

Social Behavior Mapping®

Connecting Behavior, Emotions, and Consequences Across the Day

By Michelle Garcia Winner

www.socialthinking.com

More information on this strategy is provided in our books:

- *Thinking About YOU Thinking About ME, 2nd Edition (2007)*
- *Social Behavior Mapping* (Find samples of many different maps.)

Students with social learning challenges or related disabilities have difficulty seeing the “gestalt” or the “big picture” and any behavioral system created for them needs to provide extra information about the concepts we are trying to teach. It cannot be assumed that a student understands how his behavior is linked to the consequences that follow, or that he understands how his behavior affects the perspective of fellow students or educators. **Social Behavior Mapping** is a system that helps to connect different aspects of behavior while also teaching social responsibility.

Expected Versus Unexpected Behaviors

I believe it is also important to teach students about sets of behaviors rather than simply point out each singular behavior that is inappropriate. For example, students who have difficulty staying on task and learning as part of a group in a classroom need to actively learn about “behaviors for learning.” Depending on the student, these might include:

- Staying in your chair
- Sitting up straight in your chair
- Keeping your feet on the floor
- Looking at the teacher while she is talking
- Keeping your voice quiet except to speak when the teacher calls on you
- Raising your hand when you need help

These are the behavior sets we expect students to perform to be ready to learn as part of a group.

To further break down a behavior set, we need to explore with a student what behaviors are “expected” versus “unexpected.” It is generally accepted that the expected behaviors are those that help a child learn and be seen in a positive light by his peers and educators. It is the unexpected behaviors that cause peers to have “weird thoughts” about the student’s behavior and may cause frustration to those trying to support him. In contrast to the above example of expected behaviors for learning, the list of unexpected behaviors may include:

- Falling out of your chair
- Wandering around the class
- Making noises or talking to classmates
- Saying things that are not related to what the teacher is talking about

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- Looking in a direction other than at what the teacher wants
- Yelling out answers in class *or* never raising your hand to give answers.

Within the school setting we can have a number of different behavior sets:

- Expected/unexpected behaviors for learning
- Expected/unexpected behaviors for friendship
- Expected/unexpected behaviors on the playground
- Expected/unexpected behaviors when using humor
- Expected/unexpected behaviors for eating food in the company of others
- Expected/unexpected behaviors for the home we can also discuss, such as behaviors for being part of a family.

It is up to the team to determine which behavior sets are most relevant to work on with any given student.

Perspective Taking and How It Links To Behavior

Once we have determined what behaviors are expected or unexpected, we then need to explain to students how these behaviors affect people's perspectives. Students with Asperger's Syndrome or related disabilities often fail to fully account for the emotional context that surrounds them. They don't realize their behavior is inappropriate and additionally, they don't understand that the inappropriateness of the behavior impacts how others feel about them. The next step, then, is to map out how people feel when they observe students doing what is expected, versus how they feel when the unexpected happens. (Please see the Social Behavior Mapping template at the end of this article.)

For example: When a student is sitting up in his desk and watching the teacher, she feels proud of him and happy that he is learning. Other students may also notice that he is doing a good job. However, if a student falls out of his chair or makes "monkey" sounds, the teacher may feel frustrated and worried that he is not learning; other students may notice the distraction too.

Educators have commented that it does not feel comfortable to tell a student that a particular behavior he is engaging in affects the feeling of the adult or a peer. The important point to consider is that our reluctance to verbally acknowledge our feelings to others is based on the assumption that typical people can "read" them intuitively and can then regulate their behavior accordingly. The reality for many of our kids is that they have true social-cognitive deficits that impact their ability to figure out how emotional states are connected to behavioral actions. Of course, there are times when one of our students engages in a malicious behavior with full awareness of how he is impacting other people. I have observed students purposely misbehaving. But, subsequently I have observed those same students doing an unexpected behavior with no awareness of how it was impacting others in their environment.

Connecting Expectations and Perspective to Consequences

The final step is to map out the related consequences. I work with students to improve their understanding that consequences are often tied to the emotional states of the people around

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them. If they are doing what is expected, people feel good and they will get some type of acknowledgement (verbal praise) and perhaps even a reward (a star on a chart that eventually earns a break for the student). If the student is doing unexpected behaviors, others in the environment may notice and react to it by giving a less desirable consequence. For example, if a student is being highly distracting to himself and others, he may get three opportunities to collect himself before he is removed from the classroom to calm down. There may also be a decision to remove points from a chart rather than earn them.

While I realize we try to be extremely positive when working out behavior teaching plans, it is my opinion that these students have a difficult time knowing when they have done an unexpected behavior. By only attending to their positive behavior we may not be giving them all the information they need to see the bigger picture of what they are doing.

Instructions for Completing a Social Behavior Map

When using the Social Behavior Map, start by completing the “expected” behaviors map (this has the smiley face on it)

1. List at the top the behavior set you are describing, e.g. “behaviors for learning”
2. List the expected set of behaviors
3. List how the student’s behaviors make other people feel (their perspective). Use emotion words or phrases such as *pleased, proud, or happy Paul is working as part of the group.*
4. List the consequences (generally the more positive ones) that may evolve from making people feel good about what the student is doing.

Repeat the same process on the “unexpected” page but this time after listing the unexpected behaviors for the indicated behavior set, you want to:

1. List how these unexpected behaviors affect someone else’s perspective by writing emotion words such as *frustrated, annoyed, or worried Paul is not learning.*
2. Then list the related consequences. For instance: *Paul’s teacher has a strict tone of voice when she tells him what he needs to do, Paul may need to leave the group or the room, Paul loses a point on his earning chart, or Paul feels frustrated.*

Develop a System for Using Social Behavior Maps

1. Review the maps as a team before they are introduced to the student. It is really important that parents read these ahead of time and accept the language and consequences used on the maps.
2. Once approved, make several copies of each to use throughout the day in the class or in whatever setting they are needed.
3. The maps are used to explain to the student what is happening with the people around him when he exhibits different behaviors.
4. The team sets a schedule for how often the aide should fill out a map for the student. Filling out a map entails observing the student’s behaviors in the situation and then circling which expected or unexpected behavior he was doing, how it made others feel, and what the consequence is. Base the schedule on how often it needs to be done to

generally catch the student in the act of doing what is expected so the student gets a lot of positive strokes for doing what is expected rather than just cueing him when he is not doing something appropriately.

5. Keep a simple graph in the ME Binder of how many times each day the student is “caught in the act of doing something expected” versus “caught in the act of doing something unexpected.” (Learn more about the ME Binder and how to use this method to teach students about their treatment plans in our book, *Thinking About YOU Thinking About ME, 2nd Edition.*) Encourage the student to monitor his own behavior by looking at the graph and set goals to decrease the number of unexpected behaviors or increase the number of expected behaviors. When the student can get his unexpected behaviors down to a specific level, he then earns a larger predetermined reward.



The purpose of using a Social Behavior Map and related system is to give more information to a student and his team of educators about his behavior, along with providing the vocabulary to describe and discuss it with him. I discourage a lot of talk as the maps are being filled out since I don't want to encourage the student to be argumentative or throw him too far off task. The goal is to start connecting his behavior to others' reactions and emotions, and the resulting consequences.

This behavioral system is one element the student needs in his day. Another is making sure he has suitable accommodations in his classroom experiences to foster success, which in turn will encourage him to stay behaviorally on track.

Social Behavior Mapping

Situation: **Listening to the teacher talk**

(Note: behaviors, feelings, and consequences are listed in columns in arbitrary order. There is not a one-to-one correlation between items when reading them left to right. For example, whatever behavior is listed first does not have to match the first emotional reaction or the first consequence.)

Your behavior that is EXPECTED in the situation	Others' feelings about the behavior(s)	How others treat you based on how they feel about the behavior(s)	How you feel based on how you are treated in the situation
<p>Quiet voice</p> <p>Eyes focused and thinking about the teacher.</p> <p>Looking like I am thinking about what the teacher is saying.</p> <p>Hands only touching materials on my desk</p>	<p>Calm</p> <p>Pleased</p> <p>Happy</p> 	<p>Calm face</p> <p>Calm voice</p> <p>Relaxed body</p>	<p>Calm</p> <p>Relaxed</p>
Your behavior that is UNEXPECTED in the situation	Others' feelings about the behavior(s)	How others treat you based on how they feel about the behavior(s)	How you feel based on how you are treated in the situation
<p>Telling the teacher about what you did last night.</p> <p>Reading a book you brought from home.</p> <p>Kicking the chair in front of yours.</p>	<p>Stressed</p> <p>Frustrated</p> 	<p>Unhappy face</p> <p>Her eyes look right at you.</p> <p>Unhappy sounding voice.</p> <p>She tells you, in a loud voice, what you are doing that is unexpected and she asks you to stop doing that behavior.</p>	<p>Stressed</p> <p>Frustrated</p> <p>Angry</p>

Social Behavior Mapping

Situation: _____

Your behavior that is EXPECTED in the situation	Others' feelings about the behavior(s)	How others treat you based on how they feel about the behavior(s)	How you feel based on how you are treated in the situation
→	→ 😊	→	→
Your behavior that is UNEXPECTED in the situation	Others' feelings about the behavior(s)	How others treat you based on how they feel about the behavior(s)	How you feel based on how you are treated in the situation
→	→ ☹️	→	→