

BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS WORKSHEET

Rationale: Children with ADHD often act inappropriately to acquire a highly valued incentive. To modify an inappropriate behavior, it is necessary to identify the incentive that is sustaining and encouraging that behavior. A behavior analysis is a simple procedure for making this identification that consists of little more than knowing what questions to ask about the behavior. The procedure is easy to learn and to implement and is described below.

Common Motivations: Although there are many potential motivations for inappropriate behavior, three are particularly common to children with ADHD:

1. The need for attention.
2. The need to gain a tangible object or engage in a fun activity.
3. The need to avoid an unpleasant task or activity.

Questions to Consider: By asking the questions suggested below, clues may be revealed about which of the three motivators is responsible for a specific inappropriate behavior.

The need for attention	The need to gain an object or activity	The need to avoid an unpleasant task
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Does the behavior most often occur in a group of people when you are giving more attention to others than the child? <input type="checkbox"/> Does the behavior intensify if the behavior does not immediately lead to gaining more attention from you? <input type="checkbox"/> Is the behavior effective in redirecting your attention to the child and away from others? <input type="checkbox"/> Does the behavior stop after the child gains your attention but restarts if you suddenly withdraw your attention? <input type="checkbox"/> Does the behavior suddenly occur in the presence of a sibling(s) (particularly a younger sib) or peer(s)? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Does the behavior lead to the child gaining a valued activity or object? <input type="checkbox"/> Does the behavior usually occur after you have told the child that he cannot have or do something? <input type="checkbox"/> Does the behavior abruptly stop after you have allowed the child to have or do something? <input type="checkbox"/> Does the behavior begin soon after you have permitted another child to have or do something that is of high value to the other child? <input type="checkbox"/> Does the behavior provide the child with objects or activities that usually are not permitted through other means? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Does the behavior occur after you have told the child to do something that is either difficult or unpleasant? <input type="checkbox"/> Does the behavior become so unpleasant that you withdraw or fail to enforce your demand to the child? <input type="checkbox"/> Does the behavior discontinue when you do withdraw your demand? <input type="checkbox"/> Does the behavior (such as a physical complaint) provide the child with a seemingly legitimate reason for not having to perform the unpleasant act? <input type="checkbox"/> Does the behavior stop soon after the child has complied with the demand?

Procedure: Carefully inspect the questions suggested above. If you answer “yes” to more questions within one category than within the other categories, then that is likely the underlying motivator.

If children with ADHD are unable to gain what they desire via appropriate behavior, they will likely do so through inappropriate behavior. An effective method of modifying the child’s behavior is to provide the child with a legitimate means to obtain incentives that are important to them. A behavior analysis can help to identify a child’s immediate goals thereby permitting these goals to be used as a reward for appropriate behavior.

Example: Ben is a 10 year-old child with ADHD who often fails to complete his class work at school. Ben’s parents and teacher have decided to use a daily home note to inform his parents of the work that Ben failed to complete at school. However, Ben frequently leaves the home note at school and is thus unable to complete his schoolwork at home. Ben’s parents conduct a behavior analysis and determine that Ben is “forgetting” to bring the home note in order to escape an unpleasant task (i.e., completing the homework). As a result, his parents purchase a workbook and assign Ben extra work when the home note is left at school. This strategy prevents Ben from avoiding homework by “forgetting” his home note. In addition, Ben’s parents reward him with a “no homework” day when he remembers to bring his home note home on three successive days. This strategy offers Ben the reward he seeks (avoiding homework) for an appropriate behavior (remembering to bring the note home) rather than for an inappropriate behavior (forgetting to bring the note home).