

Module 6: Positive Behaviour Support

This module will provide you with knowledge and tools to facilitate self-regulation skills in students with language disorder using Positive Behaviour Support. Today you will be guided through the necessary steps to understand student behaviour to help make a positive change. While supporting students through this process remember - Behaviour serves a purpose. For students with language disorder, the difficulties understanding language and expressing themselves may contribute to the behaviours you see in your classroom.

If you have not yet had an opportunity to complete module 4, it would be helpful to do so before beginning this module. This module will focus on the social and emotional domain, specifically self-regulation.

All domains of the foundations for learning framework are interrelated. Often behaviour difficulties are the first issue identified, however it is important to consider the student holistically.

Everything we say and do reflects what's going on inside of us. We can't observe thoughts and emotions, therefore observing behaviour is important to gain an understanding of what the student may be thinking or feeling. Behaviours can be categorised into two broad categories:

Involuntary such as sneezing or blinking; and

Voluntary such as: eating and smiling

It is important to be able to accurately identify behaviour to support positive changes. Click on all the behaviours below...

The words in pink are judgement terms often used to describe behaviour, however they don't accurately describe an observable activity like the words in green. It is important to reflect on our preconceived notions of behaviour as we progress through this module.

Challenging behaviour is any behaviour that negatively impacts and limits a person's daily life. Difficult behaviours are often a way of communicating a student's needs and wants. Even if we don't always understand. This is particularly relevant for students with Language Disorder who struggle to communicate. Challenging behaviour is generally attributed to the student demonstrating the behaviour, however it is often most 'challenging' because it challenges the student's parents, teachers and other key stakeholders. But these people are key to understanding why the student is engaging in this behaviour and can work together to find a solution.

Challenging behaviour does not occur due to poor parenting. It is due to an interaction between: the individual, what they've been taught, their life experiences, other people in their lives and their culture and environment.

Positive behaviour support is an evidence-based approach used to increase a person's quality of life by decreasing the frequency and severity of their challenging behaviour, whilst reinforcing their helpful behaviours. Positive behaviour support also has links to children having better problem solving and self-efficacy, less aggression and more optimistic outlooks, as well as fewer mental health problems in the future. Positive behaviour support can be used to support individuals or applied across a whole school. This module will address the process of supporting individual students.

For successful change, it is important to understand the student, their strengths, and areas of need. We also need to remember that these challenging behaviours are the student communicating their needs, so restricting behaviours could be considered restricting their right to communicate. Remember that progress may not be linear and some preferred behaviours might take a while to teach.

Implementing Positive Behaviour Support involves objectively addressing behaviour through data collection, setting achievable goals, supportive strategies, and meaningfully rewarding success. The diagram shown here illustrates the process of Positive Behaviour Support. You can click through each of the tabs to unpack this in more detail and the sample tab for a template plan which brings all of these steps together.

Data collection: The first step is to investigate the situation to understand why the challenging behaviour occurs. To successfully implement change, it is important to gather as much information as possible before sitting down with the student's key stakeholders. Bear in mind, there are many ways to collect information, including assessment, playground and classroom observations, reviewing work samples, interviews and speaking directly with the student. When collecting data, describe the challenging behaviour as objectively as possible. Consider the severity, impact, duration and frequency of the behaviour. Also think about what happened before and after the challenging behaviour. This can help you identify the potential cause of the behaviour, as well as other contributing factors.

Goal Setting:

After data collection, the next step is to plan for intervention and set a goal. Goal setting enables a clear focus and assists in understanding the desired outcomes. Setting achievable goals is important to enable a sense of success both for the student and support team. Ensure goals are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound to support student success.

Support Strategies:

Support strategies are the tools the student requires to succeed with positive behaviour support. Strategies such as visual supports, explicit instruction, role play, and social stories can all be used to explain a routine or expectation. Please see Module 5 on classroom strategies for further suggestions.

Rewards:

Choosing meaningful rewards is crucial step for supporting the student to use preferred behaviours. Speak to the student and their parents to find out their interests. Rewards should be a mix of immediate and accumulative, for example a stamp could be given for each step achieved in the task and then when all stamps are received they gain a more desired reward.

This prevents the student feeling like they've failed if they don't successfully finish the desired outcome. Rewards should always be paired with verbal praise.

Other influences:

Positive behaviour support relies on the strength of the relationship you have with the student. As discussed in Module 4, there are multiple other influences that can contribute to behaviour, such as social, cultural, economic and environmental factors. It is important to speak to the student, their family and other key stakeholders to understand which factors may be impacting the challenging or preferred behaviours.

To help with today's module, I would like to introduce you to Jimmy. Jimmy is a 9-year-old boy with Language Disorder. He is very social, but struggles to make friends and becomes upset when a situation doesn't go his way. Jimmy needs additional support in the playground and during transition times at school. Jimmy's parents report he comes home every day crying and he is starting to refuse to get ready for school in the mornings. You may know a student who presents with similar behaviour and often the first question is – what do I do?

Let's think about what might happen when a Positive Behaviour Support plan is put into place. After collecting data in the playground, it was identified that Jimmy didn't understand the rules of playing tag. His parents and teachers set a goal with him to take turns when playing tag for 5 minutes with verbal reminders. His teacher then role plays the support strategies for the game during 1 to 1 sessions and helped him to identify when it was his turn to run and his turn to tag. Jimmy is rewarded with high fives and verbal praise, but knows when he reaches heightened emotions, he can play on the fort until he's ready to return. So will this work?

In most cases change will not be instantaneous. When additional demands are placed on a student the reaction can often be a short increase of challenging behaviour before the improvements are seen, which is called an escalation trap. Varying levels of supportive strategies will need to be carefully considered at each stage of a challenging behaviour. But the planning times between incidents is when we have the most power to shape behaviour.

This section of the module will now help you plan for addressing student behaviour using a Positive Behaviour Support approach. This module will use Jimmy as a case study, however, you will be given the opportunity to apply this process to your own students and school context.

Have a go ordering these stages of Positive Behaviour Support from start to finish. We learnt these only minutes ago so I'm sure you'll do well.

The first step is to identify the behaviour by observing what occurs before the behaviour; describing the behaviour, and what happens after the behaviour. This sequence of observation and recording is referred to as an ABC chart – Antecedent, Behaviour and Consequence.

Consider the records completed for Jimmy - the antecedent, behaviour or consequence.

This time I'd like you to think about a student of your own. When you have a student and behaviour in mind,
When you're ready click the next button.

Now that you have identified the behaviour let's consider the purpose of the behaviour and contributing factors. As stated earlier, behaviour always serves a purpose. This purpose can fall into 4 categories; social attention, escape or avoidance, tangible or activity (gaining access to something), or sensory stimulation.

Consider each of these behaviours and the underlying purpose. When you're ready, drag and drop each behaviour under one of the 4 functions.

Take a moment to reflect on the purpose of your student's behaviour and possible contributing factors.

When you're finished click the next button.

Take a moment to reflect on the purpose your student's behaviour and possible contributing factors.

Finally, let's begin planning for intervention by considering the replacement behaviour, the skills that need to be taught, any environmental changes, as well as how to reward the replacement behaviour and discourage the non-preferred behaviour.

When considering a replacement behaviour we instinctively look to the long term, but consider what is achievable within the next 1-2 weeks.

For Jimmy the goal of taking turns when playing tag will help him progress to a long term goal of making and maintaining friendships at school.

Take some time now to complete this final section for your own student.

At this stage of the training I invite you to take a minute to reflect. Consider the content covered so far. How has your understanding of challenging behaviour now changed? Could you implement the Positive Behaviour Support process for individual students? What are the steps from where you are with your student to where you want to be?

When you're ready to move on click the next button.

You have now completed each step of the Positive Behaviour Support process and have a plan ready for implementation.

Positive Behaviour Support seeks to improve quality of life by empowering students. Through this process we can enable students with Language Disorder to develop self-regulation skills, which will help them participate in school to achieve positive outcomes.

For more information on the content covered in this module, please view the following handouts.

We value your feedback, so please complete the following survey to help us improve future learning experiences.

This project was funded by the Queensland Governments' Non-State Special Needs Organisations Program