Preface

Problem behavior represents an important challenge in enabling persons with developmental disabilities to reach their full potential. For years, problem behavior was viewed as actions produced by an individual that should be suppressed. However, an overwhelming consensus has emerged over the past 40 years that much of the problem behavior produced by individuals with developmental disabilities is maintained by social consequences such as escaping aversive events or obtaining/maintaining access to objects, actions, and/or the attention of others. One viable intervention strategy is to teach learners a socially acceptable communicative alternative to the problem behavior that is maintained by those social consequences. We have spent much of our careers trying to determine how best to make this happen. Equally important, however, is the realization that just as socially acceptable communication can be empowering, it must be used in moderation. For example, while one can politely refuse asparagus, one cannot refuse seizure control medication. Consequently, it "takes a village" of intervention and support strategies—well beyond teaching alternative communication skills—to maintain a balance between communicative empowerment and self-regulation. Even though this book deals almost exclusively with intervention, we know that linking the "function" of problem behavior to a closely targeted intervention is crucial in providing behavioral support.

Although there a number of excellent resources that address the functional assessment of problem behavior, substantially fewer resources are available that address the procedural aspects of functional communication training (FCT) and related intervention/support strategies. In this volume, we have accumulated what we believe to be sound advice in implementing

socially acceptable communicative behavior that serves as an alternative to an individual's problem behavior. We also offer descriptions and examples of a variety of strategies that, when considered collectively, can provide assistance in designing a comprehensive support plan. Throughout the book, we use case examples (indicated by gray shading) to illustrate points that we make. We also acknowledge that the strategies we suggest are by no means the only way to intervene. The following is a brief overview of each chapter in this book.

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to FCT. It describes the importance of determining the function(s) or purpose(s) served by problem behavior. Once this is accomplished, the interventionist is in a position to select a communicative alternative that closely matches the function served by problem behavior. This match is critical if the recipient of the intervention is to choose to use the new alternative rather than problem behavior to obtain the outcome that he or she seeks.

Chapter 2 describes the selection of a communicative alternative to be taught. In doing so, we identify potential disciplinary differences in the interpretation of the term *communicative function*. We describe the nature of these differences by emphasizing the importance of a team approach and understanding each discipline's approach to understanding why an individual attempts to influence the behavior of others. We also consider the selection of a communicative mode and the specificity of symbols that are selected for communicative alternatives to problem behavior. We emphasize the importance of considering the use of multiple communicative modes in designing FCT.

Chapter 3 offers an integrative model to establish communicative alternatives and enhance self-regulatory skills. This chapter introduces the importance of teaching an individual to use communicative behavior *conditionally*, that is, to understand when it is appropriate to use a newly taught communicative behavior. For example, an individual should request assistance when he or she cannot independently complete an activity, but refrain from using an assistance request when he or she can act independently. Using communicative behavior conditionally requires that the individual receive intervention that best maximizes appropriate generalized use while minimizing inappropriate use of a new communicative alternative. We identify *general case instruction* as a strategy that can provide assistance with learners who struggle with appropriate conditional use. In describing the importance of the conditional use of communicative behavior, we explain that for many individuals (e.g., persons who experience impulsivity), it can be difficult to strike a balance between empowerment and self-regulation of their actions. We emphasize the importance of incorporating support strategies to enhance self-regulatory skills during communication training. Because interventionists often use strategies that are consequence based, we

also provide a range of strategies, including antecedent-focused interventions that can be implemented prior to an episode of problem behavior and consequence-based interventions that can be implemented after the emission of problem behavior as well as after the emission of desirable behavior. Each group of strategies is often paired with FCT.

Chapter 4 provides an elaboration of a number of different evidence-based antecedent-focused intervention strategies. We describe each and provide examples of how these interventions can be utilized in applied settings and often combined with FCT.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 each address teaching communicative alternatives focused on problem behavior that is maintained by escape. Taken collectively, these chapters emphasize the importance of identifying the function that maintains problem behavior as precisely as possible. Chapter 5 addresses teaching socially acceptable communicative protesting. We provide a brief review of protesting among typically developing children and the intervention evidence in teaching protesting. This is followed by intervention steps that include examples. Chapter 6 is organized similarly to Chapter 5: it describes the development of assistance requests and discusses the range of situations that support requests for assistance. Requesting assistance is interesting in that it can serve as an alternative to problem behavior maintained by negative reinforcement (e.g., from a difficult or nonpreferred task) or as access to positive reinforcement (e.g., a tangible item). For example, difficult work may continue contingent on a request that provides sufficient assistance. Alternatively, a child may be unsuccessfully attempting to unwrap a present until assistance is requested with the appropriate consequence. Chapter 7 addresses problem behavior maintained by escape resulting from activities that extend beyond the individual's ability to tolerate engagement. A range of situations that support this intervention are described. Subsequently, examples of combining FCT with antecedent-focused intervention strategies are discussed, accompanied by procedural steps and examples.

Chapter 8 addresses problem behavior that is maintained by the attention of others. After describing the emergence of attention-seeking communicative strategies that occur in typical development, we discuss unique problems that can be associated with attention-maintained behavior. For example, the motivating operations underlying responding with escape-maintained behavior are often quite apparent as the learner reacts to the presence of specific demands or situations. In many of these situations, the care provider has actually planned and instigated the events. However, with attention-maintained problem behavior, there is often a highly individualistic response to not receiving attention—that is, some learners appear to be motivated to obtain constant attention, while others have different levels of desired attention. Additionally, some learners demand attention only

when they see others in their vicinity receiving attention. Finally, a learner's response to the range of forms that attention can take is often different and may be influenced by who is delivering the attention. For these reasons, designing interventions to address behavior maintained by attention can be challenging for an interventionist with limited experience. Consequently, this chapter identifies some of the challenges in designing and implementing intervention strategies to address attention-maintained behavior.

Chapter 9 covers functional communication aimed at addressing problem behavior maintained by tangibles. We begin by discussing the importance of determining learner preferences and describe a variety of evidence-based strategies designed to assess preferences. Subsequent to determining learner preferences, we provide a number of suggestions for implementing a program to teach learners to use socially appropriate communicative alternatives to access desired objects and events.

We conclude with *Chapter 10*, which summarizes the components of an effective positive support plan for persons who engage in behavior that is emitted to influence others' behavior.

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