



Challenging Behaviors Glossary

- ***A-B-C Analysis***: an approach to understanding behavior by examining the Antecedent (the cause), the Behavior, and the Consequence (the result)
- ***ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder)***: a problem with inattentiveness, over-activity, impulsivity, or a combination, that is out of the normal range for a child's age and development
- ***Age of majority***: the age established under state law when an individual is no longer a minor and has the right to make certain legal decisions without consent
- ***Allergies***: adverse immune responses or reactions to substances that are usually not harmful (i.e. pollen, peanuts, gluten)
- ***Anxiety disorder***: a pattern of constant worry or tension under many different circumstances
- ***Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)***: the systematic approach to the assessment and evaluation of behavior, and the application of interventions that change behavior
- ***Audiologist***: a professional who diagnoses and treats a patient's hearing and balance problems using advanced technology and procedures
- ***Autism Spectrum Disorders***: a group of complex disorders of brain development characterized, in varying degrees, by difficulties in social interaction, verbal and nonverbal communication and repetitive behaviors
- ***Aversive***: an unwanted stimulus designed to change an individual's behavior through punishment
- ***Behavior Improvement Plan (BIP)***: a plan to improve a student's behavior in school created based on the results of a Functional Behavior Assessment
- ***Behavioral disorder***: a condition in which behavior significantly deviates from acceptable norms
- ***Behavioral drift***: changes in behavioral patterns resulting from gradual and subtle adjustments over time
- ***Behavioral stereotypy***: repetitive or ritualistic movements such as body rocking or crossing and uncrossing of legs
- ***Biobehavioral unit***: a psychological and psychiatric clinic within a hospital or research center that treats behavioral, anxiety and mood disorders
- ***Biomarker***: an indicator of a certain biological state
- ***Bipolar disorder***: a brain disorder that causes unusual shifts in mood, energy, activity levels, and the ability to carry out day-to-day tasks; also known as manic-depressive illness
- ***Blinded***: unaware of a new or different intervention, which prevents bias during evaluation
- ***Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA)***: a professional certified to provide ABA therapy by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB)
- ***Bulimia***: an illness in which a person binges on food or has regular episodes of overeating and feels a loss of control, then uses different methods – such as vomiting or abusing laxatives – to prevent weight gain





- **Case manager:** a professional from a school or service agency such as the Department of Developmental Disabilities who serves as a direct contact for families and helps gather resources, team members and ideas
- **Catatonia:** a state in which a person does not move and does not respond to others
- **Challenging behaviors:** behaviors that are destructive and harmful to the individual or others, that prevent learning and cause others to label or isolate the individual for being odd or different
- **Civil Commitment:** a legal process in which an individual experiencing a mental health crisis is ordered into treatment against his or her will, including to a hospital
- **Comorbid:** pertaining to a disease or disorder that occurs simultaneously with another
- **Cognitive behavioral therapy:** a type of therapy designed to help improve an individual's inappropriate or challenging behaviors by replacing the negative thoughts that cause these behaviors with positive thoughts
- **Compulsion:** the drive to do something in particular or in a particular way, such as the need to straighten all the forks at the dinner table
- **Conservatorship:** the legal right given to a person to be responsible for the assets and finances of a person deemed fully or partially incapable of providing these necessities for himself or herself
- **Crisis plan:** a document that outlines in specific detail the necessary strategies and steps that must be taken when a crisis occurs
- **Data analysis:** the process of thoroughly inspecting information related to challenging behaviors in order to draw out useful information and conclusions that may result in strategies to improve behavior
- **De-escalation:** the process of stopping a challenging behavior or crisis from intensifying, and calming the situation
- **Depression:** a mood disorder in which feelings of sadness, anger, or frustration interfere with everyday life for an extended period of time
- **Differential diagnosis:** distinguishing between two or more diseases with similar symptoms to identify which is causing distress or challenging behavior
- **Disruption:** an event that causes an unplanned deviation from a situation
- **Dual diagnosis:** the identification of an additional mental health disorder individuals with developmental disabilities
- **Elopement:** a situation in which an individual leaves a safe place, a caretaker, or supervised situation, either by 'bolting,' wandering or sneaking away
- **Epilepsy:** a brain disorder in which a person has repeated seizures (episodes of disturbed brain activity or convulsions) over time
- **Escalating:** increasing or worsening rapidly
- **Extinction:** a response used to eliminate a behavior that involves ignoring a mild behavior when it is used for attention





- **Extinction burst:** the short term response to extinction in which there is a sudden and temporary increase in the response's frequency, followed by an eventual decline
- **Face blindness:** an impairment in the recognition of faces
- **Fecal digging:** the process in which an individual puts his fingers into his rectum
- **Fecal smearing:** the process in which feces are spread on property or the individual himself
- **Food allergies:** an adverse immune response to a food protein (i.e. dairy products) that may cause rashes, gastrointestinal or respiratory distress
- **Function:** the purpose or desired result
- **Function of behavior:** the purpose or reason behind a specific behavior for an individual
- **Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA):** the process by which a school thoroughly examines a student's problem behavior using strategies such as close observation, questionnaires, active listening, previous experiences, etc.
- **Functional communication:** effective and appropriate communication that an individual uses across his daily activities to meet his or her needs
- **Gastroenterologist:** a professional specializing in disorders of the digestive system
- **Guardianship:** the legal right given to a person to be responsible for the food, health care, housing, and other necessities of a person deemed fully or partially incapable of providing these necessities for himself or herself
- **Hormones:** chemical messengers that travel in an individual's bloodstream to tissues or organs slowly, over time, and affect many different processes, including brain activity and behavior
- **Immunologist:** a physician specially trained to diagnose, treat and manage allergies, asthma, and other immunologic disorders
- **Incontinence:** the (usually) involuntary passing of feces or urine, generally not into a toilet or diaper
- **Individualized Education Program (IEP):** a written statement for each child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised in meetings within the school so an individual's education best meets his or her needs
- **Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA):** the 2004 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Act that states that in exchange for federal funding, states must provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to individuals with disabilities in the least restrictive environment (LRE)
- **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA):** a law ensuring services to children with disabilities throughout the nation that governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education and related services to more infants, toddlers and children with disabilities
- **Informed consent:** a process of communication between a patient and physician that results in the patient's authorization or agreement to undergo a specific medical intervention
- **Intervention:** a strategy or process put in place in order to improve or modify an individual's behavior (i.e. medication, Applied Behavior Analysis)





- **Intolerance:** the inability, unwillingness or refusal to endure something (i.e. specific foods)
- **Involuntary Commitment:** a legal process in which an individual experiencing a mental health crisis is ordered into treatment against his or her will, including to a hospital
- **Lyme Disease:** a bacterial infection spread through the bite of the blacklegged tick
- **Maladaptive behavior:** a type of behavior that is often used to reduce anxiety, but the result does not provide adequate or appropriate adjustment to the environment or situation
- **Medicaid:** a government program that provides healthcare coverage for low-income families and individuals with disabilities in the United States
- **Medical home:** a team based healthcare delivery model led by a physician that provides comprehensive and continuous medical care to patients
- **Mental Health Hold:** involuntary hospitalization due to a mental health crisis
- **Motor function:** the ability to move that results from messages sent from the brain to the muscular system
- **Nutritionist:** a professional specializing in diet and nutrition issues
- **Obsession:** a repetitive thought or feeling dominated by a particular idea, image or desire, such as a person who only wants to talk about elevators
- **Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD):** an anxiety disorder in which people have unwanted and repeated thoughts, feelings, ideas, or sensations (obsessions) that make them feel driven to do something (compulsions)
- **Ophthalmologist/optometrist:** a professional specializing in vision issues and eye care
- **Ototoxic:** damaging to the ears, causing sound sensitivities, dizziness or balance issues
- **Over correction:** a punishment mechanism for a challenging behavior that involves requiring an individual to engage in repetitive behavior to an excessive extent in an attempt to prevent the behavior from reoccurring
- **Pediatric Autoimmune Neuropsychiatric Disorders Associated with Streptococcal Infections (PANDAS):** a subset of children and adolescents who have Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) and/or tic disorders, and in whom symptoms worsen following infections such as "Strep throat" and Scarlet Fever
- **Pica:** an eating disorder that involves eating things that are not food (i.e. dirt, plastic)
- **Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS):** a unique augmentative/alternative communication intervention package that involves teaching an individual to give a picture of a desired item to a "communicative partner," and goes on to teach discrimination of pictures and how to put them together in sentences
- **Polypharmacy:** the use of multiple medications by a patient
- **Positive Behavior Supports (PBS):** an approach to helping people improve their difficult behavior by understanding what is causing it, and then developing strategies to increase positive behaviors
- **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):** an anxiety disorder that can occur after witnessing or experiencing a traumatic event





- **Psychiatric evaluation:** a mental health examination by a psychiatrist or other mental health professional
- **Psychologist:** a professional with the training and clinical skills to help people learn to cope more effectively with life issues and mental health problems
- **Psychosis:** a loss of contact with reality that usually includes delusions and hallucination)
- **Psychotropic:** a medication or intervention that affects brain activity, behavior or perception
- **Puberty:** the process of physical changes that occur when a child's body matures into an adult
- **Regional center:** agencies throughout the state of California that serve individuals with developmental disabilities and their families
- **Reinforce:** to strengthen with additional material or support
- **Reinforcement strategies:** methods used to promote or increase positive behavior by providing motivating reinforcers (i.e. praise, a favorite toy, a cookie)
- **Resilience:** an ability to recover from or adjust easily to change or a difficult situation
- **Respite care:** a service that provides short-term breaks that can relieve stress, restore energy, and promote balance for caregivers
- **Restraints:** physical restrictions immobilizing or reducing the ability of an individual to move their arms, legs, body, or head freely
- **Reward:** a prize, token, or preferred activity given to an individual for good behavior, designed to promote the same behavior in the future
- **Risk factors:** conditions that increase the likelihood of aggression
- **Ritual:** a repetitive behavior that a person appears to use in a systematic way in order to promote calm or prevent anxiety, such as arranging all the pillows in a certain way before being able to settle in to sleep
- **Rumination:** the practice of (voluntarily or involuntarily) spitting up partially digested food and re-chewing it, then swallowing again or spitting it out. Rumination often seems to be triggered by reflux or other gastrointestinal concerns
- **Schizophrenia:** a chronic, severe, and disabling brain disorder that makes it hard for individuals to think clearly and tell the difference between what is real and not real
- **Seclusion:** a situation in which an individual is put briefly in a room alone to 'calm down'
- **Sedating:** calming, sleep-inducing, numbing an individual experiencing challenging behaviors or struggling during difficult situations
- **Self-advocacy:** the ability of an individual to communicate his or her wants and concerns, and make his or her own decisions
- **Sensory avoidance:** blocking or staying away from something that is painful or bothersome





- **Sensory defensiveness:** a tendency to react negatively or with alarm to sensory input which is generally considered harmless or non-irritating
- **Sensory input:** any source that creates sensation and activates one or more of the senses -vision, smell, sound, taste, and touch
- **Sensory-seeking behavior:** behaviors caused by a need for additional stimulation of certain senses as a way of maintaining attention or achieving a calmer state
- **Sleep apnea:** a usually chronic, common disorder in which an individual has one or more pauses in breathing or shallow breaths up to 30 or more times per hour during sleep, and results in daytime sleepiness
- **Special needs parent advocate:** an advocate for parents of children with special needs who helps ensure that the child's rights and needs are met in school and in the community
- **Staring spells:** occasions when an individual is in a trance staring into space, which can often signal seizure activity
- **Stimulation:** excitement or activity triggered by a stimulus either internally or externally
- **Supplemental Security Income (SSI):** a Federal income supplement program designed to help aged, blind, and disabled people who have little or no income, and provides cash to meet basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter
- **Tangibles:** items or rewards that can be touched, such as a toy or piece of candy
- **Tourette's Syndrome:** a neurological disorder characterized by tics, or repetitive, stereotyped, involuntary movements and vocalizations
- **Tracking scales:** a document or other tool used to track information such as changes in an individual's behaviors, side effects of medications, school performance, etc.
- **TRICARE:** the health care program for Uniformed Service members, retirees and their families worldwide
- **Voice output technology:** a technological device that helps people who are unable to use speech to express their needs and exchange information with other people
- **Wraparound:** an integrated, multi-agency, community-based planning process designed to build teams of providers, family members and natural supports to help keep complex youth in their homes and communities

