

SELF MANAGEMENT

Overcoming Barriers to Success

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WHAT IS SELF MANAGEMENT?

"...applying operant techniques to modify one's own behavior"

Malott, 1989

- Used for decades
 - Curbing undesirable behaviors
 - Lowering caloric intake
 - Reducing procrastination
 - Increase appropriate behaviors
 - Increase physical activity
 - Increase independence in those with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

The purpose of this thesis was to utilize self-management techniques that would help me get my shit together. A treatment package was implemented to provide a skill set that would support my success in graduate school, future employment opportunities, and life in general.

KOEGEL ET AL 1992

- **Four boys (aged 6-11) with an autism diagnosis**
- **Study used multiple baseline design across settings and participants**
- **Each child was taught to discriminate between appropriate and inappropriate responses**
 - **The participants were taught to record instances of appropriate responses with a wrist counter**
 - **Taught to self-reinforce with different rewards after accumulating a certain number of "points" from their wrist counters**
- ***All four participants completed the study with a compliance rate of 90% or greater increase over baseline***

STAHMER ET AL 1992

- Three children with autism gained the skill set necessary to play appropriately with their peers in the absence of treatment providers
- Behaviors generalized to new settings and maintained at the one-month-follow-up for two of the three participants
- In all three children, instances of self-stimulatory behaviors also decreased as appropriate play increased

PIERCE ET AL 1994

- Used pictorial self-management to teach daily living skills to three children with autism
- Results showed that children with autism could successfully use pictures to complete their activities of daily living in the absence of a treatment provider
- These acquired skills generalized across tasks and settings, and maintained at follow-up

NEWMAN ET AL 1995

- Used self-management to increase following independent schedule
- Students earned tokens which they would move from their back pocket to their front pocket for independently changing activities
- Tokens exchanged for various reinforcers when seven tokens in their front pocket
- Some of the students correctly responded to **100%** of transitional periods

THE TROUBLE WITH JAZMYN

Laundry list of undesirable behaviors:

- Dependency on service animal
- Constant crying from aversive stimuli
- Frequent eloping from class
- Eye contact aversion
- Introverted body language
- Self-stimulatory behaviors
- Socially inappropriate clothing choices

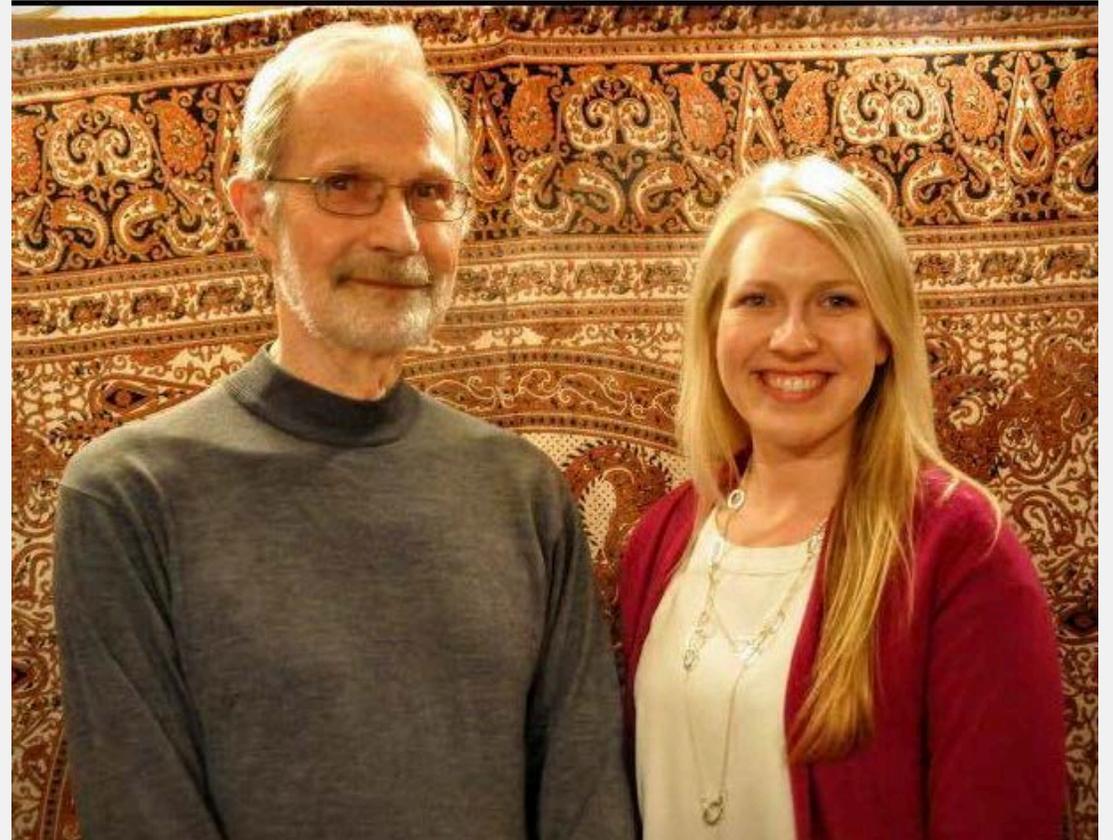


THE SOLUTION

A treatment package was implemented to increase appropriate social interactions and decrease undesirable behaviors that posed a barrier to academic and personal success.

INTERVENTION #1

Meetings with
Dr. Richard Malott
and the "Incredible Jenna"



FIRST MEETING WITH JENNA

"When I reflect on the first meeting that Jenna and I had, it was the first time that anyone had ever spoken to me like I wasn't a lost cause. I remember being amazed by the idea that my "labels" didn't have to define me. She spoke in clear, concise directives, answered questions, and helped brainstorm ways to help me be successful in the course, rather than find ways to enable my undesirable behavior by supporting unnecessary allowances. The skills she was helping me acquire for success in Psychology 1400 would soon begin to generalize to my other courses."

~j~

MEETINGS WITH UNCLE DICKIE

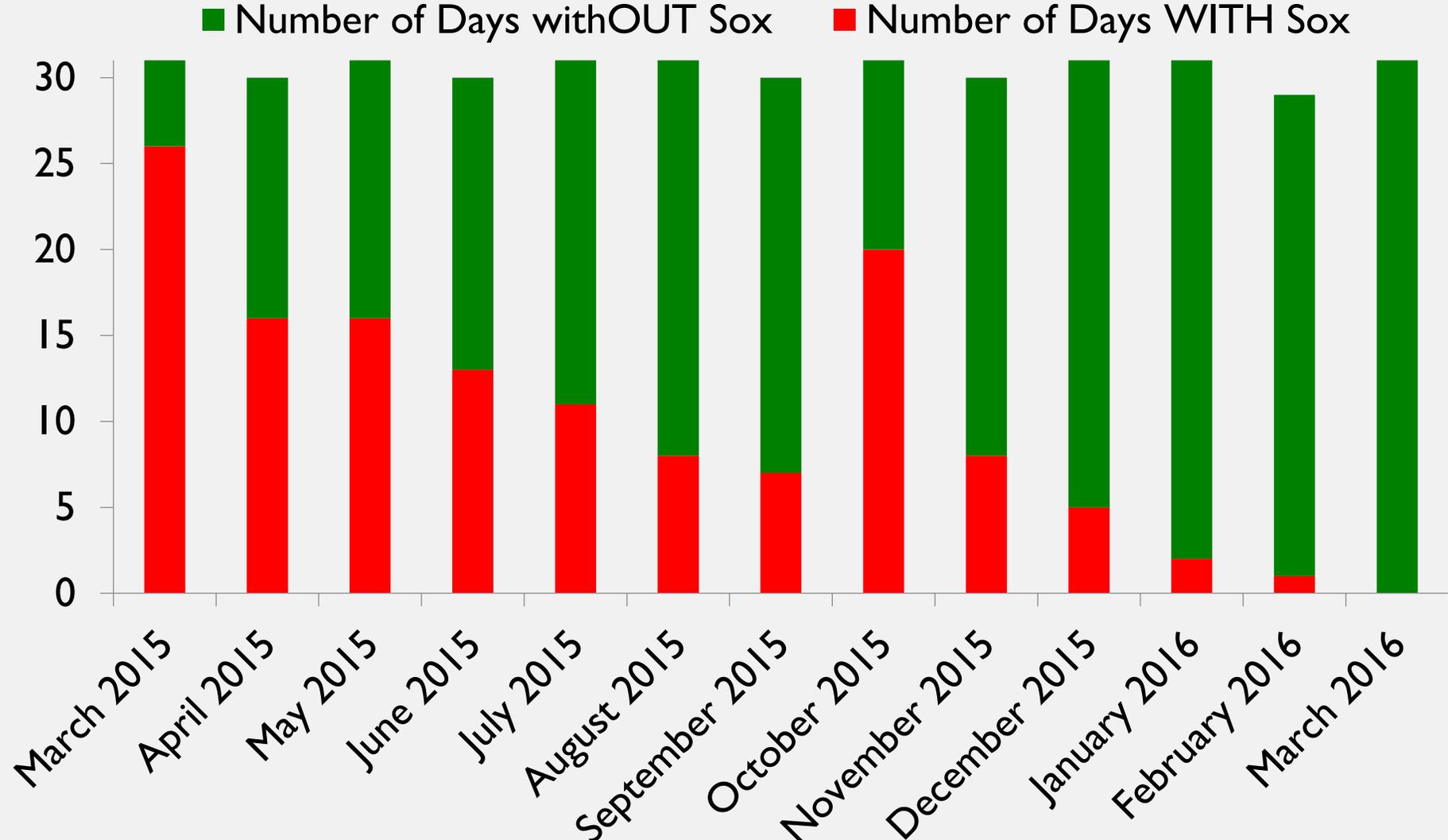
- Meetings with Dr. Malott began in the Spring of 2014. He and I have met bi-monthly(ish) to check in my progress with...
 - Becoming ready for WoodsEdge practicum
 - Honors Thesis progress
 - Keep my behavior in check
- These meetings helped me keep myself accountable for my behavior at school and allowed for practice with eye-contact and appropriate use of body language

INTERVENTION 2: DECREASE USE OF SOX





GREEN DATA DISPLAYS AMOUNT OF DAYS EACH MONTH I WAS ABLE TO LEAVE THE HOUSE WITHOUT "SOX"



INTERVENTION 3: MEETINGS WITH BRI FORBIS

Weekly goal setting including small, attainable socially related goals

Target treatment areas included increasing eye-contact, decreasing self-stimulatory behaviors (such as fidgeting), and implementing TIP (Temperature, Intense Exercise, Progressive Relaxation) skills

Each time I became dysregulated during a session, we would practice TIP skills until I self-regulated emotional responses.

If, on a particular week, I was unable to complete our goals, we would practice those deficits until they were a fluent part of my repertoire



A "NORMATIVE" LEVEL OF FUNCTIONING

- **May 2016:** my advisors and I felt that I was ready to enroll as a practicum student implementing discrete-trial training (DTT) with children who qualify for services.
- **July 2016:** my case was re-assigned to another doctoral student for maintenance skills
- **February 2017:** I am meeting with the new graduate student semi-regularly (2-3 times per month for 45-minute sessions)

INTERVENTION 4: CORRECTION OF BEHAVIORAL DEFICITS AND OVERAGES

EYE CONTACT. INSTANCES OF EYE-CONTACT WERE SHOWING A HUGE DEFICIT. I DID NOT MAKE EYE-CONTACT WITH ANYONE PRIOR TO THIS INTERVENTION. IF I WAS FACING ANOTHER PERSON, I WOULD LOOK “UP,” OR “TO THE SIDE” IN AN ATTEMPT TO AVOID DIRECT EYE CONTACT.

BODY LANGUAGE. PRIOR TO THIS INTERVENTION, MY BODY LANGUAGE SAID “STAY AWAY.” I TYPICALLY KEPT MY HEAD DOWN, SHOULDERS SLUMPED FORWARD, AND ENGAGED IN A LOT OF HAND FIDGETING/ ROCKING BEHAVIORS. I ALSO HAD A TENDENCY TO CLOSE MY EYES FOR LONG PERIODS OF TIME OR COVER MY EARS IF I THOUGHT ANY ASPECT OF MY IMMEDIATE ENVIRONMENT WAS TOO AVERSIVE. THIS BEHAVIOR COULD OCCUR AFTER INSTANCES OF SOUNDS, TEMPERATURE, LIGHTING, SMELLS, OR THE PRESENCE OF PEOPLE. SELF-MONITORING WAS IMPLEMENTED TO TARGET THE PREVIOUS TWO BEHAVIORS.



INTERVENTION 4: MOTIVATOR APP

- Motivator app was used to self-monitor and check-in on behaviors
- Set to vibrate every 30 seconds while in session with Bri Forbis
- Each time it would vibrate, I would state the target out loud, “Eye contact, body language,” and then check-in on those behaviors
- If not engaging in eye contact or correct use of body language, I would self-correct my gaze or practice being mindful of what my hands and feet were doing
- Faded the motivator app from 30 seconds to 1 minute, 2 minutes, and eventually 5 minutes until I was successfully engaging in appropriate instances of behavior each time the vibration began
- Did not verbalize the target behavior outside of the clinic setting

INTERVENTION 4: CRYING

- Crying was almost as common for me as breathing
- Crying on average of 3-7 times per day in baseline
- Engaging in multiple severe crying episodes per week that led to me eloping from class
- Post-Intervention Crying
 - Summer 2016: one crying episode
 - Fall 2016: one crying episode
 - Instances of crying are currently infrequent enough where they are no longer a barrier to academic success
 - Still working diligently to extinguish the response entirely

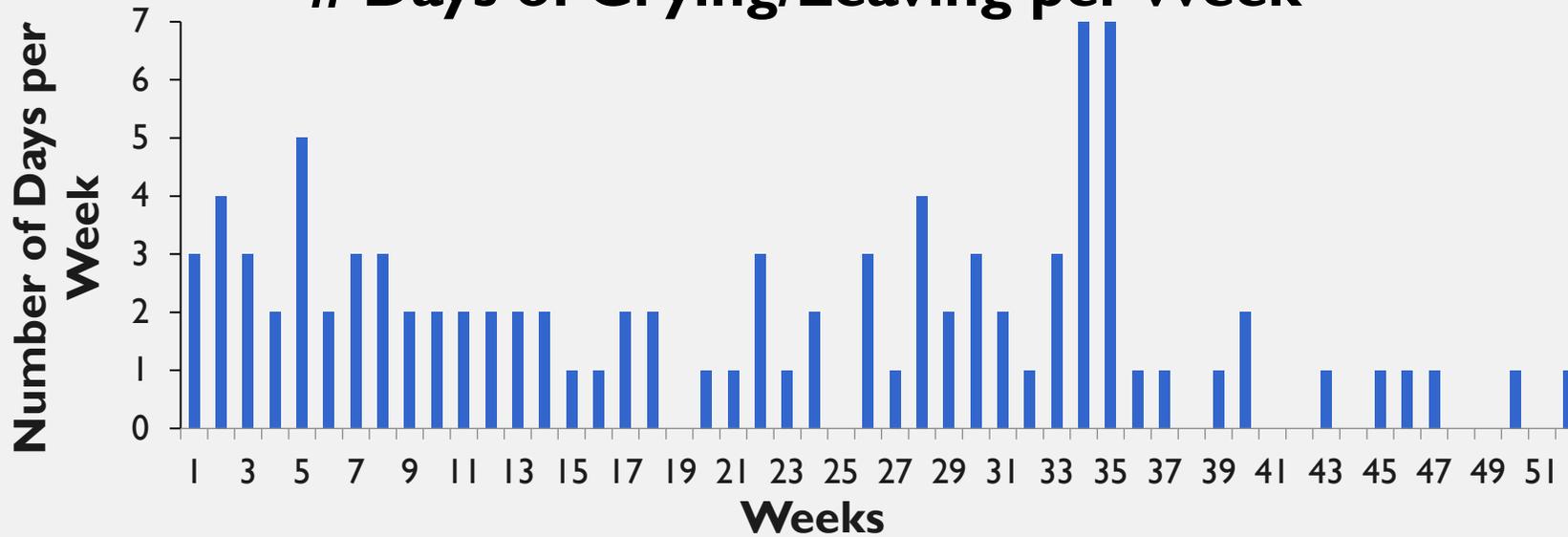
INTERVENTION 4: ELOPING FROM CLASS

Eloping from class was occurring frequently prior to intervention.

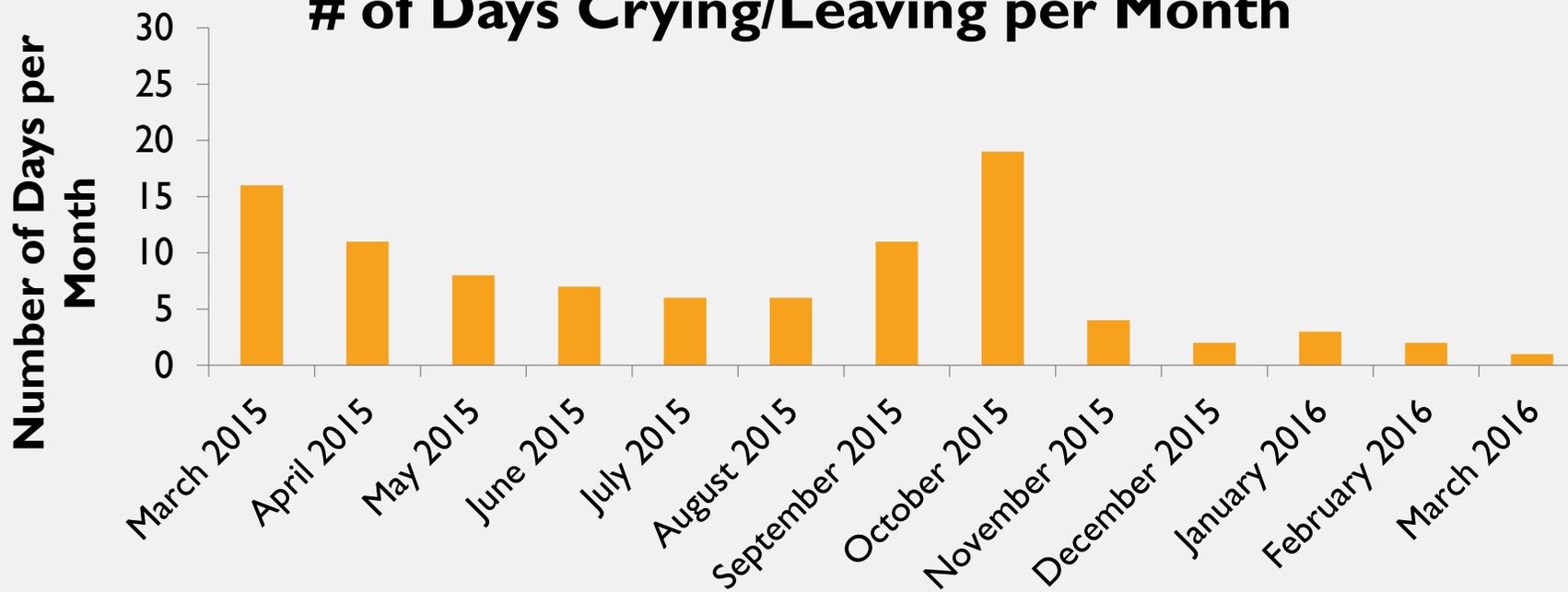
The behavior was occurring several times per week. After acquiring the use of TIP skills, I have not had to leave a class yet this Spring 2017 semester.



Days of Crying/Leaving per Week



of Days Crying/Leaving per Month



INTERVENTION 4: REPLACEMENT BEHAVIORS

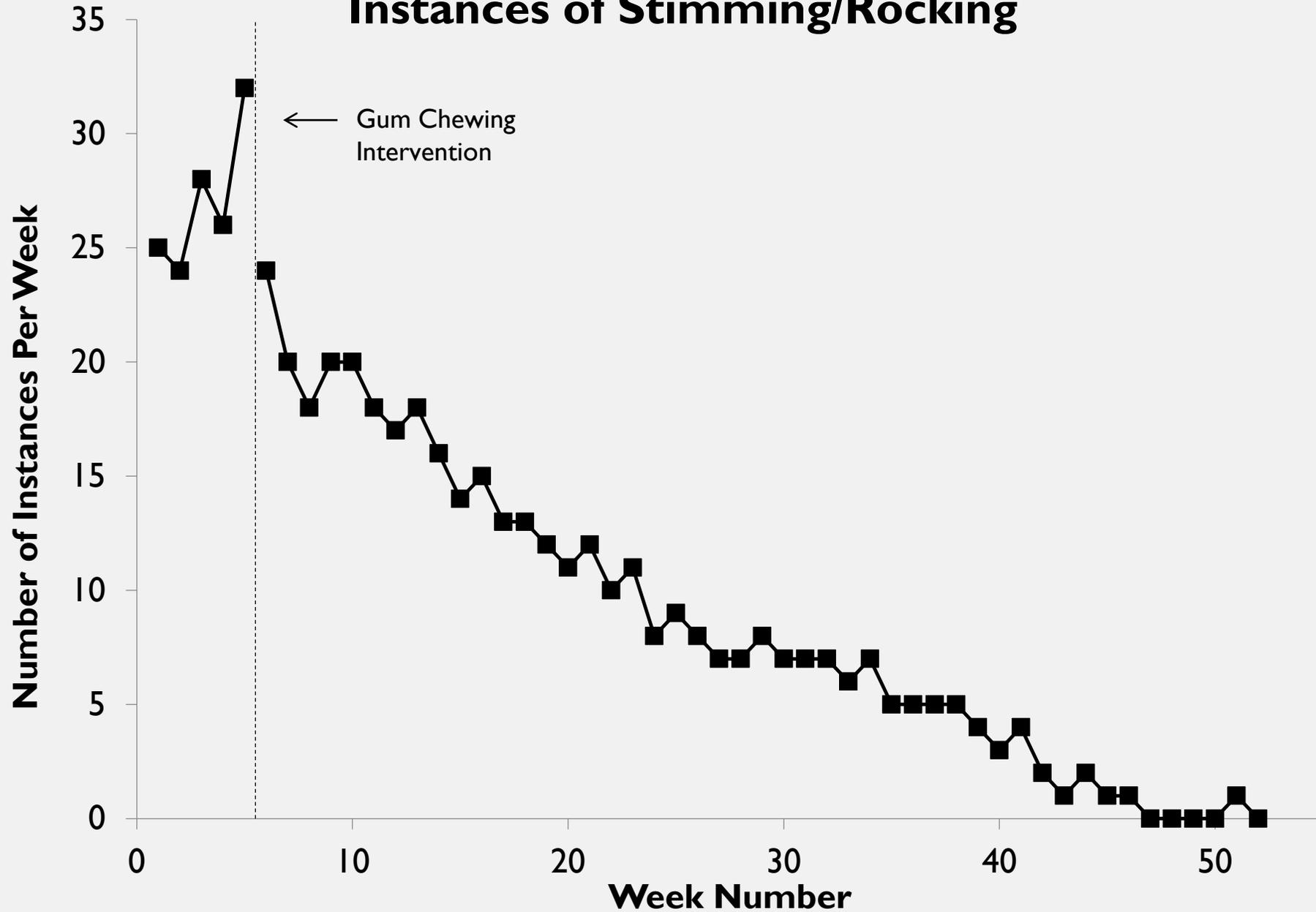
Acquired less-obvious replacement behaviors to help get me through days that are “tougher”

Chewing gum is a self-stimulatory behavior that is more socially appropriate than hand flapping or covering my eyes

...And then there's the closeted profanity



Instances of Stimming/Rocking



RESULTS...SUCCESS!

- This project is a work in progress
- Not finished with my endeavor to replace undesirable behaviors with appropriate social responses
- My goal is to continue maintenance skills for these interventions to further support my progress
- Vast majority of people I meet would never know that I ever had an ASD diagnosis

Me dressed as an adult



LIMITATIONS

- Closing eyes as escape response
- Some days are harder than others
- Burst of spontaneous recovery in October 2015 which I would like to refer to as a “trauma spike” (Malott)
- Extra variables such as trauma or illness threaten maintenance of the treatment package
- School breaks

DISCUSSION

MOTIVATION

Motivation and self-management principles helped navigate my behavior towards a desirable level of functioning. If reinforcement was extrinsic, it would probably take much longer than a year to make the swift progress I made. These methods I used as being helpful for people who were extremely motivated to overcome their own behavioral rut.

UNDERSTANDING EMOTIONS

I am also still working on interpreting the feelings and emotions of others. I could only comfortably feel and identify a small handful of emotions prior to this intervention. I haven't been able to successfully incorporate or feel certain emotions in my emotional repertoire.

MY FIRST "AH-HAH" MOMENT

- Over a year after she and I met, we crossed paths on the third floor of Wood Hall
- She said “hi,” and I recognized the vague features and voice that I had previous experience with. I actually saw this person for the first time who had been such a key player in my academic journey
- First time that I can remember where a familiar smile of another human had reinforcing value
- I had missed out on so many potential smiles from the people
- Smiles, then, became my first social reinforcer

Jennifer Mrljak



My motivation throughout this journey of self-recovery

DISCUSSION (CONT'D)

CONFOUNDING VARIABLES

- Treatment packages inherently have confounding variables
- One limitation is that you cannot discriminate which variables of the package are responsible for each change in behavior

MAINTENANCE

- Maintenance is a key component to maintaining the level of functioning that I have achieved
- School breaks: I don't practice these skills, and I have difficulty engaging in transitions and frequent eye contact during the start of the new semester

DISCLAIMER

- I have not “recovered” from autism
- I am not claiming to have discovered a miracle cure
- What I have accomplished is developing an incredible support system of behavior specialists that helped me learn how to help myself get to where I want to be

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Breaking pairings of stimuli in the environment that evoke emotional responding
- I am not finished overcoming the barriers in my life that prevent me from being the best “Jazmyn” that I can be
- I’ve sure come a long way, but I’m not finished writing the ending of my story yet

WHAT'S NEXT FOR SOX?

He is now a happily retired family member who spends his days at home watching Animal Planet



It's Shark Week!

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THE END

Questions?