

Proactive and Reactive Strategies for Caregivers Working with Individuals with Brain Injury

Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance Conference for Professionals April 25, 2024

Learning Objectives

Proactive and Reactive Strategies for Caregivers Working with Individuals with Brain Injury

- 1. Understand the importance of proactive and reactive strategies to address behavioral challenges
- 2. State 3 proactive strategies to address management of challenging behaviors
- 3. State 3 reactive strategies to address management of challenging behaviors

How to get the most from Positive Support Services

- Important factors in working with Positive Supports:
- Communication
- Collaboration/Team Effort – we need your input and help!
- Follow through with strategies outlined in support plan
- Keep Positive Support appointments a priority
- Behavior change takes time
- Explore person centered strategies (important to/important for)

- Proactive Strategies
 - anticipating problems and taking steps to prevent them from happening in the first place
- Environment
- What you bring to the table
- Support for staff
- Learning opportunities

- Reactive Strategies
 - Reacting to situations as they arise
 - Staff needs to be in control of themselves first
 - Not punitive
 - Learning opportunities
 - Investigate possible physical causes/environmental changes

Reinforcement Programs

- Person centered
- Positively focused
- Written, structured and consistent
- Non-punitive
- Watch for prohibited procedures:
 - Depriving a person of or restricting access to goods and services; requiring a person to earn goods and services that are otherwise available; or using token reinforcement programs or level programs that include a response cost procedure or negative punishment component.

- Brain Injury Considerations
 - Communication-aphasia
 - Memory
 - Executive functioning challenges
 - Rigid thinking
 - Impulsivity

- Physical aggression
 - Warning signs (examples)
 - Pounding fists on table/throwing things
 - Verbal threats of violence/talking to self
 - Watch for changes in behavior/anxiety (know the person served and their triggers)
 - Self-harm

Proactive Approach

- Maintain a safe distance
- Remove audience
- Seek additional assistance
- Know your plans and policies/be aware of behavioral history
- Continue to try to verbally de-escalate

Reactive Approach

Direct client what to do

Others might react to person

- Verbal aggression
 - Warning signs:
 - Increased volume
 - Swearing/threatening language
 - Demands/ultimatums

Proactive Approach

- Take a deep breath, remain calm
- Be aware of triggers for persons served
- Maintain neutral voice and stance
- Provide support- problem solving, meet needs,
- May not be a teachable moment
- Seek assistance/support

Reactive Approach

Take a break; offer to come back to follow up

Pause activity/task if possible

Provide a distraction for tension reduction

Offer direction if person served is threatening or escalating further

Seek assistance/support

- Inappropriate comments
 - Warning signs
 - Poor boundaries (sexual comments)
 - Unknown expectations for person served
 - History of inappropriate comments/statements

Proactive Approach

- Consistent responses and boundaries from the team
- Person served may be having a hard time, not trying to give you a hard time
- Remain neutral; Model desired interaction/behavior
- Awareness to trauma and/or pain as antecedents
- Seek support, try not to take things personally

Reactive Approach

- Request and model desired language
- Redirect to appropriate language
- Take a break; return when behavior is appropriate
- Redirect language, then ignore language

- Impulse control challenges

- Warning signs:
 - Distraction
 - Hyperfocus

- Proactive Approach

- Prepare for/provide expectations
- Supportive environment- visual cues, technology,
- Know behavioral history regarding impulsivity
- Consistent responses from team, across environments
- Consider sensory needs

Reactive Approach

Distractions/Redirection

Stop and Think skills/pause/take a breath

Review expectations

Ways to support individuals with brain injury when symptoms can lead to negative behaviors

- Care related requests/expectations

- Warning signs

- Refusals
 - Verbal or physical aggression r/t a task
 - History of refusals
 - Person served demanding of staff time/may appear impatient

- Proactive Approach

- Create and maintain a routine/partner task with a more desirable task
 - Allow person served to create their own routine; partner w/ person served
 - Have a conversation with the person served/narrate what you're doing
 - Offer limited choices; Avoid yes/no questions
 - Consider medical issues/trauma that may impact refusals
 - Adapt environment- temperature, music, timing,

Reactive Approach

- Take a break; Return to offer again
- Provide explanation of task
- Review possible consequences/benefits
- Seek Support/Update Team members

- Safety-related restrictions/requests/challenges
 - Warning signs:
 - Client not understanding situation
 - Memory/decision making skills challenges
 - Acceptance challenges
 - History of safety concerns
- Visual reminders
- Use of technology (pressure pads, timers, reminders, etc.)
- What can make the situation easier to accept?
- Keep messages simple and concrete

- Executive functioning/risk taking behaviors
 - Warning signs:
 - Frequently makes choices others don't agree with
 - Choices may be related to unmet needs
 - Impulsivity
- Your personal judgments and values may not match the individual's actions
- Try to offer choices when possible
- Harm reduction planning/team brainstorm safer ways to get needs met
- Have a clear idea of the individual's current level of functioning (testing)

- Challenges with not understanding consequences of actions/safety concerns
 - Warning signs:
 - Lack of self awareness (i.e. don't understand that their mobility is unsafe)
 - Disability acceptance
 - Think that staff/family/guardian are trying to control them
- Watch for power struggles-don't engage, acknowledge, ask questions re: emotions
- Grief/loss
- Empathy/mental health symptoms may impact ability to understand consequences
- You don't need to solve this by yourself

Ways to support individuals with brain injury when symptoms can lead to negative behaviors

- Special considerations for behavior change with memory challenges present
 - Warning signs:
 - Frequent questions on same topic
 - Repetitive statements, may be anxiety related
 - Needing frequent explanations/reminders
- Visual cues
- Consistency
- Checklists, alarms, med reminders, schedules/routines, calendars
- Patience
- Believe the individual and their perspective

Now it's your turn....

- Table discussions regarding case examples
- Group follow up discussion

Individual making inappropriate/sexual comments

Individual spending money on dangerous activities (alcohol, drugs, prostitutes) or spending money on wants instead of needs or giving money to family/friends

Individual forgetting or refusing to use mobility device

Individual refusing to go to day program or medical appointment

Individual sleeping during the day and up at night

Individual seeing every annoyance as an emergency

Table discussion follow up/Questions



- [AGuideToBrainAnatomy.pdf \(braininjurymn.org\)](#) MN Brain Injury Alliance

Thank you!

