

Book Review

Families and Positive Behavior Support: Addressing Problem Behavior in Family Contexts

by Joseph M. Lucyshyn, Glen Dunlap and Richard W. Allen

E. Alice Prichard

Department of Psychology, York University, Downsview, ON, and
TRE-ADD Program, Thistleton Regional Centre, Etobicoke, ON

When using applied behaviour analysis to treat difficult behaviour in children with developmental disabilities, there is a great need to strive to encourage partnerships among teachers, care givers and professionals and to consider familial factors like daily routine and cultural traditions. *Families and Positive Behavior Support* by Lucyshyn, Dunlap, and Albin emphasizes the importance of these issues by describing Positive Behavior Support (PBS), a family-centred practice to analyzing problem behaviour through functional assessment and creating realistic solutions that complement the family's values and lifestyle.

Parents are a valuable resource, experts about their child and the key decision makers about their child's development. Therefore, it is crucial to approach any situation with a positive view of the family and the child with a developmental disability. *Families and Positive Behavior Support* is filled with real-life examples of how challenging situations are addressed with a Positive Behavior Support (PBS) approach. Essays and chapters written by parents reinforce the importance of working alongside the family in an attempt to achieve sustainable improvements in the child's behaviour while considering the quality of life of the whole family.

The authors define PBS as "a collaborative, assessment-based approach to developing effective individualized interventions for people with problem behavior" (p. 7). These interventions can have the following goals: (a) they help consumers appreciate the range of variables that influence problem behavior; (b) they offer an effective technique that can be used in natural contexts; and (c) they promote meaningful changes in the lives of individuals with disabilities and those who support and care for them.

Families and Positive Behavior Support is divided into four sections: 1) Characteristics and Context of Positive Behavior Support with Families; 2) Assessment and Intervention; 3) Case Studies of Family-Centred Behavioural Support; and 4) Collaborative Research with Families.

Characteristics and Context of Positive Behavior Support with Families

Chapter 1 first describes the importance of holding a positive view of children with disabilities and examining challenging behaviour in the context of the family. PBS is defined and the 12 key features of this dynamic approach are delineated. PBS is developed from applied behaviour analysis, behavioural family intervention models, community living and family support advocacy movements, and ecological/family systems theories. Empirical support for this approach is provided.

Chapter 2 is an account of a mother's discovery of PBS through her continual effort to support her son with a disability.

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) all children with disabilities in the United States are guaranteed access to a free and appropriate public education. However, the IDEA provisions for PBS burden parents as they need to understand IDEA, PBS, and the relationship between them. Chapter 3 provides a discussion of these issues in an attempt to make it easier for parents to take action in obtaining the benefits that they deserve.

Assessment and Intervention

In Chapter 4, three parents of children with disabilities describe how PBS was used to improve their child's challenging behaviour. Eight themes of PBS are described and illustrated with real-life examples. For instance, theme 4 states that interventions should not focus on "fixing" children; rather, interventions should help family members and educators change what they do and help improve the quality of children's lives. One mother explains how she learned to change her own behaviour in order to better manage her son's difficult outbursts.

The value of a family-centred approach whereby the practitioner works alongside the family in developing a PBS plan is underscored in Chapter 5. The functional assessment process is clearly outlined and described as the foundation on which a behavioural support plan is built. Readers are provided with step by step instructions about how to develop a technically sound and contextually appropriate PBS plan for their family. Finally, case studies are used to illustrate the process of completing a functional assessment, developing a summary statement and designing interventions and support systems.

Chapter 6 highlights the obligation of service providers to investigate and respect the cultural traditions and family values of their clients. Before implementing a behavioural support plan, child-rearing practices, daily routines and the family's perspective on the behaviour in question should be taken into account. To do so, professionals must realize that they are shaped by their own biases and cultural beliefs. Providing effective services to families entails a delicate balance between professional judgement and the consideration of the family's values. A guide to culturally responsive practices, including questions to ask oneself when interacting with families from varied family backgrounds is included.

In Chapter 7, the authors argue that practitioners of PBS should extend their analysis beyond the immediate factors influencing the problem behaviour to encompass the larger context. Families face contextual barriers (e.g. parental illness, social isolation) that, if not dealt with, can impede the successful implementation of a behavioural support plan. Recommendations include: designing intervention services that extend to dealing with contextual issues, partnering with other systems to help bring about these intervention plans, and preparing for long-term follow-up to promote maintenance.

Chapter 8 provides readers with practical strategies and procedures for families to follow in order to initiate the design and implementation of communication-based interventions for behavioural support at home.

PBS encourages the collaboration between the home and school. Chapter 9 identifies obstacles that can hinder this partnership and recommends best practices and strategies in developing it.

Case Studies of Family-Centred Behavioural Support

Chapters 11 to 15 present a number of case studies written by parents and professionals that address various issues surrounding the implementation of PBS. The Individualized Support Project (ISP) is described as an enhanced model of early intervention that focuses on meeting the needs of young children with autism or challenging behaviour. Other topics that are covered include: the integral role parents play in the assessment and treatment of children's problem behaviour, team-based training in PBS, and the importance of normalization, inclusion, and community-based instruction.

Collaborative Research with Families

Albin, Dunlap, and Lucyshyn are strong advocates of carrying out more research on PBS. They assert that to gather socially and ecologically valid research, families must be involved. Chapters 16 to 19 deal with integrating families of children with problem behaviour into the research process, not just as participants, but as collaborators. There are two foundations on which to build this partnership: participatory action research and clinical applications. Participatory action research calls for the involvement of key stakeholders who are traditionally viewed as consumers of research knowledge. Clinical applications provide practical settings in which research can be conducted and collaborative relationships can be fostered.

Research supporting the effectiveness of participatory action research and parent to parent groups is provided. The authors recommend that parents contact local parent groups to find a match who understands what the parent is going through and can offer advice and support.

Although the length of *Families and Positive Behavior Support* is a little daunting, it is not a difficult read. A plethora of poignant essays and anecdotes written by families who have implemented PBS successfully provides for an effortless read. Overall, this book advocates for working alongside families when choosing the best supports for children with disabilities and implementing intervention plans. Too often professionals only think about how their research is benefiting others. This reading, however, asserts that the relationship between research and practice is bidirectional: although research should guide and validate practice, practice and the concerns of practitioners should inform and shape research. *Families and Positive Behavior Support* poses professionals with the challenging, but critical, task of listening, employing and, most importantly, valuing the ideas of families and care givers of children with disabilities.

Author's Note

The views expressed here are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of Thistleton Regional Centre or the Ministry of Children and Youth Services.

Correspondence

E. Alice Prichard
Department of Psychology
York University
Toronto, ON
M3J 1P3

eaprich@yorku.ca

