

## Teaching Assent Withdrawal and Self-Advocacy Skills to Persons with Autism

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Outline



- Background
- Steps to take to teach assent withdrawal skills
- Questions to consider
  - Antecedent variables
  - Function
- Examples
- Modifying instruction based on assent withdrawal data
- Measuring child overall happiness levels
- Pragmatic language implications

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Why teach assent withdrawal skills to children with autism?



- Don't we want them to learn new skills regardless of if they "want to" or not?
  - Perhaps that would be nice, but... it doesn't always work like that!

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**Why teach assent withdrawal skills to children with autism?**



- Ethical concerns
  - BACB Guidelines for Responsible Conduct
  - Child may be on a therapist's couch later in life
- Critical for making instructional changes on charts
- Amount learned per unit of time with willing learner vs. unwilling learner (productivity)
- Amount of reinforcement contacted by both learner and therapist/ degree of environmental "pleasantness"
- Bridge to self-advocacy skills

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**Students may be withdrawing assent already...**



- Crying
- Screaming
- Not responding
- Guessing
- Engaging in off-task behavior
- Trying to leave instructional area
- Avoiding interaction with the therapist
- Avoiding instructional arrangements

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**Escape-maintained behavior**



**Teaching escape-maintained behavior is not a bad thing!!!**

*...just make it appropriate!*

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**Examples of appropriate assent withdrawal responses**



- Asking for a break
- Asking to be "all done" with a specific program for the day/session
- Asking to stop instruction vs. keep going
- Asking the instructor to change their instructional delivery in some way (beginnings of self-advocacy)
  - Make it easier
  - Make it harder

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**Modes of communication needed to withdraw assent**



- Vocal
  - Ask for accommodation
  - "Skip"
- PECS
- VOCA
- Sign language/gestures
- Other
  - "Easy button"
  - Anything else...get creative!

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**Steps to take given "inappropriate" assent withdrawal**



- Determine function
  - Conduct Functional Assessment or Functional Analysis of the Problem Behavior
- Teach necessary component skills for appropriate assent withdrawal
- Contrive situations to evoke assent withdrawal and teach appropriate replacement behavior
- Formulate initial decision rules about when and how instruction should be changed based on assent withdrawal data

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**Is it the specific program or the instruction in general?**



- If child withdraws assent when they see the specific chart or materials...
- If child withdraws assent when they are asked to participate in instruction, regardless of program (specific materials not yet seen)...

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**Function of program-related assent withdrawal**



- Too hard?
- Too easy?
- Reinforcement density lacking?
  - Not a powerful-enough reinforcer for this program?
  - Bored/been doing this program for a while?

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**Topographical examples...**



- Asking for a break
- Asking to be "all done" with a program for the day
- Choosing to stop instruction vs. keep going
- Monitoring various types of assent withdrawal responses on a single chart

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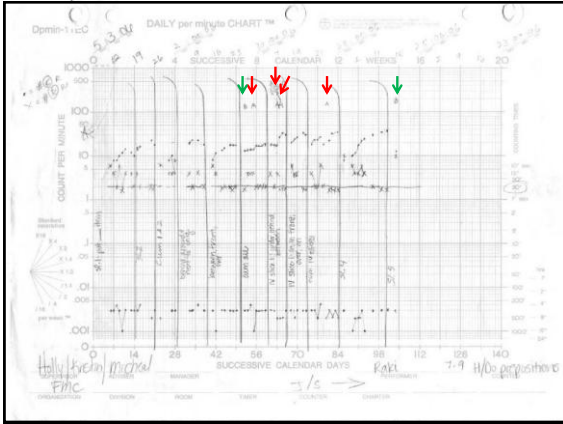
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**“Break” vs. “All done”**



- 2 levels of escape-maintained behavior
  - “Break”
    - take a few minutes away from the program/come back to it later
  - “All done”
    - finished with chart for the day, regardless of effort

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**Modifying instruction based on child assent withdrawal**



- Across-session data
- Within-session data

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**Modifying instruction based on child assent withdrawal**



- Across-session data
  - Determine how many assent withdrawals should take place before an instructional change is made
  - Factors to consider:
    - Child's resiliency to try same program again in same fashion
    - Child susceptibility to change
    - Learning channel ease/difficulty
  - The data will tell you!

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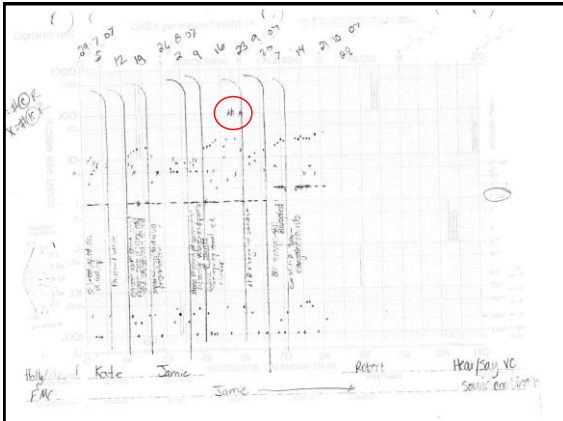
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**Modifying instruction based on child assent withdrawal**



- Within-session data
  - When (during the program) did it take place?
    - When the child saw the program materials?
    - Upon beginning his/her first timing?
    - When the child was in between timings?
    - When the child's data were not on the trajectory to reaching the daily goal for that program?
    - When the child did not reach the daily goal for that program?
  - Also consider factors such as beginning/end of session, etc.
  - Note these on chart!!!

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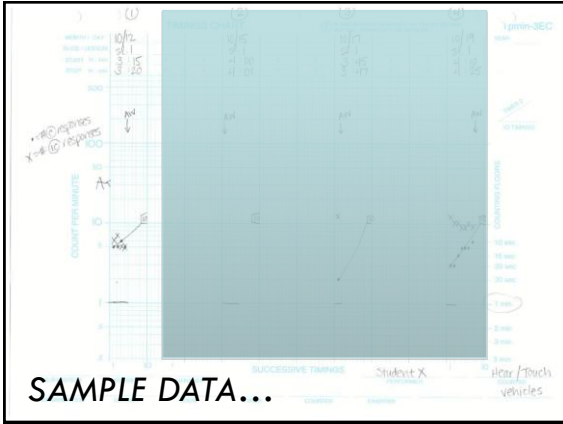
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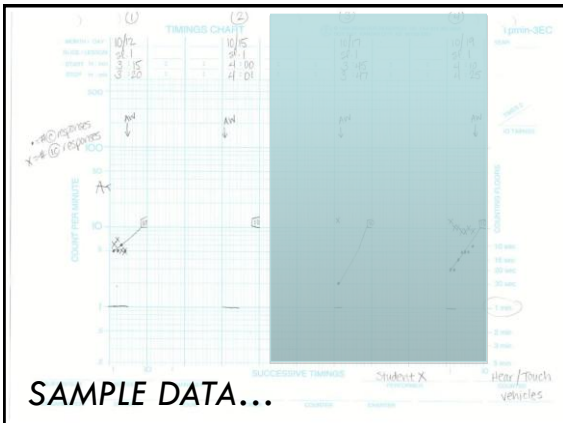
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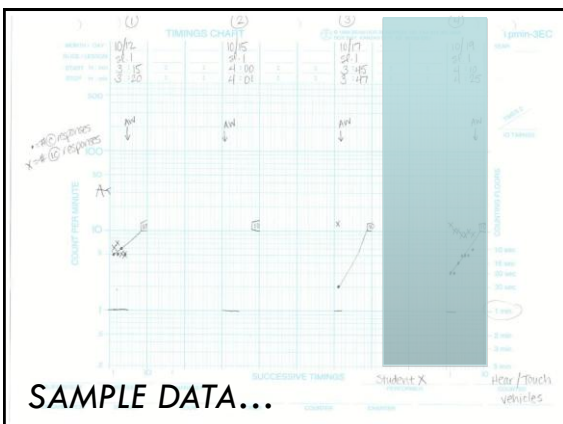
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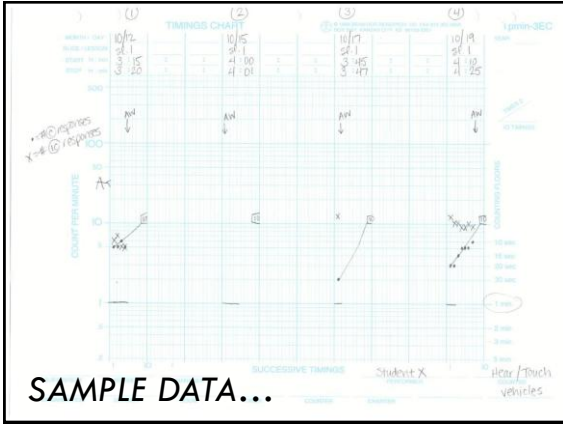
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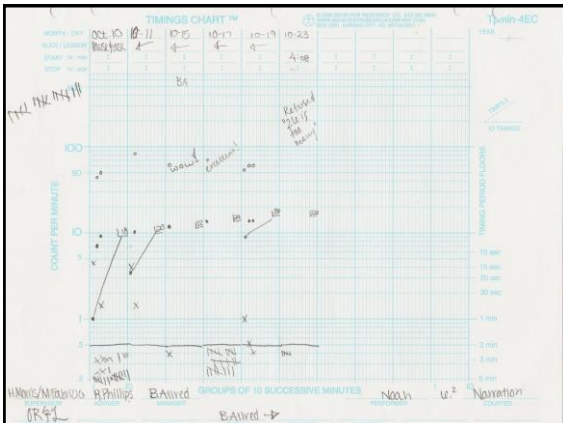
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**Measuring overall child happiness levels**



- Happiness
  - # of approaches to therapist
  - # times child shows he/she is happy
    - Giggles, smiles, etc.
- Unhappiness
  - # instances of misbehavior
  - # times child shows he/she is unhappy
    - Bored glances, sighs, etc.

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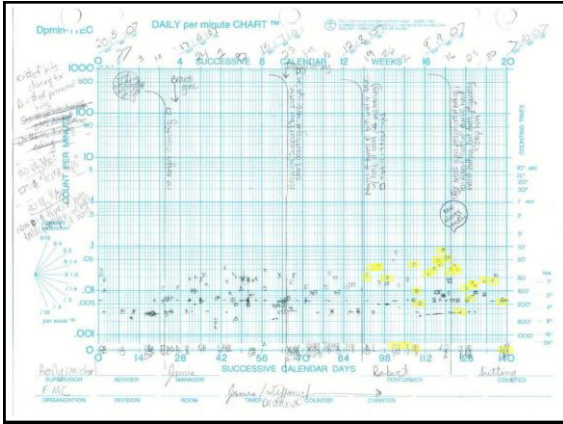
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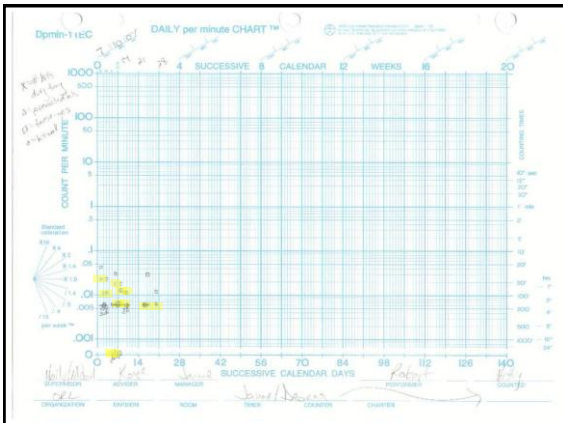
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**Pragmatic language and assent withdrawal**



- Good/bad attitude
- Hear situation/Say "ok" or "not ok"

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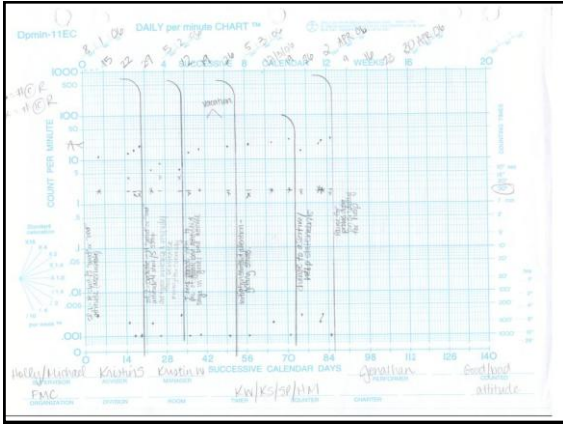
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Questions?



[www.o4rl.com](http://www.o4rl.com)

References

Behavior Analyst Certification Board Guidelines for Responsible Conduct For Behavior Analysts. (August 2004). Retrieved October 20, 2007, from <http://www.bacsb.com/comp/1.html>

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