



# Wyomissing Behavior Analysts, Ltd.

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## BEHAVIOR SUPPORT PLANS

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You may not have heard of this buzzword before. That's because I created it (I think!). It is my wishful thinking that "Behavior Support Plan" will become a buzzword in the not too distant future.

Until recently, I wrote "Behavior Management Plans". Such BMPs are getting a bad name though. It is a term associated with the old philosophy (pre-Positive Approaches). Using current perspectives, a BMP means controls, restrictive techniques and a focus only on reducing problem behaviors. "BMPs Can Work" just will not sell as a title for a Workshop.

The word 'manage' just has such a negative connotation. In one situation recently, I was rebuked for writing a BMP for someone who presumably did not have any problematic physical behaviors, but now was labeled as someone who needed a plan, now had this in his permanent record, etc.! No matter that 90% of the plan was positive and constructive, that the individual was on probation, etc.

Rather than fight, I decided to go with the trend and play the name game. I decided to re-title my BMP's as "Behavior Support Plans" (BSPs). It is "in" today to provide 'supports and services'. We are using this term more and more in the Human Services Field. The Manual for the Computer I just bought includes a section on the 'Supports and Services' available to me. Car Service Departments will soon be Support and Service Departments.

In writing my new BSPs, I usually make note of the change in name as an attempt to emphasize a more constructive and supportive approach. True, it is in part semantics, but it also keeps the pressure on to make sure that the Plan is constructive and supportive.

It remains true, however, that most of my BSPs are written because of some challenging behavior that needs to be reduced. It is nice to write behavioral goals in terms of increasing positive behaviors (e.g., will communicate using Picture Communication System) as opposed to reducing negative behaviors (e.g., will have no incidents of aggression), but the reality is that it is the negative behavior which is the real reason for the plan.

In my most comprehensive BSP, I include the following 5 components:

1. Standard Operating Procedures: some informal recommendations and guidelines for creating a more empathetic and supportive environment.
2. Replacement Skills Training: formal procedures for increasing positive behaviors that serve the same function as the negative behaviors and, hopefully, can replace and make the negative behaviors unnecessary for the individual.
3. Incentive System: formal procedures for motivating the individual to engage in the Replacement Skills as opposed to the negative behaviors.
4. Reactive Contingencies: formal procedures for responding/reacting in an effective and therapeutic fashion to the antecedents and escalation of negative behaviors when they do occur. (I use the framework: Upsetting Situations → Upset Behavior → Disruptive Behavior → Dangerous Behavior → Persisting Disruptive/Dangerous Behavior).
5. Crisis Intervention Considerations: guidelines for dealing with more extreme dangerous behavior when insuring immediate safety becomes the necessary focus.

Not everyone needs all these components in a BSP. My rule is that if a BSP needs #5 then it definitely needs #1-4; if it needs #4, it also needs #1-3 and so on. If the BSP only needs #1, then there really does not need to be a plan at all.

Even with the name change, its still possible to write a rather restrictive and controlling plan without much therapeutic value. Hopefully though, the name change keeps me focused on working with the person to change behavior, rather than working on the person as we so routinely did in the past.

Reprinted from The Arc of Berks County Newsletter (December 1991). For subscription information call 610-603-0227 or e-mail [berksarc@ptd.net](mailto:berksarc@ptd.net).