

# Reflecting on Unexpected Behavior Episodes

When an unexpectedly intense or unusual behavior episode happens, it is important to try to understand what may have gone wrong with the behavior support plan. If you do not have a behavior support plan, then understanding what happened may help you begin a functional behavior assessment (FBA) and develop a behavior support plan.



This document is intended to help the team reflect on the intense or unusual episode to better understand how the episode happened. This will allow you to consider the interventions and reactive strategies that are in your plan to determine if the episode was a fluke or whether there is a need to add to or modify the behavior support plan.



*Here are the steps of the process. Each step has a more detailed explanation as well as guiding questions to lead the reflection.*

---

R

Review what happened in the episode in a step-by-step fashion by writing it down. The review will start with events prior to the actual behavior episode so that you better understand the sequence of events.

E

Examine the ABC of the event to determine the trigger or setting event using the written sequence of events. Use your understanding of the student's diagnosis to inform your examination.

F

Fidelity check. Was the student's behavior support plan followed? Were the preventative strategies in place? Were the reactive strategies implemented as planned? Did we miss the rumbling behaviors?

L

List alternate interventions that could have been used in the sequence of events that might possibly have caused a different result.

E

Explore where communication mistakes may have happened on both sides in the sequence of events.

C

Change the current plan to reflect additional supports and reactive strategies (and a crisis plan) (and/or)

T

Teach the team how to implement the current plan more effectively.

Reflect  
B G T J G C F

# R

## Review what happened step-by-step

Review what happened in the episode in a step-by-step fashion by writing it down. The review will start with events prior to the actual behavior episode so that you better understand the sequence of events.

### Getting started

When was it apparent that the situation was deteriorating? Start your step-by-step list just before that time.

1. It helps to number the steps to promote the systematic recording of the event.
2. Try not to include what people were thinking, just write what was done.
3. Leave room between the steps as you will use this list going forwards in the reflections process.

---

### Here's an example.

1. There was a substitute in the room.
2. Joe entered from his previous class (science).
3. He went to his desk and put his materials down.
4. The substitute moved towards him rapidly while telling him to keep his desk clear for a test.
5. Joe made a squawking sound.
6. At almost the same time, he pushed his materials to the floor.
7. The substitute grabbed Joe's arm.
8. Joe jerked his arm away.
9. Joe's elbow contacted the sub's shoulder.
10. The sub backed up as Joe began screaming and flapping.
11. A teacher in the hall entered and asked if everyone was alright.
12. The sub said loudly that the student had attacked him.
13. Joe ran from the room.



Start with the last known “okay” moments.



- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.
- 11.
- 12.

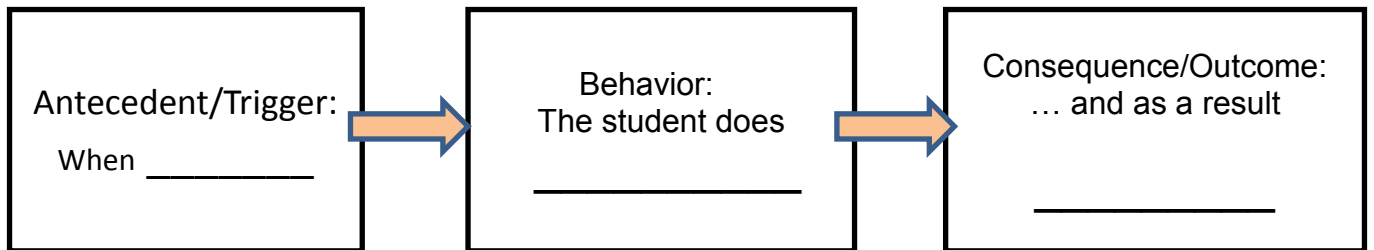
# E

xamine the ABC

Once you've recreated the event step-by-step, beginning before the actual episode started, put together an antecedent-behavior-consequence (ABC) chart to see where triggers might be.

As you consider the antecedents, use the characteristics of the student's disability to help you to identify what may have played a role. For example, for students on the autism spectrum, sensory conditions may play a role. For students with ADHD, working memory demands can be part of the antecedent.

There may be a series of behaviors to examine so there are more than one set of boxes.



**Antecedent**

**Behavior**

**And as a result**

Antecedent	Behavior	And as a result

## Guiding Questions

Before the situation deteriorated, how was the student's day going?

Were there any unexpected changes to the student's routine?

Were sensory conditions unusual or overwhelming?

Were the tasks that preceded the behavior episode difficult from the point-of-view of the student?

Was there something about what was said or demanded of the student that was confusing to the student?

Are there other important variables to be aware of?



## Fidelity check of the plan

Take a look at the student's behavior support plan, particularly the environmental support section and the reactive strategies section.

### Guiding Questions

What is the "Big Picture" for the student's behavior plan?

Was the Big Picture what drove staff responses?

Was the behavior support plan followed?    *Yes*        *No*        *Attempted*

If it was not followed, what parts were missed?

*-Environmental Supports:*

*-Reactive Strategies:*

If it was followed or partially followed, which environmental support strategies were helpful?

If it was followed or partially followed, which reactive strategies were useful?

Was the crisis plan used? \_\_\_\_\_ Was the plan implemented as planned?

What rumbling behaviors were present at the start of the episode? Were the student's rumbling behaviors missed?





## List alternate interventions

Using the step-by-step review that was completed initially, list alternate interventions that could have been used that may have caused the situation to end differently. Here is an example using the student described earlier.

What happened	We could have	We could have
There was a substitute in the room.	Put this information in Joe's schedule earlier in the day.	Skipped that class as we know subs are hard and his Big Picture is "good day."
Joe entered from his previous class (science).	The special education teacher could have walked him to introduce him to the unfamiliar adult.	
He went to his desk and put his materials down.	Used a visual reminder on Joe's desk about where to put his materials.	Left a note for the substitute about Joe and his need for routine.
The substitute moved towards him rapidly while telling him to keep his desk clear for a test.	Asked another student in the room to proactively warn substitutes to call for help and not to push Joe.	Turned to Joe and told him that we would handle the situation and to use his relaxation strategies.
Joe made a squawking sound.	We know this is a rumbling behavior. We could have prompted Joe to use breathing techniques.	We could have redirected Joe to his safe area.
At almost the same time, he pushed his materials to the floor.	Same as previous.	The substitute should have been informed about Joe's behavior so that he could have called for help at this time and not engaged with Joe.
The substitute grabbed Joe's arm.	The substitute should have been informed about Joe's behavior so that he could have called for help at this time and not engaged with Joe.	
Joe jerked his arm away.	The substitute should have been informed about Joe's behavior so that he could have called for help at this time and not engaged with Joe.	We know that Joe doesn't like to be touched unexpectedly.
Joe's elbow contacted the sub's shoulder.	This was an accident. We could have asked Joe if he had been hurt and been quietly sympathetic.	
The sub backed up as Joe began screaming and flapping.	Joe was now in full rage stage. We should have interrupted sooner but at this point we could only keep people safe and be quiet.	Move the sub and other students out of the room.
A teacher in the hall entered and asked if everyone was alright.	We should have let other teachers who might come to loud situations know about Joe's plan.	
The sub said loudly that the student had attacked him.	We should have removed Joe from this area.	We should have informed the sub ahead of time.
Joe ran from the room.	We should have had a safe place picked out ahead of time and practiced going to it.	



## E xplore communication mistakes

In the sequence of events, explore where mistakes may have made. Did the student misunderstand something about the situation? Did a staff member supporting the student communicate in a way that was misunderstood by the student?

In the future, how will you ensure these mistakes won't happen?

## C hange the plan (and/or)

In some instances, based on the episode and the likelihood that it will occur again, the behavior support plan needs additional strategies included in Environmental Supports or Reactive Strategies. The plan for Teaching New Skills may need to incorporate new skill teaching as well. Finally, the team may want to address the Crisis Plan if changes are needed in that section as well.

Changes to consider in the *Environmental Supports* section.

Changes in the *Reactive Strategies* section.

New skills to be added in *Teaching New Skills*.

Changes to the *Crisis Plan*.

## Teach the current plan

If the review of the situation finds that the plan was not carried out with fidelity, then it is important to provide instruction to the team so that, going forward, the plan is implemented effectively. Make a plan to achieve this.

---

Who is going to teach the plan to staff?

When will this be done?

What resources are needed to carry out this step?

How will you know that the staff has learned the details of the plan?



“An explosive outburst—like other forms of maladaptive behavior—occurs when the cognitive demands being placed upon a person outstrip that person’s capacity to respond adaptively.”

-Dr. Ross Greene  
*Lost at School*

