

# Functional Contextual Thinking - Internalizing Challenges

## Module 2

### *1.1 and Its Application for School Mental Health*



#### Notes:

Functional Contextual Thinking and Its Application for School Mental Health

Internalizing Challenges

Northeast and Caribbean MHTTC at Rutgers University

2021

### *1.2 About*



#### Notes:

Hello and welcome to the second in a series of three modules describing Functional Contextual Thinking and Its Application for School Mental Health. We are glad you could join us today and we hope you will find the

information useful.

There are three modules in this series, each taking approximately one hour to complete.

In module 1, we covered the ABCs of functional contextual thinking as it applies to school related challenges. In module 2, we will look at functional contextual thinking, specifically for internalizing challenges.

The third module of the series will walk you through different examples of interventions you can use based on the functional contextual thinking framework to address externalizing and internalizing challenges.

Each module will introduce new content and progressively build your skills. You will also have opportunities to practice and access to helpful resources. Progressing through the modules is straightforward. There are links in the top corner of your screen for you to access a transcript and resources. You can pause the audio any time you need to take a break.

### **1.3 Dr. Talida State**



#### **Notes:**

Your guides through the Functional Contextual Thinking journey would like to welcome you.

Dr. Talida State is an Associate Professor of Special Education in the Department of Teaching and Learning, College of Education and Human Sciences (COEHS), at Montclair State University. She is passionate about supporting students with social, emotional, and behavioral challenges to reach and exceed their potential. Dr. State has been involved in research and practice around students with behavioral needs for many years. She is the

co-founder of Nurturing Environments Institute, a place where best practices are promoted and encouraged.

She is a Board-Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) with over 15 years of research and school-based experience in consulting and providing evidence-based services for students with emotional and behavioral challenges. She is a member of several premier professional organizations such as Council for Exceptional Children and Association for Positive Behavior Supports, and a regular presenter at national and international conferences. Dr. State also serves on the board of editors for the Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, Journal of Behavioral Education, and Journal of School Mental Health.

For fun, Dr. State loves to travel and go to the beach to relax and spend time with friends and family.

#### **1.4 Dr. Imad Zaheer**



#### **Notes:**

Dr. Imad Zaheer is an assistant professor of School Psychology at St. Johns University and co-founder of Nurturing Environments Institute. He is a pediatric school psychologist, working on numerous projects in clinics, hospitals, and public and alternative school settings that involve direct and indirect or consultation services across individual, group, classroom, and systems levels.

His areas of interest are developing assessments and interventions for children with emotional and behavioral challenges and creating comprehensive school-based prevention programs by integrating school

mental health, social emotional learning, and school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports. For Dr. Zaheer's work in these areas, he was awarded the Council for Exceptional Children's Professional Performance Award in 2019. Additionally, he sits on the steering committee for the national group, Family School Community Alliance, which is an organization dedicated to creating robust collaboration and engagement across schools and families and community settings.

When he gets the chance to relax, Dr. Zaheer enjoys cooking, baking, hiking and running.

### **1.5 Objectives**



#### **Notes:**

Let's get started! There are four main objectives to be accomplished in Module 2. Click on each tile to view the objectives for this self-paced module:

At the completion of this module, you will be able to:

- Describe internalized behaviors
- Describe and differentiate externalized and internalized, or private behaviors
- Describe the role of experiential avoidance in developing internalizing challenges
- Apply functional contextual thinking or FCT to internalizing behaviors to determine the function of the internalized behavior

## 01 Objective (Slide Layer)



## 02 Objective (Slide Layer)



## 03 Objective (Slide Layer)



## 04 Objective (Slide Layer)



## 1.6 ABC



### Notes:

Let's start with a quick review of what functional contextual thinking is. In the first module, we looked at the ABC model, or the three-term contingency model, to explain behavior. As a reminder, A stands for Antecedent which is the event or activity that triggers the response, B refers to the observed Behavior and/or thought or feeling triggered by the antecedent, and C stands for Consequence or the event that immediately follows the behavior. Since the term consequence often carries a negative connotation, you can think of the consequence as the outcome instead.

When we examine and understand the ABCs of a behavior, we can determine the function of that behavior and thus, be better equipped to select an effective intervention.

An example of an ABC sequence is: The teacher announces it's time for reading (this is the Antecedent), Johnny slams his book shut (the Behavior) and as a consequence Johnny's peers laugh and the teacher sends him to time out. One might hypothesize that Johnny's behavior allowed him to escape from his teacher's demand and obtain his peers' attention. Remember, the teacher giving the direction is considered a fast trigger. Imagine that Johnny got in trouble during lunch earlier in the day and received after school detention consequently. That event may serve as a slow trigger and impact Johnny's response to the teacher's request.

Perhaps under normal circumstances, Johnny complies with the teacher's requests but on this day, because he is upset about getting in trouble at lunch, when the teacher asks him to start reading, he responds by slamming the book shut.

The ABC model is a tool that can help us examine behaviors we might want to change, the triggers behind those behaviors, and the behaviors' impact . As a last reminder, when we consider these situations, it is important that we think and talk about problem behaviors, not problem children.

## **1.7 Types of Challenges**



### **Notes:**

Functional contextual thinking is the process of determining the function, the why or the purpose behind a behavior. We can determine the function, not only by looking at the behavior itself, but also the context in which that behavior is occurring. This process is going to lead us to functional solutions. There are three types of challenges that can be supported through functional contextual thinking: behavioral challenges, social emotional learning, or SEL, challenges, and mental health challenges. A student might exhibit minor distracting behaviors in a classroom such as frequent call outs; another student might lack effective communication skills to express their frustration and manifest this frustration through aggressive behaviors; yet another student might struggle with depression and be perceived as unmotivated to complete class work.

All these concerns can be understood and supported through the functional contextual thinking framework. For more challenging or intensive behaviors, assistance from trained mental health professionals may be necessary and recommended.

## 1.8 Functional Approach



### Notes:

As previously mentioned, this module focuses on applying the functional thinking approach to mental health. In the first module, we focused on externalized behaviors that we can easily observe. In this module we will shift our focus to internalized behaviors. These are private behaviors that are not easily observed from the outside, but are knowable to the individual, such as thoughts and internal planning.

*Private* events such as feelings and memory associations, are things we experience but do not perform. These private events can serve as antecedents or setting events, and even though they are private, they can play a role in the context in which the behavior of interest is happening. It is helpful for us to look at these private behaviors and private events to determine the function of the behavior that is impacting the student's mental health.

## 1.9 Internalizing Behaviors



### Notes:



Internalizing behaviors that are challenging for the student can be subtle, and unfortunately can often go unnoticed by classroom teachers or other school professionals. They represent an over-controlled, inner-directed pattern of behavior. In contrast, when we look at externalizing behavior patterns, they are often directed at others or the environment. For example, a child that might be upset in the classroom may hit an object in the environment. But a child who has a pervasive feeling of sadness might just sit quietly, not bothering anybody.

Click on the “Check here for Examples” button to review some examples. When you’ve finished click the “x” in the upper right to close the pop-up screen.

**Check here for examples: (Examples are below)**

Here are some examples of internalizing challenges. As you can see, it's a long list. It includes social withdrawal, depression, anxiety, fear of violence, loneliness and obsessive-compulsive behaviors.

These challenges fall along a continuum. At one end of the continuum could be challenges that meet criteria for a clinical mental health disorder. At the other end they may not be diagnosable but may still significantly impact the child within the school setting.

Many of these challenges can be, but are not necessarily, related to trauma from past or current aversive experiences.

As a result of traumatic experiences, the student’s chances of experiencing internalizing and externalizing challenges are much higher. However, trauma is not necessarily involved in internalizing or externalizing challenges.

## 1.10 On the Run External



### Notes:

Before we dive deeper into these internalizing challenges, let's go back to our example of how to look at a problem behavior to determine its function.

In this example, a student is eloping from their classroom. By examining the ABCs, we may determine the behavior is performed because the student wants to escape or avoid "unwanted adult attention".

## 1.11 On the Run Internal



### Notes:

When you think about a behavior such as running out of the classroom or eloping you may interpret it as an externalizing concern, which it certainly could be. However, in certain situations, it may actually represent an internalizing concern or some combination of the two.

If we look at the behavior of concern as a "survival behavior" for the child but keep the function the same, that is escaping from adult attention and interactions, we may hypothesize that the child feels overwhelmed or scared.

These feelings are private behaviors that might occur along with the overt or externalized behavior of running that we can observe.

We want to make sure that we take these potential private behaviors into account when selecting an intervention or strategy designed to prevent the child from running away. If we fail to consider the student's private behaviors, we may apply an intervention that results in the student staying in the room, but not address what the student is scared of or what's making them feel overwhelmed. This will only partially fulfill our goal as the student might remain in the classroom but still feel too scared or unsafe to learn.

### **1.12 1st Level - On The Run**



#### **Notes:**

Let's continue with this example and take a closer look at the easily observed ABCs in this example. Explore by clicking on each ABC component. See if you can determine the main function of the behavior performed by the student.

#### **Antecedent:**

The antecedent or fast trigger in this situation is the teacher closing the classroom door in the morning to begin instruction.

#### **Behavior:**

As a result, immediately afterwards we notice that the child starts to throw objects and runs out of the classroom.

#### **Consequence:**

In response, the teacher calls the office to ask for help.

Function:

We can hypothesize that the child is running to escape from a closed classroom and possibly any closed room in general.

### Antecedent (Slide Layer)



### Behavior (Slide Layer)



### Consequence (Slide Layer)



## Function (Slide Layer)



### 1.13 2nd Level On the Run



#### Notes:

Now let's look at the parts that are more difficult to observe, the internalizing components of the same ABCs. This requires that we first identify the presence of any slow triggers or setting events, which are often past experiences and private events.

Explore by clicking on each ABC component.

#### Antecedent:

By talking to the child, their parents, and teachers, we find out the child has a history of trauma and experiences an elevated level of anxiety. This information can clue us in to some private behaviors that maybe happening along with the public, externalized behaviors.

#### Behavior:

When the teacher closes the door, the child might be reminded of a previous traumatic episode and immediately think "I have to get out of here", "I have to run."

Consequence:

As they run, the child's anxiety begins to come down as they escape the scary environment. Take a moment and think of a potential function of the running behavior. What could the child be trying to escape in this situation?

Function:

The function of running here can be hypothesized as avoidance of internal feelings of anxiety or escape from a perceived danger.

### Antecedent (Slide Layer)



### Behavior (Slide Layer)



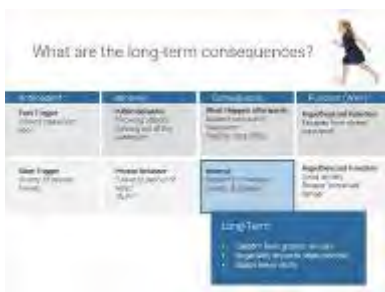
## Consequence (Slide Layer)



## Function (Slide Layer)



## 1.14 Long-term consequences



### Notes:

For many, the internal consequence of a behavior designed to reduce anxiety is reinforcing. If we can escape an aversive situation, we will. It's a very natural response. When we come across something scary or difficult, escaping the situation will help reduce our immediate anxiety. However, over the long-term, this avoidance will lead to even greater levels of anxiety. In addition, we will be less likely to build relationships or skills to help us cope with the situation we are trying to escape. For our student, every time they run out of the classroom, they miss opportunities to connect and build

friendships in the classroom that might help them feel more comfortable and they fail to learn much needed skills. The amount of time a child is in the classroom is linked to the amount of academic and social-emotional skills developed. So, in this situation, the child gets some immediate benefits by running, but overall they will experience higher levels of anxiety and over time, more and more distress from challenges developed in social and academic domains.

### **1.15 Experiential Avoidance**



#### **Notes:**

This phenomenon we just described in the previous example is known as experiential avoidance. Experiential avoidance is the avoidance of one's private experiences such as aversive thoughts, feelings, memories, or associations. While this provides some short-term immediate relief, long-term, experiential avoidance leads to worsening mental health, less skill development, and typically increased social isolation.

Due to the harmful effects of experiential avoidance, it's considered one of the key factors in the development, and maintenance, of mental health challenges involving a cycle of greater and greater escape and avoidance behaviors.



## 1.16 Sleeping All Day



### Notes:

Here's an example of how experiential avoidance can often lead to feeling stuck and impact one's mental health.

In this scenario, we have a student who sleeps late nearly every day to avoid the stress of going to school where they experience negative peer interactions. The child has a history of being bullied at school.

Unfortunately, waking up late and avoiding school leads to increased levels of stress and anxiety due to a variety of unaddressed responsibilities such as completing their morning routine, including daily hygiene and breakfast, upsetting their parents, and receiving consequences at school for tardiness and excessive absenteeism. As a result, the student feels guilty about disappointing their parents and teachers and may experience worsening mood due to missing their friends and any positive peer interactions they had at school. This leads right back to sleeping late the next day to avoid school and potentially even higher levels of stress and anxiety.

To some extent we may have all gone through this cycle of avoidance-related behaviors. However, depending on how long the cycles continue and to what extent, this behavior can have significant consequences. If it gets to the point when the student absolutely refuses to go to school, then we see a common school-related mental health concern, often known as school refusal. You can imagine how this cycle can really start to build up and worsen over time. In this case, we need to help the student learn to tolerate their uncomfortable private experiences instead of avoiding them at all costs.

### 1.17 Negative Avoidant Behavior



#### Notes:

Let's look at more examples of how some avoidant and escape behaviors can lead to mental health challenges such as worsening depression and anxiety. Behaviors such as acting out in class, bullying others, getting into fights or becoming overly passive and disengaged might be used to avoid uncomfortable experiences such as feeling ashamed because of academic difficulties or poor social skills. Unfortunately, such behaviors will only lead to more loneliness and negative private behaviors such as thoughts like "no one likes me".

### 1.18 Depression Subsides



#### Notes:

To improve the situation, we can encourage positive replacement behaviors to help ease depression by replacing the negative cycle with a positive one. We can help the student develop positive replacement behaviors by teaching

social skills to improve peer relationships, practicing emotional regulation skills that will help the student cope with uncomfortable internal experiences, role playing effective ways the student can ask for help or a break when feeling overwhelmed, and creating a predictable and positive classroom environment by making our expectations clear.

By replacing negative avoidant behaviors with positive replacement behaviors that serve the same function, the student can begin to feel more connected, develop friendships, and feel safe, leading overtime to a reduction in depression and anxiety.

### **1.19 Revisiting**



#### **Notes:**

Let's go back to the example of the student who is running out of the classroom when feeling overwhelmed and scared. Remember, when we only looked at the externalized behavior of running, we concluded the behavior was performed because the student wanted to escape or avoid "unwanted adult attention". When we examined the child's history of trauma and anxiety, the information we learned clued us into some private behaviors that may be happening along with the public, externalized behaviors. When the teacher closes the door, the child might be reminded of a previous traumatic experience and immediately think "I have to get out of here", "I have to run." As they run, the child feels relief from their anxiety as they escape the scary environment.

The function is escape in both scenarios but the information about the child's private behaviors help us select a more effective intervention.

## 1.20 Adding in the Positive



### Notes:

We want to be able to replace a survival behavior (running) with a positive adaptive behavior. As a reminder, we want to make sure that we help the child meet the function of their behavior, so if a child is looking to escape or avoid something in this situation, we can teach them the replacement skill of appropriately asking for a break. Because we also know that the child is scared and overwhelmed, we can also teach coping strategies the child can use when taking their break such as using relaxation exercises, coloring, taking some deep breaths, listening to music, or whatever will be most helpful for the child to help better self-regulate their anxious feelings.

Thinking long-term, we don't want to stop our intervention here, because we don't want the child to always need to take a break from school or class. This could result in taking so many breaks that other challenges are created.

## 1.21 Move toward obtain



## Notes:

Eventually, we would like the child to want to be in the classroom rather than looking to escape it. This can include wanting to be around peers, interacting with teachers, and participating in learning. To do this, we need to implement additional strategies in the classroom.

### 1.22 Positive Environment



## Notes:

One of the best things we can offer our students is a safe environment that encourages positive adaptive behaviors. Positive adaptive behaviors are not likely to occur in an environment that doesn't feel safe. They also won't continue if they are not honored and reinforced, such as if a student appropriately requests a break and they are refused. The child needs to feel a sense of predictability and trust that the rules and their actions will "work" for them.

We can also start to nurture strong relationships that are going to help the child remain resilient even when challenges arise. For example, establishing a mentoring relationship with an adult the student likes and trusts is very important.

Finally, we also want to make sure we teach and encourage general social emotional skills. This is something that we often do for all children in schools but in this scenario, we need to focus on the skills this particular child needs. If a child has a history of behavioral challenges, they are likely not only in need of immediate functional skills such as "coping skills" or "how to ask for a break", but also a broader set of social emotional skills such as how to make

friends, take turns, and accept corrective feedback. Long-term, teaching these skills will help the child build friendships and have positive experiences.

### 1.23 Caryn



#### Notes:

Let's work through an example together. In this scenario, Caryn experiences social anxiety, specifically, she has panic attacks and becomes aggressive when she is in environments that are crowded and loud. Recently, two students were injured when she pushed them down as she ran through the crowded hallway during a class change.

### 1.24 Caryn - Analysis

A table titled "Caryn - Panic Attack" showing the ABCs of her behavior. The table is organized into four columns: Antecedent, Behavior, Consequence, and Function. The first row is for the "Fast Trigger" (loud announcement while transitioning) and the second row is for the "Slow Trigger" (crowded hallway). The behavior is "Pushing students down" and the consequence is "Students get hurt and Caryn gets in trouble". The function is "To escape the crowded hallway and avoid the loud noise."

Antecedent	Behavior	Consequence	Function
<b>Fast Trigger:</b> Loud announcement made in the hallway	<b>Behavior:</b> Pushing students down	<b>Consequence:</b> Students get hurt and Caryn gets in trouble	<b>Function:</b> To escape the crowded hallway and avoid the loud noise
<b>Slow Trigger:</b> Crowded hallway during class change	<b>Behavior:</b> Pushing students down	<b>Consequence:</b> Students get hurt and Caryn gets in trouble	<b>Function:</b> To escape the crowded hallway and avoid the loud noise

#### Notes:

This is a scenario that can be difficult for Caryn, who generally feels overwhelmed and anxious when in crowded and noisy environments. To start, let's observe the ABCs of her externalized behavior. The antecedent or fast trigger is a loud announcement made while she is transitioning

between classes in the hallways. This triggers her public behaviors of pushing the students out of her way so she can run to a less crowded place. As a result, Caryn manages to escape the crowd and noise by taking refuge in a classroom. In this situation, we can hypothesize that the function might be escaping from crowds and loud noises.

Now let's consider some internalizing challenges that might be a little bit harder to observe. As we learn more about Caryn, we understand that she has a history of claustrophobia and general anxiety that can act as slow triggers for her behaviors. We might also find out from talking to Caryn, or others that know her well, that she often has private behaviors such as thinking to herself, "I can't breathe" and "There are too many people around me" that occur alongside her public, externalized behaviors.

Internally, when she escaped the crowded and noisy hallways, she thought to herself, "I feel safe" and she felt a sense of relief by getting away from the crowd and loud noise. Hypothesizing the function based on this information, we can also add that she not only escapes the environment but she also escapes from her anxious thoughts and feeling.

### 1.25 Caryn - Solutions

Caryn - Long-Term			
<b>Present</b>	<b>Future</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Future</b>
<b>Visual Triggers:</b> Caryn's perception of the crowded hallway	<b>Visual Triggers:</b> Caryn's perception of the crowded hallway	<b>Visual Triggers:</b> Caryn's perception of the crowded hallway	<b>Visual Triggers:</b> Caryn's perception of the crowded hallway
<b>Other Triggers:</b> Caryn's perception of the crowded hallway	<b>Other Triggers:</b> Caryn's perception of the crowded hallway	<b>Other Triggers:</b> Caryn's perception of the crowded hallway	<b>Other Triggers:</b> Caryn's perception of the crowded hallway
<b>Behavioral Triggers:</b> Caryn's perception of the crowded hallway	<b>Behavioral Triggers:</b> Caryn's perception of the crowded hallway	<b>Behavioral Triggers:</b> Caryn's perception of the crowded hallway	<b>Behavioral Triggers:</b> Caryn's perception of the crowded hallway
<b>Long-Term:</b> Caryn's perception of the crowded hallway	<b>Long-Term:</b> Caryn's perception of the crowded hallway	<b>Long-Term:</b> Caryn's perception of the crowded hallway	<b>Long-Term:</b> Caryn's perception of the crowded hallway

#### Notes:

Let's remember that such escape behaviors will only reinforce anxiety and lead to negative consequences in the long-term. Her anxiety will likely grow

stronger because it is reinforced by escape (this is called negative reinforcement), thus it's likely her anxiety will return even stronger in the future. Her relationships with peers will suffer, whether it's the peers that she actually pushed down or other peers that witnessed this happening. Within the school setting, running and pushing are almost always going to lead to some type of disciplinary action. Frequent disciplinary actions could have other types of negative consequences for Caryn in terms of her school functioning and academic status.

### **1.26 Caryn Strategies**



Caryn – Identifying Strategies

Type your thoughts here:

Check Your Answer Here

#### **Notes:**

Please take a moment and consider what strategies you would recommend to help a student like Caryn manage her anxiety. Type your thoughts in the box below. Then check your answer against some of our suggestions by clicking on the “Check Your Answer Here” button. Please note that your reflection will not be saved once you advance to the next slide.

#### **Check Your Answer Here:**

Here are some examples of helpful strategies for Caryn. First, we might be able to initially help her by allowing her to leave the classroom a little bit early so she can transition before the hallway gets crowded or loud announcements are being made.

However, we also want to make sure that this antecedent modification is not



the only help we provide. Thinking long-term, we want to take time and teach Caryn coping skills to be able to better cope with anxiety when she can't change the situation around her. This would have a broad impact in Caryn's life after school as well. She might find herself in similar situations outside of school or when in new anxiety provoking situations where she either can't escape or escaping by running away can have even worse consequences. To help Caryn cope with the anxiety, we can start by teaching coping skills such as breathing techniques, muscle relaxation or meditation. We can also gradually increase her exposure to more crowded or louder situations to help Caryn slowly get more comfortable being in such environments. This would have to be done very carefully, in a step-by-step manner, with full consent from Caryn.

These strategies are likely to have positive long-term impacts by opening up possibilities for Caryn's life beyond school. She might find herself in a crowded room at a mall or in a restaurant and unless she has developed these skills, she may run out or avoid things that she wants to do but is too afraid to engage in.

### Answer (Slide Layer)



## 1.27 Noah



### Notes:

Let's examine another example where we can use Functional Contextual Thinking to understand internalizing concerns. Noah is a 13-year-old student who manifests anxiety related behaviors such as verbal tics, withdrawal during academic periods, and self-injurious behavior.

Noah's teacher reported that anxiety related behaviors occurred primarily during writing assignments, specifically timed writing activities. His parents reported Noah was "obsessed" with good handwriting. Noah himself reported writing was his least favorite activity because it is "too long" and "too hard." He also reported not liking timed tasks, worries about not finishing the task on time and peers thinking he's stupid.

Prior academic assessments indicated a lack of fluency in writing, but no difficulty in generating materials, ideas, and organizing written passages or stories. Results of direct observations showed that his verbal tics increased significantly during writing assignments, especially when the material was presented orally at a fixed pace; for example, taking notes while the teacher lectures. A wide range of problem behaviors were displayed during situations when writing was required. These behaviors were absent during other activities. To address his frustration, the teacher checks on him frequently and allows him to take a walk in the hallways or put his head down to take a break.

## 1.28 ABC's for Noah

**Noah – ABC Practice**  
Take time to describe the ABC's of information processing in the box below.

Antecedent	Behavior	Consequence	Hypothesized Function
What happened? \$100,000, 100% success	What did he do? 100%	What happened? 100% success	?

Type your Behavior (public and private), Antecedent, Consequence and Hypothesis here:

### Notes:

It's time to practice our FCT skills. Please take some time and complete the ABCs for Noah, both for his public and private behaviors. What are the hypothesized functions of his public and private behaviors? Type your ABC's and hypothesized functions in the box below. After you complete the chart, you can check your answers on the next slide.

## 1.29 Noah - Chart

**Noah – Anxiety**  
Creating social distance and maintaining boundaries

Antecedent	Behavior	Consequence	Hypothesized Function
Event trigger When I see people approaching	Public Behavior I will yell and running away towards the back	What happens afterwards? People move away from me and I feel safe	Aggravated/Anxious (Anxiety, Fear, Sad) Feeling unsafe
State trigger When I am tired, hungry, or stressed	Private Behavior I will yell and run away towards the back	What happens afterwards? People move away from me and I feel safe	Hypothesized Function People move away and I feel safe

**Long-Term**  
1. Anxiety and stress  
2. Avoidance of social situations  
3. Loss of social skills  
4. Loss of social support

### Notes:

Compare your analysis of Noah's behaviors to ours. When given timed writing assignments, Noah exhibits verbal tics (for example, repeatedly saying I can't do this), withdraws from the task and refuses to complete the work. In response the teacher comes and checks on him and allows Noah to take a break to wander the hallways or keep his head down for a while. We can hypothesize that Noah's behavior is performed to get the teacher's attention and escape the writing task. When we look at his private behaviors such as thinking "I hate writing, I won't finish on time, people will think I am stupid", they are triggered by anxiety due to a lack of writing fluency that makes writing difficult for him. Noah feels relieved when allowed to leave the room or keep his head down, and his anxiety is reduced in the moment as he escapes the feeling of shame and frustration. But we know that such escape motivated behaviors will not be productive for him in the long-term, as his anxiety will continue and his writing skills won't improve, leading to even more academic challenges in the future.

### **1.30 Noah- Strategies**



#### **Notes:**

What strategies would you put in place to help a student like Noah manage his anxiety? Type your thoughts in the box below and then check your answer by clicking on the "Check Your Answer Here" button. Please note that your thoughts are confidential and are not saved once you advance to the next slide.

#### **Check Your Answer Here:**

Here are some examples of strategies that could be used to help Noah. While we can continue to allow him to request a break, we should limit the number

of breaks and only provide them after incremental parts of the assignment are completed. This will allow the breaks to serve as a reinforcer of the behavior we want more of, the writing. We could also build in additional reinforcers for completed writing assignments. We could provide Noah with temporary accommodations such as extended time, typing writing assignments on the computer instead of by hand, and provide him with teacher notes. However, while we accommodate, we should also work on Noah's writing fluency as that is the root cause of his anxiety. In this case, remedial one-on-one writing instruction is necessary to ensure Noah's writing fluency is addressed. Building up Noah's writing skills will have the best long-term benefits.

### Answer (Slide Layer)



### 1.31 Your Example



Notes:

We are almost at the end of this module. Let's wrap up with a quick individual practice. Think of a student you've worked with that you suspect had internalizing concerns. It could be a student that also had externalizing concerns, but they don't have to have both. How would you conceptualize the student's concerns using the functional contextual thinking framework? Use the next slide to create your own example. It's helpful to start thinking about the behavior first and then identify the antecedent that triggers the behavior and the consequence that follows it.

### 1.32 Chart - Your Example

Antecedent	Behavior	Consequence	Function	Long-Term Impact

Type your Behavior, Antecedent, Consequence, Function and Long-Term Impact HERE using the user above as a reference.

#### Notes:

Use this format to add your own example in the FCT framework. Type your Behavior, Antecedent, Consequence, Function and Long-Term Impact in the box provided using the chart above as a reference.

Please note that this information will not be saved in the module. It will be deleted once you exit the module.

### 1.33 Summary



#### Notes:

Wonderful! We hope you gained a deeper understanding of how to use Functional Contextual Thinking to identify the function of public or externalized and private or internalized behaviors. Now we're ready to identify effective strategies to address these challenges.

In module 3, we'll consider the role of identifying the ABCs and the hypothesized function in selecting strategies to Prevent, Teach and Respond to externalized and internalized behaviors. Once we identify the Antecedent for a problematic behavior, we can decide what we can do to prevent that behavior from happening in the first place. What Antecedent can we create that will trigger a positive replacement behavior instead of the problematic behavior? These antecedent strategies will help us promote positive mental health and prevent challenges that we know are likely to occur.

Next, we can look at effective, adaptive replacement behaviors that we can teach students to perform instead of the problematic behaviors. Such adaptive, positive behaviors will have immediate, as well as positive long-term outcomes for the student. When considering the consequences following a behavior, we can strategize how to respond when the problem behavior does takes place in such a way that will decrease the likelihood of the behavior in the future, as well as how to respond when the positive behavior is performed to ensure we reinforce it.

### 1.34 Exit



**Notes:**

Thank you for taking part in the second module of the Functional Contextual Thinking and Its Application for School Mental Health online course. We are looking forward to you joining us for our third and final module focused on strategies that encourage growth and positive change.

### 2.1 Examples of Internalized Challenges

