



APMRT

Alabama Psychiatric Medication Review Team

A Collaboration between
Auburn University Department of Psychology & AL-DHR

Functions of Behavior

Function refers to the “why” or the specific purpose of the behavior

Behaviors can **look the same** but serve **different purposes**

CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR

SKILL DEFICITS

PAST TRAUMA

LEARNING HISTORY

UNMET NEEDS



the 4 functions

ESCAPE/
AVOIDANCE

- Delaying difficult tasks
- Getting out of a place
- Getting away from a person

ATTENTION

- Seeking interaction
- Looking for a reaction
- Physical connection/comfort

ACCESS

- Getting items or foods
- Going to a favorite place
- No sharing or interruption

SENSORY /
AUTOMATIC

- Meeting a sensory need
- Reducing discomfort
- Providing stimulation



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UNCOVERING THE "WHY"

Questions to Ask Yourself

- Has this behavior "worked out" for the child in the past? How might that be playing a role in this situation?
- Is this situation similar to a traumatic situation from this child's past? How might that affect this child's behavior?
- Is this child doing this because they can't complete the instruction they have been given?
- Is this child trying to get away from something they don't like?
- Is the child be trying to gain control or choice in what they're doing?
- Is this child trying to get to someone they love/want to be around?
- Does the child have other items to interact with? Is the child bored?
- Is there something I could teach this child to help this situation (how to ask for help, how to ask to be left alone, how to complete a chore, etc.)?