognizing that behavior is influenced by what other people in the environment say

and do. This ecological (i.e., big picture) perspective is very important because groups, systems, and communities all have an impact on people's behavior. It is helpful to look more broadly at behavior within settings (e.g., classrooms, schools, organizations)—and that includes families. PBS offers this ecological, proactive perspective and recognizes that it is essential to engage all family members to ensure that behavior support strategies fit their needs and circumstances and will promote positive and productive family functioning. Each of these elements of PBS are described next.

ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE SUPPORT

PBS is a process and set of principles to guide planning and decision making, rather than rigid procedures. Given this, PBS can be tailored to essentially any situation by ensuring that plans are based on a complete understanding of the home and community environment and family preferences, needs, and patterns of behavior. Professionals may be able to support families in this process, but the ownership must remain with the families themselves, engaging all members in the decision-making process. PBS plans are not single-strategy quick fixes, but instead a comprehensive approach that involves proactive strategies, teaching skills, and managing consequences, as well as broader support to improve family life.

Core elements of effective support include

- Understanding behavior, including the context in which it occurs and the purpose(s) it serves for the individual
- Developing comprehensive support plans that include proactive, teaching, and management strategies
- Improving lives by not only addressing challenges but also helping families thrive overall

These elements are discussed in the following sections.

Understanding Behavior

One of the grounding principles of PBS is that people respond in unique ways to environmental circumstances and are driven to achieve different outcomes. For this reason, we begin our process by gaining an understanding of the needs of everyone involved and the patterns contributing to desired and challenging behavior. We do this with the A-B-C (antecedent-behavior-consequence) model.

Antecedents, Behavior, and Consequences *Behavior* is what people say or do. We try to look at behavior as objectively as possible because assumptions can cloud our judgments. For example, rather than labeling a behavior as aggressive, we would simply say that a child hit or yelled at her sibling. *Antecedents* refer to events or conditions that come before behavior and may

include interactions with other people (e.g., being asked to do something, told no, or ignored) or environmental changes (e.g., changes in setting or schedules). They may also include broader issues (sometimes called *setting events*) such as historical events, illness, ongoing conflict, or changes in routines. For example, if we are under a lot of stress at work and find that our child skipped school or got into a fight, we may be more likely to overreact. The COVID-19 pandemic is another example of a setting event that had a large impact on family dynamics and behavior for many. Finally, *consequences* are the reactions or results that occur following the behavior. People commonly get or avoid things through their behavior. Desirable consequences tend to increase behavior, whereas undesirable consequences tend to decrease behavior. Consequences may be planned or incidental, but regardless of which they are, they affect the likelihood of the behavior happening in the future.

Purposes of Behavior Behavior has four primary purposes. These purposes (or in technical ABA language, “functions”) relate to desirable and challenging behavior. First, behavior can be motivated by attention. A parent may say “excuse me”—or yell loudly—to get their child to listen. Second, behavior may occur to gain access to items or activities. A child may request or grab items off the shelves in the grocery store or demand to play video games. Third, behavior may be driven by avoiding or stopping an unpleasant event. A parent may give in to a child’s demands for items or activities because they are worn down by nagging. Giving in often causes the child’s challenging behavior to stop, at least for the time being. Finally, behavior can have a self-stimulatory function, which means the activity itself is pleasurable and no social contingencies are in play. Many of us enjoy binge-watching certain programs, playing video games, exercising vigorously, or engaging in other activities that provide stimulation.

Behavior can also serve more than one function or result in complex outcomes. For example, a child might be sent to their room because they talk back to a parent. If a parent provides attention while arguing with the child about their behavior, and the child gets to read comic books in the room, then multiple reinforcing outcomes may be in play. Gaining or regaining control of circumstances can also be a powerful outcome of behavior. For example, this might occur when a parent yells at her children until they finally do what they are told or a child turns the tables on a parent during an argument so that the parent gives in. Understanding the different purposes that behavior serves and the antecedents that set the stage for the behavior is important in building effective strategies.

Developing Comprehensive Support Plans

Effective PBS strategies are individualized and tailored to the specific patterns maintaining the behavior. Although quick fixes may be popular, we cannot expect that a single strategy (e.g., time-out) will ultimately produce long-term improvements. Instead, we put together comprehensive supports that include implementing proactive and preventive strategies, teaching desired behavior

(e.g., to replace challenging behavior), and managing consequences that follow behavior to ensure that we are responding consistently and effectively. Table 1.1 provides a summary of different proactive, teaching, and management strategies tailored to the four functions/purposes of behavior.

Using Proactive Strategies Proactive strategies involve setting up situations to prompt desired behavior and prevent or minimize problems. Because

Table 1.1. Function-based interventions

Function or purpose	Proactive strategies	Replacement skills	Management strategies
Gaining attention	Increase the amount of attention provided throughout the day. Let the person know when attention will be available. Provide other activities when busy and unable to interact. Prompt the person to request attention appropriately.	Teach the person to request attention, such as proximity (come here), interaction (talk to me), or physical contact. Teach the person to engage in alternative activities when attention is not available.	Increase level and frequency of desired attention following desired behavior. Minimize attention (e.g., by ignoring, walking away) when challenging behavior occurs.
Obtaining items or activities	Clarify what items and activities are available. Remove off-limits items from the surroundings. Offer alternative activities or items when you must say “no.” Prompt the person to request or negotiate alternatives.	Teach the person to request items or activities or initiate access to activities on their own. Teach the person to accept alternative choices, to wait, and to accept “no.”	Provide desired items or activities only following appropriate behavior (e.g., requests). Withhold desired items or activities immediately after challenging behavior (including negotiation).
Escaping, avoiding, or delaying tasks or situations	Modify aspects of the settings or activities. Provide the person with choices of activities or their timing. Shorten activities or provide periodic breaks during them. Remind person how to request breaks or delays appropriately.	Teach the person to say “no” or “later,” take breaks, or use other ways to escape or delay unpleasant places or activities. Teach the person to cooperate and engage in nonpreferred tasks and activities for periods of time.	Allow breaks, delays, changes in the environment, or reductions in demands for appropriate behavior (e.g., participation). Delay assistance or breaks from tasks until challenging behavior stops and the person cooperates.
Sensory stimulation	Provide activities that produce appropriate sensory stimulation. Block the person’s access to inappropriate stimulation. Prompt appropriate forms of stimulation.	Teach the person to obtain sensory input through alternative appropriate actions. Teach the person to tolerate periods of reduced or increased stimulation.	Allow access to items and activities that provide appropriate sensory stimulation. Block the person’s access to inappropriate events (e.g., flipping items over and over).

we have identified antecedents, conditions, and environmental events that may affect behavior, we are empowered to set the stage for desirable behavior and make challenging behavior less likely to occur in the first place. Proactive strategies may include organizing our households, planning schedules, and establishing clear expectations. For example, we might make sure that everything children need to complete their homework is stored in one place. We might post a calendar on the refrigerator to include all family activities. We might review expectations for behavior prior to going to a restaurant. More examples of proactive strategies are provided throughout the book.

Teaching Replacement Skills Teaching skills is very important in PBS because children (and adults) often lack the communication, social, organizational, daily living, problem solving, self-management, or other skills to effectively negotiate their circumstances. We must avoid assuming that family members are simply unmotivated or being uncooperative. Instead, we should determine if they need better ways to get attention, items, or activities they desire or delay or avoid challenging circumstances appropriately (e.g., taking brief breaks, negotiating reductions in demands). We also need to consider if they need skills to effectively participate in social situations, complete tasks expected of them, or simply tolerate frustration. Teaching skills through explaining, modeling, and rewarding performance is critical to long-term success.

Managing Consequences Managing consequences means that we pay attention to the way we react or respond to behavior. Our goal is to maximize reinforcement (e.g., access to attention, special privileges or items, preferred activities, opportunities to avoid tasks) for desired behavior and minimize reinforcement following challenging behavior. For example, if we give our kids a lot of positive attention when they are participating in family activities but ignore their grouching, then they may be more likely to stay engaged. If we provide an allowance or access to screen time after children complete their homework and chores each week, then they may be more cooperative. If we help children with difficult tasks when they are clearly trying or asking for help, then we are reinforcing those efforts. Consequences pertain to parents as well. We should reward ourselves for being proactive and staying even keeled during family interactions (e.g., with a piece of chocolate, a long bath, or watching our favorite show).

Improving Lives

PBS is not only about motivating and managing behavior, it is also about creating the best possible lives for families. This often involves broadening our focus to other areas that affect families, such as work and home demands, interpersonal relationships, physical and mental health, communication, schedules and routines, household structure, and available support systems. These factors are certain to affect family functioning and enjoyment; therefore, it is necessary to look beyond the moment-to-moment interactions to long-term

considerations and the big picture. For example, if all family members are not communicating openly and effectively, then it is very difficult to resolve problems. If histories of trauma are affecting family members' reactions to situations, then they cannot be ignored. If the demands on family members' time are overwhelming, then it may feel next to impossible to shift to a more proactive, planful approach. For this reason, it may be important to ensure that the timing of initiating and engaging in the family-focused process described in this book works for everyone involved. Therefore, it is critical that PBS is viewed as a collaborative process in which parents and children work together to build on the family's strengths, take advantage of available resources, identify and resolve problems, and strengthen their connections with each other.

SUMMARY: WHAT IS POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT?

PBS has been applied successfully across various people and settings and aligns with recommended best practices (e.g., American Academy of Pediatrics). PBS focuses on 1) understanding why behavior occurs and continues to occur, 2) developing comprehensive, individualized strategies to prevent, teach, and reinforce behavior, and 3) improving the lives of all involved.

BEFORE MOVING ON

- **Do you understand the role PBS can play in improving the lives of individuals and families so they can thrive?**
- **Are you able to describe and provide examples of the key features of PBS?**