

Meaningful Solutions for Severe Problem Behavior Associated With Autism

Presented by Gregory P. Hanley, Ph.D., BCBA-D

Ten Unique Aspects of the Approach

- 1. Closed-ended indirect assessments (MAS, QABF, FAST) are never used in the process**
- 2. Extensive descriptive assessments (those requiring more than 30 min) are never part of the process**
- 3. An open-ended interview (see page below) is always part of the process (as is one brief and informal observation)**
- 4. A standard 4 or 5 condition analysis (with the play condition as the control, e.g., Iwata et al., 1982) is never part of the process**
- 5. A two-condition analysis designed from the open-ended interview is always part of the process**
- 6. We synthesize multiple contingencies into one test condition, if the interview suggests the contingencies are operating simultaneously**
- 7. Our function-based treatments are always skill-based**
- 8. We always increase the complexity, flexibility, and/or interactional nature of the FCR before teaching delay/denial tolerance**
- 9. We always explicitly teach delay/denial tolerance and use the delayed reinforcer to shape up either compliance or independent play**
- 10. We work hard to ensure that the process is agreeable and outcome is meaningful to both children and parents**

Open-Ended Functional Assessment Interview

Developed by Gregory P. Hanley, Ph.D., BCBA-D
(Developed August, 2002; Revised: August, 2009)

Date of Interview: _____

Child/Client: _____

Respondent: _____

Respondent's relation to child/client: _____

Interviewer: _____

RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. His/her date of birth and current age: ____ - ____ - ____ ____yrs ____mos Male/Female
2. Describe his/her language abilities.
3. Describe his/her play skills and preferred toys or leisure activities.
4. What else does he/she prefer?

QUESTIONS TO INFORM THE DESIGN OF A FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS

To develop objective definitions of observable problem behaviors:

5. What are the problem behaviors? What do they look like?

To determine which problem behavior(s) will be targeted in the functional analysis:

6. What is the single-most concerning problem behavior?
7. What are the top 3 most concerning problem behaviors? Are there other behaviors of concern?

To determine the precautions required when conducting the functional analysis:

8. Describe the range of intensities of the problem behaviors and the extent to which he/she or others may be hurt or injured from the problem behavior.

To assist in identifying precursors to dangerous problem behaviors that may be targeted in the functional analysis instead of more dangerous problem behaviors:

9. Do the different types of problem behavior tend to occur in bursts or clusters and/or does any type of problem behavior typically precede another type of problem behavior (e.g., yells preceding hits)?

To determine the antecedent conditions that may be incorporated into the functional analysis test conditions:

10. Under what conditions or situations are the problem behaviors most likely to occur?
11. Do the problem behaviors reliably occur during any particular activities?
12. What seems to trigger the problem behavior?
13. Does problem behavior occur when you break routines or interrupt activities? If so, describe.
14. Does the problem behavior occur when it appears that he/she won't get his/her way? If so, describe the things that the child often attempts to control.

To determine the test condition(s) that should be conducted and the specific type(s) of consequences that may be incorporated into the test condition(s):

15. How do you and others react or respond to the problem behavior?
16. What do you and others do to calm him/her down once he/she engaged in the problem behavior?
17. What do you and others do to distract him/her from engaging in the problem behavior?

In addition to the above information, to assist in developing a hunch as to why problem behavior is occurring and to assist in determining the test condition(s) to be conducted:

18. What do you think he/she is trying to communicate with his/her problem behavior, if anything?
19. Do you think this problem behavior is a form of self stimulation? If so, what gives you that impression?
20. Why do you think he/she is engaging in the problem behavior?

Tactics to Overcome General Obstacles to Conducting Functional Analyses

To address concerns regarding....	Consider....
.... the time required to conduct an analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– scheduling brief (3 to 5-min) sessions– conducting an analysis informed by an open-ended interview consisting of only a single test condition and intimately matched control condition– synthesize contingencies
....the complexity of an analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– conducting an analysis informed by an open-ended interview consisting of only a single test condition and intimately matched control condition
....the difficulty “selling” the analysis to constituents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– building a therapeutic relationship with parents and teachers via open-ended interviewing– describing the practical and humane reasons for understanding function prior to treating problem behavior– describing how reinforcement-based treatments are more likely following a proper functional analysis– using analogies to explain the logic and acceptable risks inherent in a properly designed functional analysis,– emulating the conditions they described as being important to problem behavior in your analysis
....the danger to the client and person conducting the analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– conducting the analysis in an environment that allows for the problem behavior to occur safely– including clearly signaled contingencies and continuous schedules of programmed consequences in test conditions– scheduling brief (5-min) sessions– conducting an analysis informed by an open-ended interview consisting of only a single test condition and intimately matched control condition– arranging for putative reinforcers to only be provided for precursors to the dangerous behavior in the test condition– synthesizing all contingencies suspected of influencing problem behavior
.... low-rate problem behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– acknowledging that because putative establishing operations are repeatedly arranged in functional analyses, differentiated analyses can be obtained even for reportedly low rate behavior– extending the durations of sessions and assessments– conducting analyses only when problem behavior is occurring– conducting additional open-ended interviews or observations to discover idiosyncratic factors that may be included in analyses
.... covert problem behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– conducting the analysis in a baited environment and in the absence of others– conducting a reinforcer analysis in which the likely reinforcers for problem behavior are available concurrently and or for arbitrary responses of similar effort

Designing Individualized Functional Analyses

- 1) What problem behavior(s) will be targeted in the analysis?
- 2) What problem behaviors will be measured and how?
- 3) What are the safety precautions for the analysis? Has consent been obtained?
- 4) What reinforcers will be arranged in the test condition?
- 5) How will the value of the reinforcers be established?
- 6) How will the control condition be arranged?
- 7) What discriminative stimuli will be incorporated in test/control conditions?
- 8) What materials will be available in all conditions?
- 9) How long will sessions be? How long will inter session time be and what will occur?
- 10) Where will the analysis be conducted and by whom?
- 11) What session order will be used (what will the experimental design be)?
- 12) Who will graph and interpret the results?
- 13) Who will design and evaluate the function-based treatment?
- 14) Who will adjust the treatment so it is effective once extended to the school and home?

Activity: Each group should select a unique contingency that could influence a problem behavior. Discuss what the Test and Control conditions would look like. Practice the Test and Control conditions. Share role play with entire group.

Problem Behavior:
Contingency suspected of influencing problem behavior: EO: SR:
Contextual features held constant across test and control conditions:
Test condition description:
Control condition description:
Questions?

Designing function-based treatments

Pseudonym and age:	
Language abilities:	
Form of problem behavior:	
Reinforcer(s) for problem behavior:	
Conditions under which reinforcer(s) are valuable:	

How are you going to strengthen some response to produce the same reinforcer maintaining problem behavior?	
How are you going to withhold or minimize that same reinforcer from following problem behavior?	
How will you teach the person to tolerate progressively longer periods of time when that reinforcer is not available?	
How will you use that reinforcer to develop important and developmentally and socially appropriate repertoires?	

Supplemental Notes

The assessment and treatment commitments outlined in this presentation are described in:

- Hanley, G. P., Iwata, B. A., McCord, B. (2003). Functional analysis of problem behavior: A review. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, 36, 147-186.
- Hanley, G. P. (2010). Prevention and treatment of severe problem behavior. In E. Mayville & J. Mulick (Eds.) *Behavioral foundations of autism intervention*. Sloan Publishing: New York.
- Hanley, G. P. (2011). Functional analysis. In J. Luiselli (Ed.) *Teaching and Behavior Support for Children and Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder: A "How to" Practitioner's Guide*. Oxford University Press: New York.
- Hanley, G. P. (2012). Functional assessment of problem behavior: Dispelling myths, overcoming implementation obstacles, and developing new lore. *Behavior Analysis in Practice*, 5, 54-72.
- Hanley, G. P., Jin, C. S., Vanselow, N. R., & Hanratty, L. A. (in press) Producing meaningful improvements in problem behavior of children with autism via synthesized analyses and treatments. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*.