
Understanding Behavior: From Function to Intervention

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CAUSES OF CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR

Challenging behavior is communication.

It is our job to figure out what the individual is trying to tell us.

I have a medical illness!

I have side effects
from my
medications!

I have a mental illness!

I have a syndrome
that is associated
with behavior!



I am being abused!

I want something!
I don't want to do that!
Pay attention to me!

I need to develop
new skills!

I am bored!!!!

Applied Behavior Analysis



Applied Behavior Analysis is the science in which tactics derived from the principles of behavior are applied systematically to **improve socially significant behavior** and experimentation is used to identify the variables responsible for behavior change (Cooper, Heron and Heward, 2007).

Behavioral Assumptions



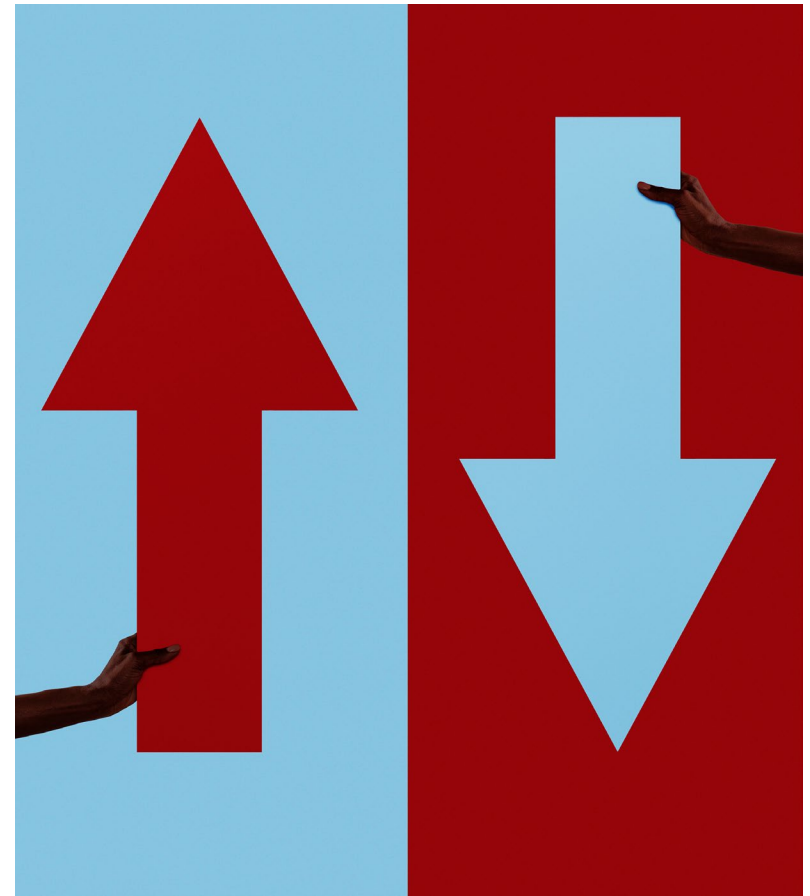
- Behavior is learned.
- Behavior serves a specific purpose.
- Behavior is related to the context in which it happens.
 - Changing the environment can change the behavior.
- If behavior continues to happen, it's being reinforced, otherwise it wouldn't occur.
- Changing how we respond can and will change the behavior.

Function

- Function = The Why
 - Why is the individual engaging in this behavior?
 - What is the purpose of this behavior?
- Examine the environment. Identify what is reinforcing or maintaining the behavior.
- Use the function to build an intervention plan

More than just reduction

- Increase and develop pro-social or desired behaviors
- Reduce challenging behaviors
- Can't do one without the other
 - Need to replace challenging behaviors with something



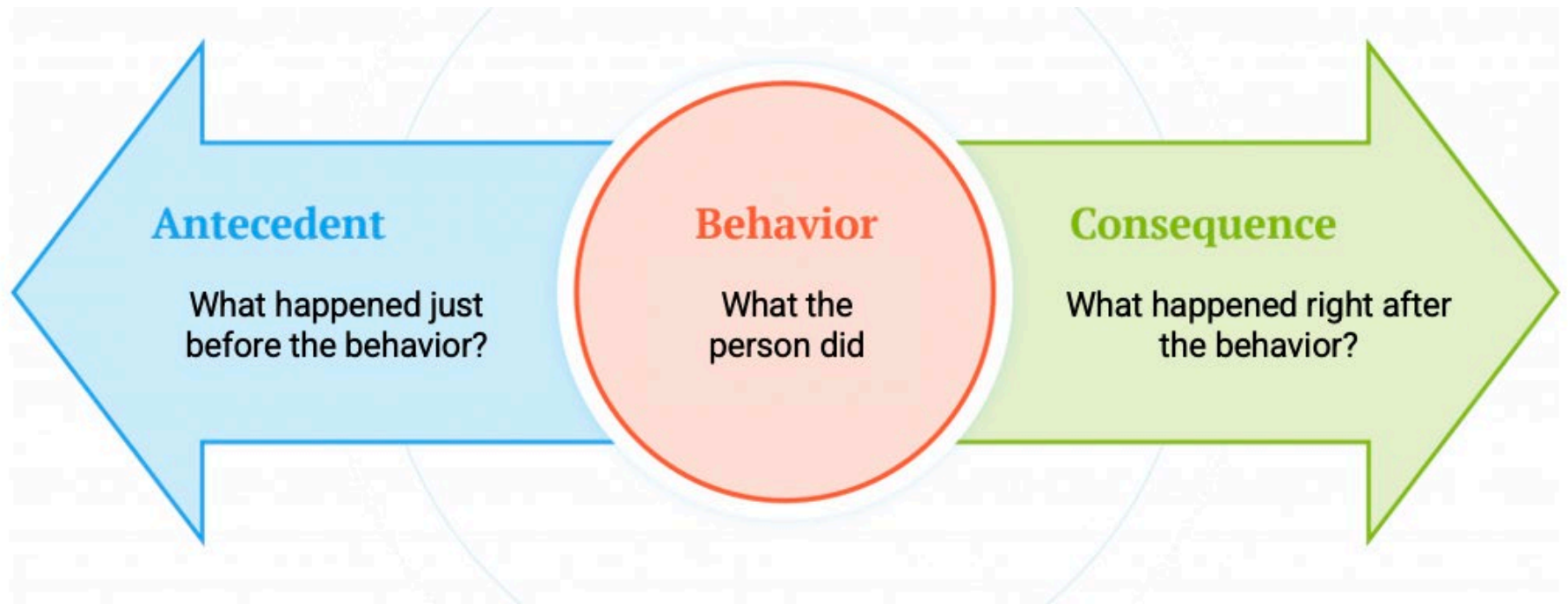
Functions of Behavior



4 primary functions:

- **Attention**-behavior occurs to obtain access to attention
- **Tangible**-behavior occurs to obtain access to preferred items/activities
- **Escape**-behavior occurs to escape from something aversive (person, place, situation)
- **Automatic**- behavior occurs in the absence of any social reinforcement

Antecedent-Behavior-Consequence (ABC)



ABC Cont'd

Antecedent

- Variables that may trigger the behavior
- Consider environmental factors
 - Attention available?
 - Task presented?
 - Access to preferred items?
- People, space, volume, temperature, etc.

Consequences

- What immediately comes after the behavior
- Environmental response
- Can increase or decrease the likelihood that a behavior will be ongoing
- What is used to determine the function of behavior
- Consider what we are trying to teach as an alternate behavior



ABC Data Collection

- Indirect
 - Interview
 - Checklist
 - [Functional Assessment Screening Tool](#)
 - [Motivation Assessment Scale](#)
 - Records review
- Direct
 - Observations in environment
 - Functional analysis

FAST Sample

Part II. Social Reinforcement

- | | | | |
|-----|---|-----|----|
| 4. | The behavior often occurs when he/she has not received much attention | Yes | No |
| 5. | When the behavior occurs, you or others usually respond by interacting with the him/her in some way (e.g., comforting statements, verbal correction or reprimand, response blocking, redirection) | Yes | No |
| 6. | (S)he often engages in other annoying behaviors that produce attention | Yes | No |
| 7. | (S)he frequently approaches you or others and/or initiates social interaction | Yes | No |
| 8. | The behavior rarely occurs when you give him/her lots of attention | Yes | No |
| 9. | The behavior often occurs when you take a particular item away from him/her or when you terminate a preferred leisure activity (If "Yes," identify: _____) | Yes | No |
| 10. | The behavior often occurs when you inform the person that (s)he cannot have a certain item or cannot engage in a particular activity. (If "Yes," identify: _____) | Yes | No |
| 11. | When the behavior occurs, you often respond by giving him/her a specific item, such as a favorite toy, food, or some other item. (If "Yes," identify: _____) | Yes | No |
| 12. | (S)he often engages in other annoying behaviors that produce access to preferred items or activities. | Yes | No |
| 13. | The behavior rarely occurs during training activities or when you place other types of demands on him/her. (If "Yes," identify the activities: ____self-care ____academic ____work ____other) | Yes | No |

FAST Scoring

Scoring Summary

Items answered "Yes." If you completed only Part II, also circle items 1, 2, and 3

Likely Maintaining Variable

5	6	7	8	Social Reinforcement (attention)
10	11	12	13	Social Reinforcement (access to specific activities/it
15	16	17	18	Social Reinforcement (escape)
23	24			Automatic Reinforcement (sensory stimulation)
26	27			Automatic Reinforcement (pain attenuation)

ABC Direct Observation

Date:	Time:	Activity:	Intensity and Duration
Antecedent: ☐ Given direction/task/activity ☐ Whole group instruction ☐ Difficult task or activity ☐ Waiting ☐ Preferred activity interrupted ☐ Activity/item denied (told no) ☐ Loud and noisy environment ☐ Given a correction ☐ Transition ☐ Attention given to others ☐ Presence of specific person ☐ Attention not given when wanted ☐ Alone (no activity) ☐ Alone (no attention) ☐ None observed Other: _____	Behaviors: ☐ Refusal to follow directions ☐ Verbal refusal ☐ Making verbal threats ☐ Crying/whining ☐ Screaming/yelling ☐ Scratching ☐ Biting ☐ Kicking ☐ Spitting ☐ Flopping ☐ Running away ☐ Destroying property ☐ Flipping furniture ☐ Hitting self ☐ Hitting others (students) ☐ Hitting others (adults)	Consequences: ☐ Verbal redirection ☐ Physical prompt ☐ Ignored problem behavior ☐ Kept demand on ☐ Used proximity control ☐ Verbal reprimand ☐ Removed from activity/location ☐ Given another task/activity ☐ Response block ☐ Left alone ☐ Loss of privilege ☐ Calming spot ☐ Peer attention ☐ Time out (duration) _____ ☐ asked to leave the room	Low: Light, no marks left on others, only 1-2 intentional hits, or items destroyed or turned over Medium: moderate, leaves slight marks 3-4 intentional hits or overturned or destroyed High: Intense behavior that leaves physical marks or injury. 5 or more hits or items overturned or destroyed
			Total Duration:

ABC Direct Observation

Child's Name: _____

Date: _____

Observer: _____

Activity: _____

Function: _____

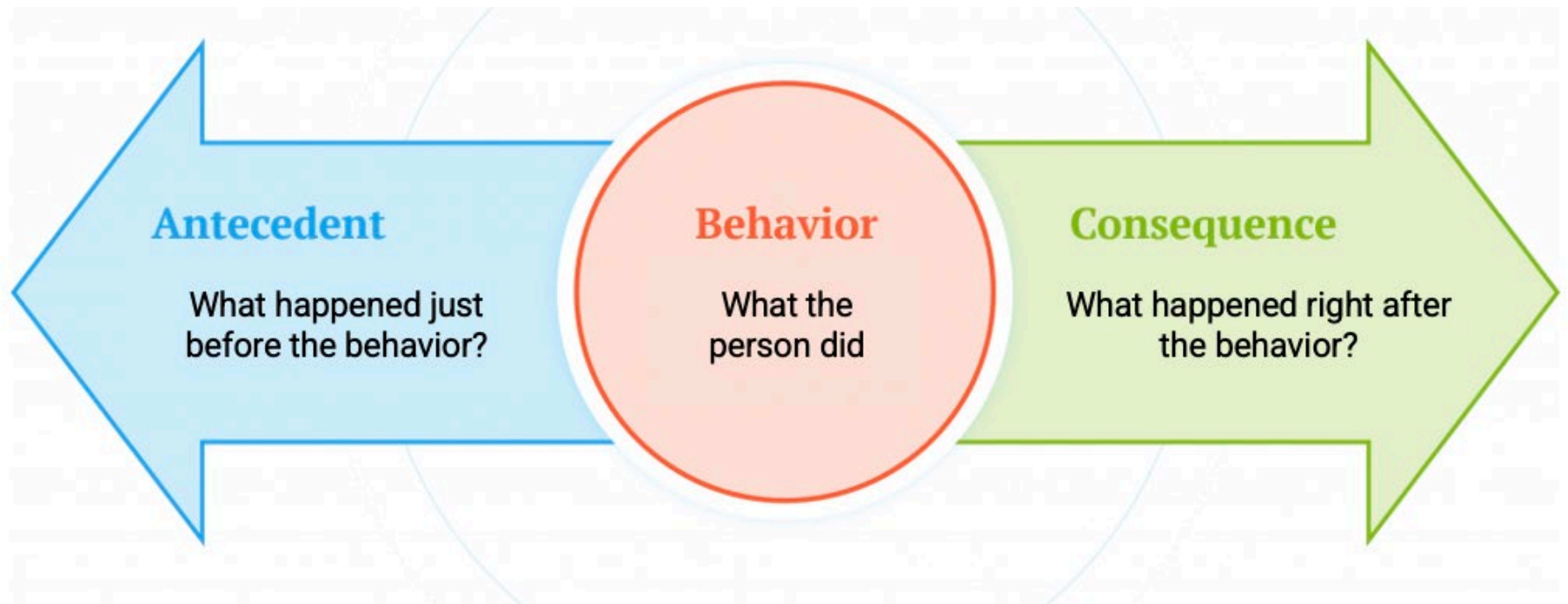
Antecedent	Behavior	Consequence
(What happened before)		(What happened after)

ABC Direct Observation

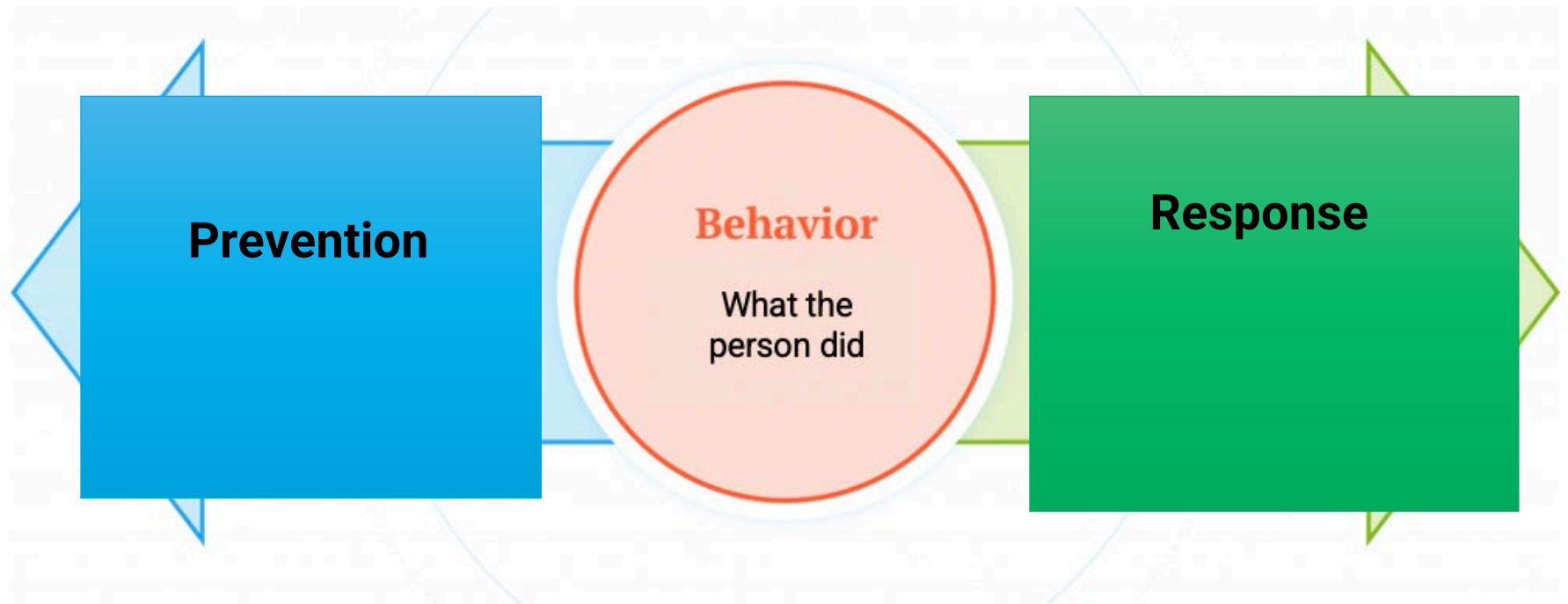


Date	Start Time	End Time	Antecedent	Behavior	Consequence/ Outcome	Student Reaction	Comments/ Duration
Observation time for Interval Recording							
Observer Initials							
			☐ Transition ☐ Denied Access ☐ Waiting ☐ Change/New Task ☐ Other _____	☐ Target Behavior ☐ Other _____	☐ Ignored ☐ Attention ☐ Access to item ☐ Item removed ☐ Verbal reprimand ☐ Redirected ☐ Time out ☐ Blocked ☐ Calming technique ☐ Restraint/Isolated (add'l form req.) ☐ Other _____	☐ Stopped ☐ Continued ☐ Intensified	

Antecedent-Behavior-Consequence (ABC)



Antecedent-Behavior-Consequence (ABC)



Prevention Strategies

Escape

- Choice
- Breaking down of tasks
 - Shaping
 - Initiation assistance
- Visual supports
- Schedules/routines
- Prompting or priming

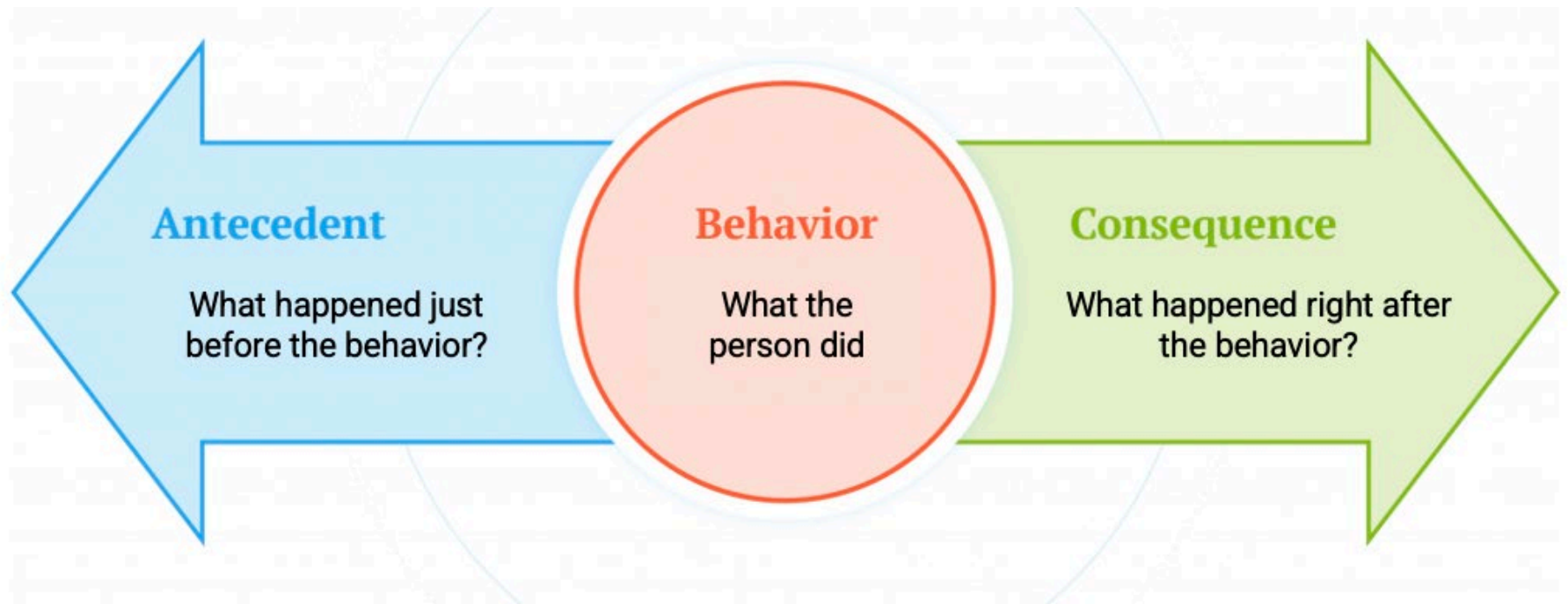
Attention

- Noncontingent attention
- Scheduled attention
- Functional communication training—how to access attention

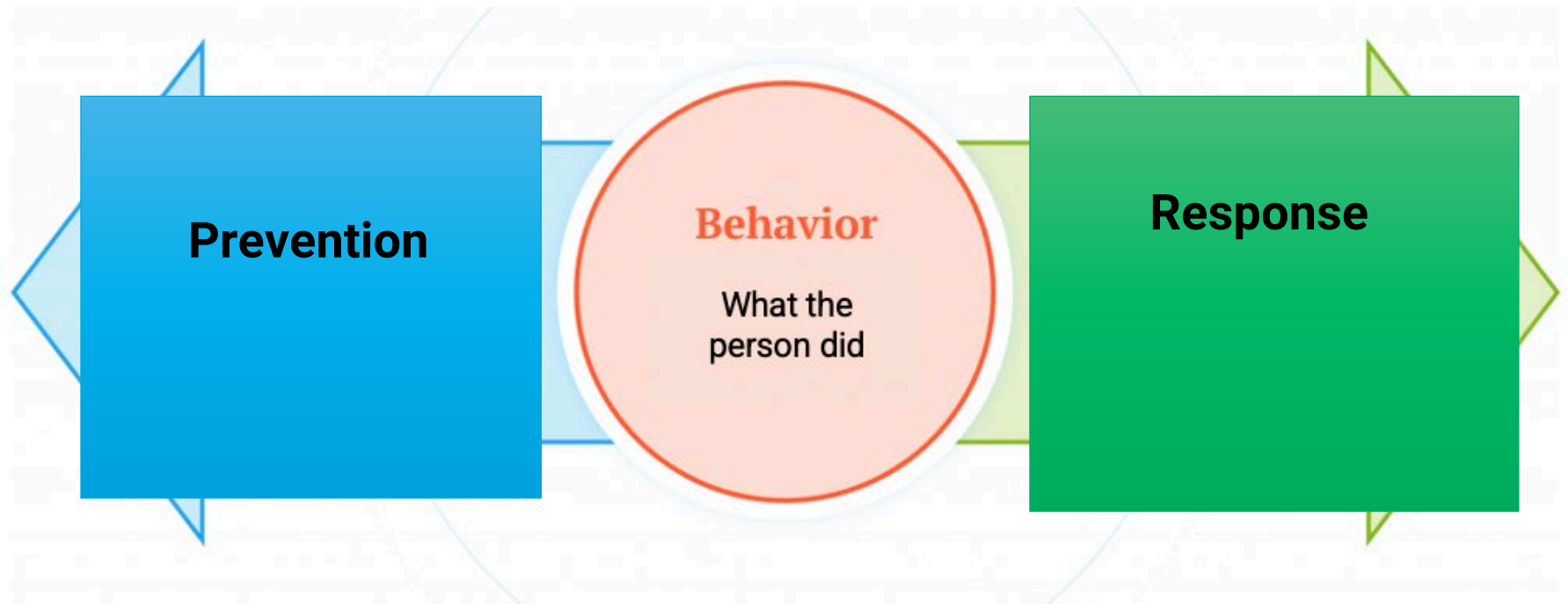
Tangible

- Built in and predictable access (scheduled)
- Functional communication training—how to access preferred items, activities, snacks

Antecedent-Behavior-Consequence (ABC)



Antecedent-Behavior-Consequence (ABC)



Replacement Behavior/Response Strategies

Escape

- Reduce opportunities to escape non-preferred tasks
- Specific and immediate praise for completion of tasks or engagement

Attention

- Neutral attention for challenging behaviors
- Token economies tied to preferred behaviors: earn to gain access

Tangible

- Limit access to items as a result of challenging behaviors
- Token economies tied to preferred behaviors: earn to gain access

IOWA

Thank you

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