



Positive behaviour support

Traditional approaches to managing behaviour have been largely ineffective - a more effective approach is positive behaviour support.

In this article

- Traditional responses to challenging behaviour
- What Is Positive Behaviour Support?
- Key Aspects of Positive Behaviour Support
- The ABC Approach
- Positive Behaviour Support - An Example

Traditional responses to challenging behaviour

In the past society's responses to challenging and complex behaviours have included imprisonment, torture and banishment from the community. Today, punishment is still a common response, whether it is prisons at the public level, or giving someone the cold shoulder at a personal level.

Some traditional techniques are still used today to try and manage the behaviour of people with disabilities, such as:

- taking away desired objects
- locking away/secluding
- hitting
- tying up
- ignoring/shunning
- bribing (coercion).

What Is Positive Behaviour Support?

Positive Behaviour Support is a modern approach to challenging behaviours. It has gained international acceptance and is being adopted by many organisations and government departments in the disability sector. Its goals are to assist a person to engage in less challenging behaviour and increase their quality of life.

There are many effective strategies available within the positive behaviour support approach providing a variety of ways to respond to challenging behaviours. All strategies are based on a foundation of respect for the person involved. It is important to make a distinction between the person and the behaviour. Always look for positive ways to encourage appropriate behaviour, and avoid punishment or coercion. It is helpful to:

- develop a positive rapport
- establish consistent routines
- remain calm and respond positively during a behaviour
- involve the person in discussing behaviour issues.

Key Aspects of Positive Behaviour Support

Positive behaviour support is exactly what it sounds like - a supportive, positive approach to complex and challenging behaviour. Key aspects include:

- we shouldn't try to control others, but offer support instead
- positive responses are better than coercion and punishment
- don't just blame the person, look for wider causes in the environment
- look for the reason behind a behaviour (e.g. is there an unmet need?)
- every person has unique strengths and talents to offer
- everyone deserves respect, quality of life and effective services.



The ABC Approach

The ABC model is an effective way to understand challenging behaviour and develop suitable responses within a positive behaviour support plan. It looks at the:

- Antecedents - what happened before the behaviour?
- Behaviour - what is the actual behaviour?
- Consequences - what happens afterward?

This is an effective technique to remove the emotion from challenging behaviours, analyse the behaviour and create effective responses.

Positive Behaviour Support - An Example

At the supermarket, Paul's support worker finds that after a few minutes of shopping Paul will suddenly start throwing items from the shelves and yelling loudly.

Instead of seeing Paul as being difficult or throwing a tantrum, his support worker looks for the causes, and message behind the behaviour. It is a new supermarket, and this has upset Paul's routine as the layout is completely different. This, combined with the noisy and over-stimulating environment, proves too much for Paul to manage.

After discussion with colleagues, a plan is set to take Paul into the new supermarket for only 30 seconds at first, then gradually increase the length of visits each week until he has adjusted to the new environment. Paul is encouraged to say when he starts to feel uncomfortable. The support workers give Paul lots of encouragement for handling the situation well or for verbalising his discomfort.

The situation is discussed with the supermarket manager who agrees not to ban Paul from the supermarket after realising that action is being taken to resolve the issue.

References and further information

Association for Positive Behaviour Support - http://www.apbs.org/new_apbs/pbsInfo.aspx