



The Behavior Web Newsletter

CREATING ALTERNATIVES TO RESTRICTIVE INTERVENTIONS

The Worst Mistake

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Welcome to the inaugural issue of The Behavior Web Newsletter! Each month we will bring you a discussion and tips about topics related to behavior management and behavior analysis.

Thank you to all of you who answered the survey and let me know which topics are of interest to you. Many of you have requested tips on how to manage "problem" behavior, so, today, this will be our topic.

In my experience, when people talk about *Behavior Management*, hardly ever they are referring to the prevention of problem behavior. Most of the time, they are talking about some sort of crisis de-escalation, "managing" the behavior, so it does not get worse.

Ideally, we should be working towards building the skills which the individuals with whom we work often lack, and in turn lead to crisis situations. When that is not possible due to environmental limitations, or simply because the staff dealing with the behavior do not understand it, your aim should be to not make it worse.

So, to start, instead of teaching you how to avoid crisis situations, I am going to talk

about how make sure that you don't make it worse.

Whenever we see someone in distress our first impulse is to say "Relax" or "calm down". Those are **two of worst things** you can say during a crisis. When you ask someone to "stop" or to "be calm" you are addressing your needs to have the crisis end, not the patient or the person in distress.

Think back to a time when you were very upset and someone asked you to "relax". How did that make you feel? More upset? Embarrassed? Discounted? When someone is expressing his emotions during a crisis (even if in a challenging way) and you tell them to stop, you may make that person feel discounted, as if his emotions are "wrong".

Instead of addressing the behavior (e.g. "stop punching the wall", "stop yelling"), tell the person you see how upset he is and you are willing to help (e.g. "I see you are upset, is there anything I can do to help?", or "it looks to me as there is something bothering you, would you like to talk?").

I understand that ultimately we do want the behavior to stop, but we can get there without making it seem as if it is inadequate.

For example, we can say "I see that you are upset, and you might get hurt punching the walls, help me understand how I can support you now so that you don't need to punch the walls to feel better."

During a moment of crisis, the worst mistake you can make is to forget about the individual and address only the behavior. Your best bet at de-escalation is to acknowledge the emotional state the individual is experiencing and offer support.

Coming Soon

We're preparing a new series of courses to come up soon, which include "Meet Ups" where behavior analysts in private practice can get

Check The Website

For updates to the blog, including video tutorial explaining a chosen technical term. New videos are uploaded regularly. You can also subscribe to the blog to have these updates delivered to your inbox.