

Enhancing Pro-Social Desired Behaviors to Reduce At-Risk Sexual Behaviors

Table 1. Individualized behavior intervention table under an attention function.

Preventive Strategies (Antecedent-Based)	Replacement Skills (Related to Function)	Management Strategies (Consequence-Based)
<p>Provide unconditional one to one attention throughout the day across environments.</p> <p>Remind Mia to use her words if she wants to gain someone's attention.</p> <p>Role play suitable conversations with Mia.</p> <p>Remind Mia when attention will be available should attention be removed for a period of time.</p> <p>Read Social Story with Mia.</p>	<p>Teach Mia to make appropriate statements to peers, teachers, or family members when she wishes to gain their attention i.e., "I like your shirt" or "your hair looks good today".</p> <p>Teach Mia to use her pocket checklist when she feels the need to touch herself or someone else in a private area while in public.</p> <p>Teach Mia to use her journal when she feels the need to make an inappropriate comment while in public.</p>	<p>If Mia ask for attention using appropriate statements, honor her request by engaging in conversation and other interactions.</p> <p>Praise Mia and provide reinforcement when she uses her pocket checklist and/ or journal.</p> <p>Allow for Mia to earn beads, allowance, and community outings contingent on the absence of sexually inappropriate behaviors.</p> <p>Do not provide attention in any form (eye contact, proximity, conversation) when engaged in sexually inappropriate behaviors. Redirect Mia using gestural prompt to reach for her pocket checklist or journal.</p>

interventions were carried out. It was imperative to take into consideration Mia's health, safety, and happiness throughout the intervention as well. Table 1 provides an overview of interventions across the three term contingency based upon the function of attention.

Once considerations were made, the behavior analyst needed to identify how to teach Mia these skills. Individuals with autism are extremely visual learners, and Mia was no exception. The adage "a picture is worth a thousand words" rings true when teaching individuals with special needs, so it was crucial for the team to use visuals as much as possible and where appropriate. Equally important was breaking information down into small teachable steps, or what is known as "chaining," and moving at Mia's comfort level which helped support the acquisition of new skills more readily and with greater ease.

Mia was able to read and had previously used visuals as prompts, so it was decided that a "pocket checklist" would be the most beneficial proactive strategy to put in place. The pocket checklist is an evidence-based strategy that falls under the category of a visual strategy. By using a pocket checklist, the team provided an intervention that included the differential reinforcement of an incompatible behavior or DRI, meaning, if Mia was holding the pocket checklist with both hands, she could not be able to rub herself in a private area and would not be able to grab another person in their private area. The pocket checklist listed steps vertically on a 2-inch by 4-inch laminated sheet of paper. It listed four one-word behaviors in which Mia was to engage in upon identification of antecedent situations that


would typically result in her engaging in inappropriate sexual behavior. Antecedent situations (situations that happen just before the behavior) were vocalized by Mia and included: seeing someone that she finds attractive, wanting attention when her friend or parents weren't directly talking with her, or feeling tingling sensations in her vaginal region.

The words included on the pocket checklist were: focus, filter, deep breathing, and repeat. Step one: focus - this meant that Mia was to think about where she is, who she is with, and how she should behave. Step two: filter - this meant that she needed to have conversations that were appropriate and only to use language that her mother, father, and teachers approved of. Step three: deep breathing - this meant that Mia was to take five deep breaths to help "cool her down." Step four: repeat - which meant Mia was to complete all three steps again until she no longer felt the urge to touch herself or another person in a private area or make comments regarding private areas. Figure 2 provides an example of the pocket checklist.

In order to facilitate the greatest level of understanding for how to use the pocket checklist, as well as what each behavior "looks" like when carried out, the behavior analyst paired the teaching of the pocket checklist with the use of a social story. Social stories are used for nearly any topic and assist in teaching social information that an individual with ASD may lack.

Along with the pocket checklist and social story, journaling was an additional strategy included as part of Mia's individualized behavior intervention. In order to curtail Mia's sexually explicit vocalizations, Mia's behavior analyst used a pocket-sized, three-ring spiral notebook in which Mia could write down anything she was thinking that she was not allowed to say out loud. This gave Mia an outlet to express herself in a manner that was not offensive to others and would not be cause for removal from the natural environment. Mia was able to share the thoughts written in her notebook with her teacher, parents, or behavior analyst if she desired and could not be punished for anything she wrote. Journaling provided differential reinforcement of other behavior (DRO) and redirected Mia from engaging in a behavior that put herself and others at risk. Differential reinforcement of other behavior allowed for

Figure 2. Example of Pocket Checklist

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- 1. Focus**
 - 2. Filter**
 - 3. Deep Breathing**
 - 4. Repeat**

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