



David Pitonyak &
John O'Brien

Version 1.1

2 February 2011

Effective Behavior Support

People with disabilities whose behavior concerns others often rely on the skilled help of specialist staff. Their role has different names –including Behavior Specialist, Behavior Therapist, Behavior Consultant. Their effectiveness depends on their values and beliefs, their capacity to form and maintain good relationships, their ability to identify and assist staff to employ best practices that will improve the person's situation, and their effectiveness as advocates for necessary changes in service practices.

Values and Beliefs That A Specialist Demonstrates in Action

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

Individual behavioral difficulties are often symptomatic of an organizational culture and structure that frustrates people's needs for relationship, control, and meaningful contribution.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

Any service practice that ignores or compromises a person's right to an ordinary everyday life is unethical.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

The fundamental goal of any support plan is to help the person to experience more joy in living.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

Presuming competence and the capacity for life-long learning is a necessary condition for effective support.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

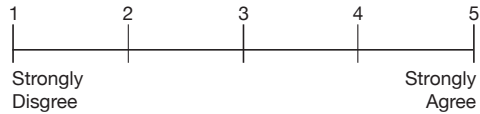
A person who is "out of control" needs more control of their circumstances, not less.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

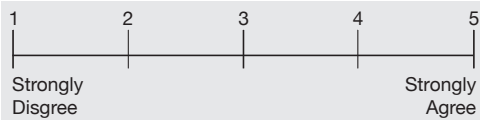
Often, a person gains greater control when he or she learns more about what to do, e.g. greater ability to communicate, self-management skills, relevant practical skills.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

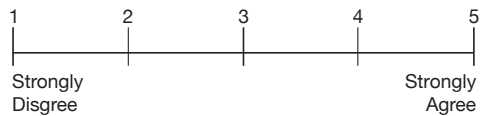
Often, a person can improve his or her ability to self-regulate when he or she gains greater understanding of his or her emotions.



Opportunities to make a contribution to others are necessary to emotional well being.

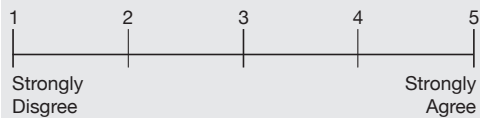


Planning with a person and his or her supporters in a holistic –person-centered– way is essential to responding effectively to difficult behavior.

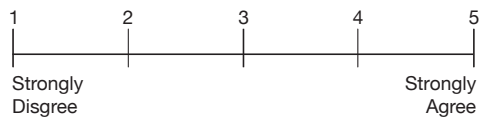


Effective support focuses on systematically addressing fundamental life issues, including those identified by these seven questions:

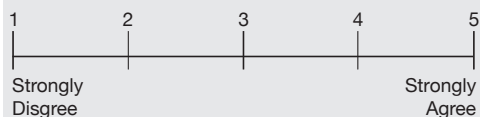
1. How can we help this person to broaden and expand his or her relationships?
2. How can we help this person to experience a sense of health and well-being?
3. How can we help this person find joy in ordinary community places and activities?
4. How can we help this person have more control and choice in his or her life?
5. How can we help this person to make a contribution to others?
6. How can we help this person to learn valued skills?
7. How can we better support the person’s supporters?



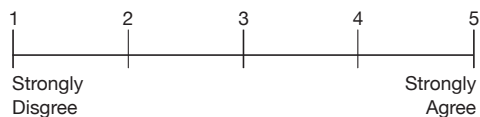
Relying on the systematic use of punishment to control behavior is unethical and has no place in responding to difficult behavior.



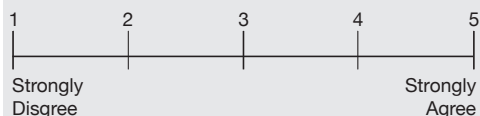
Without carefully considering a person’s behavior in context, common attributions of motivation like “attention seeking” or “manipulative” are usually simplistic and unhelpful.



The contingent delivery or withdrawal of food to reinforce or punish behavior is unethical and unnecessary.



It is essential to keep promises and agreements made with the person and his or her supporters.



Good support can be costly, in time, effort, and money, but there are few things more expensive in the long run than crisis management.

Relationship Building

The specialist...

Always	With many people	Seldom or never	... Asks the person for permission to offer help.
Always	With many people	Seldom or never	... Asks the person's permission to talk with others about him or her.
Always	With many people	Seldom or never	... Takes time to develop a relationship with the person by doing things with him or her that he or she enjoys.
Always	With many people	Seldom or never	... Takes time to learn the person's story.
Always	With many people	Seldom or never	... Takes time to get to know the person's supporters.
Always	With many people	Seldom or never	... Strives to respect the person's and supporter's cultural values and viewpoints so that they feel safe and encouraged to express themselves.
Always	With many people	Seldom or never	... Makes time to celebrate successes with the person and supporters.
Always	With many people	Seldom or never	... Actively involves people and their supporters in developing support plans.
Always	With many people	Seldom or never	... Bases support plans on the knowledge and information that grows in gathering the person's story and thoughtfully defining the behavior in question.

Understanding Behavior

The specialist...

Always	With many people	Seldom or never	...Develops clear definitions of the behavior in question.
Always/vt	With many people	Seldom or never	...Accounts for the history of the behavior in question
Always	With many people	Seldom or never	...Identifies strategies and interventions that have helped and those that have not helped.
Always	With many people	Seldom or never	...Identifies conditions associated with high and low levels of the behavior in question and lists things that are working and not working for the individual.
Always	With many people	Seldom or never	...Systematically collects useful information and summarizes it in a form that improves decision-making.
Always	With many people	Seldom or never	...Considers and addresses physiological issues that may influence behavior, particularly self-injurious behavior.
Always	With many people	Seldom or never	...Considers and addresses the effects of medications and their interactions on the behavior in question and the effectiveness of support.
Always	With many people	Seldom or never	...Considers and addresses psychological and emotional issues that may influence the behavior in question and the effectiveness of supports (eg. depression, anxiety, lack of self-confidence).
Always	With many people	Seldom or never	...Considers and addresses the possibility that post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) influences the behavior in question and the effectiveness of supports.
Always	With many people	Seldom or never	...If necessary, develops a crisis plan that specifically describes how to keep the person safe during tough times and assures that this plan is understood by the person and everyone involved.

Advocacy

The specialist...

Always	With many people	Seldom or never	... Can see the big picture and identifies system and organizational structures, policies and practices that contribute to the behavior in question or compromise the effectiveness of support.
Always	With many people	Seldom or never	... Uses the big picture view to work for organizational and system change.
Always	With many people	Seldom or never	... Effectively advocates for concrete, practical support for the person's supporters, including time to meet, opportunities for learning, tools for maintaining focus on the person, and working conditions that respect their relationships.
Always	With many people	Seldom or never	... Effectively advocates for establishing and maintaining a good match between the person and his or her supporters
Always	With many people	Seldom or never	... Assures that supporters receive the acknowledgement due their accomplishments and insights.