

# INTRODUCTION

Approximately one in four children and adolescents experience behavioral, developmental, emotional, or social and educational difficulties (Hibbs & Jenson, 2005). As clinical and school psychologists, our practice helps children and adolescents learn to overcome the problems they face in their lives. We concentrate on three important goals: accurately identifying problems, measuring severity, and implementing evidenced-based interventions. These critical steps improve the quality of life for children and adolescents and teach them the specific skills they need to overcome their difficulties.

As an extension of our clinical practice, we have developed behavior change projects that enlist mental health professionals, parents, and classroom teachers as partners. These projects are geared toward helping children reduce conflict, cope with problems, and reach their potential. Many of the forms, samples, and cases in this book are ones we use in our behavior change projects.

Our earlier books focused on children with attention deficit disorder: *Meeting the ADD Challenge: A Practical Guide for Teachers* (Gordon & Asher, 1994) and *The AD/HD Forms Book: Identification, Measurement, and Intervention* (Asher & Gordon, 1998). These books provided clinicians, parents, and teachers with tools to identify, measure, and intervene with the many challenges presented by children with AD/HD. Over the years, we applied the content of those books to help children with a range of disorders, which resulted in this text—a larger, more expansive toolbox of forms, questionnaires, sample completed forms, and interventions, for working with children with any diagnosis.

## BEHAVIORAL AND COGNITIVE-BEHAVIORAL ORIENTATION

A significant body of evidence supports behavioral therapy and cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) as effective treatment modalities to address:

- internalizing disorders such as depression and anxiety (Bernstein, Bernat, Victor, & Layne, 2008; Hibbs & Jensen, 2004, TADS Team, 2007)

- externalizing disorders such as AD/HD, oppositional defiant disorder, and conduct disorder (Barkley, Edwards, Laneri, Fletcher, Metevia, 2001; Koegl, Farrington, Augimeri, & Day, 2008)

The resources in this book are grounded in this research attesting to the effectiveness of behavioral and cognitive-behavioral treatments.

### **ORGANIZATION OF THE TEXT**

This book is divided into three main parts:

Part 1: Problem Identification

Part 2: Measurement and Functional Behavior Assessment

Part 3: Interventions

Each part begins with an overview of the purpose and use of the materials in that part. As the book proceeds, we provide an explanation of the purpose, content, and use of specific forms and procedures. In many cases, we include completed sample forms to assist you in using them.

#### **Part 1: Problem Identification**

Problem identification is always the first step in developing effective interventions. Therefore, Part 1 of the book is designed to facilitate gathering information to identify specific behaviors for change, assess their importance, and generate hypotheses regarding the function(s) of the problem behaviors.

#### **Part 2: Measurement and Functional Behavioral Assessment**

After a problem has been identified, measurement is the next task. A reliable baseline (i.e., preintervention) level is established to permit evaluation of the effectiveness of any interventions. The procedures and forms in Part 2 facilitate recording and organizing data regarding the problem behavior. These forms can be used before, during, and after an intervention to measure the extent and nature of changes. Problem behaviors can be measured by collecting data on frequency, duration, and intensity. Measurement contributes to an understanding of the settings, antecedent predictors, problem behaviors and maintaining consequences. Extensive data collection using an antecedent, behavior, and consequence (ABC) model permits the user to adapt interventions to personal, school, or organizational needs.

#### **Part 3: Interventions**

Interventions facilitate application of specific strategies to change behavior. This section begins by providing forms to document comprehensive behavior and social skills intervention plans. Following these forms, the material is grouped by antecedent, behavioral, and consequence interventions. It is essential to do as much as possible to reduce the need for socially maladaptive behaviors. *Antecedent interventions* allow those working with

the child to make necessary changes prior to the occurrence of the challenging behavior. *Behavioral interventions* permit the replacement of the target or problem behavior. Included in this category are procedures and forms to teach skills to address social, emotional, developmental, functional, and educational issues and to promote coping strategies and positive change. *Consequence interventions* are designed to strengthen replacement behaviors and/or weaken inappropriate behaviors through the management of outcomes after the behaviors have taken place.

### **BEYOND THE CLINICAL ENVIRONMENT**

Reaching beyond the clinical environment to involve parents and teachers is an important part of treatment. Training parents and teachers is highly useful in treating children and adolescents at home and in the classroom. School professionals such as counselors and school psychologists may use the cognitive strategies outlined in this book to assist students in making perceptual changes. Parents and teachers involved with children who are struggling with these disorders can benefit by using the forms in this book as their children engage in behavioral change.

The adults who live with and teach children with problems are often left with the task of taking a general concept (e.g., positive reinforcement, punishment, etc.) and figuring out how to apply it to their particular situation. This book provides the forms and information that facilitate the specific identification, measurement, and intervention of child/adolescent problems, for use in clinical settings, classrooms, and homes. Practitioners, teachers, and parents can use the well-established strategies and procedures presented in this book to begin taking action to improve the lives of children and adolescents who are struggling.