

# **Behaviour Support and Families: Inseparable Concerns**

Glen Dunlap  
University of South Florida

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# The Topic

- Young Children with Challenging Behaviours, and their families
- Effects of Challenging Behaviours on Child's Prospects and on Family's Quality of Life
- Benefits of Effective Intervention and Support for Both Child and Family

# Messages

1. Challenging behaviours can be very significant concerns for child *and* for family
2. Family functioning can have a major impact on child's behaviour and development
3. Effective intervention can provide significant benefits for child and family if the intervention is individualized and truly family-centered

# More Messages

4. It is truly wonderful to be present here in your wonderful city, country, and conference, and I thank you very much for the invitation
5. In appreciation, I tried to remember to spell “behaviour” correctly (despite the protests of my computer’s “spell check”). Still, I suspect I have failed on some occasions...and I confess that “behaviour” is the only word I attempted to adjust

# Some Resources

- [www.challengingbehavior.org](http://www.challengingbehavior.org) (note – if you type “challenging**behaviour**” it will not work)
- [www.pbis.org](http://www.pbis.org)
- [www.apbs.org](http://www.apbs.org)

Save the Date

*The Second International  
Conference on  
Positive Behavior Support*

**March 10-12, 2005  
Tampa, Florida**

For information see: [www.apbs.org](http://www.apbs.org)



**glend@fmhi.usf.edu**

**(Another Shameless Promotion)**

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

Edited by:

**Joe Lucyshyn, Glen Dunlap, & Richard Albin  
(2002); Paul H. Brookes Publishing Company**



# **Challenging Behaviours and the Lives of Children and Families**



# Challenging Behaviours and Young Children – some definitions

- Young Children --- 0-6 years of age
- Challenging Behaviour
  - Any repeated pattern of behaviour that interferes with or is at risk of interfering with optimal learning or engagement in pro-social interactions with peers and adults.
- Serious Challenging Behaviour
  - Intense, chronic behaviours (such as aggression, violent and intractable tantrums) that occur in multiple settings and persist over extended periods of time
- Most common in children with developmental-intellectual disabilities, and children with multiple risk factors

# Some Facts about Challenging Behaviours and Young Children

- Prevalence figures vary --- as much as 10-25% in some preschool populations, probably higher in distinct diagnostic categories
- If not resolved early, chances of successful intervention decline considerably --- and keeping challenges in check becomes more and more costly
- Early behaviour problems are the single best predictors of school failure, delinquency, drop out, gang membership, and adult incarceration

# Effects of Uncontrolled Challenging Behaviours

- In Early Childhood
  - Prevent learning of adaptive behaviour
  - Impede social development
  - Limit opportunities for social engagement
  - Produce rejection/expulsion from needed services
- In Later Childhood, Adolescence, and Adulthood
  - Promote placement in restrictive, special settings
  - Lead to poor peer relationships, and criminal activity
  - Associated with school failure
  - Associated with adult depression, isolation, abuse, and early death

# Effects of Challenging Behaviours on Families (from Fox et al., 2002)

- Social isolation
- Coping challenges
  - Emotional
  - Physical
  - Instrumental
  - Self-concept
- Stress
- Great need for assistance

# Brendan - Before PBS



# Tough Times Before PBS



# How People Viewed Us Before PBS...





# **Influence of Family Functioning on Child's Behavioural Development**



# Family Influence

- Research has demonstrated in many ways that child's learning and development is influenced by family interactions
  - This influence may be even more salient when children have disabilities and/or challenging behaviours
- Studies have demonstrated parents' abilities to learn how to teach specific skills to their children, and to modify children's challenging behaviours
  - Literature on "parent training" beginning in late 1960s and 1970s

# A Personal Learning Experience

- Preschool Training Project (1985-1988)
  - A Family Training project focused on young children with autism
  - Rural Appalachia (WV, KY, OH)
  - Individualized applied behavior analysis, mainly home and community-based, emphasizing a parent training approach

# Overall Findings

- Parents learned skills and reported improved interactions and child behavior
  - All participating parents did well (met criterion) on parent-child interaction skills
- Children made good progress
  - Some better than others
- We conducted analyses to see if, retrospectively, we could predict which children would do very well and which would do less well

# Methods of Predictive Analysis

- Calculated Proportional Change Index (PCI) for first year of participation for each child – based on overall LAP scores
- Analyzed relationship to possible factors, including child (IQ, age, etc.) and family characteristics (stress, SES, etc.)

**TABLE 3****Summary Data on Child Outcome and Parenting Stress**

<i>Child</i>	<i>PCI<sup>1</sup></i>	<i>LAP Change<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>PSI Child Domain<sup>3</sup></i>	<i>PSI Parent Domain<sup>4</sup></i>
A	0.70	2.8	90	95
B	0.81	3.0	95	80
C	0.93	2.8	99	99
D	1.18	2.7	90	90
E	1.33	4.6	90	80
F	1.87	7.3	90	70
G	2.41	9.5	95	70
H	2.51	18.6	90	30
I	2.84	15.0	75	35
J	3.96	15.3	90	20
K	4.68	16.0	90	45
L	5.05	26.2	95	40

<sup>1</sup>Proportional Change Index

<sup>2</sup>Absolute change in months based on an average across all LAP/E-LAP developmental domains

<sup>3</sup>Parenting Stress Index Child Domain (percentile)

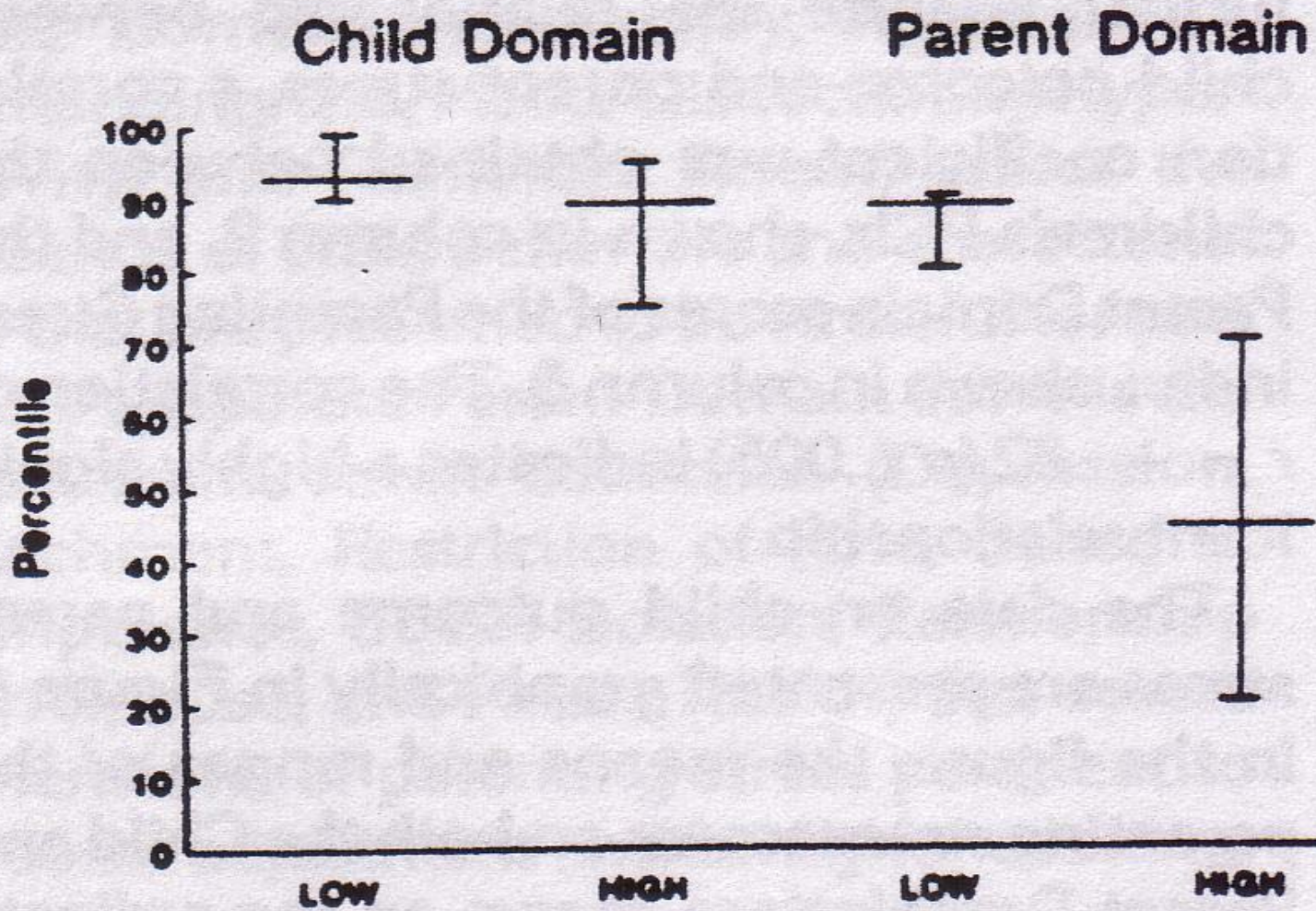
<sup>4</sup>Parenting Stress Index Parent Domain (percentile)

**TABLE 4**  
**Correlations with LAP One-Year**  
**Proportional Change Index**

	<i>r</i>
Chronological Age (intake)	.19
Slosson Mental Age	.56
Slosson IQ	.44
Autism Behavior Checklist	-.01
SES	.61*
Parent Teaching Skills (intake)	-.36
Parent Teaching Skills (one-year follow-up)	.54
Parent Teaching Skills (change score; intake to one-year)	.53
PSI Parent Domain Total Score	-.82**
PSI Child Domain Total Score	-.14

\* $p < .05$

\*\* $p < .005$





# Findings

All mothers reported elevated levels of child-related stress

There was a large range of scores on mothers' reports of stress from other sources

The scores on "other sources of stress" were significantly correlated with child outcome (one year)

All mothers showed progress on parent-teaching skills; this variable was not significantly predictive of child progress

Other child (IQ, age, diagnosis) and family measures were not statistically related to child progress

# Conclusions

- The conspicuous factor associated with child progress was parent stress and parent functioning related to issues other than child's characteristics (i.e., important aspects of family functioning)
- Child progress was not related to parent "skills" per se, but rather (we presume) to time, energy, resources and ability to focus on child on an ongoing basis
- We may presume, then, that changes in these other sources of stress could lead to more child-focused activity and greater child progress – that is, improved parental/family functioning is related to enhanced child progress and development

# Challenge to Address Needs of Families and Children with Severe Challenging Behaviours

- Challenge is to develop programs that can help families learn and apply effective practices with their children, while the family system gains strengths, competence, and confidence (and stress reduction) needed for short-term improvements, and longitudinal change in the child's developmental-behavioral trajectory

# Family-centered Behaviour Support



# The Premise

- We Know:
  - Families have unique “expertise” regarding their children, and this intimate knowledge can be very useful in behavioural support and intervention;
  - Families are (by far) the greatest and most enduring resource available to their children;
  - Families are highly individualized systems – with unique compositions and distinctive strengths, resources, needs, goals, priorities, and values

# The Premise (2)

For children with serious challenging behaviours:

- There is a need for early intervention to resolve challenging behaviours;
- There are solid evidence-based practices that are effective in resolving and preventing challenging behaviours (e.g., relationship building, positive reinforcement, teaching, arranging environment to prevent problems);
- Parents and other family members can learn to use these practices;

- However, for practices to be used over time, the practices must be consistent with (a good “fit” with) families’ characteristics --- values, goals, priorities, routines, resources, etc.
- Therefore, it is vital that families be involved as partners (and the focus) in developing and implementing behavioural supports
- To be truly effective, families need to be included in a collaborative partnership designed to assist the child’s behavioral development AND help families gain strength, knowledge, competence, and confidence

# Behaviour Support = Family Support

- Families (and children) benefit from a range of individual supports needed to build capacities of both the child and the overall family system
- To be ultimately effective, families need to be the centerpiece and the holders of enough knowledge, problem-solving skills, and confidence to address new challenges and continually move forward.



# Kinds of support (examples)

- Information
- Training
- Advocacy
- Respite
- Financial Assistance
- Planning
- Emotional Support
- Counseling
- Friendship

# Some Features of Effective Family-centered Support

- Develop real rapport and trust with family
- Include family in all decisions, and insure that family goals, preferences, and routines are prominent in all planning
- Use effective procedures in support plan (positive behavior support, applied behavior analysis)
- Focus on building skills of child and family
- Evaluate plan and revise as needed

# A Model of Family-centered Positive Behaviour Support (Dunlap & Fox)

- Comprehensive Assessments and Planning
  - Functional Assessment of Challenging Behaviour
  - Team-building, Goal Setting
  - Family and Child-centered Planning
- Individualized Support
  - Collaborative development of support plan
  - Communication-based Intervention
  - Focus on child and family
- Family Support (from beginning)
- Longitudinal Support

## Brendan - After PBS



# **PBS: A Family's Cause for Celebration**



# Messages

1. If untreated, challenging behaviours can be very significant concerns for child *and* for family
2. Family functioning can have a major impact on child's behaviour and development
3. Effective intervention can provide significant benefits for child and family if the intervention is individualized and truly family-centered
4. Therefore, it is in everybody's interests to learn to be more effective partners with families, and to find ways to deliver individualized assistance not just for the child, but for the whole family as well.

**Thank you very much**

