

Preventing AAC Device Breakages

Proactive & Responsive
Strategies

Presentation Overview



Identify causes of behavior

Understanding triggers & functions.



Behavior Focused Strategies

Proactive & positive supports.



Environmental & Physical Strategies

Adapting the setting for safety.



Communication Strategies

Enhancing expressive skills.

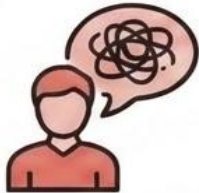


Cleaning and Storage

Proper hygiene & organization.

Did You Know?

Challenging Behaviors



Often equal communication attempts

Device Breakages



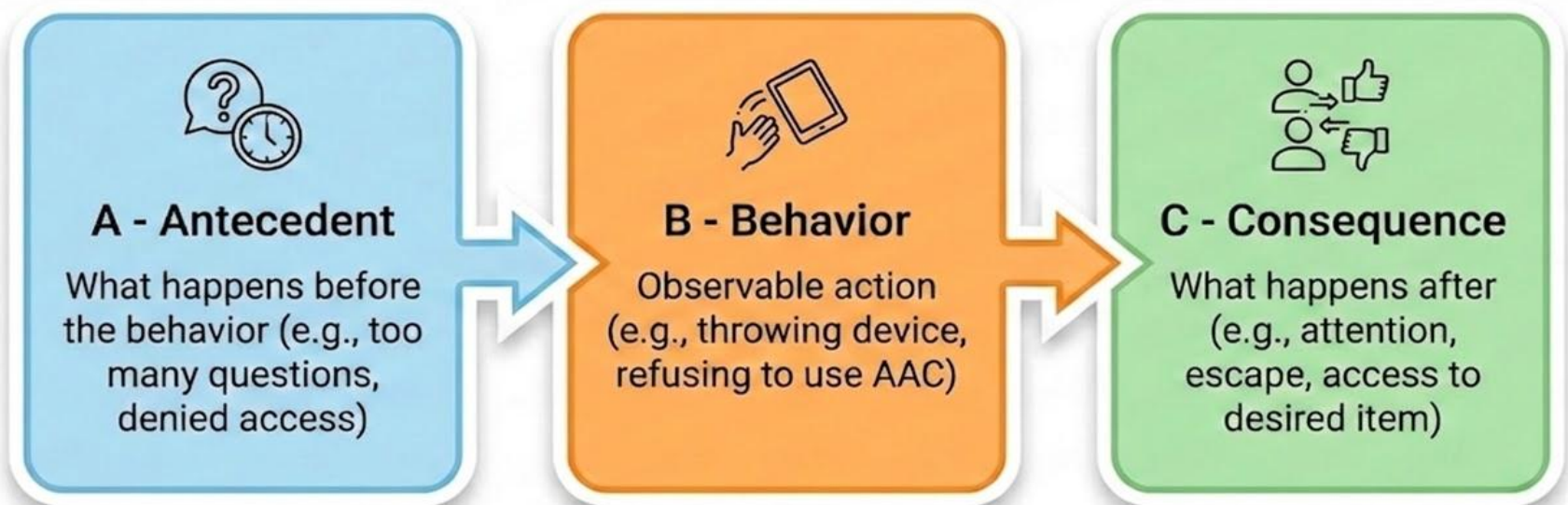
Devices may be broken/thrown due to the inability to communicate

The Goal



Find trigger to teach better alternatives

AAC: Identifying the ABCs of Problem Behavior



👉 Understanding the ABCs helps identify triggers and teaches better communication strategies.

Common Triggers



Expectation and communication mismatch (too many/complex questions, not enough wait time)



Student is Over-Stimulated
(movement, pressure, auditory, and visual input)



The student does not understand the value of the device to support autonomous communication



Protest



Escape

Behavior-Focused Strategies



Model AAC use consistently



Ensure robust vocabulary:



-Core words (go, stop, more, help)



-Break requests ('break', 'wait')



-Emotional words ('tired', 'frustrated')



Adjust the current behavior plan or BIP to include communication device and functional communication training

Behavior-Focused Strategies



Device use social story



Create a robust and meaningful schedule



Implement lite/low-tech, paper-based system regularly, not just during escalation



Discuss, model emotion language using their AAC or low-tech once the student is calm

Communication Partner Response to Behavior/Breakage



Transition immediately to low-tech backup



Stay calm, avoid reinforcing behavior



Later: model discussion with AAC (e.g., "mad," "broke," "sad")



Consider social story

Environmental/Physical Strategies



Durable case
+ screen
protector



Mounts/straps
to prevent
throwing



Device =
communication
only (use
Guided Access)



Keep device
accessible



Always have
a low-tech
backup



Keeping the
device out of
areas where it
can get stepped
on, knocked
over, dropped
from heights

Functional Communication Training (FCT)

Teach replacement skills:



break /
all done

Throwing → say 'break' / 'all done'



Model device use for feelings
on a regular basis



Reinforce appropriate
communication



Model personal interactions ("What did you
do this weekend? I went to the movies")

Cleaning

Keep Devices Clean



Wipe Down

Use a damp cloth or wipes approved for electronics



Protective Measures

Use 2 gallon zipper bags in the presence of liquids (meals) or activities (paint).

Key Takeaways

- **Behavior** usually= communication but consider **sensory needs**



- **Prevent** with proactive supports



- **Protect** devices physically & environmentally



- **Respond** calmly, teach better alternatives



- Communication temptations (create natural opportunities for communication)



- **Communication should be FUN!!!!**



Closing/Questions

“Every behavior tells a story. Our role is to listen and teach.”



Resources

Strategies to prevent AAC Breakages