ISSUE #01

Newsletter

FTF Behavioral CONSULTING

July 2025

What We've Been Up To & What's Coming Next!

Welcome to the summer edition of our newsletter—and our very first issue. We're excited to launch this newsletter as another way to connect with our community and share timely updates, meaningful success stories, and new research related to Practical Functional Assessment (PFA) and Skill-Based Treatment (SBT).

Over the past several months, we've focused on improving the accessibility of our services, deepening our partnerships with schools and clinics, and refining how we disseminate information to better support those implementing compassionate, evidence-based practices. Through this newsletter, we hope to keep you informed, inspired, and connected to the broader FTF community.

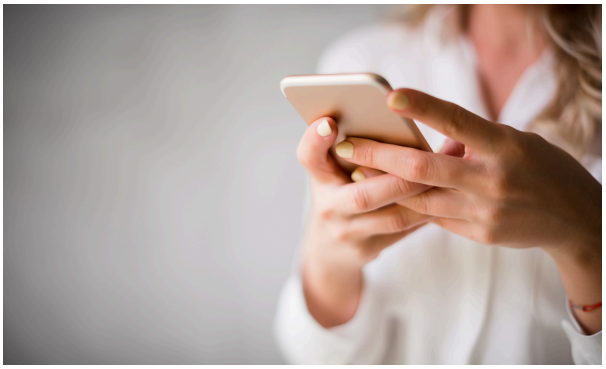
We are deeply grateful to every individual and organization who has supported FTF's work; whether by learning about PFA-SBT, seeking credentialing, joining our trainings, or bringing these processes into their daily practice. Your commitment to improving outcomes for children and adults who engage in severe problem behavior is the foundation of this work.

We're especially thankful for those who continue to push for contemporary approaches within their schools, clinics, and communities. This newsletter is for you, and we look forward to growing and learning together as we continue this important work.

Thank you for being here!

In this newsletter you can expect:

- Dr. Hanley's Reflections
- Credentialing Corner
- Research Recap
- FTF Spotlights
- New Cont. Ed. Opportunities
- FTF on the Road



Making It Easier to Connect

To support schools, clinics, and professionals interested in PFA-SBT, we've created new tools to simplify the process of learning about and accessing FTF services. You can now schedule a 15-minute Zoom call with a member of our team to discuss your goals and learn how our services might support your organization. During this call, we can also provide tailored cost and time estimates.

In addition, we've launched updated contact forms and dedicated email accounts for specific services. Presentation requests can be submitted through our online inquiry form or by emailing **presentations@ftfbc.com**, and general inquiries can be directed through our main contact page or by emailing **inquiries@ftfbc.com**. For questions about on-demand content, you can email us directly at **on-demand@ftfbc.com.**

Who You'll Talk To

Dr. Holly Gover

Lead Consultant /
Director of Client Relations

Dr. Gover has trained practitioners from all over North America as well as in Brazil, Italy, Nicaragua, and Israel. She is passionate about bringing effective solutions to practitioners and families struggling with behavioral issues, specifically food selectivity, and doing so in a way that promotes agency and autonomy within therapeutic processes. At FTF, Dr. Gover is also a first point of contact for professionals interested in training. In your meeting, she will learn about your organization's goals and needs and work with you to identify the right training options.

Dr. Adithyan Rajaraman

Lead Trainer /
Assoc. Director of Client Relations

Dr. Rajaraman is passionate about engaging science communication and dissemination. As an instructor and presenter, he has developed a reputation for distilling complex behavior-analytic concepts and research into accessible, actionable lessons. Dithu teaches in these contexts while blending humility, humor, and tremendous respect for individuals about whom he speaks.

If you don't meet with Dr. Gover to discuss your team's training needs, you'll meet with Dr. Rajaraman. We look forward to speaking with you!

Credentialing Corner

Our Director of Credentialing, Alex Beckwith, recently created a series of videos that walk through the credentialing process in detail. These are now available on our social media channels, including Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn.

If you're considering credentialing, we encourage you to review our Credentialing page on our website: **https://ftfbc.com/credentialing** or email Alex Beckwith with any questions at abeckwith@ftfbc.com.

FTF Spotlight - Dr. Anastasia Keller

Dr. Anastasia Keller-Collins, a behavior analyst and clinical educator at BAYADA, has played a key role in integrating Practical Functional Assessment (PFA) and Skill-Based Treatment (SBT) across her organization.

Reflecting on her start, she shared, "As part of the initial training, I began implementing PFA-SBT with just one learner as I learned to apply the technology and better understand the philosophical underpinnings and values." (cont...)

Full spotlight: https://ftfbc.com/dr-anastasia-keller-collins/

What is the value of becoming a credentialed professional?

Becoming credentialed in Practical Functional Assessment and Skill-Based Treatment provides documentation of your training, implementation, and supervision experience with these processes.

Your credential serves as independent verification of your competencies, aligned with ethical and professional standards such as Code 1.05 of the Behavior Analyst Certification Board® (2020). As a credentialed professional, you will receive a formal certificate, a wallet card, and a confirmation letter signed by Dr. Gregory Hanley. Your name will also be listed in the Credential Directory at ftfbc.com, making it easier for potential clients to connect with you for services or collaboration.

Additionally, you will gain exclusive access to Big Ideas and New Discoveries, an advanced, interactive seminar series developed specifically for credentialed practitioners to explore cutting-edge topics and emerging insights in the field.

Continuing Education Opportunities

Our on-demand course library continues to expand with new offerings for behavior analysts and related professionals. Recent additions include:

- Expediting Skill-Based Treatment: Practical Strategies for Safe and Effective Implementation (2025; 2 CEUs)
- Intractable Head-Directed Self-Injurious Behavior: A Functional Reconsideration (2 CEUs)
- Italiano: Trattare la selettività alimentare senza lacrime (7 CEUs) – Food Selectivity

Revamped Practical Functional Assessment and Skill Based Treatment (10 CEUs) On-Demand Course Available Now!

The *Practical Functional Assessment (PFA)* and *Skill-Based Treatment (SBT)* processes continue to evolve through research and practice. The version of PFA-SBT that we practiced 5 years ago, or even 1 year ago, is not the same as the version we practice today.

This updated 2025 version integrates foundational training with newly developed content on expediting skill acquisition, maintaining safety and dignity, and collaborating with stakeholders. Through engaging lectures, video modeling, active responding, and computer-based feedback, participants will learn about analysis design, teaching skills, responding to problem behavior, and collaborating effectively with families and supervisors.

New modules detail the most updated SBT data sheets and graphing approach, the use of modeling and multimodal responses during Functional Communication Training, identifying and placing boundaries during reinforcement, and updated tactics for building complex behavioral chains.

The course also features updated materials and practical tools, including a brief implementation integrity checklist, to support application.

Summary of What's New:

- Dr. Hanley's latest implementation tips
- Dr. Fiani's updated graphing module
- Tips on meaningful collaboration from Dr. Ruppel and Dr. Egan
- Review of our updated implementation integrity checklist with Dr. Ruppel
- Instruction on the Evocative Control Probe with Shana Rodriguez, M.A., BCBA

The new material is integrated with still-relevant material from our previous PFA-SBT for Implementors course.

Research Recap: Treating Interfering Stereotypy Through SBT

This month we celebrate a new peer-reviewed publication by Dr. Slaton et al., (2025): "Skill-Based Treatment of Interfering Stereotypy" (*Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*).

Why this matters to us at FTF:
A key contribution of this paper is the expansion of SBT application from problem behavior sensitive to socially mediated contingencies, to interfering stereotypy that seems to produce its own reinforcers ("automatically reinforced").

Recently, many autistic individuals and advocates have challenged the need to intervene on **non-injurious stereotypy**, and we agree. A pattern of behavior being associated with autism is **not a sufficient reason** to intervene At FTF, we support the view that stereotypy, in and of itself, **does not require treatment**.

However, there are some situations in which intervention can be warranted. In the case of the participants in this study, stereotypy was so pervasive that it interfered with their learning. Rather than participate in schoolwork, for example, participants spent a great deal of instructional time engaging in stereotypy with the work materials.

And yet, the goal of this intervention was not to eliminate stereotypy altogether, but rather to teach balance. If and when some forms of stereotypy become a barrier to learning, it may be helpful to the person to learn to engage in stereotypy some of the time and other activities some of the time.

This aligns with our commitment to contextually appropriate, compassionate, and dignifying intervention that honors clients' preferences *and* emphasizes skill-building.

What the authors did:
Three autistic students who engaged in stereotypy that demonstrably interfered with learning participated in the study. They learned to:

- Use functional communication and tolerance responses
- Accurately complete multi-step tasks
- Access free time to engage in stereotypy

Clear signals distinguished between:

- **Instructional contexts** (where students learned to focus on work), and
- **Reinforcement contexts** (where stereotypy was welcomed)

What happened:

- Stereotypy no longer interfered with instruction
- Discriminative control over both motor and vocal stereotypy was achieved
- Task accuracy exceeded 80% across all participants
- Teachers rated the intervention as acceptable and the outcomes meaningful

Research Recap Continued...

From the study:

"We shifted response allocation of stereotypy such that it no longer interfered with instruction and used contingent access to stereotypy to teach skills across a variety of domains including communication, language, and social skills."

Why we're celebrating:
It reminds us that our mission is not to treat stereotypy because it looks different — our mission is to intervene only when it becomes a barrier to learning, and always in a way that protects access to reinforcement, autonomy, and joy.

To access a copy of the publication, please click here.

Dr. Hanley's Reflections:
On the Importance of Hope and Joy for Families of Autistic Children who Engage in Severe Problem Behavior

The diagnosis of autism can be overwhelming to parents the first time they hear it. But over time, parents realize that raising a child with autism can be just as joyful as raising any child. As Marybeth Walsh, a mother of an autistic boy, once wrote, "Parenting a child with autism is a lot like parenting a typical child, but everything you know about parenting a typical child needs to be taken to an extreme to parent your child with autism." Other parents have described how the lows are lower, and the highs are higher. Although autism does not necessarily sap the joy from families, severe problem behavior does. And severe behavior problems, like frequent self-injury, aggression, and property destruction, are prevalent among autistic children. Prevalence rates for severe problem behavior range between 25 to 65%. The low range is regarding self-injury; the higher range conveys the prevalence of any type of severe problem behavior occurring regularly. The fallout from severe behavior is considerable. Attempts to teach basic skills are stymied by severe problem behavior. Emotional exhaustion and parental mental illness are correlated with severe problem behavior. Most trips to the ER for families of autistic children are due to severe problem behavior. The lifestyle dictated by it is not an easy one.

Dr. Hanley's Reflections Cont...

What we love best about our jobs at FTF is that, with our consultees, we give hope to families and teachers who have experienced hopelessness due to regular and severe problem behavior. We offer without hesitation that a lifestyle without severe problem behavior is indeed possible in the home and classroom. It is possible with competent implementation of a contemporary version of the practical functional assessment and skill-based treatment (PFA & SBT) process. We have witnessed severe problem behavior being eliminated and lifestyles improving. When people are hesitant to believe that freedom from problem behavior is possible for their child or student, we point them in the direction of the two-dozen peer-reviewed studies showing meaningful outcomes from PFA & SBT. We direct people to success stories shared by professionals. We refer people to credentialed professionals and to those who have been spotlighted for excellence.

We teach that the road to freedom from severe problem behavior is ultimately paved with skills, the skills of communication, toleration, and cooperation, with these skills being personalized and practiced under an ever-widening set of conditions. But we also emphasize that skill building cannot begin until parents and teachers restore trust and routinely bring joy to their passionate children who accidentally learned to protect themselves, to regulate, and to satisfy needs and wants via severe problem behavior. Perhaps it is not coincidental that to restore joy within families of autistic children who engage in self-injury and aggression, parents and professionals must find and start from a place of joy. The best part is that it is not that hard to find that place.

To do so, we teach others to remove the challenges that overwhelm, to minimize the unexpected, and to try to eliminate the things the child simply does not like from this one place for a short period of time. We also teach others to populate the same space with materials and activities that honor and enhance the child's special interests, to be available and responsive, and to follow the child's lead. We recommend that parents arrange this joyful context for at least fifteen minutes a day, twice a day. We tell them that you know you are doing it right if your child is routinely happy, relaxed, and engaged during these shared experiences. By following their child's interests, conversational leads, and by respecting their preferences during these short periods, parents often find that during the other parts of the day their child will listen more, begin to respect parents' wishes, and even follow their parents' lead.

Will bringing joy for 30 minutes a day eliminate severe problem behavior? No, probably not. Bringing joy is just the beginning of the process. The professionals supporting the family will use the joyful context as a springboard to empower the child and then to start practicing those important skills in situations that emulate those parents reported as troublesome. It is this family and professional collaboration and parallel implementation that leads to meaningful outcomes.

Hope for a future without severe problem behavior, that is our main message to families, teachers, and administrators. Baker and colleagues reported that optimism for a future without problem behavior is a protective factor for families. Optimism protected mothers from depression and parents from marital problems.

Dr. Hanley's Reflections Cont...

We have also witnessed the protective and activating properties of optimism, and we have genuine confidence in the process we teach families and professionals, so the hope we convey is authentic and grounded in experience.

It is important to recognize that PFA and SBT are technical processes, requiring training, and supervision to safely and efficiently produce meaningful outcomes. Because of the detailed nature of the process, sometimes professionals forget to provide families with hope, to teach families how to bring joy, and to rely on joy as their own educational or therapeutic starting point. I hope this reflection serves as a reminder of the first things to provide families you serve: Hope for a brighter future and regular times of joy.

FTF on The Road: First Stop - Maryland!

FTF has supported over 100 school systems in transforming how they support students with severe problem behavior. Now, we're launching FTF on the Road, a completely free, in-person event for school-based professionals who want to learn more about implementing SBT in schools. During these free events, you will hear from FTF and our collaborators as we share real-world strategies and outcomes. We'll also open the floor for discussion, questions, and how you can bring these changes to your school.

In May we held our first FTF on the Road event with Howard County Public Schools in Maryland. Ali Baker, M.Ed., BCBA, LBA and Kelly Olsen, M.Ed., BCBA, LBA from Howard County Public Schools shared a presentation about the incredible work they and their team have done implementing PFA-SBT in their district.

Howard County Public School System

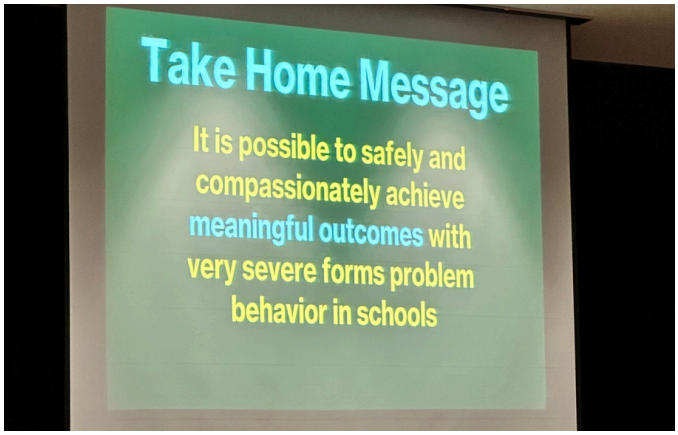
FTF on The Road Cont...

Their school team participated in consultation and training with FTF, and the presentation highlighted their successes and described how they navigated barriers throughout this experience. FTF's Dr. Dithu Rajaraman provided an overview of the PFA-SBT approach for audience members new to the topic.

Thank you, Howard County, for your collaboration and for hosting our first On the Road event. Follow us on social media and check out our website for future events!

Our next On the Road event will be taking place in Nebraska on September 24, 2025. The event will be hosted by FTF Behavioral Consulting, the Nebraska ASD Network, and Educational Service Unit #3

Are you interested in bringing FTF to your school? Please reach out to: inquiries@ftfbc.com



Thank you for reading!

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