

# INTRODUCTION

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In 2009, the first edition of *Behavioral Interventions in Schools: Evidence-Based Positive Strategies* was published, and we thank Melissa Bray and Tom Kehle for their contributions to that book. The reception we received for that book exceeded our expectations. In 2009, with school psychologists still reacting to learning disability eligibility criteria changes with regard to the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (Pub. L. 108-446), as well as the advent of response-to-intervention models, we thought it important for school psychologists to focus on both academic and classroom behavior. We hope that book served that purpose.

Today, 10 years since the publication of the first edition, it is still selling, and we are still receiving positive comments. However, as we began to consider a second edition of this book we tried to focus on the direction of psychology in the schools since 2009 and how we would like to see it progress in the future. We also have had some important experiences since

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*Behavioral Interventions in Schools: Evidence-Based Positive Strategies, Second Edition*, S. G. Little and A. Akin-Little (Editors)

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the first edition, derived from the opportunity we had to work and live in New Zealand. Steve served as director of the Educational (School) Psychology Programme at Massey University, and Angeleque worked for the New Zealand Ministry of Education. We noticed that New Zealand had much less emphasis on psychoeducational assessment than what we had seen in the United States. New Zealand schools used mostly a problem-solving model and put less emphasis on identification of disabilities. In teaching school psychology at the postgraduate level, we noted that the courses were yearlong and integrated a larger amount of, and more diverse, content. For example, the interventions class covered the full range of behavioral interventions, from specific applied behavior analysis (ABA)–oriented interventions to cognitive behavior therapies (CBT). No single coursebook covered both types of intervention; therefore, we thought this book should.

During this time there has also been a tremendous increase in the number of students being diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). We have also seen a great deal of variability in the quality of school programming for students with ASD. In addition to being trained as school psychologists and licensed as psychologists, we are both also Board Certified Behavior Analysts at the doctoral level (BCBA–D) and have had the opportunity to serve as consultants in this area. We have noticed that ABA services are more and more likely to be designed and implemented by BCBAs trained in behavior analysis, education, or speech and not by school psychologists, who lack such credentials. At the same time, we believe that school psychologists need to work more closely with students with ASD because the depth of their training makes them the ideal professionals to design and supervise these services. That is why we have added to this edition an entire section devoted to ASD and treatment options for working with this population.

We also believe that school psychologists need to become full-service psychologists in the schools. In addition to training in ABA, for use in both regular and special education settings, we need to be able to address the emotional needs of all students. CBT is the approach to psychotherapeutic intervention that has the greatest amount of empirical support. We have therefore devoted another section of this book to CBT and its applications, including working with children who have experienced trauma. Although a book such as this cannot fully train someone in these approaches, we hope it will spur an interest in readers to expand their knowledge and skills so that each and every person reading this book will grow in his or her practice and school psychology can grow with them. For example, Steve attended training in rational emotive behavior therapy conducted at the Albert Ellis Institute in New York City. The skills he acquired during this training not only have helped in his work with children and adolescents, but they have also been

valuable when working with parents and teachers, in helping them better meet the needs of their children.

## A FOCUS ON BEHAVIOR

As with the first edition, this book maintains a strong emphasis on behavior and behavioral interventions. Given that its foundations lie in the philosophical movement of positivism, a focus on behavior has had a strong impact in psychological and educational intervention methodology. The modern term *behaviorism* was initially coined by Watson in 1914 (Alberto & Troutman, 2013) and included a focus on direct observational data. Skinner's work in operant conditioning and the use of his theoretically derived principles to change human behavior became much more prominent in the 1950s and 1960s with the advent of behavior modification and applied behavior analysis. Early work, such as Ogden Lindsley's (1990) successful application of operant methods to the behaviors of psychotic children and adults at his Harvard Behavior Research Laboratory, Bijou's (1957) work with reinforcement and extinction in young children, Lovaas and colleagues' work with children with ASD (Lovaas, Freitag, Gold, & Kassorla, 1965), and Patterson and Brodsky's (1966) work with antisocial children, provided the initial empirical support for this technology.

We now have decades of empirical research supporting the efficacy of behavioral interventions in the classroom. This includes work with token economies by Ayllon and Azrin (1968); Birnbrauer, Wolf, Kidder, and Tague (1965); and O'Leary and Drabman (1971); Barrish, Saunders, and Wolf's (1969) Good Behavior Game; Iwata and colleagues' research in functional analysis (Iwata, Dorsey, Slifer, Bauman, & Richman, 1982); and Litow and Pumroy's (1975) seminal work in group contingencies. All have helped firmly established the continued efficacy of behavioral approaches.

During the past 3 decades, research has continued to provide evidence for the efficacy of behavioral and cognitive behavioral interventions with children and adolescents. Casey and Berman (1985) conducted a meta-analysis on the effects of child and adolescent psychotherapy. Their results indicated an overall effect size of 0.71, but behavioral interventions were found to be more effective than nonbehavioral interventions, with effect sizes of 0.91 and 0.40, respectively. Similar results were found by Weisz, Weiss, Alicka, and Klotz (1987), who obtained a mean effect size of 0.79 for psychotherapy, with behavior therapy ( $d = 0.88$ ) again being found more effective than nonbehavioral interventions ( $d = 0.44$ ). Stage and Quiroz (1997) conducted a meta-analysis to examine interventions designed to decrease disruptive behavior in public education settings. Their results yielded

a mean effect size of  $-0.78$ , indicating a reduction in disruptive behavior of a magnitude approaching Cohen's (1977) definition of a large effect size. Behavioral interventions such as group contingencies ( $d = 3.41$ ; Little, Akin-Little, & O'Neill, 2015), self-management ( $d = 0.93$ ; Briesch & Briesch, 2016), ABA for adaptive behavior in children with autism ( $ds = 0.68$ – $2.91$ ; Peters-Scheffer, Didden, Korzilius, & Sturmey, 2011), and token economies ( $d = 0.82$ ; Soares, Harrison, Vannest, & McClelland, 2016) also have strong support in the meta-analytic literature. Meta-analyses have also supported the efficacy of cognitive behavioral interventions. Hoogsteder et al. (2015) conducted a meta-analysis on the effectiveness of individually oriented CBT for severe aggressive behavior in adolescents and found a mean effect size of  $1.14$ . Scaini, Belotti, Ogliari, and Battaglia (2016) found an effect size of  $0.99$ , supporting the efficacy of CBT intervention with children and social anxiety disorder, whereas Arnberg and Öst (2014) found an effect size of  $0.66$  after examining CBT as an intervention for children with depressive symptoms.

Thus, we designed this book keeping in mind the abundance of empirical support for behavioral and cognitive behavioral interventions, coupled with the need for school psychologists and other personnel to be equipped with knowledge of these interventions. In other words, we wanted to create a book that informs its readers by providing information on evidence-based positive behavioral strategies for use in schools. We also felt it was important to provide the content in a concise, easy-to-read, and understandable format. Hence, we have chapters that are written so that a person somewhat new to behavioral interventions will be able to use the techniques presented immediately and with ease at the same time that more experienced practitioners could have a helpful resource to guide their practice. Of course, there may be instances in which readers may need to seek out other sources for more details on specific methodologies, implementation techniques, and so on; however, the chapters are designed for readers to be able to use the information immediately.

## EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE

In August 2005 the American Psychological Association (APA) adopted a policy with regard to evidence-based practice in psychology. The purpose of this was, and is, to promote effective psychological practice by using evidence derived from clinically relevant research (APA, 2005). Evidence-based guidelines have created the necessity for practitioners to use interventions (including primary and secondary prevention programs) that

have clinically proven effectiveness. The aim is to improve the quality and efficacy of interventions, delivered efficiently and economically, as measured by objective criteria. Proponents of the evidence-based movement seek to incorporate research-supported techniques into interventions; however, psychologists and others working with children and adolescents recognize the challenges in doing this (APA Task Force on Evidence-Based Practice for Children and Adolescents, 2008). Each chapter in this book is predicated on the principles of evidence-based interventions. Empirically supported principles of psychological assessment, case formulation, and intervention are integrated with issues and concerns faced by psychologists and other professionals who work with children and adolescents in educational contexts (APA, 2005).

## POSITIVE AND PREVENTIVE APPROACHES TO BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTIONS

Emotional and behavioral problems of students in the classroom have been deemed a major concern for teachers, administrators, and the public (Hardman & Smith, 2003; Macciomei, 1999). Without effective behavior management, a positive and productive classroom environment is impossible to achieve. The most effective model for producing behavior change and preventing the development of maladaptive behavior is the behavioral model (Wielkiewicz, 1995). In addition, and as discussed above, research indicates that behavioral approaches are very effective in developing effective instructional strategies. However, resistance to the use of behavioral procedures in the classroom has come from a variety of sources, and some individuals have been particularly harsh in their criticism of the use of positive reinforcement (e.g., Kohn, 1993).

As psychologists, we are involved in interventions now more than ever, and a book such as this is needed to provide all kinds of practitioners with a summary of empirically valid and ecologically sound intervention strategies that recognize primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention. To effectively cover the breadth of behavioral interventions related to school behavior it was necessary to maintain a certain level of brevity in our discussions. The chapters, however, should provide practitioners, students, and trainers with a resource that aids in identifying and understanding the foundations of appropriate interventions and gives direction as to where additional details can be found. No book can describe, in complete depth, the multitude of problems faced in schools today, but we believe this one gives readers as complete and comprehensive an understanding as possible.

## OVERVIEW OF THIS BOOK

We have structured the book into three major parts: (I) Foundations of Behavioral Interventions, (II) Working with Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder, and (III) Cognitive Behavior Therapy. We strove to recruit the top researchers in each area, and we believe we have put together a very impressive array of authors from around the world. A PsycINFO search of authors conducted in July 2018, as we were beginning the book's development process, indicated that the chapter authors collectively have published a total of 2,140 journal articles, book chapters, and books. We are also very proud of the international diversity of our authors. In addition to the United States, authors hail from New Zealand, The Netherlands, and Italy. Given this diversity, some chapters may include slightly different terminology, but we believe these are minor and should not confuse any reader.

An understanding of the foundations of behavioral interventions is necessary for any intervention to be implemented with integrity and efficacy. Part I, then, focuses on foundations. It includes chapters on behavioral assessment, positive behavioral supports, classroom management, reductive procedures, generalization and maintenance, an overview of the extrinsic reinforcement–intrinsic motivation issue. The chapters in this part present information integral to readers in the use of behavioral interventions in the school setting. Chapter 6, although it does not present a specific intervention, discusses an issue important to the effective application of behavioral interventions. Many educational professionals have been exposed to an antibehavioral bias from a theoretical standpoint, believing that the use of behavioral techniques will decrease intrinsic motivation (see Kohn, 1993). The authors of Chapter 6 attempt to clarify this issue and provide further support for the proper use of positive, evidence-based behavioral techniques.

Part II contains chapters on working with children with ASD. This part includes chapters on screening and diagnosis, an overview of ABA, discrete-trials training, pivotal response training, verbal behavior interventions, video-based interventions, and structured teaching approaches. The chapters in Part II present the major types of behavioral interventions with children with ASD that will give all readers a comprehensive overview of behavioral approaches to evidence-based interventions for children with ASD.

The chapters in Part III focus on another competency area we believe is essential for any full-service psychologist in the schools: CBT. Splett, Fowler, Weist, McDaniel, and Dvorsky (2013) discuss the role of school psychologists in advancing school mental health programs and services. School psychologists are in a key position to develop, advance, and implement mental health services in the schools and desire that role and function (Fagan & Wise, 2007), but they are not always given that opportunity (Friedrich,

2010). One of Splett et al.'s recommendations to enhance school psychologists' involvement in school mental health was to "ensure that content courses provide sufficient knowledge needed to provide continuum of SMH services" (p. 251). We believe that including chapters such as these provides the knowledge needed to begin this process.

The target audiences for this book are practicing school psychologists, school psychology students, and other psychologists who work with children. All children in the United States and Canada receive compulsory education. Even if intervention services are not taking place primarily in the schools, practitioners cannot ignore the role of the school and the importance of coordinating interventions with the school. The fact is, much of what is discussed in this book is applicable in multiple environments, including schools, homes, residential facilities, and any place children reside or are educated. It is our sincere hope that other audiences (e.g., teachers, administrators, parents) also have the opportunity to avail themselves of the information provided in this book. To maximize the efficacy of interventions; teachers, parents, and school administrators all must be involved with psychologists in effective implementation. We believe this book will be particularly useful to traditional and special education teachers and school administrators as well as counselors and social workers.

Behavioral and cognitive behavioral interventions clearly work. Many data support this contention. In this book we have attempted to bring together a sampling of the world's leading researchers in behavioral interventions in school psychology, behavior analysis, and education. As we have discussed, although the target audience is psychologists, we believe this book can also benefit all who work with children and adolescents in an educational context. The chapters provide details of behavioral interventions, grounded in science (e.g., evidence based), in a simple and easy-to-use format, to provide the very best educational environment for children and adolescents. We truly believe this is what that population deserves and that these techniques are best to ensure a positive outcome.

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