

Competing Behavior Pathway

Going from Function to Intervention



01 Competing Behavior Pathway

From Function to Intervention

Throughout your training, you have heard experts in the field of ABA stress the importance of utilizing function-based interventions.

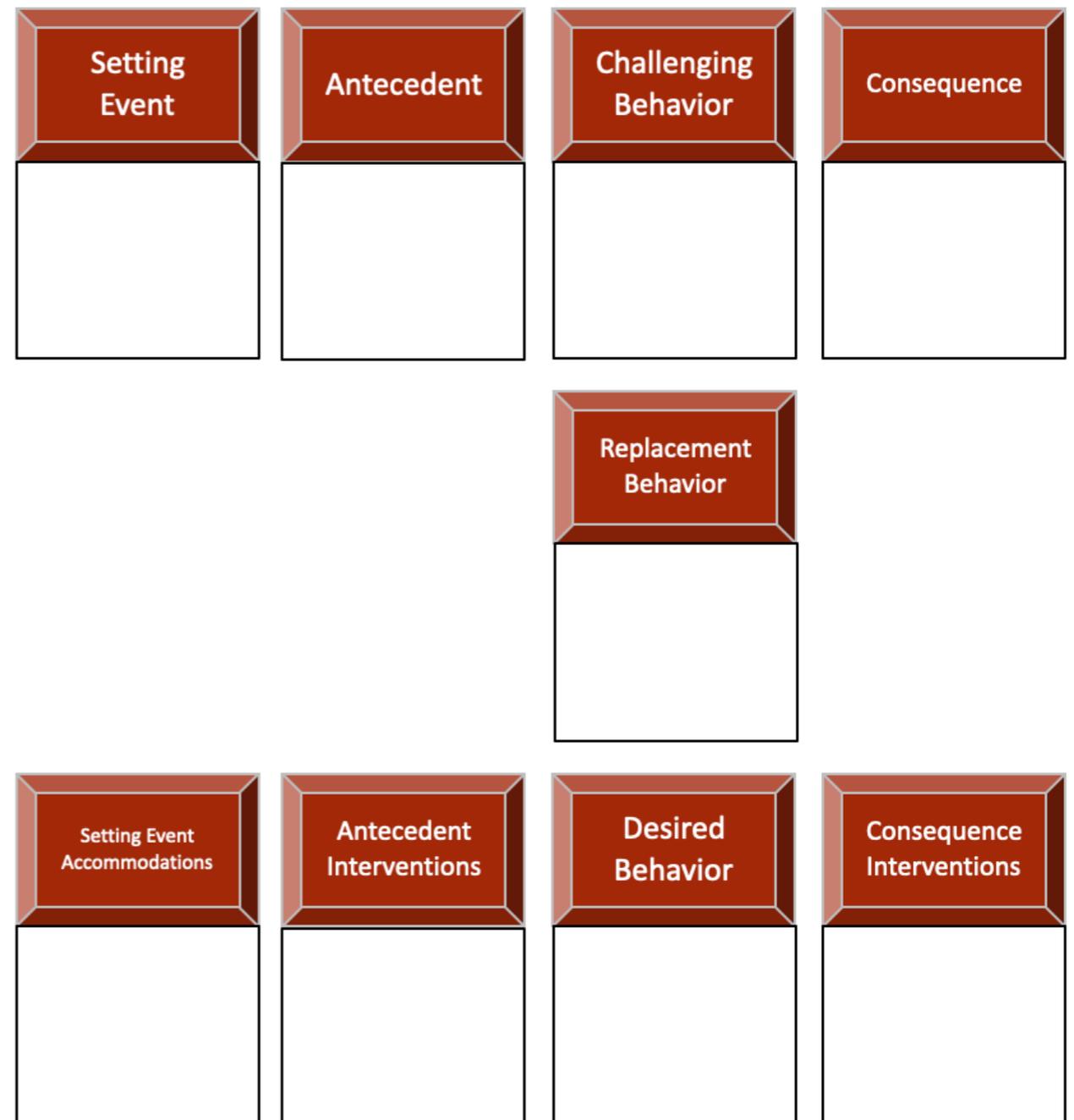
The question is: how do you actually choose interventions based on the function of the challenging behavior?

The answer is: use the competing behavior pathway!

The competing behavior pathway provides:

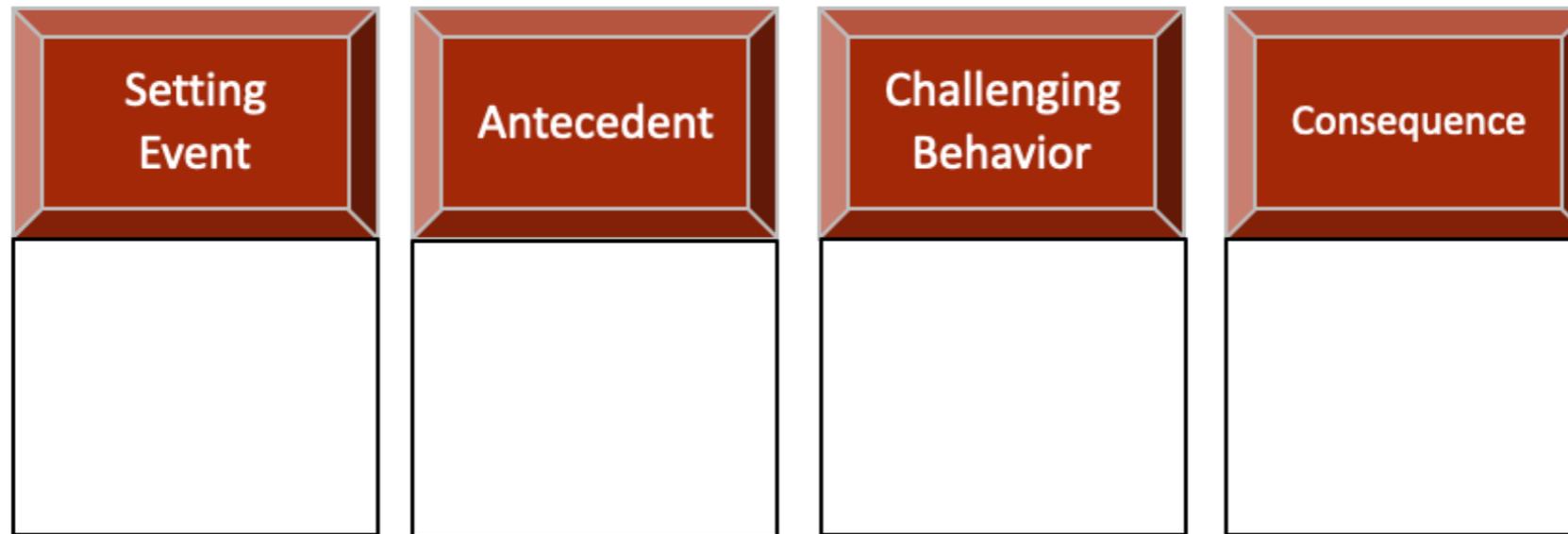
- A visual depicting the maintaining variables for the challenging behavior and a prototype for the context for the desired behavior
- A concrete way to document functionally-equivalent replacement behaviors
- A clear way to go from function to intervention

Competing Behavior Pathway



Sugai, G., Lewis-Palmer, T., & Hagan-Burke, S. (2000). Overview of the functional behavioral assessment process. *Exceptionality*, 8(3), 149-160.

02 Document the Context of the Challenging Behavior



Begin by documenting the context of the challenging behavior. Identify the most common setting events, antecedents, and consequences. Describe the challenging behavior.

This step helps you process the data you collected and analyzed. It assists in creating a road map throughout this process.

The above image depicts a standard context of behavior from your functional behavior assessment. The image below, from the [BCBA Personal Assistant](#), takes it a step further looking at scatterplot data and links the function in this chart. This information together in one place helps you work through the process of choosing effective, function-based interventions.

Most Common Setting Event	Most Common Antecedent	Most Common Consequence	Most Common Days	Most Common Times	Hypothesize d Function	Hypothesize d Access
New therapist	Demand	Delayed demand	Tuesday	9 am	Escape	Direct

03 Replacement Behavior

Functionally-Equivalent Replacement Behavior

When looking to reduce or eliminate a challenging behavior, you **MUST** choose an appropriate replacement behavior that serves the same function as the challenging behavior. The purpose is to teach the learner to encounter the reinforcer using a more appropriate behavior. This replacement behavior might not be the ideal behavior but it's an improvement from the challenging behavior. In the BCBA Personal Assistant, we refer to these as Skill Development Interventions.

Some examples of common replacement behaviors include:

- Manding for desired items
- Manding for escape (i.e. break)
- Manding for help
- Independently accessing sensory equipment
- Telling jokes (i.e. when the function is access to attention from peers)



Replacement
Behavior

04 Describe the Context of the Desired Behavior

Setting Event Accommodations	Antecedent Interventions	Desired Behavior	Consequence Interventions

Here is your opportunity to describe context of the ideal behavior. Describe the accommodations that mitigate the impact of the most common setting events. Choose antecedent interventions that address the most common antecedents to the challenging behavior. Describe the specific behavior you want the learner to engage in. Finally choose interventions that reinforce the desired behavior.

You must choose evidence-based interventions supported by the literature. Begin to build a library of references and interventions with sufficient empirical evidence to warrant including in your behavior plans or use an online database such as the one provided in the [BCBA Personal Assistant](#).

Complete Competing Behavior Pathway

In this example, the learner engages in aggression when presented with a demand and this aggression typically results in him delaying the demand. This behavior is more prevalent when there's a new therapist.

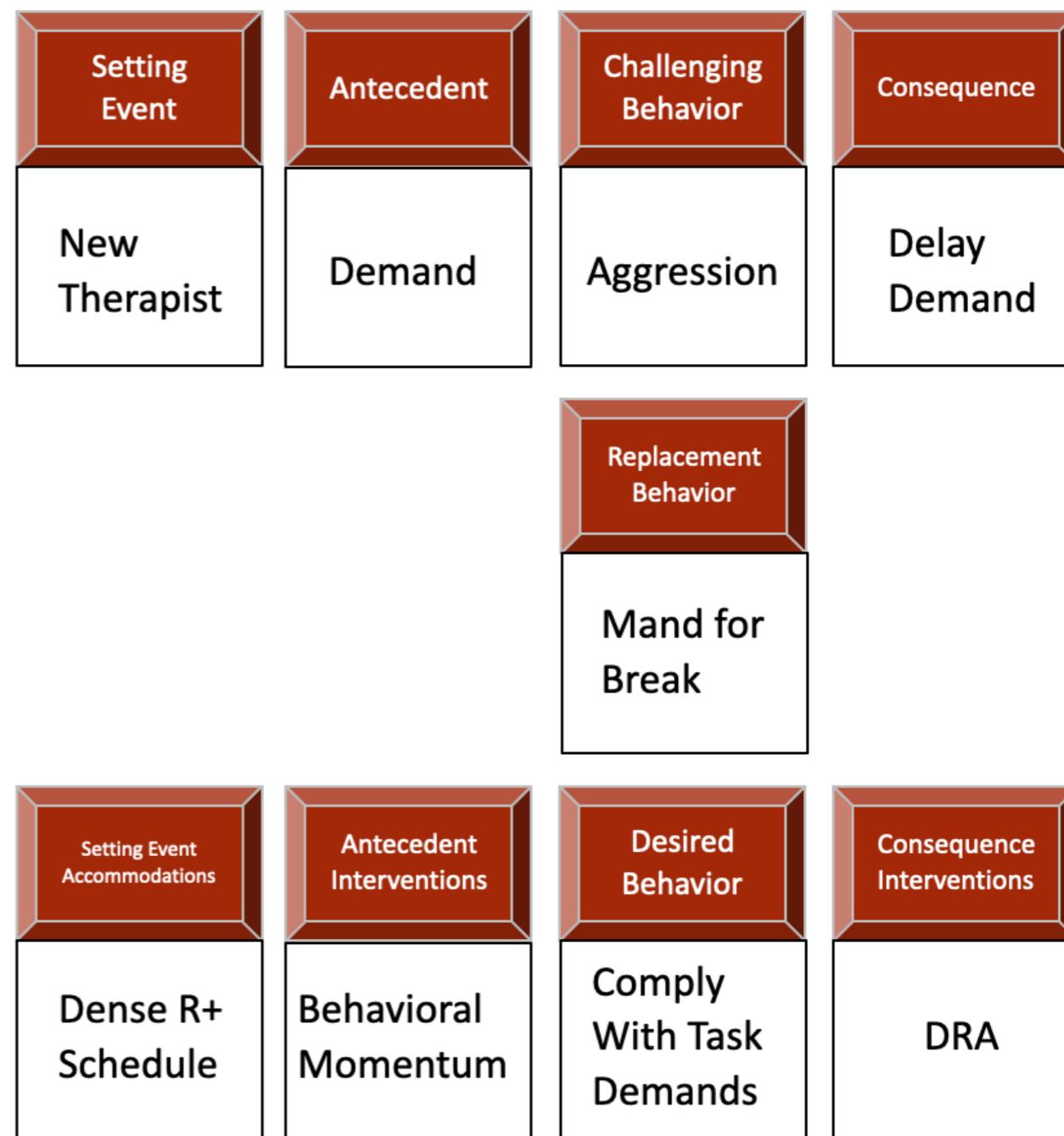
The functionally-equivalent replacement is manding for a break. Although you don't always want him asking for a break, this is a more appropriate alternative to aggression and it gives the learner access to the reinforcer that maintains the challenging behavior.

The final step is to address each component of the context of the challenging behavior so that it supports the final goal. In this example:

- When there's a new therapist, they will increase the density of the reinforcement schedule (the learner will achieve reinforcement more quickly).
- Prior to placing demands that are likely to trigger challenging behavior, the therapist will use behavioral momentum.
- The final goal for the learner's behavior is that he will comply with task demands.
- They will use Differential Reinforcement of Alternative Behavior (DRA) to reinforce compliance with task demands.

You now have the roadmap you need to write your behavior intervention plan with confidence!

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