

# Focusing on Function of Behavior Within the Context of DBI

## Participant Workbook



## Table of Contents

Setting the Scene .....	3
Mr. Robinson’s Perspective.....	3
Pause and Reflect.....	3
Jasmine’s Perspective .....	3
Pause and Reflect.....	3
Background Knowledge: Function of Behavior .....	4
Components of the Three-Term Contingency .....	4
Function .....	4
Activity 1: Function of Behavior .....	5



## Setting the Scene

### Mr. Robinson's Perspective

Mr. Robinson is a seventh-grade reading interventionist. He has growing concerns about his sixth-period group, specifically his student Jasmine. Jasmine is always talking to her peers during instruction and shouting out. Mr. Robinson believes he has tried everything—politely asking her to stop, providing a correction when Jasmine calls out, and speaking with Jasmine in the hallway. He admits he has even yelled a few times. His team recommended a token economy for Jasmine, but that has not worked either. He is frustrated and thinks this is impacting his ability to teach and other students' ability to learn.

### Pause and Reflect

Take a moment to reflect on the scenario presented in the previous slide. In what ways can you relate to Mr. Robinson? What would you do in his situation?

### Jasmine's Perspective

Jasmine is in Mr. Robinson's sixth-period reading intervention group. Jasmine often feels like Mr. Robinson only pays attention to the students who get the answers right. Jasmine is struggling with reading and has not been getting many answers correct lately. However, Mr. Robinson *does* pay attention to her when she talks to her friends or when she calls out. Sometimes he even speaks with her in the hallway! Jasmine wants to be a good student and she knows she shouldn't be calling out, but how else can she get Mr. Robinson to pay attention to her?

### Pause and Reflect

Take a moment to reflect on the scenario presented in the previous slide. In what ways are Mr. Robinson's and Jasmine's perspectives of the same situation *different*? How do may these differences impact Mr. Robinson's approach?



## Background Knowledge: Function of Behavior

This section presents a review of some behavior basics shared in the module. The Three-Term Contingency, also referred to as the Antecedent-Behavior-Consequence (A-B-C) model, helps define behavior in context by identifying the events that occur *before* and *after* a behavior. This relatively simple model can help put complex behavior into context and provide insight into what environmental factors may contribute to the occurrence of a behavior.

### Components of the Three-Term Contingency



- **Antecedents** are events that occur immediately before a behavior (sometimes these are referred to as “triggers”).
- **Behaviors** are the actions or events that can be observed and measured.
- **Consequences** are the events that occur immediately after a behavior.

### Function

- Behavior always serves a purpose (i.e., obtain a desired outcome or goal).
- Function is the purpose of or reason why a person engages in a behavior. It is linked to concepts of consequences and reinforcement.
- Examples of desired outcomes or goals:
  - **Access to** attention, tangibles (e.g., toys), a preferred activity, or sensory stimulation
  - **Avoidance of** tasks, specific environment or situations, social interaction, or unpleasant sensory stimulation



## Activity 1: Function of Behavior

Read each scenario below and review the antecedent, the behavior, and the consequence. Next, identify the possible function(s) of behavior.

**Scenario 1:** Val’s social studies class is working in small groups making volcanoes. Val loves group work because she doesn’t have many friends. Unfortunately, the kids in her group don’t pay much attention to Val or her ideas until she starts making fun of their teacher, Mr. Bellington. Whenever a groupmate asks her a question about the volcano she is making, she replies with a funny comment about Mr. Bellington. Her groupmates laugh and tell her how funny she is. Val is happy to be making her classmates laugh, and she continues with her comments about the teacher.

Antecedent	Behavior	Consequence
Val’s groupmates ignore her ideas.	Val makes a funny comment about her teacher.	Val’s groupmates laugh and tell her how funny she is.

*What is a possible function maintaining Val’s behavior?*

Function of Behavior (circle all that apply)	
To Access, Obtain, or Get:	Avoid or Escape From:
Peer attention	Difficult task
Adult attention	Boring task
Desired activity	Easy task
Desired object or items	Physical demand
Sensory stimulation (e.g., auditory, tactile)	Nonpreferred activity
	Peer attention
	Staff attention
	Reprimands



**Scenario 2:** Sometimes there may be multiple functions for one behavior, as is the case with the next example. Jorge, a ninth grader, failed math class last semester. The next semester is starting, and he is excited for a fresh start with a new math teacher, Ms. James. On the first day of class, Ms. James asks each student to solve a problem on the board. Jorge panics because he doesn't know how to solve this type of problem and is too nervous to tell Ms. James. When it is his turn, Jorge walks to the board and instead of working on the problem, he mutters a joke. The class laughs and Ms. James takes the dry erase marker from him. Ms. James tells Jorge there will be no behavior like that in her class, and she calls on another student. In the future, anytime Ms. James asks Jorge to solve a problem he does not understand, he makes a joke.

Antecedent	Behavior	Consequence
Ms. James asks Jorge to solve a difficult math problem in front of class.	Jorge makes a joke about math.	Jorge's peers laugh. Ms. James tells Jorge there will be no behavior like that in her class, and she calls on another student.

*What is a possible function maintaining Jorge's behavior?*

Function of Behavior (circle all that apply)	
To Access, Obtain, or Get:	Avoid or Escape From:
Peer attention	Difficult task
Adult attention	Boring task
Desired activity	Easy task
Desired object or items	Physical demand
Sensory stimulation (e.g., auditory, tactile)	Nonpreferred activity
	Peer attention
	Staff attention
	Reprimands



**Read each scenario below and identify the antecedent, the behavior, and the consequence. Next, identify the possible function(s) of behavior.**

**Scenario 3:** Oliver doesn't have an iPad at home and feels so lucky to be able to use them in his classroom. His teacher keeps them on a shelf in the classroom library. During independent reading time, Oliver always asks to read in the library. Without his teacher noticing, Oliver plays on an iPad instead of reading his book. His teacher doesn't notice. He asks to read in the library every other day that week and plays on the iPad instead of doing his work.

Antecedent	Behavior	Consequence
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*What is a possible function maintaining Oliver's behavior?*

Function of Behavior (circle all that apply)	
To Access, Obtain, or Get:	Avoid or Escape From:
Peer attention	Difficult task
Adult attention	Boring task
Desired activity	Easy task
Desired object or items	Physical demand
Sensory stimulation (e.g., auditory, tactile)	Nonpreferred activity
	Peer attention
	Staff attention
	Reprimands



**Scenario 4:** Each day Jeremiah gets to Chemistry class early to claim a seat in the back row against the wall where he doesn't have to sit with any other students. He puts his backpack on the chair next to him. One day, a new student comes to class and the spot next to Jeremiah is the only seat available. Ms. Young tells the new student to sit there. Jeremiah shouts out that the student can't sit there and refuses to move his backpack. Ms. Young tells the new student to sit in another spot. Jeremiah yells the next day when Ms. Young tells the student to sit next to him.

Antecedent	Behavior	Consequence
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*What is a possible function maintaining Jeremiah's behavior?*

Function of Behavior (circle all that apply)	
To Access, Obtain, or Get:	Avoid or Escape From:
Peer attention	Difficult task
Adult attention	Boring task
Desired activity	Easy task
Desired object or items	Physical demand
Sensory stimulation (e.g., auditory, tactile)	Nonpreferred activity
	Peer attention
	Staff attention
	Reprimands

This resource was produced under U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Award No. H326Q210001. Celia Rosenquist serves as the project officer. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education. No official endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education of any product, commodity, service or enterprise mentioned in this document is intended or should be inferred.

