Between a Rock and a Calm Place:
Practical School Interventions for Students with Anxiety-Related or Oppositional Behavior

By Jessica Minahan, M.Ed, BCBA

SOS tips for teachers
Misbehavior is a symptom of an underlying cause
She can't vs. She Won't
Behavior is communication
Behavior has a function
Behavior occurs in patterns
The only behavior an adult can control is her own
Behavior can be changed

Anxiety
Working Memory

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Traditional Behavior Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Following Adult Directions</th>
<th>Using School Language</th>
<th>Using a Safe Body</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Morning Meeting</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading/Writing</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recess</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
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</tbody>
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Common Underdeveloped Skills in Students with Anxiety

- Self-Regulation
- Thought Stopping
- Social Skills
- Executive Functioning
- Flexible Thinking

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F: FUNCTIONAL HYPOTHESIS AND ANTECEDENT ANALYSIS

Functional Hypothesis

Behavior

- Attention
- Escape
- Tangible
- Sensory

Mark Durand

Date Activity Setting Events A B C

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A: ACCOMMODATIONS

Anxiety REDUCING Breaks

Alternative

• Lunch
• Recess

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Transitions

Stopping the Activity
Making a Cognitive Shift
Starting the Activity
Lack of Structure/Downtime

Anxiety
Initiating

Work Avoidance
Underdeveloped Skills
Initiation
Persistence
Help Seeking

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Teachers are doing too much

...and students aren't doing enough

Self-Monitoring/Self-Regulation

- Emotional Thermometer
- Body Checks
- Daily Self-Calming Practice
- Develop Calming Box

Emotional Thermometer


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Self-Regulation Apps
- Sosh lite
- At Ease
- Calm Counter
- Stress Tracker
- DBT
- iCouch CBT

<table>
<thead>
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<th>BEFORE</th>
<th>AFTER</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTS OF WRITING</th>
<th>STRATEGIES</th>
<th>USED?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| THINKING OF AN IDEA | 1. Look in a book  
2. Look at my writing idea list  
3. Look at photographs  
4. Computer picture help |   |
| ORGANIZATION | 1. Graphic organizer for paragraph  
2. Graphic organizer for expanding |   |
| SPELLING | 1. Frequently used words card  
2. Seek web help  
3. Tap out the words |   |
I: INTERACTION STRATEGIES

Supportive Response

Any Sudden Change in Behavior

CATCH IT EARLY

Check In

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R: RESPONSE STRATEGIES

FAIR Responses

Points for Skill Practiced/Demonstrated  =  Skill Development

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