

Students With Emotional and Behavioral Disorders Can Manage Their Own Behavior

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For the 5th day in a row, you arrive at school only to find your third-grade student, Chris, in the principal's office. Today, the art teacher caught Chris pushing and shoving the students around him in the breakfast line.

Three times this week, Alexa has been sent to you, her case manager, because she refused to begin her work in class. Today, the 10th grader arrived during third period with a note from the general education teacher stating she crumpled up her quiz, threw it on the floor, and refused to pick it up. You have tried everything you know to do. What now? (See box, "What Does the Literature Say About Managing Students With Emotional and Behavioral Disorders?")

Connections Between Self-Management and Students With Emotional/Behavioral Disorders (E/BD)

Students with E/BD often display one or more of the following characteristics. These characteristics must be displayed over a long period of time, to a marked degree, and adversely affect educational performance.

- An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors.

- An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers or teachers.
- Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances.
- A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.
- A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems. (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, IDEA, 2004, CFR 300.7 (a) 9).

Teachers and service providers should note that displaying one or more of these characteristics could lead to failure to achieve maximum academic and/or social potential.

This article illustrates how teachers can implement self-management in the classroom. For illustration, we use two hypothetical case studies based on classroom experiences: (a) A student with E/BD and academic challenges and (b) A student with E/BD with social challenges. When teachers implement self-management with fidelity, undesirable student behaviors can be replaced with more desirable student behaviors (McQuillan & DuPaul, 1996); thus, this approach may positively affect academic and social student potential.

Chris: A Case Study

Chris is a third-grade student with E/BD who attends a small public school in a suburb of a large southeastern city. Chris's permanent records show that, since age 3, he has had a history of being aggressive towards his peers and adults. Chris is currently being served in a self-contained classroom alongside other students with E/BD, leaving the classroom only for physical education (P.E.), lunch, and art (approximately 1 hour/day). According to recent assessments, Chris has average to above-average IQ and performs on grade level. Chris currently lives with both of his parents and his older sister. He plays on the community soccer team and is involved with Cub Scouts.

Chris's Behavior

During transitions at school, Chris often kicks his peers to get items he wants, is verbally aggressive, hits or pinches them if they approach, and pushes them when the teacher is not looking. The parents of Chris's peers have called the school complaining that Chris bullies their children, and they have demanded that the school and his teacher do something about him. Suppose you are his case manager. What can you do? Chris will behave for a few minutes, but as soon as you turn your back, he is

behaving inappropriately again. You are at the end of your rope. As you seek assistance from the other special education teachers at your school, a colleague suggests you try a self-management strategy with Chris.

Self-management is a practical and powerful tool for changing behavior.

Procedures for Implementing a Self-Management Plan for Chris

Here are five steps we have found useful for implementing a successful self-management plan for a student like Chris (see box, "Steps for Implementing a Self-Management Plan"). You, along with other teachers who work with Chris, can write a self-management plan and teach Chris to implement it, as follows:

1. *Identify and operationally define the behavior to be changed.* The target behavior is to decrease Chris's inappropriate aggressive behaviors during transitions. We began by stating exactly what "inappropriate" aggressive behaviors for Chris looked like. Then, we described transition times as times when the entire class is with Chris in the hallway moving between the classroom and P.E., lunch, and art. To make sure Chris understood what the appropriate behaviors were, we phrased them at his language level, as follows:

- Keep hands and feet to yourself.
- Talk softly or not at all.
- Walk.
- Stay in line with at least one arms-length from the person in front of you.
- Speak appropriately.

This step is linked to the components of self-evaluation.

2. *Determine the criteria for mastery, using baseline data.* To determine criteria for Chris's behavioral change, we gathered baseline data. We collected these observational data before introducing the self-man-

What Does the Literature Say About Managing Students With Emotional and Behavioral Disorders?

New special education teachers often cite managing student behavior as the most problematic issue, especially for teachers of students with emotional and behavioral disorders (E/BD). Students with E/BD usually have difficulty managing their behavior within the context of the classroom, as well as during routine transitions. These students may display aggression, impulsivity, noncompliance, and distractibility that results in poor academic achievement (Carr & Punzo, 1993) and a disruptive learning environment.

An inexperienced teacher often spends much time focused on managing behavior of the students, rather than focused on academic instruction if effective behavior management practices are not implemented. Student self-management is a technique that has been proven effective in transferring responsibility of a student's behavior from the teacher to the student (Carr & Punzo, 1993). Likewise, research has also suggested that self-management strategies can produce improvements in academic productivity and on-task behavior, as well as a reduction of inappropriate behavior (Reid, Trout, & Schartz, 2005).

Self-management includes three components: self-monitoring, self-evaluation, and self-reinforcement (Allinder, Bolling, Oats, & Gagnon, 2000; Carr & Punzo, 1993).

- Self-monitoring refers to the process of self-observation and self-recording.
- Self-evaluation is the process of comparing the self-monitoring data to the individuals' standards for behavior.
- Self-reinforcement is the act of delivering a consequence that has reinforcing qualities.

For example, McQuillan and DuPaul (1996) found that 66% of students with E/BD in their study responded more favorably to self-management strategies than to interventions imposed and controlled by teachers. According to Schloss and Smith (1998), self-management is (a) a practical and powerful tool for changing behavior; (b) a tool that frees the teacher from primarily reacting to inappropriate student behavior to actually teaching; (c) a cost-effective tool that requires minimal energy to teach and implement; and (d) a tool that students with different abilities, grades, and disabilities can use. Because self-management techniques have been validated and have systematic implementation procedures, results from Reid et al. (2005) suggested that teachers can use self-management techniques as part of a successful behavior management plan.

agement plan to Chris. Chris's teachers monitored him during all hallway transitions for 3 days and noted how frequently he displayed inappropriate aggressive behaviors. On average, Chris displayed 52% inappropriate aggressive behaviors.

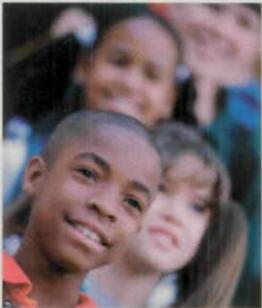
Self-management includes three components: self-monitoring, self-evaluation, and self-reinforcement

3. *Discuss appropriate and inappropriate behaviors with the student and*

reasons for the self-management plan. Chris's appropriate and inappropriate behaviors are discussed individually with him. The baseline data that were collected are discussed with Chris and together we developed his goal (criteria for mastery). He is shown pictures of students behaving in appropriate ways and in inappropriate ways. Figure 1 provides examples of pictures shown to Chris as a reminder of appropriate versus inappropriate behaviors. This step is linked to the components of self-evaluation.

We also explained the benefits of self-management to Chris and asked

Figure 1. Chart of Illustrated Appropriate and Inappropriate Behaviors

Behaviors	Appropriate	Inappropriate
Keep your hands and feet to yourself		
Talk softly or not at all		
Walk		
Stay in line with at least one arms length from the person in front of you		
Speak appropriately	<p data-bbox="655 1696 859 1885" style="text-align: center;">Obscenity Profanity Indecency</p>	<p data-bbox="1114 1667 1354 1738" style="text-align: center;">#?*#@!***!</p> 

that he commit to the procedure. Teachers know the reasons they believe their students can benefit from self-management, but they need to consider reasons students will perceive as beneficial (King-Sears & Bonfils, 1999). First, if Chris spends less time engaging in these inappropriate behaviors, he would be sent to the office less. If he is in class more, he may receive better grades. Second, each time Chris engages in inappropriate behavior, the line is stopped and his peers lose time from the activities they enjoy (e.g., art, lunch, P.E.). Reducing these behaviors would decrease the teasing from his classmates. We hoped that Chris would come up with these reasons himself, but he could not, so we explained them to him. During this step, Chris signed a contract stating that he was interested in participating in a self-management plan. Figure 2 is a sample contract Chris signed.

4. *Introduce the system for self-management.*
5. *Provide guided practice.* Steps 4 and 5 occurred together. The teacher showed Chris all components of the self-management plan: self-monitoring, self-evaluation, and self-reinforcement. Chris's teacher explained to him that at the end of each transition (class to art, art to class, class to lunch, etc.), Chris would be given

Steps for Implementing a Self-Management Plan

1. Identify and operationally define the behavior to be changed.
2. Determine the criteria for mastery, using baseline data.
3. Discuss appropriate and inappropriate behaviors with the student and reasons for the self-management plan.
4. Introduce the system for self-management.
5. Provide guided practice.

Figure 2. Contract to Learn and Use Self-Management (Elementary Student)

Directions: Circle your answer.

- | | | |
|---|-----|----|
| 1. I think I need to have better behavior in the halls. | Yes | No |
| 2. I want to have better behavior. | Yes | No |
| 3. I wish I got in trouble less. | Yes | No |
| 4. I want to learn the self-management plan. | Yes | No |

If you circled No to anything, write one sentence why: _____

I agree that I want to try the self-management plan.

Your signature: _____

Teacher signature: _____

his self-monitoring sheet. The sheet had a space for him to circle whether or not he displayed the five appropriate behaviors. If an appropriate behavior matched with what the teacher scored, Chris would earn a point. Even if Chris marked that he engaged in an inappropriate behavior and the teacher marked it as appropriate, Chris would not earn a point. Even though the teacher might feel Chris engaged in an appropriate behavior, we wanted to teach Chris to be aware of his own behavior and to know the difference between appropriate and inappropriate. If Chris marked that he engaged in an appropriate behavior, but the teacher marked it as inappropriate, Chris would lose a point. If Chris engaged in an inappropriate behavior and marked it correctly, his data were not changed. Figure 3 shows Chris's self-monitoring sheet for his transition from class to art.

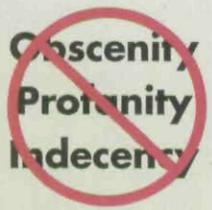
At the end of each transition, Chris was asked to self-evaluate. He was given a sheet identical to this one, with teacher-recorded behaviors. He com-

pared his answers to his teacher's and awarded himself points based on the criteria.

If Chris earned at least four points for the transition, he could reinforce himself by selecting from a set of reinforcers he had agreed to: (a) eating with the teacher at lunch, (b) being the line leader, (c) being able to use the special paint in art, and (d) being first in line for lunch. The teacher also closely monitored the self-reinforcement plan to ensure that Chris was appropriately reinforcing himself. We decided that this reinforcement should be immediate for Chris so that he could make the connection between appropriate behavior and positive reinforcement.

As time went by and Chris became more effective at using the self-management plan, Chris's teacher allowed him to use the plan independently with periodic teacher monitoring. This self-management plan allowed Chris to take responsibility for his behavior in hope that he would become completely independent in managing his own behavior using the components of self-monitoring, self-evaluation, and self-reinforcement.

Figure 3. Self-Monitoring Form for Chris

Self-monitoring form for: <u>Chris</u>		Date: _____
Class to Art		
<i>Did I . . .</i>		
. . . keep my hands and feet to myself?	Yes	No
		
. . . stay quiet?	Yes	No
		
. . . walk?	Yes	No
		
. . . stay in line?	Yes	No
		
. . . speak appropriately?	Yes	No
		
Number Yes (matches teacher) _____ (one point earned)		
Number No (matches teacher) _____ (no points earned)		
Number Yes that teacher marked No _____ (minus one point)		
Number No that teacher marked Yes _____ (no points earned)		
Total Points: _____		

Alexa: A Case Study

Alexa is a 10th-grade student at a large inner-city high school. She receives E/BD-related services and spends the majority of her day in the general education setting. Alexa spends time in the E/BD classroom only when the general education teachers observe inappropriate behavior. Alexa lives with her mother and her mother's boyfriend. Alexa's biological father passed away 3 years ago. Recent test scores show that Alexa is performing at grade level.

Alexa's Behavior

Alexa has difficulties completing work in her general education math class. If she comes to a problem that is difficult for her, she will put her pencil down and either put her head on her desk or talk to a fellow student. When given directions by the teacher, she often is noncompliant, resulting in being sent to see her case manager or to the office. Alexa could benefit from a self-management plan centering on academic behavior to keep her on task. Her teachers hoped that the self-management plan would assist her with her on-task behaviors, increase her compliance during math class, and allow her to complete more assignments.

Procedures for Implementing a Self-Management Plan for Alexa

The procedures for implementing a self-management plan for an academic behavior for a high school student is similar to implementing the social self-management plan for an elementary student (as was the case of Chris). The five steps remain the same, and Alexa's self-management plan follows:

1. *Identify and operationally define the behavior to be changed.* In Alexa's situation, the target behavior was to increase her on-task behavior in math class. The following are descriptions of on-task behavior for Alexa:
 - Working quietly, independently, and consistently on assignments.
 - Participating in class discussions by contributing relevant (e.g., about the content) information.
 - Staying in her seat.

- Following directions within 5 s of the direction given (King-Sears & Bonfills, 1999).
- This step is linked to the components of self-evaluation.

2. *Determine the criteria for mastery, using baseline data.* The criteria for Alexa's mastery were determined in the same manner in which the criteria for mastery were determined for Chris. The teacher recorded baseline observational data during math class for 3 days. During the period, at 10-min intervals, the teacher recorded if Alexa was engaged in the target behaviors. The teacher calculated the percentage of time that Alexa was engaged in the appropriate target behavior. Figure 4 shows Alexa's baseline data and the appropriate goals set for her.

3. *Discuss appropriate and inappropriate behaviors with the student and reasons for the self-management plan.* Next, the teacher conferenced with Alexa to discuss her appropriate and inappropriate behaviors. She also discussed the data collected and potential goals. Alexa was an integral part of the goal-setting process; she and the teacher set a realistic yet challenging goal for the targeted behavior. The teacher showed Alexa videos of students engaging in appropriate and inappropriate behaviors related to being on task. The teacher asked Alexa to verbalize the differences between the target behaviors and inappropriate behaviors. Alexa also observed her peers (guided by the teacher) and identified differences between appropriate and inappropriate peer behavior. This step is linked to the components of self-evaluation.

The teacher elicited Alexa's motivation to learn about self-management by identifying benefits she could expect if she increased her on-task behaviors. One benefit Alexa identified was being able to finish more work in class and therefore having less homework. If she spent more time during class being on task, her classwork would improve,

Figure 4. Baseline Data and Goals for Alexa

Behavior	Average	Goal
Working on assignment	30%	50%
Participating in class discussion	20%	40%
Staying seated	40%	60%
Following directions	20%	50%

more learning would occur, and her grades would improve. Alexa considered other benefits, such as better grades leading to more reinforcement at home, being allowed to obtain a driver's license, and having opportunities to participate in school activities.

The teacher and Alexa developed a contract indicating Alexa's interest in learning and participation with the self-management plan. The contract is similar to the contract used for Chris, but was written in more mature language for Alexa. Figure 5 is an example of Alexa's contract.

4. *Introduce the system for self-management.*

5. *Provide guided practice.* Again, Steps 4 and 5 were concurrent. The system of self-management for a high school student was somewhat different from the self-management system for an elementary-age student. For the self-monitoring aspect of self-management during math class, Alexa had an index card on her desk. She also had a small timer set at 10-min intervals. She was instructed that each time the timer reached zero, she was to self-monitor and record on her card whether she was

Figure 5. Contract to Learn and Use Self-Management (Secondary Student)

Directions: Circle your answer.

1. I want to make better grades in math class.	Yes	No
2. I understand what on-task behavior is.	Yes	No
3. I understand that my on-task behavior influences my grades.	Yes	No
4. I will try the self-management plan to the best of my ability.	Yes	No

Write one sentence telling why you want to change your behavior: _____

If you answered no to any of the questions, write one sentence telling why: _____

I agree to implement the self-management as described to me.

Student signature: _____

Teacher signature: _____

Figure 6. Self-Monitoring Chart for Alexa

Behavior	1st 10 min	2nd 10 min	3rd 10 min	4th 10 min	5th 10 min	6th 10 min
Work quietly on assignments						
Participate in class discussion						
Stay seated						
Follow directions						

Place a check mark (✓) in the box if you are on task when the timer reaches zero. Place an X in the box if you are not on task when the timer reaches zero.

Don't forget to reset the timer!!

*** DO YOUR BEST!!***

engaged in appropriate behavior or not. The general education teacher covertly monitored this self-monitoring skill using proximity and eye-gaze. On Alexa's index card, she

made a check mark in the appropriate box (see Figure 6).

For the self-evaluation component of self-management, Alexa calculated the percentage of time she was on task and

recorded it on her self-evaluation chart (see Figure 7). This not only gave her practice in managing her own behavior, it also gave her an opportunity to practice basic math skills.

Figure 7. Self-Evaluation Chart for Alexa

Behavior	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Work quietly on assignments					
Participate in class discussion					
Stay seated					
Follow directions					
I met mastery today	yes no	yes no	yes no	yes no	yes no

Determine the percentage you were on task for each behavior for each day of the week and record it in the corresponding box. Circle "yes" if you met mastery for the day and "no" if you did not.

Mastery

- Work quietly on assignments: 50%
- Participate in class discussion: 40%
- Stay seated: 60%
- Follow directions: 50%

Last, the self-reinforcement component of Alexa's self-management plan involved her being able to positively reinforce herself. At the end of the day, when Alexa met with her special education teacher, if she had met the criteria for mastery, she chose a previously agreed-on reinforcer from a list.

Implication for Practice

As is seen here, teachers can use self-management plans with students of all ages and for both social and academic behaviors. When considering using self-management techniques within the classroom, a teacher should consider the following factors:

- *Start small and think simple.* Choose a behavior that can be operationalized and easily definable by the student. The age, developmental, and maturity level of the student is an important factor when considering what behaviors can be changed with self-management techniques. Regardless, only a few behaviors should be targeted for change at a time.
- *Expect students to inaccurately report their appropriate or inappropriate behaviors at first.* The teacher will need to covertly monitor students as they reward their behaviors at the beginning of the self-management program. Students should not be reprimanded for incorrectly reporting their behaviors, but teachers can view such incidents as "teachable moments" to discuss and clarify what constitutes an appropriate behavior, the reason it is important to display appropriate behaviors, and the reasons it is important to monitor and report behaviors accurately.
- *Remember that the goal of self-management is to encourage students to become more intrinsically motivated, as opposed to extrinsically motivated.* Therefore, it is important that teachers encourage students in the beginning of self-management implementation and then fade this encouragement as the students

become more successful with their individual self-management plans.

Final Thoughts

Self-management can be a successful behavior management strategy when used individually for students with E/BD (Carr & Punzo, 1993; McQuillan & DuPaul, 1996). Self-management strategies can be used with a variety of behaviors: writing quality and quantity, math fluency, engaged time, on-task behavior, aggressive behaviors, and social behaviors (Scholss & Smith, 1998). Self-management strategies allow students to take ownership of their behavior, involve them in the process of determining whether they are displaying appropriate behaviors, compare their behaviors to the preset criteria, and reinforce themselves appropriately.

The constant feedback enables a comparison between what the student is doing and what he or she should be doing. This, in turn, serves as a cue to maintain or increase appropriate behavior as well as change or decrease inappropriate behavior (Reid et al., 2005). As such, self-management is a viable strategy to embed within the positive behavioral support framework and could be used at the schoolwide, classroom, or individual level as a means to increase student ownership of their behavior. In addition, self-management can be interfaced within a student's behavior intervention plan (BIP) as the self-reinforcement can be linked directly to the function of the student's behavior.

The goal of a self-management plan is to encourage student independence in behaving more appropriately and succeeding in school.

Self-management can increase the likelihood that students will engage in more appropriate behaviors than inappropriate behaviors (Carr & Punzo,

1993). Finally, self-management is a positive and proactive strategy that can be used with students with E/BD.

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