BEHAVIORAL SKILLS TEACHING (BST) OVERVIEW

STEP 1: REVIEW GOALS, DEFINITIONS, SETTING, AND MATERIALS

Goal

The goal of this process is to teach caregivers, staff, and others how to use Behavioral Skills Teaching (BST) to teach learners new skills.

Definitions

- Teacher: the individual (caregiver, staff, loved one, or friend) who is using BST to teach a learner a new skill
- Learner: the person who is being taught a new skill using BST

Setting

This should initially be taught in the environment in which the learner will be using the skill. For example, if the teacher is using BST to teach a learner the skill of putting on a mask, the skill should be practiced in all areas where they will need to put on a mask (home, school, car, grocery store, etc.) If this is not possible, the skill can be taught in the home environment, and this can be moved to the community for generalization and maintenance at a later time.

Materials

Task list (see step 2) and any materials necessary for the skill completion (for example, if you are teaching mask-wearing, you will need two masks; one for the teacher and one for the learner. If you are teaching hand washing, you will need access to a sink, soap, hand towel, etc.).

STEP 2: COMPLETE THE TASK ANALYSIS

To complete a task analysis for any skill, the teacher must consider all of the smaller steps that need to be completed to perform the skill.

For example, suppose you are teaching a learner how to make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. In that case, there are several steps you can think about. A task list for this activity may begin like this:

1. Get the bread, jelly, and peanut butter out and ready.
2. Get a butter knife.
3. Get a plate.

4. Get two pieces of bread.
5. Put the bread on a plate.

And so on, until the task is complete. These steps may need to be broken down into smaller steps depending on the learners' skills/abilities.

One way to complete a task analysis is to complete the skill yourself and write down the steps as you complete them. You can have another individual try to complete the steps based only on your instructions and find where there may need to be more details or additional steps based on your observations.

Another way is to have someone else complete the skill, and you write down the steps as they are completing them. This allows you to have an outside perspective of the steps and skill completion process.

Task lists will be used throughout BST and should be developed by the teacher prior to working with the learner. (See the Task Analysis Handout and Example Task Analysis)

STEP 3: RATIONALE/INSTRUCTION

This is where the teacher provides the learner with a clear description of the skill or behavior they are learning. In this step, the teacher includes the rationale or the why the skill is important to or for the learner. The teacher should provide examples of when to use the skill and when not to use the skill.

STEP 4: MODELING

This is where the teacher shows the learner how to perform the skill. The teacher will act out the skill in its entirety (using the previously developed task list) as the learner watches. The teacher should do all the steps on the task list, and have the learner follow along.

This modeling provides the learner with some tangible knowledge of how to perform the skill. Learners will be more likely to complete a skill successfully if they have watched it be done successfully by someone else. In modeling, it is helpful to have someone that the learner likes/respects modeling the skill. This creates buy-in on the part of the learner.

STEP 5: REHEARSAL/ROLE-PLAY

This is where the learners can practice the new skill. In rehearsal/role play the learners use the previously modeled task list to complete each step of the skill. Here teachers observe the learner and use a data sheet (or an additional copy of the previously completed task list), and mark down correct and incorrect step completion. If the learner completes a step correctly, the teacher will mark a positive, so that praise can be given during the next section. If a learner completes a step incorrectly, the teacher will mark a negative with the specific feedback they will give the learner during the next section.

STEP 6: FEEDBACK

During this step, the teacher gives feedback to the learner about what they did well, and what they can improve on. After each practice or rehearsal session, the teacher will tell the learner how they did - giving specific feedback. The teacher should use the data sheet (or an additional copy of the previously completed task list) that they completed in the Rehearsal/Role-Play section to give specific feedback. For best results, teachers should praise to correct at a 4:1 ratio (4 praise statements to 1 corrective statement) whenever possible.

Disclaimer: This is not intended to be, and cannot replace the benefits of individualized treatment. These are general recommendations. If you continue to have any concerns, please consult directly with a licensed and/or board-certified behavior analyst.