



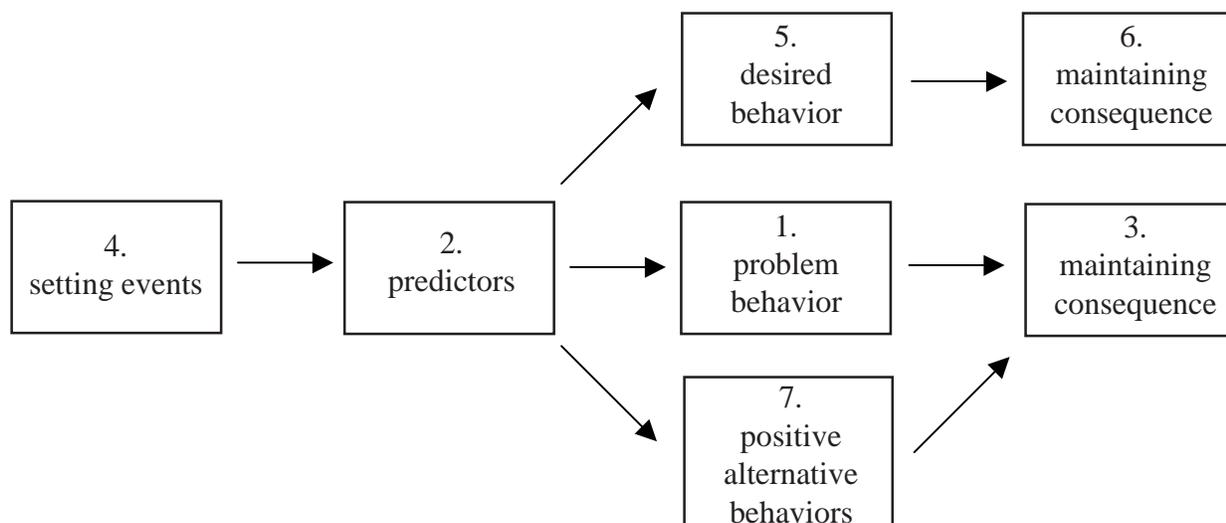
## PBS Practice

The purpose of the series on PBS Practices is to provide information about important elements of positive behavior support. PBS Practices are not specific recommendations for implementation, and they should always be considered within the larger context of planning, assessment and comprehensive support.

### *Competing Behavior Model*

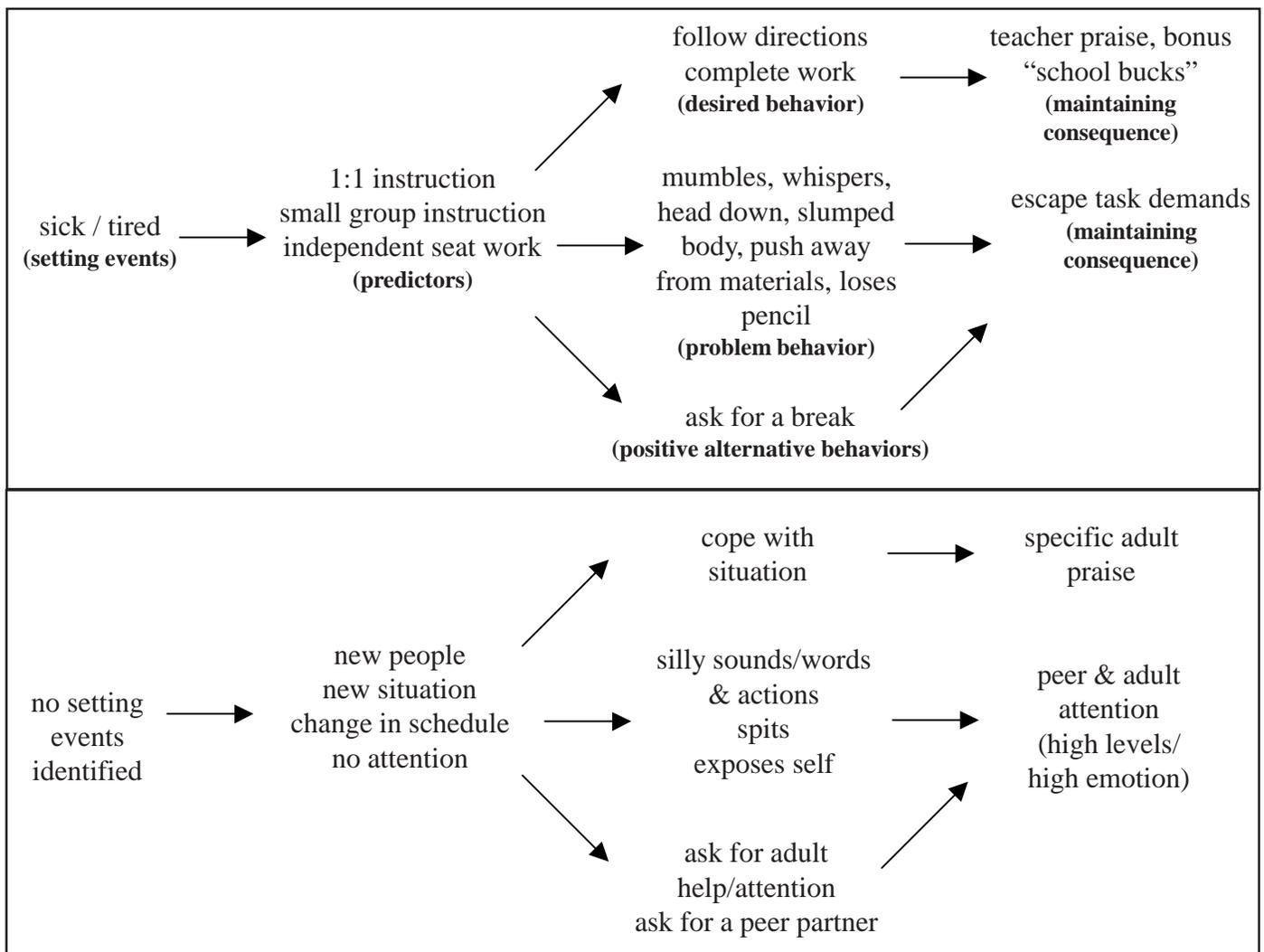
The competing behavior model helps to provide a link between functional assessment information and developing a positive behavioral support plan. This model is based on the logic that many different behaviors, some more appropriate than others, may serve the same function (i.e., produce the same reinforcing event). When a positive alternative behavior (i.e., a replacement skill) provides the same type of consequence that problem behaviors produce, the likelihood that a person will use the alternative behavior increases. This is especially true if the positive alternative is easier, or somehow more efficient, than problem behaviors. The problem behaviors are replaced by alternatives that successfully compete.

The competing behavior model involves seven steps. The first four steps represent a four-part summary statement (or hypothesis) that results from a functional behavioral assessment (FA). These first four parts are: (1) the **problem behaviors**, (2) **predictor events** (immediate antecedents) for problem behaviors, (3) the **maintaining consequence** of problem behaviors, and (4) **setting events** relevant to occurrence of problem behaviors. Once these core elements of the FA summary statement are identified, support planners should determine (5) the **desired behavior** in the situation (i.e., what behavior(s) do you really want the person to do?) and (6) the **maintaining consequence** for the desired behavior. Typically, the desired behavior leads to a maintaining consequence that is different from the consequence produced by problem behavior. Finally, they select (7) a **positive alternative behavior** (replacement skill) that will produce the same maintaining consequence as problem behavior. These seven parts result in a diagram (see below) that is then used for identifying and selecting possible behavior support procedures.



The basic idea in developing a support plan based on the competing behaviors model is to make problem behaviors irrelevant (there is no need to do them), inefficient (there are easier behaviors to engage in), or ineffective (problem behaviors no longer work to produce the desired outcome). Support planners identify procedures that will promote and strengthen the links between predictors, positive desired and alternative behaviors, and their maintaining consequences, and procedures that reduce or weaken the links between predictors, problem behaviors, and their maintaining consequences. To promote performance of desired behaviors, support planners must ensure that these behaviors have been taught, and that they produce adequate maintaining consequences (reinforcers) when they occur. To increase the use of positive alternative behaviors, an acceptable replacement behavior must first be identified, and then systematically taught. When this positive alternative behavior occurs, it must produce the same consequence that maintains the problem behaviors. To compete successfully with problem behavior, the positive alternative behavior must be more efficient in producing the desired maintaining consequence than the problem behaviors that it is replacing.

Examples:



*Competing Behavior Model*

## Frequently asked questions:

1. *Can a person have more than one problem behavior summary statement, and, therefore, need more than one competing behavior model developed?* Yes. A competing behavior model should be completed for each summary statement that results from the functional assessment.
2. *What if we do not know the setting events?* Behavior support planning can still occur and be effective if relevant setting events are not known. Typically, connections with the individual's personal life help to identify relevant setting events for a problem behavior. Observations across living settings, and conversations with people who know the person with problem behavior well, may help to identify and understand the setting events that may contribute to the person's problem behaviors.
3. *What is the difference between desired and positive alternative behaviors? Aren't they both just appropriate, positive behaviors?* The main difference is in the consequences that these behaviors produce (i.e., their maintaining consequences). The maintaining consequences delivered for "desired behavior" are different from the consequences that maintain problem behavior. Because they produce different consequences, desired behaviors successfully compete with problem behaviors only when the consequences for desired behaviors are stronger (more powerful) than the consequences for problem behaviors. Positive alternative behaviors should result in the same maintaining consequences as problem behaviors. Because they produce the same consequences, alternative behaviors serve as acceptable replacement behaviors for problem behaviors. Alternative behaviors will be used if they are easier to do or more efficient than problem behaviors.
4. *Does using the competing behaviors model to identify positive alternative behaviors guarantee that problem behaviors will disappear for good?* No. First remember that you may need to teach and prompt an alternative behavior to get it to occur and be reinforced. Also, if alternative behavior does not work or stops working (i.e., is no longer reinforced), then problem behaviors may return, especially if they continue to produce desired outcomes for the person.

### Other resources:

Horner, R. H., Albin, R. W., Sprague, J. R., & Todd, A. W. (2000). Positive behavior support. In M. E. Snell & F. Brown (Eds.), Instruction of students with severe disabilities (5<sup>th</sup> Edition) (pp. 207-243). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Horner, R. H., Sugai, G., Todd, A. W., & Lewis-Palmer, T. (2000). Elements of behavior support plans: A technical brief. Exceptionality, 8(3), 205-216.

O'Neill, R. E., Horner, R. H., Albin, R. W., Sprague, J. R., Storey, K., & Newton, J. S. (1997). Functional assessment and program development for problem behavior: A practical handbook. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.

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