



Functional Behavioral Assessment

Functional Analysis

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The FBA methods discussed to this point have been developed for use in classroom, vocation, or residential settings by practitioners (e.g., teachers, therapists or caregivers) in the child's treatment or support team. In most instances, these methods are effective in identifying at least one possible function of the behavior of interest. They are most effective when used in combination such that an interview or MAS might indicate a possible function, and then be verified or confirmed through direct observation. In fact, it is highly recommended that at least two different methods be used to identify functions for challenging behavior. In some instances, however, these methods do not produce the desired results of a function or even two possible functions of challenging behavior. The results of the assessment may be unclear, or may produce different results, depending on the type of method used. In these cases, then, further analysis is needed in order to accurately identify the functions of the behavior.

The analysis of choice is called a functional analysis, which is a specific set of procedures designed to identify the functions of challenging behavior under tightly controlled situations. This analysis is usually referred to as an experimental manipulation, because of the rigorous criteria required for its completion. In general, the goal of a functional analysis is to set up conditions, or situations that are likely to produce undesirable behavior. Increases in challenging behavior under a condition helps identify the type of reinforcement for the behavior, and thus the function. The types of experimental conditions include: attention, toy removal, demand, alone, and a control condition of play/leisure. Due to the complexity of the analysis, functional analysis should only be conducted by professionals specifically trained in its methods and application; it is referred to here only as a point of reference. For more information on functional analysis, refer to this seminal article:

Iwata, B. A., Dorsey, M. F., Slifer, K. J., Bauman, K. E., & Richman, G. S. (1982). Toward a functional analysis of self-injury. *Analysis and intervention in developmental disabilities*, 2, 3-20.