



Foreword

By Thane Dykstra Ph.D.

I have had the pleasure of attending workshops facilitated by Nathan Ory that help professional staff effectively work with individuals who present with challenging behaviors. I have also had the opportunity to observe Nathan firsthand as he provided behavioral consultation to individuals receiving services and supports at our agency, Trinity Services, Inc. During these experiences, I was struck by Nathan's ability to help staff members gain a hopeful perspective on the possibilities for people with complex and multiple challenging behaviors. In part, Nathan accomplished this by helping staff understand the phenomenology of the problem behavior from the perspective of the person receiving services. In addition, Nathan was able to empower staff by formulating individualized, systematic interventions. This was not the case for just a single consultation, but for all that occurred over the course of two days.

For professionals not fortunate enough to have direct experience with Nathan, this publication is probably the next best thing. Nathan draws upon his wealth of clinical experience—over 30 years—in creating this useful guide. Those problems range from agitation, stress, and panic behaviors among persons with severe and profound intellectual disabilities to challenging sexual behaviors. In his writing, Nathan draws upon numerous metaphors and real clinical examples that help professionals understand the experience of individuals who exhibit challenging behaviors. A significant hurdle confronting professionals working with individuals with challenging behaviors is the tendency to personalize these behaviors, and consequently engage the person in an ineffective manner.

In contrast to other texts that address this important topic, Nathan's writing avoids relying heavily on technical jargon. Although his framework is based upon a behavioral analytic perspective, it is not necessary for the reader to have significant prior exposure to learning theory. Nathan provides a very practical guide to overcoming challenging behaviors. He provides very specific recommendations that can be employed in the home, classroom, workplace, and community settings. To facilitate learning, Nathan provides frequent reviews of key concepts and includes memorable visual cues, which come back to the learner during times of crisis or during day-to-day experiences with challenging behavior. Although the book should be read cover to cover (at least once), its organization readily lends itself to use as a reference tool for particular content areas.

The two keys to overcoming challenging behaviors are establishing a positive relationship, and modifying the environment to accommodate individuals' unique goals and needs. Nathan Ory's writing provides a blueprint for accomplishing both tasks.

Nathan has had a profound impact on the lives of persons with disabilities and this text is a “toolbox” for professionals seeking to become ramp builders, behavior artists, and behavior choreographers.

—Thane Dykstra, Ph.D.
Director of Behavioral Health Services, Trinity Services, Inc.
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