
by

Ashley Couto

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The procedures in this staff-training manual are meant to be used by agency staff, as part of the broader services they provide, or under supervision of agency staff.
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to a young girl, near and dear to my heart that inspires me every single day. Her love for life, laughter and motivation to overcome anything is truly amazing and has encouraged me to pursue working with children with exceptionalities.

Sometimes the things we can’t change, end up changing us instead.
Baby K- Thank you for helping me see the world in a beautiful, new light.
I love you, sweet girl.
ABSTRACT

Challenging behaviours are described as repetitive patterns of behaviour that impede a child’s learning and ability to socially engage. As childcare programs and schools act as a child’s first experience interacting with peers and other adults in structured settings, it is childcare providers and teachers in these programs that are responsible for instructing children both academically and toward appropriate social conduct. However, early learning teachers may not always possess the knowledge or skills necessary to effectively promote these important skills or manage severe problem behaviour. The purpose of this thesis was to examine the research literature to find best practices that are currently used in the field to improve difficult behaviours in children. A training manual composed of the most frequently used strategies was created to help educate childcare providers and offer them the tools necessary to handle these behaviours in a confident way. The manual is divided into four sections including; social skills training, visual supports, functional communication and behaviour strategies. It was created to be a user-friendly document that is easy to read and understand. The training manual provides real-life, useful and adaptive examples, starting by describing the technique in detail and also providing a descriptive set of instructions about how to implement the strategy effectively. Future recommendations considered that usefulness of the manual could be further determined once it is applied within clinical settings by childcare staff.
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Chapter I: Introduction

Background

A child’s ability to handle challenging and stressful situations can directly relate to their success in other important aspects of their development including; peer relationships and engagement, social competence, self-esteem and others (Stansbury & Sigman, 2000). The children who easily act on their emotions and frustrations are also usually the children who most often exhibit challenging behaviours. These behaviours can be either external, meaning they are visible behaviours such as hitting, or they can be internal behaviours, which are more difficult to identify as they are not always observable, such as anxiousness or a child that is withdrawn (Pickens, 2009). Smith and Fox (2003) have described challenging behaviours as a repetitive pattern of behaviour that impedes a child’s ability to learn and socially engage (Powell, Dunlap & Fox, 2006). With high numbers of children who exhibit problem behaviours that have parents and childcare providers worried about their growth and development, comes the increased importance for intervention and prevention strategies for dealing with these difficult behaviours (Powell et al., 2006).

Daycare programs and schools act as a child’s first experience socially interacting with peers and other adults in planned and controlled settings (Hiralall & Martins, 1998). It is within these environments that children begin to learn which types of behaviours are acceptable and which are not (Hiralall & Martins, 1998). Childcare providers and teachers in these programs are responsible for instructing children both academically and toward appropriate social conduct, as they act as models of appropriate social behaviour for learning (Smith, 2009). It has been suggested that child-caregiver relationships and
interactions can have an effect on challenging behaviours typically seen in children (Powell et al., 2006). Early learning teachers may not always possess the knowledge or skills necessary to effectively promote these important skills or manage severe problem behaviour (Pickens, 2009). However these early years, childcare programs often set the stage for future success in later years of school, which is why it is important for educators to promote various skills such as conflict management, self control and communication skills (Pickens, 2009).

Implementing intervention programs can be effective for children to learn appropriate social conduct which can help prepare them for the demands of formal schooling (Smith, 2009). The practice of using positive behaviour support techniques is one of the most commonly used and regarded evidence-based approaches in reducing challenging behaviours (Ling & Mak, 2012). While the use of behaviour strategies have proven to be effective in preventing and reducing difficult behaviour, the problem lies not in the technique itself but more in the delivery of the technique or the way in which staff address these behaviours (Ling & Mak, 2012). Staff who deal with such challenging behaviour on a more continuous and routine basis, often report feelings of exhaustion and irritation which can have a negative effect on both the relationship with the client and can eventually lead to burnout or other health problems for the staff member (van Oorsouw, Embregts, Bosman & Jahoda, 2010). As well, childcare providers and staff who may lack knowledge and understanding about challenging behaviour and the possible causes, may also lack confidence and in turn the necessary skills to address the problem in an effectual way (van Oorsouw, Embregts, Bosman & Jahoda, 2010). For such behaviour strategies to be successful, they must first be straightforward and easy to
understand for both the trainer and trainee, and must adhere to the needs of both parties. Ling and Mak (2012) note that increasing staff knowledge and overall competence, not only can help to reduce the likelihood of problem behaviours occurring in the first place, but can also lower staff anxiety in dealing with these behaviours, which can ultimately improve the quality of life for students and self-confidence and stress levels in staff.

**Rationale**

It has been suggested that staff working with challenging clients, who lack understanding about difficult behaviours and causes of such behaviours are also generally the staff who become more likely to experience negative effects on their health and well-being (van Oorsouw et al., 2010). Assessing and addressing difficult behaviours in children is a challenge for any childcare provider, let alone those providers who may have little to no knowledge or experience at all in handling such behaviours. Behaviour analytic techniques are among the most widely used approaches for handling difficult behaviour, yet there is such little research done or manuals currently out there that help guide childcare providers through the use of effective behaviour practices (Knapp, 2010). Based on this research, a training manual composed of best practices for handling problem behaviours was created to help educate childcare providers and offer them the tools necessary for dealing with these behaviours in a confident way.

**Hypothesis/ Purpose**

This training manual attempts to decrease anxiety and frustration levels felt by staff who deal with challenging behaviours by providing various best practice, behaviour strategies in a clear and straightforward way, using simple language and detailed information. It begins by educating the reader about challenging behaviours by providing
reasons why the child may engage in them. It also includes brief descriptions about each technique and a list of easy to follow instructions for proper implementation of these strategies. It was proposed that the training manual will educate and enhance the knowledge of childcare providers on behavioural techniques that can be effective in improving and preventing challenging behaviours in young children.

An evaluation form was also created in addition to the manual that helped to identify areas of concern with the manual itself and helped to provide direction as to how to improve the manual to best fit the needs of those childcare providers using it. It was hypothesized that the feedback from this evaluation form would help to modify the manual in ways that would be most user-friendly for use with any type of childcare provider.

**Overview of Chapters**

Chapter two of the thesis includes a literature review. The literature review includes a summary of each of the best practices included in the manual, what they are and how they have been used effectively in the research. The behaviour strategies that were focused on include: social skills training procedures, social stories and modeling techniques, use of visual supports, using the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), and behaviour strategies such as prompting, use of positive reinforcement, token economies and self-monitoring.

Chapter three includes the format and methodology section of the thesis. This section provides information about the rationale for creating a training manual for childcare providers, a description of the target audience and client group for which the manual is aimed to assist and the purpose of the evaluation form and how the data would
be collected and analyzed to improve the manual.

The final chapter of the applied thesis includes the discussion section. This section will describe the strengths, limitations and challenges encountered both in the creation of the training manual and for use of the manual with childcare providers and other staff at the agency. It will also provide a brief summary of the overall applied thesis, and how the training manual will be a positive addition both to the agency and to the field of Behavioural Psychology.
Chapter II: Literature Review

Importance of Using Best Practices To Enhance Child Learning and Development

Early education programs focus primarily on the development of social, cognitive and emotion regulation skills of the child, however children who exhibit challenging behaviours often restrict their own learning and therefore it is up to the teacher to provide additional opportunities to develop the skills (Smith, 2009). Based on what is already recognized knowledge regarding problem behaviours, it is believed that children engage in these behaviours because they gain access to the desired outcome, such as obtaining a preferred item or escaping a task (Dunlap, 2005). If these challenging behaviours are not addressed properly early on, they can persist and predict future consequences in life, which is why it is so important to help children develop appropriate social skills from an early age (McCabe & Frede, 2007). With an increasing number of children who display behavioural difficulties, comes the need for innovative strategies and information to enhance the knowledge and ability of childcare providers to implement these strategies and improve behaviour of the children they are supporting (Powell, Dunlap & Fox, 2006).

It has also been noted that adult-child relationships that are more secure and positive are effective in aiding with child development. A teacher who is supportive and takes the time to engage the child, tapping into the child’s interests and building trust, is modeling the appropriate skills needed to create positive relationships. Childcare providers and teachers who adopt a more sensitive approach to working with children, by being encouraging and engaging with the children tend to have more success in managing difficult behaviour due to the established trust and strength of the relationship.
(Powell, Dunlap & Fox, 2006). Adults and teachers act as models for learning appropriate behaviour and communication and have many opportunities to guide child behaviour through the many interactions throughout the day. Because it is the responsibility of childcare providers and teachers to teach children proper social etiquette and problem solving skills, it can be beneficial to try and fuse these skills in with academic curriculum and blend the two as much as possible (Smith, 2009). So much of preschool and school curriculum focuses on the development of a child’s cognitive skills but it is equally important to also incorporate social skills development, in order to teach appropriate interactions and cooperation, which can decrease problem behaviours that impede learning (Pickens, 2009).

The manual will act as a resource to help train childcare providers who are unfamiliar with handling problem behaviours. It will include best practice strategies that have shown to be effective in the literature for improving challenging behaviours. It will contain helpful information and tips to implement these techniques effectively with children.

**Social Skills Training**

**Social Stories.** Literature can be a very powerful and popular approach for introducing and teaching important social skills and can be applied successfully in school settings (Smith, 2009). Social stories are an effective tool designed to give children accurate information regarding a specific social situation as well as the possible responses of others (Scattone, 2008). Carol Gray created social stories, which have shown to be effective in reducing disruptive behaviours as they enhance understanding of various social situations in order to assist the reader in obtaining the skills necessary to
respond appropriately (Hanley-Hochdorfer, Bray, Kehle & Elinoff, 2010). Social stories are generally short stories that are targeted at developing a specific skill or behaviour designed for an individual who may have difficulty in the area. The story should be told in the perspective of the child and tailored to the child’s skill level. The information included in the social story is what the social situation or event is, when and where the event may occur and who could be involved, but is not limited to this information alone (Schneider & Goldstein, 2009). Social stories are an appealing intervention strategy because reading is a powerful tool for teaching literacy skills and can be used independently or in-group contexts, which can be time-efficient for a childcare provider or other adult. Social stories also allow for discussions relevant to the material within the story to occur (Smith, 2009).

Several articles have also identified using social stories in combination with other strategies, which can help generalize other appropriate skills. Scattetone (2008) used social stories with video modeling to enhance conversational skills in a young boy diagnosed with Asperger’s disorder. The treatment was effective not only in increasing communication skills, but generalized to improve eye contact, smiling and peer interactions as well.

Social stories are an appealing and effective strategy to improve difficult behaviour as they address the particular areas of difficulty for the client and allow for learning alternative, appropriate behaviours and responses. In addition, to maximize the overall benefits of social stories, it is encouraged to use them in combination with others modes of intervention (Schneider & Goldstein, 2009).

**Modeling.** Observational learning proposed by Bandura, is an approach for
teaching behaviour in two ways: through imitation, which is learning and practice of the
behaviour after watching it being modeled, and vicarious learning, which involves the
observer learning the behaviour through watching it being modeled, but applying it at a
later point in time which could impact the effectiveness (Taylor & DeQuinzeo, 2012).
Observational learning is an effective approach for teaching young children a wide range
of behaviours, through the use of modeling with a real life subject (Clarke, Viney,
Manton & Hayes, 1975). After all, many of the ‘social norms’ that we follow are a
product of observing the behaviour and responses of others in situations that we may be
unfamiliar with (Taylor & DeQuinzeo, 2012). Children learn by watching a modeled
response and seeing the consequence, which in turn will have an impact on the child’s
response to a similar situation, also taking into account their history of being reinforced
for prior imitation of the skill (Taylor & DeQuinzeo, 2012). Neilsen and Christie (2007)
specified that children begin learning by imitating the actions and behaviours of others at
the early age of two. Children learn well through watching others and for those children
who face challenges with social situations, modeling can provide the child with useful
examples of appropriate social responses and behaviours which can improve social
interactions (Taylor & DeQuinzeo, 2012).

Because there seems to be a strong relationship between a child’s social
competence and their success in academics and positive behaviours, it is important to
ensure that early childcare providers are instructing and modeling the skills towards
developing appropriate, social conduct (Pickens, 2009). Proper instruction and modeling
is an important strategy that can be effective to use when trying to teach and practice new
skills with children because it allows for the child to obtain the detailed information from
the trainer and for them to watch modeling of the desired behaviour (Spence, 2003).

**Visual Supports**

Visuals are an effective strategy to use when teaching new skills to children because learning information through visuals is more easily processed than auditory learning, especially in children who may show characteristics of autism (Ganz & Flores, 2007). Learning through visuals allows the information to become more meaningful to the child, particularly when it is presented in a simple and clear way allowing the child to better understand the material (Schneider & Goldstein, 2009). The visual presentation allows for the task to be broken down into smaller, more manageable steps for the child so that they better understand both the expectations and consequences of the task (Miller, 2007).

Visuals can be used in a variety of ways to support children with difficulties, some examples include: picture prompts, cue cards, activity schedules, visual schedules or checklists (Schneider & Goldstein, 2009). The use of visual schedules with children has shown to be effective in reducing off-task and other disruptive behaviours and in improving task engagement, compliance and social skills (Ganz & Flores, 2007).

Dunlap (2005) suggested that an attractive element of using visual activity schedules with children is the use of choice in allowing the child to have a voice in the preference of the activity or task. The literature has shown that implementing activity schedules and changing the way in which instructions are given can help prevent the occurrence of challenging behaviours and increase other alternative, more appropriate behaviours as well (Dunlap et al. 2006).

Many studies also emphasize fading strategies that can be carried out in a number
of ways when using visual prompts in order to differentiate the prompt and target
stimulus (Rivera, Koorland & Fueyo, 2002). Rivera et al. (2002) described a fading
approach used with children diagnosed with learning disabilities, where sight words were
used in addition to a visual illustration, where the visuals were faded out gradually by
placing pieces of tissue paper over the image until the illustration was no longer visible.
While visuals help to support the child’s learning, it is important to keep in mind that
visual supports will not change the behaviour alone, more they act as a preventative tool
to help decrease the occurrence of undesired behaviours from occurring in the first place
(Miller, 2007).

**Functional Communication**

**Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS).** Children who have special
needs or deficits with communication can be taught to communicate with others through
use of the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) (Cannella-Malone, Fant &
Tullis, 2010). PECS teaches children who are unable to verbally communicate, to
associate an item or gesture with a visual which allows them to communicate their wants
and needs (Cannella-Malone et al., 2010). PECS uses basic behaviour principles such as:
shaping, differential reinforcement and stimulus transfer to formulate initiations and
requests through pictures in order to communicate these requests to a partner (Charlop-
Christy, 2002).

PECS is a process that takes the user through a series of steps to learn to associate
the visuals with wants, beginning from teaching the child to exchange a picture icon for
the item itself to eventually creating sentences and responses to questions through the
visuals (Cannella-Malone et al., 2010). PECS has been successful for many children with
deficits in communication to improve initiations and requesting but the literature has also shown that PECS can have a positive impact on social behaviours and reducing the occurrence of challenging behaviours (Charlop-Christy, 2002).

This type of functional communication strategy is also advantageous for educators as it does not require much work or effort to employ once created, it is cost effective and can generalize across many situations and settings, as it is also a portable method (Charlop-Christy, 2002). In addition to improving communication, using PECS with children can show positive outcomes on social skills and alternative, appropriate behaviours (Charlop-Christy, 2002).

**Behaviour Management Strategies**

**Prompting.** A prompt is a simple strategy that can be used to improve difficult behaviours and prevent them by delivering a prompt that is clear and specific before the desired behaviour is expected and is most effective when delivered frequently (Faul, Stepensky & Simonsen, 2011). There are various ways that prompts can be used, some of which include: verbal prompts or reminders, physical prompts, gestural prompts, models and rehearsal of appropriate behaviours (Faul et al., 2011). To best benefit the child, prompts should be simple but specific and occur frequently.

Gibson and Schuster (1992) explained a prompting procedure called *model-lead-test* which they stated was most frequently used and involved a teacher first modeling the appropriate behaviour and then having the child practice a response, with and then without the prompt.

Prompting procedures also shape the behaviour by continually manipulating the way in which the prompt is delivered, which is an important part of effective prompting.
so that the child does not become dependent on the prompt alone to deliver the correct response (Mosk & Bucher, 1984). It is critical that children learn to develop new skills from an early age and because children tend to learn well through individual instruction procedures, prompting can be a rather effortless but beneficial strategy to improve behaviour by reinforcing appropriate alternatives (Gibson & Schuster, 1992). Mosk and Bucher (1984) also noted that pairing prompting with other strategies, such as reinforcement could have positive effects on improving behavior.

**Positive Reinforcement.** Positive reinforcement is an effective strategy to use with children in developing alternative, more appropriate behaviours by first identifying them and then by validating them in a way that is meaningful to the child (Sigler & Aamidor, 2005). When trying to teach children appropriate behaviours it is important to keep in mind prevention strategies because as much of the literature states, there are copious opportunities to reinforce children for behaving and responding appropriately, which can indirectly have a positive effect on reducing the occurrence of problem behaviours (Dunlap et al., 2006). The literature states that positive reinforcement is a successful approach to use with children because the appropriate behaviour or response is followed by a pleasurable stimulus or reaction, which can be a multitude of things tailored to the specific interests of the child (Sigler & Aamidor, 2005).

Parents use verbal praise most commonly to reinforce children, yet verbalizations alone have little meaning to the child, although it has been shown that when praise is paired repeatedly with naturally occurring, encouraging outcomes it has a positive effect on behaviour (Owen, Slep & Heyman, 2012). Praise is one of the most common forms of reinforcement as it signals a positive response to the child, indicating that the behaviour
or response delivered is a desirable one (Sigler & Aamidor, 2005). When praise is used effectively and paired with a pleasant stimulus, it teaches the child that compliance or appropriate behaviours can produce a reward for them, which increases the likelihood that the child will use those appropriate behaviours again in the future (Owen et al., 2012).

Children who frequently display various challenging behaviours are often labeled ‘difficult’ or at times, even more harshly called ‘disturbed’ yet it is important to acknowledge that children must first be educated about appropriate behaviours and expectations before they can to understand to be compliant (Dunlap et al., 2006). When using positive reinforcement it is important that adults understand that while we reinforce appropriate behaviours, it is also effective to ignore instances of inappropriate behaviours as well (Owen et al., 2012). Attending to a child that is well behaved will not have a negative effect on the behaviour as some misconceptions go, rather it is inappropriate behaviours that tend to be reinforced by adults through words, actions and attention (Owen et al., 2012). In addition, reinforcement also allows for a communication to improve in regards to responsiveness between child and caregiver interactions as the child is exposed to a pattern of positive responses modeled by the adult (Owen et al., 2012).

Reinforcement can come in all kinds of forms from adult attention and praise, pleasant tangibles or preferred time as well as social reinforcement through inclusion with peers. Gena (2006) conducted a study that taught children to respond appropriately to peer initiations and requests which was socially reinforcing for them as it enhanced their appropriate communicative skills and social inclusion with peers. Peer interactions
and engagement alone can be reinforcing, especially for children with special needs and can be a quick and easy way for teachers to strengthen social skills and other appropriate behaviours by promoting group inclusion (Gena, 2006).

**Token Economy.** Token economies are a type of reinforcement system that have shown to be effective for use in various classroom settings with children who are normally non-compliant or who do not respond well to the environment (Reitman, Murph, Hupp & O’Callaghan, 2004). The use of token economies is a long-standing, successful behavioural approach that has been used effectively with a wide range of target populations and in a number of different settings from school classrooms to prisons (Marr & Zelhart, 1974).

Token economies which have shown to be effective in reducing difficult behaviours in children, involve the continuous modification of target behaviours and expectations and the delivery of a token or generalized reinforcer to the child for appropriate and correct behaviours to be exchanged at a later point for a desired reward (Reitman et al., 2004). Marr and Zelhart (1974) described a study where the token economy was tried with inmates in a maximum security prison after being quite successful with youth in a reform school program, inmates received tokens for appropriate behaviour and could later use them to purchase rewards from a menu of desired items or preferred time.

A major challenge of using this strategy however can be training professionals to use it effectively when they may be reluctant or hostile to try such an approach (Marr & Zelhart, 1974). When they are used for children within a classroom environment, it is usually the teacher who is volunteering their time and effort to attempt a strategy that
could be beneficial for the students and also indirectly benefit the teacher (Marr & Zelhart, 1974). The implementation of a token economy does require continuous child observation, delivery of consequences and possible changes to the intervention. Even with the extensive literature regarding the popularity and success of using token economies to improve social behaviours and academic achievement, educators and childcare providers are often reluctant to use them due to the belief that they are too time consuming and difficult to understand and therefore implement. However Reitman et al. (2004) identified how this type of intervention could be implemented for an entire group, such as a whole class, which is easier and more time efficient for the educator.

Christophersen et al. (1972) also discussed the use of token economies conducted within the home with two families, in which the parents were able to manage a point system with their predelinquent boys, taking advantage of use of natural reinforcers such as TV viewing privileges. The families both reported being skeptical about using the token reinforcement intervention prior to the start of the study similar to some educators, however both sets of parents were able to modify behaviours at home to be more desirable due to their cooperation and commitment to the technique. Token economies are quite favored in the literature at increasing more desirable behaviours, however to be successful they need to be conducted by an individual who is willing to learn the skills and take the time to implement it effectively (Christophersen et al., 1972).

**Self-Monitoring.** Self-monitoring is another strategy that has been used effectively in young children, as they tend to use environmental controls that are less obstructive, allowing the child to regain control of their self and behaviour (de Haas-Warner, 1991). Teaching the children to self monitor by independently using a technique
and allowing them to be accountable for their own behavior can contribute to self-control and other long lasting benefits (de Haas-Warner, 1991). Another advantage of teaching children to self-monitor their behaviour is that it is also a technique that is readily available to teachers and takes minimal time on their part to implement but can generalize to improve numerous behaviours (de Haas-Warner, 1991). Coyle and Cole (2004) described self-monitoring procedures as recording one’s own behaviour and then self-observing, recording and evaluating it in order to learn to recognize and change it to be more desirable. In a study that used self-modeling videos of appropriate target behaviours and checklists to self-monitor the appropriate behaviour, where the checklist also served as a visual prompt of the expectation, it was effective in reducing off-task and non-compliant behaviours in three young boys with autism, two boys aged nine and one eleven (Coyle & Cole, 2004). Studies show that self-monitoring with prompts can be successful with children in reducing non-compliant behaviours as well as generalize to improve other alternative, appropriate behaviours (de Haas-Warner, 1991).

Self-monitoring strategies can be a beneficial approach to use because they teach children to be accountable for themselves. Using self-talk is an effective example that can help children direct their own behaviour, however this strategy tends to be used with children above the age of 3, as children often are not necessarily verbal or speaking sufficiently before this age (de Haas-Warner, 1991). Other strategies to self manage can be used effectively with children however a child’s attention span and age can be a concern, which is why it is important to observe a child’s on-task behaviour closely first as it can help indicate whether self-monitoring could be an effective strategy to use with the child (de Haas-Warner, 1991).
In conclusion, the literature highlights a variety of approaches that have been successfully used with children to prevent and decrease the occurrence of problem behaviours. It also acknowledges the need for appropriate staff training and cooperation when using the techniques in order for them to be effective. McCabe and Frede (2007) explain that challenging behaviours displayed in the early years of a child’s life can help predict the development of more serious issues such as aggressive or antisocial behavior later on. The education of young children should then play a significant role in helping to develop a child’s social competence in addition to academics, as it can function as a protective factor to reduce the occurrence of challenging behaviours in the future (Mcabe & Frede, 2007). While the use of behaviour strategies have shown to be successful with children, the effectiveness of these approaches rely on a variety of factors regarding the delivery of these techniques by educators, including but not limited to: eye contact, tone of voice, close vicinity to the child, length, and consistency of delivery (Hirallal & Martens, 1998).

The training manual consists of best practice, behaviour management strategies that have been used successfully within the literature at preventing and reducing challenging behaviours in young children. The manual will outline what these approaches are by providing a detailed description of the strategy and an easy to follow set of instructions as how best to construct and implement these strategies. The manual will educate and train childcare providers and staff on how to develop the skills necessary to successfully use the best practices with children and increase staff confidence in addressing challenging behaviours.

Word Count: 3655
Chapter III: Method

The training manual will act as a supportive resource to help educate and train childcare providers about how to successfully address challenging behaviours displayed by young children. It will provide the readers with detailed information and easy to read instructions about current best practices used within the behavioural psychology field. The manual will not only help childcare providers develop the skills necessary to effectively address and improve difficult behaviours, but will also help to increase overall staff confidence and knowledge regarding how to manage these behaviours.

Participants and Setting

The strategies included in the training manual can be used in a variety of daycare and school settings with boys or girls ages 2-8. There is no exclusion criterion for the techniques. Many of the strategies identified have been more specifically targeted for children with special needs, who exhibit challenging behaviours that impede their opportunity for learning. These children may show both physical and cognitive delays in comparison to their peers, in areas such as mobility, speech, communication and social engagement. Although the strategies identified in the manual have been more widely used with children with exceptionalities, when modified appropriately they can be generalized for use with all children.

The training manual was designed to be used by childcare providers and staff as a helpful resource that is easily accessible at Community Living Kingston, an agency that supports young children with special needs and adults with Developmental Disabilities. Childcare providers may include but are not limited to: resource consultants, teachers, program staff, parents, support workers, volunteers and future students.
Materials

The materials needed in creating or implementing the strategies will be discussed throughout the various sections of the manual. Instructions will also be provided in the manual regarding how to use the best practices and how to create or construct any instruments needed for use with strategies. The materials will be presented as a bullet list directly following the list of instructions for each best practice, which will include any materials used in the creation of the behavior management tool, such as paper, markers, glue, computer programs, printer, poster boards, adhesive tape and so on.

The manual was designed and bound nicely into a small book format that allows the reader to easily locate a particular section and photocopy that section to be used, with the set of instructions and examples. This can be beneficial and more appealing for staff, as they may be more willing to use the strategies when they are presented as individual sheets rather than the entire manual, which can be somewhat intimidating.

Training Manual Outline

The manual will include information pertaining to challenging behaviours, children with special needs and strategies to best address and improve difficult behaviours. It will be comprised of a compilation of the best and most currently used practices from the literature to address problem behaviours. The best practices will include a description of what the technique is, how it works, and how it can be effective in improving the behaviour. A set of easy to read instructions on how to effectively create and implement these strategies will follow each best practice.

The first section of the manual is an introduction to the manual, including a brief description about challenging behaviours and reasons why children might engage in
them, the purpose of the manual, and descriptions of potential program settings and the
target audience of the manual.

The sections following the introduction will be divided into four parts and
 grouped by each best practice strategy. The first of these sections begins by explaining
social skills training which includes a description about social stories, modeling and role-
play strategies. The second section explains the use of visual supports, which includes
visual schedules and visual prompts. The third section discusses functional
communication training, which explains the use of The Picture-Exchange
Communication System (PECS). The fourth and final section will include behaviour
techniques such as direct instruction and prompting, using positive reinforcement, the
token economy and self-monitoring techniques.

Each section will include a brief description about what each best practice is, how
it has been used in the literature and how it can be used to manage challenging
behaviours. Following the description will be a set of easy to read instructions regarding
how to create and implement the technique successfully. In addition, several examples
will also be provided throughout the sections to provide readers with a sample to follow
in creating their own instruments.

**Evaluative Measure**

An evaluation form was also created and administered to childcare staff in
 addition to the training manual. The evaluation form consisted of first a 5 point-Likert
scale format which contained questions that had to do with the readability and overall
clarity of the manual, using a scoring scale where 5 meant “strongly agree” and 1 meant
“strongly disagree.” The next part of the evaluation form consisted of a couple open-
ended type questions that allowed for more general feedback from readers about their understanding of the manual. The feedback collected from this evaluation form helped to identify any concerns with the current manual and also provided direction as how to best improve it, to make the manual as user friendly as possible. The completed manual was added to the resource library at the agency to be used with childcare staff in the future.
Chapter IV: Results

The training manual was created as a compilation of best practice strategies for addressing challenging behaviours in children and presented as a product that would be an easy to read, helpful resource for childcare providers. The manual was designed in such a way to be appealing and practical to the childcare providers audience. By separating the best practice strategies into various sections, it allows the reader to look up the desired strategy and find the relevant information in order to learn to use that preferred technique. The format of this training manual allows the reader to copy a few pages containing the desired information, rather than reading through a large document.

The best practice strategies included in the manual were shown to be effective in the literature for decreasing problematic behaviours in children and in increasing alternative, more appropriate behaviours. Much of the literature showed these strategies used for children with special needs, however when modified appropriately they can be effective for use with all children.

A feedback form (Appendix B) was also created and given to placement supervisors and consultants at the agency, along with the first draft of the manual. Feedback from the evaluation forms outlined strengths of the current manual, which included: well written introduction and background information, good organization and structure, booklet format allows for easy use when reading and utilizing the manual. Some weaknesses that were identified included: spacing of the document, adding additional visuals and examples, and PECS’s strategy needing a second staff to implement. The feedback from these forms as well as feedback from college supervisors was incorporated to help make the completed manual as user friendly as possible.
Chapter V: Discussion

Summary

While on placement, it became apparent that when working among children with special needs, specifically working within a consultant role can be rather challenging. A consultant position involves working with a number of other outside parties to achieve target goals for a particular client. It can be a difficult task to teach a new skill or implement a new strategy with a child, when for the most part the consultant is not present regularly enough to physically teach the child. It is then up to the teacher or childcare providers to carry out these strategies in attempt to enhance the child’s learning or social environment. This can be problematic, as the consultant cannot be sure that the teacher or provider will attempt procedure or technique that was suggested consistently with the child, or whether or not the instructor has the appropriate knowledge or skills necessary to use the strategy successfully. When trying to change or decrease difficult behaviours in children, consultants can provide knowledge, materials and strategies for teachers or childcare providers, but lack of appropriate information, proper effort, or effective communication between the two parties can make trying to improve behaviour of the child extra challenging.

The training manual was created to act as a helpful resource for teachers and childcare providers to learn about challenging behaviours in children and how to acquire the skills for implementing effective strategies that can improve them. The manual is intended to help decrease anxiety and frustration levels felt by childcare staff in handling problem behaviours, by providing various best practice strategies in a simple and straightforward manner. The manual uses detailed and simple language to make it easy
to read, understand and follow. The manual educates the reader about each best practice technique by providing a brief explanation of it, including a descriptive list of instructions about how to implement each technique, a materials list and visual examples of the strategies. The manual allows for the user to find the preferred strategy and acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to implement it successfully with children.

This training manual will be a beneficial addition to the agency’s resource library because it can be a useful tool for consultants to help teach childcare providers important strategies or skills to be used with children. When offering suggestions or strategies to try with the child, the consultant can provide the manual itself or copy pages from it for teacher or providers, to help them learn the appropriate ways to apply the technique effectively. This allows for the provider to be able to refer back to the information at any point when using the strategy with the child.

**Contribution to Behavioural Psychology**

The training manual was designed to be an easy and less intimidating way to help childcare providers gain the information and skills necessary to handle challenging behaviours. The manual will not only help childcare providers to address difficult behaviours, but also can also decrease anxiety levels felt by staff when dealing with similar matters in the future. It may also benefit the relationship between consultants and childcare providers in choosing various strategies for the child, as it allows consultants to also assist the providers in learning these techniques. The manual allows for any childcare provider to learn these techniques, as it is a modern, user-friendly script that provides real life examples that are both useful and adaptive.

The techniques that were chosen to be included in the training manual are those
strategies that are used successfully with children in the field today. These strategies allow the teacher opportunity to learn multiple techniques and combine approaches to improve problem behaviours. The strategies provided will also benefit the children; regardless of the age at which they are taught because these techniques will continue to be used by teachers and educators in school settings in the future.

**Strengths**

The training manual was designed to be an appealing, user-friendly document that could help train childcare providers about how to use effective strategies to improve behaviour. A key strength of the manual was in the structure and organization of it. The manual was divided into a variety of sections that allow the user to locate the desired technique quickly and efficiently and learn about that strategy, rather than searching for the relevant information in a large document. The manual allows for pages to be photocopied of the desired strategy to be learned, which is beneficial as consultants can provide childcare staff with these pages and also allows for the manual to be used by multiple persons.

Another strength of this training manual is that it was written using simple, clear and descriptive language to describe effective behavioural strategies. The explanations provided are brief and expressive and made easy to understand, without the use of too much behavioural jargon. This is a strength as it makes the manual a user-friendly document that can be used by a wide range of individuals.

**Limitations**

Although the training manual was designed to be as user friendly for readers as possible, however there are several limitations that exist with the manual. First, while the
manual provides descriptions about each best practice strategy, the information is limited. The descriptions tend to be short so that the user can get straight to learning how to physically use the technique. While each section’s brief set of literature can be appealing to the users, the literature tends to be quite general, only giving the most necessary information and examples. As well, the training manual was never actually tested within the field so it cannot be said for sure that it’s intended use is validated.

Another limitation of the training manual is that it only touches on some of the effective behaviour strategies that are used within the field. The best practice strategies that were chosen for the manual were selected due to the frequency of use of these strategies. These techniques were preferred because they are among some of the most commonly used strategies within the field to improve difficult behaviours. However, with sufficient time the manual could be lengthened to include many other effective behaviour strategies and present them in a way that is simple for the user to understand and practice.

A final limitation of this training manual is that there is no guarantee for success with client outcomes. It is important to keep in mind that every client is unique and each will respond differently to the various techniques in the manual. The results will fluctuate from client to client and therefore positive outcomes may not be replicated for every individual.

**Multi-level Challenges**

In creating the manual, there were also several challenges presented throughout the process. Firstly and possibly the most difficult challenge was creating a training manual that would be user friendly for a wide range of audiences including; childcare
staff, teachers, parents, enhance support workers and so on, but that was also clear and expressive enough to describe the techniques without using behavioural jargon. It was quite a challenge to describe each technique and provide detailed instructions that would be easy to follow for a reader who may be completely unfamiliar with the concepts.

A second challenge faced in composing the manual was creating a document that would adhere to the needs of everyone concerned. This included creating a manual that would be user friendly for any type of staff; parent or childcare provider who may utilize the manual, while incorporating feedback and opinions from placement supervisors to make sure it would be a beneficial tool for the agency and also making sure that these ideas matched up with my own personal views and direction for the thesis itself.

**Future Recommendations**

The usefulness of the manual could be further determined once it is applied within clinical settings by childcare staff. Possible challenges may arise for childcare staff that could help to uncover potential problems with the manual and alter it in ways that would make the manual more useful. An example might be for the instructions from the manual not providing enough detail to actually carry out the technique with fidelity. It is recommended then that the manual be used at the agency for 3-6 months and kept within the agency’s resource library so that it is available to multiple users. The manual could be used on field sites where childcare staff can attempt these strategies with children. Given that the staff member took the time to read and understand the steps to carrying out the technique, the strategy can be attempted repetitively with children and have the information from the manual to refer back to. Positive client outcomes cannot be guaranteed, however through learning and practicing these strategies, behaviours can
improve and childcare staff can gain confidence for applying these techniques.

As well, the training manual itself could be expanded to include additional behaviour techniques that could also be useful for improving difficult behaviors in children. Additional sections could be added to continue expanding on the manual in order to make it a beneficial tool for childcare providers, such as adding use of signing to functional communication training section, or shaping, effective ignore or extinction procedures to behaviour techniques section and so on. Also, the content within the manual itself could be extended. Currently the descriptions are brief and concise; further information and examples could be included throughout the manual, so that the user has numerous samples to follow and model when exercising the technique for themselves.
References


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Training Manual of Best Practice Strategies for Addressing Challenging Behaviours Displayed by Children in Childcare Settings

Ashley Couto
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Introduction

Children and Challenging Behaviours

The research suggests that there is considerable evidence of increasing numbers of children who engage in problem behaviours, which ultimately affect a child’s ability to learn and develop both academically and socially. A child’s capability to problem solve and handle difficult, stressful situations can directly relate to their success in other important aspects of development as well, such as peer relationships, social competence and self esteem. Usually the children who display difficult behaviour problems tend to be those children who become frustrated easily and act on their temporary emotions.¹

Problem behaviours can range greatly in type and intensity, depending on both the attitude and needs of the individual child.² While many problematic behaviours are external behaviours, meaning they are visible and easy to identify such as hitting or screaming, there are also other behaviours of equal concern called internal behaviours that some children engage in, which are often harder to identify such as a child who is anxious or withdrawn.³

Anything a child does, from being non-compliant to causing physical harm to themselves or someone else is considered behaviour.⁴ The way in which a child behaves relates to their understanding about how to join in on the environment around them or how to get their personal needs met.⁴ Based on relevant information regarding challenging behaviours, it is recognized that children engage in these behaviours because it works for them, they gain access
to a desired outcome such as preferred activity time or a toy.\textsuperscript{5} While the ways in which children choose to express themselves may not always be favored, it is important to keep in mind that they are young and are using the strategies they have learned thus far in their lives to meet their basic needs.\textsuperscript{4} With the growing numbers of children who display problem behaviours that have parents and childcare providers concerned for their overall development and well being, comes the increased need for innovative strategies and information to help educators support and improve these behaviours.

Childcare settings such daycares and schools, act as a child’s first real experience interacting with unfamiliar adults and peers in planned and controlled environments. It is within these adaptive settings that children begin to learn which behaviours are appropriate and acceptable and which are not.\textsuperscript{6} As childcare providers and teachers in these settings act as models of appropriate social behaviour, it is their responsibility to instruct children both academically and towards appropriate social conduct.\textsuperscript{7} As early years programs often set the stage for future success, it is important for educators to promote additional skills like conflict management, self-control and communication.\textsuperscript{3} However children who engage in challenging behaviours often restrict their own learning and therefore it is up to the childcare providers and staff to provide additional opportunities to develop these essential skills.\textsuperscript{7}
Importance of Using Best Practice Strategies

The practice of using positive behaviour support based on the principles of applied behaviour analysis (ABA) is one of the most commonly used and regarded, evidence-based approaches in reducing and improving challenging behaviours. Implementing these types of intervention programs can aid children in developing desired social conduct, which will help prepare them for the demands of formal schooling later in life.

Based on what the literature expresses, it has been understood that childcaregiver relationships and interactions can have an imperative effect on whether or not children engage in challenging behaviours. However early learning teachers may not always possess the knowledge or skills necessary to encourage additional, yet essential social skills in children or to manage severe problem behaviours. However, if these difficult behaviours are not addressed properly early on, they can persist and predict future consequences in life.

It has been recognized that adult-child relationships that tend to be more positive and secure have an encouraging influence on development. A parent or teacher who is supportive and takes the time to engage the child, building trust and tapping into the child’s interests, is modeling the appropriate skills needed to create positive peer relationships. Childcare providers and teachers who adopt a more sensitive approach to working with children also tend to have more success in managing difficult behaviours because of the established trust and strength of the relationship. Because childcare providers act as models for teaching appropriate behaviour and communication and have many
opportunities throughout the day to guide child behaviour, it may be beneficial to try and integrate social skills with academic curriculum.\textsuperscript{7} Blending social skills and academics together can help teach children suitable interactions and cooperation, which in turn can help to decrease the occurrence of problem behaviours.\textsuperscript{3}

Lastly, childcare providers and staff who deal with problem behaviours on a routine basis can often report feelings of exhaustion and irritation, which, in turn can have a negative impact on the relationship with the child and may eventually lead to burnout or other health problems for the staff member.\textsuperscript{9} As well, these childcare providers may also lack the confidence needed to address difficult behaviours successfully because they have not been given the accurate information or sufficient training.\textsuperscript{8}

The manual created will educate and enhance knowledge about behavioural techniques that can be effective in both improving and preventing challenging behaviours in children. Not only will it help childcare providers develop the skills necessary to effectively address and improve difficult behaviours, but will also help to increase overall staff confidence and knowledge in managing similar behaviours in the future. Increasing staff knowledge and overall competence about how to use best practice strategies can help reduce the likelihood of problem behaviours, can lower staff anxiety in addressing these behaviours and can improve quality of life for students.
Purpose and Objective

This training manual was designed to be a supportive resource to be used by childcare providers and to help educate them about how to effectively address problem behaviours displayed by young children in childcare settings. Childcare providers may include but are not limited to: resource consultants, teachers, program staff, parents, support workers, volunteers and students. The manual is a compilation of current best practices used within the behavioural psychology field and will provide the readers with detailed information and easy to read instructions about how to implement these strategies successfully with children.
Part One: Social Skills Training

Social Stories

Social stories are a very popular and powerful approach for introducing and teaching children essential skills and can be applied successfully in a variety of school or childcare settings. Carol Gray created social stories for children as a strategy to enhance the child’s understanding of various social situations and events, in order to help them gain the knowledge and skills necessary to respond appropriately when faced with these situations in their day to day life. Social stories are an effective tool for teaching children proper skills and behaviours because they give the child accurate and meaningful information about the specific situation, as well as the possible responses of others. They are generally short stories that target developing a specific skill for a child that may show difficulty in that area. The story should be told in the perspective of the child and tailored to match the child’s skill level. The information within the social story should include: what the social situation or event is, when or where the event may occur, and who could be involved, but is not limited to this information alone.

Social stories are a very influential intervention strategy for teaching literacy and social skills to children, as reading is generally quite an appealing activity to young children. The strategy also allows for discussions to take place both with the child and for the child with their peers, about relevant information pertaining to the story. Social stories also appeal greatly to childcare providers and teachers, as social stories can be used within individual or group contexts,
which make them a time efficient strategy for adults.\textsuperscript{7}

Social stories, which have shown to be effective in reducing disruptive behaviours, can also generalize to develop or increase other alternative, suitable behaviours. The research also suggests that social stories are most effective when used in combination with other strategies.\textsuperscript{11} Scattetone (2008) used social stories with video modeling to improve communication in a boy diagnosed with Asperger’s disorder. Not only did the boy’s communication increase, but also the effects generalized to improve eye contact, smiling and peer interactions.

The use of social stories is a successful approach for introducing and teaching children new skills or about coping with unfamiliar situations. The story should be created assessing the specific needs or challenges of the child and rehearsed and discussed regularly. The repetition will help the child become familiar with the information and as a result more comfortable and confident. However, to maximize the total benefits of using this approach, it is encouraged to combine social scripts with some of other strategies.\textsuperscript{11} Some of which strategies will be discussed later in the manual.
How to Use Social Stories

1. Create a social story targeting a specific social situation or event, some examples may include: “Greeting a Friend,” “Taking Turns,” or “Losing a Game.” The story should be personalized for the child and can incorporate the child’s interests (such as using the child’s favourite character to tell the story)

2. Write the short, social story from the perspective of the child and match the skill level to meet the needs of the child. The length of individual sentences and the complete story itself should correspond to the child’s current reading level

3. Include specific descriptions and details about what the social situation or event is, where and when it may occur and who might be involved

4. Also include possible reactions and responses of others regarding the social situation or event, to help the child fully understand the meaning behind the social script

5. Include pictures that are relevant to the situation or skill targeted at being developed. These can be photos found on the Internet or use of personal photos of the child. Adding visuals allows the child to relate more closely to the information they are learning and process it easier as well

6. Read and rehearse the social story with the child before the child is put into the situation that is being targeted for teaching. Allow for discussions to occur about the information in the story by both asking and answering questions that can help the child relate to the information being presented
7. When writing and creating the social stories there are a few things to keep in mind, first the story should be composed of both descriptive and direct sentences, but descriptive sentences should be used twice as much as direct sentences. Descriptive sentences tend to describe the social situation by answering the “W” (who, what, where, ect) where as direct sentences usually offer an appropriate response (“I will try to cover my mouth when I cough,” or “when I am angry I can...”) The story should be written in a positive manner and be kept short and concise, generally should be no more than 10 sentences

**Materials**

- Paper
- Pen/ markers or computer program (ex. Word, Boardmaker)
- Printer/ ink
- Glue, tape, stapler (for a homemade story)
- Laminator (optional)
- Binding machine or another way to fasten the story into a storybook
- Photos/ visuals
Examples of Social Stories

**What To Do At Circle Time?**

At circle time,

I will keep my hands together and put them in my lap.

At circle time,

I will sit quietly with my legs crossed in my special chair.

At circle time,

I will listen to the teacher and the other kids.

At circle time,

I will listen closely to the songs and stories that we are learning.

When I am at circle time,

I will raise my hand to speak or ask questions.

Circle time can be a lot of fun!
Taking A Break

My school is a big place with lots of different children in it.

Sometimes it can get a little loud and busy for me, which can make me mad or frustrated.

When this happens, I can tell my teacher "I need a break".
When I need to take a break there are a few things I can do. First, I can talk to a teacher about my feelings.

When I am upset, I can take a few deep breaths and count to 5.

1...
2...
3...
4...
5...

I can also take a break in the "cool off" tent, where I can be alone for a few minutes.

When my break is finished I can rejoin the group.

My teachers will be happy that I know how to take my break and I will feel better too!
Modeling

Modeling, which is also commonly referred to as observational learning, is an approach proposed by Bandura (1977) to teach suitable behaviours. Learning behaviour through modeling can be done in two ways: through imitation and vicarious learning. Learning through imitation involves the child first watching the appropriate behaviour being modeled by an adult or another child and also practicing the skill or behaviour after having observed it. Vicarious learning is similar to imitation in that it also involves the child watching an appropriate behaviour or skill being modeled, but the practice of the skill or behaviour is applied at a later point, which can impact the child's success in the development or use of the skill.\(^\text{13}\)

The early years of a child’s life can be a critical time to teach suitable and desired skills and behaviours to children, as they begin learning by imitating the actions and behaviours of others as early as 2 years old.\(^\text{14}\) Because there seems to be such a strong link between a child’s social skills and their success in academics, it is important that individuals working with young children are both instructing and modeling the preferred skills necessary for developing appropriate social manners.\(^\text{3}\) Children can be effectively taught appropriate skills by watching a real-life subject do it in a way that is relatable to them. Like many of the “social norms” we follow today, children can also learn how to behave in situations where they may be unfamiliar, by simply getting to witness the behaviour being modeled for them first.\(^\text{15}\) Especially for children who may face challenges with social situations, modeling provides the child with useful
examples of appropriate social responses, which can help improve their general social interactions with adults and peers.\textsuperscript{13}
How to Use Modeling

1. Educators and child care providers should be frequently displaying desirable behaviours and positive language around the child, which will allow for the child to understand and practice similar behaviours and responses. When teaching a specific target behaviour or skill, after it has been modeled appropriately, the teacher or person instructing the lesson should then expect the children to copy the behaviour that was just modeled.

2. Modeling can also be used to display behaviours that the child may not already be familiar with. Showing the child appropriate alternatives to undesirable behaviours and responses is critical for the child to learn about and practice within social situations. For example, children are taught to share toys from an early age. When a child takes a toy from their peer, the educator should model what the appropriate response would be in this situation and have the child practice this response. The educator should model appropriate ways to ask for a toy from another child and to share it.

3. Models can also include the peers within the classroom who display positive behaviours and responses. Allowing the child to work with other peers can create a positive environment and can have a positive impact on the child’s behaviour. As the literature has shown children tend to learn well when appropriate behaviours are modeled for them, using real life subjects that are similar to them. Pairing the child with a friendly peer
could be beneficial, as the peer would model appropriate behaviours and responses that are similar to those being targeted for the other child.
Part Two: Visual Supports

It is important to keep in mind that every child is unique and may have their own individual learning style in which they process information differently from others. Children who may show difficulties with communication can sometimes be better visual learners, meaning they understand more easily what they see rather than what they hear. In order to support children of all different learning styles, it is important that educators consider the environment in which children learn and adapt it in ways that can provide structure and routine in a variety of ways.4

The use of visual supports is an effective and quite popular approach to teaching children new skills because learning information through visuals allows for the child to process the information quicker and easier than they would through auditory learning alone. Visuals support the child by allowing them to actually envision the expectation or task, which allows them to better understand it.16 The visual information becomes more meaningful to the child when it is offered in a clear and simple way.17 The pictures, labels and signs of the visual tool allows for the task or expectation to be broken down into smaller more manageable steps for the child, so that they comprehend both the expectation and the consequences of the task.18

Visuals can be used in a variety of ways to help support children who may show learning difficulties. Some examples might include: picture prompts, cue cards, activity schedules, visual schedules or checklists.17 These visual tools can be created for additional support, targeted at the specific needs of the child. But it
is also essential to recognize that educators themselves, as well as other objects that naturally occur in the environment can also serve as visual tools. These can be anything you see, from people to printed material such as posters or books.\textsuperscript{4}

The use of visual schedules with children have shown to be successful in reducing off-task and other disruptive behaviours and improving task engagement, compliance and overall social skills.\textsuperscript{16} The schedules contain pictures and words that help the child to visualize the routine so that they can understand what comes next. This breakdown of information supports the child through transitions and possible changes in the day because when the child is aware of what to expect, it can cut down on any confusion or anxiety for the child, which could lead to problem behaviours.\textsuperscript{4}

Visual activity schedules or “first-then strips” are another type of visual strategy that is popular with children as they allow for the child to have a choice in the preference of an activity or task. This type of schedule can change the way in which an instruction is provided for children, which can help to prevent challenging behaviours from occurring and also increase other alternative, more appropriate behaviours as well.\textsuperscript{19} First-then strips show the child that they are required to complete the first task before they can have a reward or preferred time. An example could be, using the strip to show the child that they can go and play outside, but first they must finish their homework.

Using visuals to help support children who may learn in different ways can be an important element in teaching new skills, however these strategies should also be gradually faded out, to teach the child to differentiate between the visual
prompt and the desired object or behaviour, so that the child does not become dependent on the visual alone. While visual strategies can be an effective in supporting children’s learning, it is important to keep in mind that visual supports alone will not change difficult behaviour, but rather they act as a preventative tool to help decrease the likelihood of unwanted behaviours occurring in the first place.
How to Use Visual Schedules

1. Visual schedules are used to help the child understand what is happening or what may happen. They can include a sequence of events with pictures to help the child understand what is to come and what will be expected. These can be created in a schedule form or a visual calendar. For example, a visual schedule can be placed in a bathroom to prompt the children about the proper way to wash their hands. It can be shown using small images and words, either on a horizontal or vertical line (turn on tap, wash hands with soap, rinse, turn off tap, dry hands.) These schedules can also be eventually faded out. For example, putting the visual schedule up for 4 days of the week, rather than 5 and continuously decrease the number of days it is up in the bathroom.

2. Create visuals or pictures that help explain the expectation. These can be images found online, in magazines or personal photographs of the child and their environment. The images should be chosen so that the child understands what to do when he/see sees the image.

3. The images should be arranged in a sequence or list that helps the child understand what comes next. They can be presented and arranged in either a vertical or horizontal line, clearly specifying the order of events. They can also include words or labels. The images can also be presented using a booklet format, where one single picture is shown per page and the child can flip the page once they have completed that task or activity. This can be made more challenging for the child by increasing the number
of tasks in a visual list or the duration of the task before the child can access a reward.

4. Help the child understand the visual tool by explaining to them what will happen, what will not happen, people who may be involved, the expected behaviour and any unexpected possibilities that could occur.

5. Visuals should also be durable and portable, so that the child can travel with it to communicate in various locations. It is also helpful to have copies of the visuals that the children are learning. This will be beneficial incase visuals get misplaced, or when the target behaviour can be taught across different environments (home, daycare, grandma’s house.)

Materials:

- A visual board (paper, calendars, folders, ect)
- Images of desired expectations, behaviours, activities or events
- Adhesive tape (used to attach/ detach to change the velcro)
- Markers, scissors, glue or a computer program (word, Boardmaker, ect)
How to Use Visual Activity Schedules/ First-Then Strips

1. Creating activity schedules is quite similar to visual schedules, in that you create pictures that relate to the expectation for the child and present them in a sequence form.

2. The schedule allows the educator to change the images to fit with the present task or activity.

3. A board should be created that include the words first and then.

4. The images should be arranged so that they are easily accessible for the child and can be continuously changed. This can be done by placing the images in a separate area below the board, or by creating a booklet format and organizing the images based on use/need for them. For example, a booklet of images could be created and organized using headings such as: home, school, food, toys, etc.

5. The educator should provide the expectation first and then allow preferred choices for afterwards. For example, the child first has to finish their homework and then they can have a choice of a desired activity like TV viewing or computer time.

Materials:

- A visual board or booklet (paper, calendars, folders, etc)
- Images of desired expectations, behaviours, activities or events
- Adhesive tape (used to attach/detach to change the velcro)
- Markers, scissors, glue or a computer program (word, Boardmaker, etc)
How to Use Visual Prompts

1. Visual prompts are used to help children understand the expectation by providing an image and words to pair with the instruction, to help them visualize what is being asked of them. It is important to first determine transitions or other areas of difficulty or confusion for the child, where a visual prompt could be beneficial. An example of a visual prompt that can be used in school and childcare environments could be an image of a red stop sign placed on any doors, windows or areas that may be prohibited to the child. This prompt will serve as a reminder for the child that that area is off limits to the child and therefore they should not use it.

2. Create images or pictures that reflect the expectation or area of difficulty for the child. These images can be found online, in magazines, or can be personal photographs taken of the child’s own environment and personal items. The image itself will help trigger for the child what is being asked of them and help them to respond accordingly.

3. The visual prompt should include an image of the expectation, as well as any words that follow the instruction typically paired with the prompt. The words relating to the image or prompt can be placed right on the visual prompt itself, or on a separate piece of paper accompanying the visual.

4. Once the visual prompt has been created, it must be introduced to the child. This is when the educator should teach the pairing of the visual prompt to the real object or expectation so that when the prompt is presented, the child knows how to respond.
5. An example could be creating a visual prompt for a child who may not respond well to instructions alone, specifically around transition times. The visual prompt could be photos relating to the various transitions (circle time, snack, lunch, recess, work periods, etc.) throughout the day. It could be as simple as showing a visual prompt of the child’s cubby, coat and bag, to explain that it is time to transition to the cubby to change for recess. The image of the child’s cubby, as well as the words “go to cubby” paired with the instruction will help the child picture the expectation and therefore better understand how to respond.

6. Among some commonly used visual prompts include; stop, wait, quiet, raise hand, etc. An educator who uses these types of visual prompts frequently can put them together and attach them on a ring, to have on them while instructing lessons. The educator can flash the necessary visual prompt if problem behaviours arise during the lesson, to remind the learner of the expectation during this time.

Materials:

- Paper, markers, glue, stapler or a computer program
- Printer, ink
- Camera to take personal photographs
- Internet or various magazines to find suitable images relating to the expectation for the child
- Laminator (optional)
Examples of Visual Schedules

**Washing Hands**

- turn on
- wash hands
- turn off
- dry hands
Daycare Morning Routine

- arrive at daycare
- play
- tidy up
- go to cubby
- change shoes
- put coat on
- wait for name
- line up
- go outside
- play outside
- pick up toys
- line up
- go inside
- circle time
- wash hands
- lunch time
Example of Activity Schedule/ First-Then Board
Examples of Visual Prompts

These visual prompts can be used with a child who may usually engage in problem behaviours, to help remind them of suitable, more appropriate behaviours or responses that can be used instead. Once the visual prompts have been used with the child and they understand what the prompt is suggesting, the cards can be flashed and used for the child whenever necessary.

- **Birds Nest**
  - A quiet, calm place

- **Boomerang Bird**
  - Stop and think how your actions will affect yourself and others

- **Balloon Breathing**
  - Slow, deep breaths

- **Mighty Eagle**
  - An adult that can step in to help
Find Your Cubby

Lunch Time
Wash Hands

Nap Time
Part Three: Functional Communication Training

Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)

Children who are non-verbal or have difficulty communicating with others due to speech and language challenges or children who process information differently (such as visual learners) can be taught to communicate by learning to associate a visual image with the tangible item or activity. This strategy used to help individuals with special needs or deficits communicate with others is called the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS).¹¹

PECS is a practice that takes the user through a series of phases, gradually adding to each phase so that eventually the child is able to formulate full sentences or comments to questions using picture symbols.¹¹ The whole process itself involves six small, collective steps.

1. “How” to Communicate- in this phase the child is taught to associate the picture symbol with an item or activity and exchange the picture symbol for that tangible (real life) object or preferred activity. The child is taught to pick up the desired symbol, reach for or go to the trainer and give them the image. This is fully assisted exchange between the child and trainer because the trainer will help provide the child with the tangible object. This phase can begin to be faded out by providing less physical assistance when the child makes a request.

2. Distance and Persistence- this phase involves the child actively using this new skill and generalizing it across different settings and
with various people. In this phase the child will go to their communication booklet, choose the picture, pull it off and approach an adult to give them the picture. This can be challenged for the child by increasing the distance between the child and their communication book and the distance between the child and the trainer. This teaches how to communicate in the *real world*.

3. **Picture Discrimination**- within this phase the child is taught to select the desired image from a set of other images inside a communication booklet. The child can make a desired request by going to their communication book, find the desired image, pull it off and approach a communicative partner to give it to.

4. **Sentence Structure**- this phase begins teaching the child to construct basic sentences by selecting a multi word phrase and pairing it with a picture. The child chooses the desired request, such as “I want” and puts it on a sentence strip attached to the bottom of their communication book. Then they child chooses the desired item and places it on the strip next to “I want” to form a sentence request. The child then takes the sentence strip off the communication board and approaches a communicative partner and gives them the strip.

5. **Responding**- this phase involves teaching the child to answer the simple request “what do you want?” by providing the desired image. By this phase, the child knows how to request a number of
items and can begin responding to the question, “What do you want?” This phase can be challenged for the child by continually increasing the delay interval for the response to the child.

6. **Commenting** - this last phase teaches the child to comment and respond further to other questions, such as “what do you see?” and they learn to formulate sentences like this: “I see,” “I hear,” “I feel,” etc

**PECS** is a cost effective and portable strategy that can be used in a variety of environments, which will help improve initiations and requesting for children across different social situations, settings and people.\(^2^2\)

When used with children, PECS has shown to be successful not only in improving communication skills but has also generalized to show positive effects on social behaviours and in decreasing the occurrence of difficult behaviours as well. While this communication system can help teach children an alternative method to express themselves, it has shown to also benefit verbal behaviours and other alternative, desired behaviours when used accurately.\(^2^2\)

However, the important thing to keep in mind when using PECS is that this communication system is meant to the voice of the learner. It is their way to communicate with others by presenting visual images in order to create sentences that can request or respond to another person. PECS should not be used like other visual strategies to indicate expectations or requests from the trainer or communicative partner.
How to Use PECS

1. Firstly, before PECS training can begin the communication system has to be created. Pictures of the desired object or activity should be chosen and created into small individual, visual images that represent the real life tangible or situation. These visuals can be personalized photos or downloaded images from the Internet. There are several websites and online programs that allow people to obtain these types of images. The picture symbols should be kept in a personalized communication book and use Velcro to attach and detach them for easy use. The booklet should be durable and portable to travel with. There should also be multiple copies of the communication book to minimize the likelihood that the learner may not have access to their words, in the chance that the book gets damaged or a picture is lost.

2. Once the communication system has been created, it is then time to teach the child how to use the picture symbols to express their wants and needs to others. This involves teaching the child to associate the visual image with the real life object or activity. This can be done through repeatedly pairing the two for the child, by showing the child that when they present the visual image to a communicative partner, the result will be obtaining that concrete preferred object or activity. (Example: A child is hungry for a banana, the child is taught to retrieve the picture symbol for a banana and give it to the trainer, who will then access a tangible banana and give it to the child.)
3. The child’s PECS device should be used in various places and with different people so that the benefits generalize across settings. If the child is using the system routinely, it should be taken with them wherever they go, such as taking it to school and using it with teachers and other staff.

4. After the child has been taught to successfully use the images to communicate their wants and needs, they should be taught to select that item from a group of images. The visuals should always be kept together in the same area so that the child knows where to locate the images when needed (such as in a communication binder that holds all the images, organized into various headings, home, school, food, ect.) They can also be sorted into different routines or themes to help the child easily locate the image. (Example: sorting food preferences into breakfast, lunch, dinner or snacks, so that the child can easily locate the image for cereal to communicate that is their preferred meal choice.)

5. Once the child is effectively using the PECS system to communicate, further images and multi word phrases can be created to help teach the child to start formulating basic sentences. First the child is taught to effectively pair the request “I want” with the picture to obtain the preferred item or activity. Then eventually other phrases and requests can be created and used, such as: “I see,,” I hear,” I feel, “It is a,” ect) This not only teaches responding but also the child may begin to start commenting on things with others as well. (Example: Riding in the car, the child may
provide the sequence of images to express “I see” and the image of a tree.)

**Materials:**

- Create visual images of various foods, games or other items/activities that pertain to the child (can be personalized photographs or downloaded/purchased images found online) Computer programs are often a popular choice (Boardmaker is an example of a suitable program which can be downloaded as a free trial)
- Construct a communication booklet or other PECS board (this can be a binder which contains storage for all the visual images)
- Adhesive tape, Velcro is placed on the backside of the images and used to attach them within the booklet
- Printer/ laminator (optional)
Examples of PECS Boards

Image retrieved from http://www.speechbuddy.com/blog/speech-therapy-techniques/how-to-use-the-picture-exchange-communication-system-pecs/
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I want</th>
<th>I see</th>
<th>thank you</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>drink</td>
<td>biscuit</td>
<td>cake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>book</td>
<td>sand</td>
<td>pens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shoe</td>
<td>jumper</td>
<td>trousers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>coat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>sock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>hat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examples of a PECS communication book

Image retrieved from http://www.educateautism.com/make-your-own-teaching-aids/make-a-pecs-booklet.html#UplIKBaSHFI
Part Four: Behaviour Techniques

Direct Instruction and Prompting

Direct instruction and prompting is a simple strategy to use with children that can help to improve challenging behaviour or difficult situations by delivering a prompt before the desired behaviour is expected to occur. There are a variety of ways in which instructions and prompts can be given, some of which include: verbal prompts or reminders, physical prompts such as using an item like a timer, gestural prompts which could be as simple as putting a finger to lips to remind children that it is a quiet work period, or using models and rehearsal of appropriate behaviours. Prompts are used to help teach children new skills and expectations are most effective when they are specific to the child and delivered frequently and on a consistent basis.23

Prompting procedures also allow for shaping of the behaviour to be desirable by continually manipulating the way in which a prompt is delivered to the child. This is also an important part of using prompting, as the continuous change of the delivery of the prompt reduces the likelihood of the child becoming dependent on the prompt alone to deliver the correct response or behaviour.24 In addition, it has also been noted that pairing prompting procedures with other strategies such as reinforcement, can have positive impacts on additional, appropriate behaviours as well. Children learn to develop new skills from an early age and as it has been shown that children tend to learn well through individual instructions, prompting can be a rather effortless but beneficial strategy to improve behaviour.25
How To Use Direct Instruction and Prompting

1. When giving instructions educators should be clear and use short, simple terms that are easy for children to follow and understand. When one to one with a child, the educator should make eye contact and have a close proximity to the child, which will help the child to better understand.

2. Firstly, an appropriate prompt should be chosen to reflect the target behaviour or response that is being expected. The prompt chosen should match the child’s skill level and the goal being targeted. For example, an image of a storybook could be used to prompt a child about the expectations during silent reading period. An image of a child’s outdoor shoes and hat could be a prompt meaning it is time for recess.

3. Once chosen, the prompt should clearly indicate to the child what is being asked of them. This should be done by delivering an instruction, then immediately delivering the prompt and reinforcing the response directly. In doing this, the child will begin to learn that delivering the appropriate behaviour response upon sight of the prompt, will result in reinforcement for the child.

4. Prompts should be simple and clear.

5. Prompts should be delivered frequently and consistently. The more they are used, the more time it allows the child to learn and understand it so that they are delivering the correct responses.
6. When the learner is engaging in the correct behaviour consistently with prompts, it is time to begin fading out the prompt so that the child does not rely on the prompt alone to deliver the correct response. This can be done by reducing the amount of prompts given or by changing the prompt slightly. An example could for a child who has difficulty with transitions, verbally prompting the child that it is time to move on to the next activity or task. This verbal prompt should be faded out and delivered less. If the child is prompted several times, you could try instead prompting them only once before the transition period is to start.

Image retrieved from http://www.worksheetlibrary.com/teachingtips/imagedirectgif.gif
Positive Reinforcement

Using positive reinforcement with children is an effective approach to teaching new skills and desired behaviours by identifying them for the child and then validating them in a way that is meaningful to the child.26 The literature notes there are generally more opportunities to reinforce children for adaptive behaviours and responses, rather than to provide attention to those maladaptive behaviours.5 Positive reinforcement is a successful approach to use with children because the appropriate behaviour is followed by a pleasurable reaction or preferred item, which can be a number of things so long as they are geared to the interests of the child.

One of the most common forms of positive reinforcement that we all tend to use and that parents commonly use with children is simply verbal praise. Although praise is so commonly used, it has been shown that verbal praise alone has little meaning to children, unless it is paired with natural, positive outcome that the child can visualize and understand.27 Praise is used so successfully with children because it signals a positive response to the child, indicating to them that their behaviour or response was a desired one.26 When combining positive praise with a pleasant reward, it helps the child learn that positive and correct behaviour can produce a pleasant outcome, which will most likely increase the likelihood that the child will use those behaviours again in the future.28

Children who do not behave in a certain way or can be defiant are often quick to be labeled; yet it is important to acknowledge that children must first be
taught about proper behaviour and expectations before they can understand to be compliant.\textsuperscript{5} While we have mentioned that it is important to reinforce instances of appropriate behaviour, it is also necessary to keep in mind that behaviours that are inappropriate and repetitive should also be ignored. So often children who misbehave tend to be the ones who receive the most reinforcement through actions, words and adult attention, yet reinforcing children for positive behaviours can also have a large impact on additional, desired behaviours.\textsuperscript{29}

While tangible items and preferred time are attractive rewards for children, it has been shown that peer initiations and engagement can also be socially reinforcing for children, especially children with special needs. Children all want to feel included and be accepted by their peers, which is why it is important to teach and reinforce socially appropriate behaviours from a young age. This type of social reinforcement can also benefit teachers and can be a quick and easy way to also strengthen social skills and other socially acceptable behaviours by stimulating group activities.\textsuperscript{29} Reinforcement comes in all kinds of forms from adult attention and praise, pleasant items or preferred time, to social reinforcement and all forms have shown to be successful approach to teaching children desirable behaviours.
How To Use Positive Reinforcement

1. Positive reinforcement can be used in a variety of ways to encourage appropriate behaviour for children. Verbal reinforcement in the form of praise is among the most reinforcing and commonly used forms. Praising a child verbally is encouraging and motivating for them. When we can recognize good behaviour and praise them for it, the chances of the child exhibiting that behaviour again in the future increases.

2. Positive reinforcement can also come in the form of tangible items or preferred time for the child. This type of reinforcement can be a number of things, but it should be tailored to the specific interests of that child. It could range from receiving a tangible item such as a new game or treat at the store, to getting to watch an extra 15 minutes of television before bed.

3. Children should be reinforced for good behaviour whenever possible. Desirable behaviours can vary and children should be reinforced for all types of appropriate behaviours and responses. Reinforcement should be provided consistently for good behaviour so that the child is more likely to continue the desired behaviour.

4. The type of reinforcement that is provided should be changed routinely. Switching up the reward will avoid the child losing interest in it, which could lead to the child resorting back to displaying difficult behaviours.
5. Remember DISC when providing positive reinforcement in order to keep it working effectively.

- **Deprivation**- use a wide variety of reinforcers, to avoid *satiation* (lost interest in a reward due to repeated distribution of it) of a reinforcer or group of them

- **Immediacy**- provide the reinforcement immediately or as soon as possible, after the desired response or behaviour is delivered

- **Size**- the size of the reward should match the effort involved in the task, highly preferred rewards should be used especially for behaviours that require more effort form the child (the harder the task, the larger the reinforce should be)

- **Contingency**- reinforcement should be delivered if and only if the target behaviour occurs, this will also avoid accidently reinforcing other behaviours that are not the target
Examples of Positive Reinforcement

NAME ____________________________________________

YOUR SUPER POWERS ARE SHOWING!

Earn 10 punches on your card, then trade it in for a treat from your teacher.

Name ________________________________

You are making WISE choices!
Earn 12 punches on your card, then trade it in for a reward from your teacher.

Images retrieved from http://mrsfilas.blogspot.ca/2013/02/positive-reinforcement-rituals.html
Token Economy

The token economy is a very popular type of reinforcement strategy that has shown to be effective with a wide range of children and can be used in a variety of settings. The literature has supported that when token economies have been used with children who may be defiant or unresponsive to the environment, it can have a positive impact on increasing positive, more desired behaviours. This approach is a well-established strategy that has been used successfully not only with children, but with a number of different target populations and environments.

While token economies have proven to be effective in decreasing challenging behaviours in children, the technique does require continuous effort on the part of the educator. The approach involves continuously changing the target behaviours or goals and expectations for the child and delivering tokens for correct behaviour, which can be exchanged at a later point for a pleasant reward. A token can be any type of general reward personalized to that child’s interest and skill level, such as using stickers as tokens with young children.

Despite the popularity of using token economies with children, the major challenge of using them is that many educators are reluctant to try such an approach due to the belief that are difficult to understand or too time consuming. This strategy does require constant child observation, delivery of tokens on a consistent basis and possible changes to the target behaviours or expectations of the child. To effectively implement a token economy in order to produce positive changes in social behaviours and academic achievement, the educator
must be willing to volunteer their time and effort to learn about and practice the strategy. The strategy requires minimal training for the teacher, but when used properly can benefit the children and thus in turn, also indirectly benefit the educator.\textsuperscript{31} This type of reinforcement strategy can also be used for an entire group or whole class, which can be easier and time efficient for the teacher.\textsuperscript{30}

Token economies have also shown to be effective when used within the home by parents, who take advantage of natural reinforcing rewards, such as TV viewing privileges.\textsuperscript{32} Christophersen et al. (1972) discussed a study where two families attempted to use token economies in their home to modify behaviours of their delinquent children. The parents had reported some skepticism about using the technique prior to attempting it, but due to their cooperation and commitment to the approach, they successfully stated positive behaviour changes in their young boys after implementing the system.\textsuperscript{32}

Token economies can be a very popular approach to use with children and can be quite successful in increasing appropriate, desired behaviours but they need to be conducted by an individual who is willing to learn the skills and take the time to implement the technique effectively.\textsuperscript{32}
How To Use a Token Economy

1. The token economy reinforcement system should first be created. The teacher should identify suitable tokens to be earned through a sort of preference assessment and identify ways in which children will earn the tokens. As well, the teacher should choose a number of tokens that need to be earned before they can be traded in for a preferred item or activity. (For example, a teacher may use stickers as tokens and give them out for homework completion. For every 15 stickers the child earns, he/she can then exchange them for a small prize from the teacher’s treasure chest.)

2. Next, the system must be explained to the child so that they understand behaviours or responses that could earn them the tokens and that after a set number of tokens are scored, they can be exchanged for a tangible item or preferred time.

3. Tokens should be delivered to students when desirable behaviours occur. They should be delivered regularly and consistently. When tokens are delivered, there should be a specific place that they are stored. This could be in the form of a booklet or chart for a token such as stickers or checkmarks, or a jar or other container to hold a tangible reinforcer such as pom poms or lego pieces. Tokens that are chosen should be durable items, difficult to counterfeit and stored in a safe place.
4. When the child has earned a set amount of tokens, they should be traded in for that child's preferred activity or item, while still obeying the agreed upon time to make the change. A set time should be chosen and it should be discussed with the child so that they are aware of the expectation. For example, when the child has earned enough tokens, they can trade them in at the end of that school day to earn their reinforcement.

5. The reasons for which children receive tokens can be changed on a consistent basis, so long as the teacher is explaining the changes and providing additional examples to the children.

**Materials Used:**

- Tokens (stickers, checkmarks, candy, etc)
- Back up reinforcers (the desired tangible/ object, or preferred time)
- Pen/ markers or computer program to create a board for the tokens once earned (Word, Excel, Boardmaker)
- Printer/ ink
- Glue, tape, stapler (for a homemade story)
- Laminator (optional)
Examples of Token Economies

Image retrieved from http://www.nationalautismresources.com/token-board-i-can-do-it.html#.T7gypKTVgUo.pinterest
One Example of a Token Economy

A chosen reinforcer is placed here

I’m working for

Earned tokens are placed into these spaces

Self-Monitoring

Teaching children to self-monitor can be a beneficial approach to use with children and educators because the technique allows the child to be in control of him or herself and thus be accountable for their own behaviour. It has proven to be an effective method to use with children because it tends to use environmental controls, which are less restrictive on the child and can also generalize to improve other additional, desirable behaviours. Self-monitoring not only benefits the child by teaching them self control, which can have other long term benefits, but it can also benefit the teacher as the approach is readily available and takes little to no time on their part to use.\(^{34}\)

There are various ways that children can be taught to self manage their behaviour. Although there are several approaches to try when using this strategy, it is important to keep in mind the age and skill level of the child when choosing the approach. When self-monitoring, children need to be able to observe and record their own behaviour patterns, in order to learn to recognize and change the behavior to be more acceptable. Self-modeling videos can be used to show the child what the behaviour is supposed to look like by taping the child or other individual similar to the child, physically modeling the target behaviour. Checklists can also be used so that the child can record instances of their behaviour and thus actually be able to see the differences in their behaviour and the target behaviour. These strategies have been used in combination with each other, where the checklist can also act as a prompting tool and has shown to reduce off-task and non-compliant behaviours.\(^ {35}\)
The use of prompts with self-monitoring has also shown to reduce disruptive behaviours but also to increase alternative, appropriate behaviours and responses.\textsuperscript{34} Self-talk is another approach to self-monitoring that can be successful with children. Using self-talk can allow the child to direct their own behaviour by talking themselves through it and giving reminders. However usually only children above the ages of 3 can use this method, as children are not necessarily speaking adequately prior to this age.\textsuperscript{34}

Self-monitoring strategies can be beneficial to use with children as they can help to reduce challenging behaviours as well as increase other, more appropriate behaviours also. Observing a child’s on-task behaviour closely first, can help indicate whether or not this type of strategy could work for them.
How To Use Self-monitoring

1. Before an educator or child-care provider can know whether or not a child may benefit from using self-monitoring strategies, the child first needs to be observed closely in their natural environment. A child who is considered a good candidate for this approach, is the child who is generally on-task or is capable of observing and recording their own behaviour.

2. Define the target behaviour that you want the child to self observe. Make a decision about whether the behaviour is aimed to increase or decrease. This can be done by operationally defining the behaviour with the child, so that both know what the behaviour should look like.

3. Choose a method for the child to self observe their behaviour. The method chosen should adhere to the skill level of the individual child.

4. Checklists can be used to help children keep track and record instances of their behaviour. They can act as prompts or reminders to the child about what the expectation is and how they can respond. The child can review the checklist prior to start of the task and it will help verify the appropriate response. (For example, the child could have a checklist with three items regarding silent reading period; clear off desk upon teacher request, take out silent reading book, and read quietly at desk.)
5. Rating scales can be used for children to self-record how well they are behaving. These should be used at consistent time periods, usually at the end of an observation period. (For example, child rates their on-task behaviour at the end of a work period; How well did I: 1) stay in my own chair, 2) contribute in class, 3) follow instructions, etc.)

6. Self-modeling videos are effective ways to help actually show the child the expectation or desired behaviour. This can be done by taping the child or a similar individual, such as a peer, physically modeling the appropriate behaviour. The child can then watch and practice the behaviour frequently and record using checklists or rating scales to see progress.

7. Self-talk is another strategy that can be successfully with older children. They can be taught to talk themselves through certain situations and use reminders of appropriate behaviour and responses. The repetition and reminders that the child uses can ease anxiety and help them understand the appropriate behaviours that are desired. Modeling appropriate behaviours and using positive talk frequently will promote this for the child. Say it out loud and use affirming messages, such as “it’s okay to be angry” or “you can be upset and still think of what to do.” Songs can also be another way to help children through certain situations and tasks.
# Examples of Self-monitoring Behaviour Checklists

**My Self-Monitoring Form**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Today in class...</th>
<th>Was I paying attention to my assigned work?</th>
<th>Y</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Was I following the classroom rules?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Was I paying attention to my assigned work?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Was I following the classroom rules?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Was I paying attention to my assigned work?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Was I following the classroom rules?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Was I paying attention to my assigned work?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Was I following the classroom rules?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Was I paying attention to my assigned work?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Was I following the classroom rules?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total number of Y (yes) = _____  My Goal =**

**Signed:**
- Student
- Teacher
- Parent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Cool</th>
<th>So-So</th>
<th>Uncool</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opening</td>
<td>😊</td>
<td>😐</td>
<td>😞</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morning 1</td>
<td>😊</td>
<td>😐</td>
<td>😞</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morning 2</td>
<td>😊</td>
<td>😐</td>
<td>😞</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE</td>
<td>😊</td>
<td>😐</td>
<td>😞</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>😊</td>
<td>😐</td>
<td>😞</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>😊</td>
<td>😐</td>
<td>😞</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>😊</td>
<td>😐</td>
<td>😞</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>😊</td>
<td>😐</td>
<td>😞</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>😊</td>
<td>😐</td>
<td>😞</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Parents: This is not a conduct report. Its purpose is to help PB’s learn to be honest about their own behavior. Please don’t give consequences for any marks. This works best if you don’t even ask to see this card.

Mr. Roemer

http://www.pb5th.com/selfmoni.shtml
Conclusion

In conclusion, the literature highlights a variety of approaches that have been successfully used with children to prevent and decrease the occurrence of problem behaviours. It also acknowledges the need for appropriate training and cooperation when using the techniques in order for them to be effective. As it has been noted, challenging behaviours displayed in the early years of a child’s life can help predict the development of more serious issues, such as aggressive or antisocial behaviours later on. The education of young children should play a significant role in helping to develop a child’s social competence in addition to academics, as it can help to reduce the occurrence of challenging behaviours in the future. While the use of these behaviour strategies have shown to be successful, the effectiveness of these approaches rely on several factors concerning delivery of the techniques. Some of these factors include but not limited to: eye contact, tone of voice, close vicinity to the child, length, and consistency of delivery.

The manual describes several common, behaviour techniques that are used successfully within the literature for preventing and reducing challenging behaviours in young children. It explains what these approaches are and provides easy to follow instructions about how to best create and apply these strategies. The manual will educate and train the reader about how to develop the skills necessary to successfully use the best practices with children and may increase confidence levels for addressing challenging behaviours in the future.
References


Appendix B: Feedback Evaluation Form

Training Manual Feedback Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Was the manual easy to read? Did it use simple language and illustrative details to help users understand the material?</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Were instructions provided in the manual descriptive enough in order to help the reader learn to use the strategy effectively?</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Did the pictures and visual examples in the manual help illustrate the best practice strategy? Were the samples provided useful models to help the reader in recreating their own tools?</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Was the layout of the manual designed in such a way that allows for easy use? Was it helpful to have sections separating each best practice strategy used?</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Overall, did the manual provide an easy to read, helpful source of information to help childcare providers learn to use the skills outlined?</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What did you like about the manual?

In what areas do you think the manual could be improved to allow for easy and effective use?