

Session 10: Dr. Pat Friman

Matt: [00:00:00] This is the behavioral observations podcast with Matt Cicoria session number 10.

Intro: [00:00:12] Welcome to the behavioral observations podcast stimulating talk. For today's behavior analysts. Now here's your host Matt Cicoria.

Pat: [00:00:27] Everyone that's coming back at you in session 10 of the behavioral observations podcast it is my distinct honor to share with you this conversation I had with no other than Dr. Pat Friman. Pat is the vice president of Behavioral Health Services at Boys Town. And we get into what Boystown town really is and how it started and things like that later on in our discussion. And he's also a clinical professor in the department of pediatrics at the University of Nebraska School of Medicine. Pat has had a long career and behavior analysis. He's published more than 180 articles and chapters primarily in the area of behavioral pediatrics and he's well known for interventions for common parenting issues such as bed time problems and thumb sucking one of his interventions the bed time pass one him quite a bit of notoriety as a matter of fact. So he is well known for being a great ambassador for Behavior Analysis In other words using it in areas that aren't are less well established for example again using behavioral pediatrics as one area to disseminate the practice. He's also a wonderful speaker. I know many of you have seen him present and I've had the opportunity to do that as well and he is just a masterful presenter. And that kind of comes through in our conversation today in our conversation. We talk about how he got into Behavior Analysis his shall we say unique point of view on functional assessment practices how he interviews parents his take on how adolescents and adults communicate with technology. And he also takes a few minutes to talk about the remarkable story of how Boys Town got started.

Matt: [00:02:30] It is a story you don't want to miss. We also talk about some of my struggles with parenting and that wasn't by design. For some reason it was just going to stumble upon that. And so you'll get some entertainment at the house expense. So you're welcome. That part of the interview came when we were talking about behavior analysts as parents and how behavior analysts have the same types of struggles that everyone else does including things like depression anxiety marital issues et cetera. So and what that does essentially is it kind of tees up a second interview that I conducted with Pat that I release in a few weeks about mental health issues in general. But for the purposes of this interview yeah we we had a little bit of fun at my expense and I hope you get a few laughs out of it. One other thing I'd like to draw your attention to is just the how Pat communicates. I've been on this kind of storytelling kick for a while. And if you notice about how he describes how he got into behavior analysis and the story of Boystown and things like that Pat communicates in stories which I think makes what he has to say way more memorable. Before we get into the show itself I want to let you know that this episode is sponsored by B side 21 darg beside 21 dot org is your go to ABC News site. And since we are talking about parenting I thought I'd find a parenting article for you to check out. You can check out my kids won't stop fighting how they can reduce sibling rivalry by Zaina Zoll.

Matt: [00:04:10] You can check that out again at bSci21.org. And without any further ado please enjoy this episode with Dr. Pat.

Matt: [00:04:21] Hey Pat Friman how are you doing today. Fine. Thanks so much for joining us here today on the podcast. There's so many things I want to talk to you about and I'm going to do my best to keep it narrowed down to a couple of topics. I do want to start with one particular area that I'm just interested in. Generally whenever I speak to another behavior analyst and what I want to know is if you could tell us kind of how you got into psychology behavior analysis and so forth would you mind spending a few minutes and getting us kind of the Pat Friman back story. Sure.

Pat: [00:05:00] I'm from Montana. You know land where men are men and so are the women. So it's like rugged rough country. You know I grew up poor and I got interested in psychology partly because of classes that I took that were relatively easy and I had friends in college who were taking real classes like chemistry and physics and calculus and by comparison psychology was pretty easy and very very interesting. And so it hurt my interest.

Pat: [00:05:37] And then I went sideways that a relationship with a woman and left town where I was going to school in Missoula and I went to a small town in Montana called Boulder where they had Boulder River school and hospital which was an institution at the time where they called the mentally retarded. It was an acceptable term at that time. That became developmental disability as very large. One of those old warehousing institutions and I got oceans I got a job as a direct care aid. And I was told while I was in pre-service they're not going anywhere on campus and going to the colleges and if I didn't do that I'd get fired. I'm walking to the educational classroom one morning and a nurse crosses my path and I swear to this day that she winked at me. But if you were to ask her. She would say she didn't. She said she didn't but I swear she did that. I followed her into one of the colleges and she disappeared. But as soon as I got there it was the cottage that was housing adult high functioning men and there was a huge brouhaha that occurred right in the vestibule where I come into the building because I was a stranger and that was always an exciting event for them. And the director the cottage burst out of his office which is right there to find out what was going on and he asked me what I was doing in his building and simultaneously I saw two things.

Pat: [00:06:59] One was an advertisement for a train officer on his door at 85 is it was called and the other was a life size poster of Alan Page who was an defensive genius for the Minnesota Vikings at the time. And so I told him I was there to apply for that job on the spot you just on the spot and that you are required a master's degree and in psychology and I didn't even have a master's degree yet. So he said that the time wasn't right for interviews but since I was there when I come in and so we sat down and talked about the Minnesota Vikings for an hour and for about two minutes about psychology and my suitability as a training officer as much of that conversation he liked to be. He said if I would complete my degree cut some tape for me and allow master's degree be suitable criteria and I just needed one more course. So I got French credit for my three outstanding credits which were an incomplete. Got the job as a politician 8:5 and joined the ranks of seven other behavior and was I didn't want to be Iran was it was at the time that my job was. To write programs. A lot of vacation programs that were designed to get behavioral excesses down to be able deficits up so that the man in that cottage would go out into the community for community placement programs I wrote work pretty well. I wrote up little articles about them for what was called Boulder behaviorist which is a little newsletter put out by Boulder.

Pat: [00:08:36] And on the strength of those little papers I got another job in Missoula and on the strength that job we got into the University of Kansas and there's some stuff in the in-between but that's basically how it started it was all started as a sham a serendipitous one at that I reckon.

Matt: [00:08:57] When you say when you said you were working with other behavior analysts today what did they call themselves at the time was the term behavior analysis in vogue you know we've obviously seen illusion of what we call ourselves.

Pat: [00:09:11] And so with that wasn't common then they like the one a couple of people that had the jobs had come from Carbondale Illinois Southern Illinois and were kind of neat Hauserman and their degrees were in behavior modification or a master's degree in education.

Pat: [00:09:31] So they were either behavior therapists or behavior modifiers. They all had Master's Degree one of them had a doctoral degree. They'd all done their research went to him and many

topics.

Pat: [00:09:45] And the title of their position was habilitation 8:5 but that was basically a training officer. The job was for people that knew how to modify behavior to come in and modify the behavior of persons in the institution so they could move out into the community. That was that was going on across the country that was part of what was called normalization at the time.

Matt: [00:10:06] And about what time period was it. I don't want to date you or anything like that at all. What era if you will was.

Pat: [00:10:15] I got the job in 1975. OK. In that batch of programming lasted for five or six years. And a school hospital was prominent for a couple of reasons. There was a woman there.

Pat: [00:10:28] Maybe I should name her even though she's deceased now but there was a young woman there who was dangerously self-injurious and she was only mildly disabled when she was in four point restraints 24/7 for a couple of years she was only taken under restraints for bathroom breaks and feeding it first brought in Richard Fox.

Pat: [00:10:57] We did a program involving electric shock and got cat got this young woman's behavior down to zero levels cause controversy with the state legislature and so that eliminated the program put her back in restraints. That they brought in Brian I we the same thing and got the same result. But Yanti caused the controversy because became public knowledge that electroshock was being used to eliminate this. This of really unfortunate. Self-injurious behavior. That will eliminate that program pull back and restraints. But it sort of brought out of the older was getting hospital into the public domain because a long story was written about or heard about those programs in Reader's Digest. And I think for that reason that boulder attracted behavior endless or what were then called the modifiers to work there. So there were some really tell people working there. They just sort of one of those deals where you find the one that doesn't belong and that would have been me.

Pat: [00:12:01] But I learned fast and so the idea of writing behavior etc. was more or less was that on the job training.

Pat: [00:12:14] Yes it was on the job training but it wasn't that difficult. Give you just one example. Sure. Come into the college one morning there's a guy in there many called Jim and he's a punch out orders this guy is what's up and down the hallway and and whenever one of the other residents would engage in kind of mind numbing on it. So maybe standing and flapping Jim would walk up and nail the guy with a roundhouse punch. This floor and I saw this happen and what I also saw was what was I think intuitively was behaviorally sent him to be sensible to me it wasn't a function of education just my common sense. But the staff went to the gym out guy to see if everything was OK. And like once that person went to the victim three staff people go a gym they taught him soft tones of voice. Then they asked him what's bothering him and he has a counselor and he said something about his anxieties can't use full sentences and then they take him down and put him in the staff lounge and get him a cup of coffee with some sugar in it. And just like the holy of holies in an institution there's poor victim laid out once that person think of them. There is the aggressor surrounded by sympathetic staff people who take him in. Was that allowed to give them coffee and I thought well I could figure this out. That was my job to take care of that program.

Pat: [00:13:44] So the following week I got all the staff together rearranged the program so that next time he hit somebody everything was reversed the staff would take care of the victim. And Jim became that victim's slave for a day. So he had to surrender always candy to his victim. He had to go over and make his victim's bed get to sitting next to his victim during breakfast lunch and dinner and give whatever was on his plate. The victim wanted to the victim and that behavior was

eliminated completely within like eight days. Now that is all this death incident reports over a two year period and then continue to take that as data and it went from eight to 10 a week to zero for over a year before I left. Wow. And the point I'm making here is it didn't take a rocket scientist to figure some of this stuff out.

Matt: [00:14:36] Yeah. And as much as we like to make the distinction between behavior analysis and behavior modification that intervention is clearly effective. You know did now did you say.

Matt: [00:14:50] I don't know if you're looking at this at the time and of course you know what a place it's in its historical context but if we can hypothesize that the function of that behavior was you know some a synthesis of attention and clearly attention tangibles or intangibles played a small part.

Pat: [00:15:12] It was clear to me at the time without even knowing anything about functional analysis that this kid Jim was doing this is a function of attention is he got attention from not just the staff but from the other residents here is his role or his reputation as this tough guy. He really wasn't that tough he just belong to that category.

Pat: [00:15:36] And then the staff and the residents sort of played into it. And when I call it it's not his hands.

Pat: [00:15:43] Why would I say it's what I mean is that pattern of behavior and they were nourishing that pattern of behavior and as soon as we starved that it went away it does you see other you know once this repertoire of aggressive behavior went away did you see other well did other kind of social opportunities open up to this gentleman.

Pat: [00:16:10] Oh he was out of the institution. Six months later it was the only thing keeping him there. He was a high functioning kid but he was considered to be dangerous. And maybe he really was eager to please. He wanted to talk to staff every day. He always knew people's schedules. He would be waiting for them when they came in the door. He had some other friends that were there. I mean there's this crowd living in this cottage. They weren't friendly to each other necessarily higher functioning Gerson's there I call him a kid. He was probably 22. So he was an adult man but he had friends on the staff. He had friends in the population. The only thing keeping him in that institution was the fact that people considered him dangerous. Once we had six months of data on on his dangerousness would show that there wasn't anything. He was put into a community group home. He didn't get far.

Matt: [00:17:08] OK. Yeah. Like I said just trying to compare contrast.

Matt: [00:17:12] You know kind of you know what we might refer to as a behavior modification intervention versus a behavioral analytic one where you know you might we would be very concerned with teaching replacement behaviors for attention seeking etc. and it seems like those more or less naturally develop because the occasion was set for them we know.

Pat: [00:17:31] I I just to what has become more of a virtually religious conviction than prior to intervening for any behavior we need to do a functional analysis. The functional analysis is fundamentally our MRI and it's designed to answer questions that we can't answer in another way. Now what does the physician you have an addict the physician will ask you a series of questions designed to determine what the basis of your headache is if those questions don't yield useful information. Then he goes to the next level or she goes the next level in order and the cat scan or MRI or some other diagnostic imaging or diagnostic procedure that they don't go there immediately. They go there when they have an actual question. And we do the same thing with behavior. We just

asked a series of questions and we can get up function. So for example I know a lot of research on upcycling and I can just ask a couple of questions of a parent determine whether or not it's automatically reinforced.

Pat: [00:18:34] You know for example does your child ever suck their thumb or finger when they're alone. And the answer is virtually always yes. Where else do they suck their thumbs really suck their thumbs when they're tired. It's up to them when they're angry. They suck their thumbs when they're bored and they suck or sometimes they're watching TV.

Pat: [00:18:53] Well just on the basis of that information I can rule out tangibles that can rule out Boynton's and I can rule out attention. So I don't need to do a functional analysis.

Pat: [00:19:03] However periodically like for example the behaviors that red car and brown eyes water first worked on are truly mysterious. We don't have any idea why it's happening. We have some hypotheses and early on it proved to be wrong. You know so for example people thought of self-injurious behavior as a function of attention seeking when it was quite the opposite. And that wouldn't have been revealed without a functional analysis.

Pat: [00:19:29] So it's a very expensive procedure it isn't necessary for all forms of behavior sometimes frequently. Probably most of the time you can divine what the function might be just by observing the person observing the behavior and asking a few questions.

Matt: [00:19:45] I see now you see it as kind of like a a dividing line in terms of the complexity of the behavior of the complex situation that would.

Pat: [00:19:56] Make you decide whether or not to go with an interview versus a more complex analysis potentially on the complexity would be a factor what what would drive me to a functional analysis is an open question about what's going on. So I find my own hypotheses and then test them with interventions. The hypotheses are formed as a function of simple observation and a series of questions focused on the behavior. But if those observations of those questions don't leave me anywhere or if my intervention derives from the hypothesis doesn't go anywhere I'll go to the next level. Pretty similar to medicine really try to go with the you know the least expensive and least labor intensive route.

Pat: [00:20:46] And if successful continue down that pathway and if not then you go for more rigorous testing than I can that are functional ounces to be very rigorous testing sure you know there's some interesting stuff coming out about you know some of the stuff has been around for a while as well about doing functional analyses that are brief and in scope and localized to a couple in other words it's kind of like a combination of you know what it sounds like you do versus you know the full five you know four or five conditioned multi element design that you know Brian I was you know made famous if you will whereby you know you do an interview and you create a hypothesis of what's going on and you do kind of a control and test and you can you know get a functional analysis accomplished within the span of you know sometimes even you know 20 30 minutes or so.

Pat: [00:21:46] Yeah I know Greg Hanley That's exactly right. I think that was one of the first people who introduced that idea would not be first because of those on or else these were being developed years ago in the Wagner shop in Iowa. Yeah yeah. I remember though I did a colloquium at the University of Kansas and Greg was on the faculty at the time a junior member of the faculty and I presented a series of studies many of which involved interventions the overall purpose of the presentation was to undermine the idea that there is a necessary underlying psychopathology for certain kinds of child behavior problems like increases or any recess or hair pulling. So that was the argument I was making and one of the one of the pieces of evidence people used to argue for

underlying psychopathology is resistance to treatment. Join these behaviors weren't that difficult to treat were highly responsive behavioral interventions. And then when I got done Greg asked me why I hadn't done a functional analysis. And I remember that very well because he had come out of writing on why his shop and you championed folks all the houses they gave me an opportunity to think about that question. And I pretty much gave him the same answer I just gave you that I would have done a focus on else's if I had a question. But I did. I had a pretty clear hypothesis about what was needed for each of the behaviors I was treating proceeded with treatment and was successful ritually every time.

Pat: [00:23:26] So a functional analysis would have been superfluous these views on analysis you've all since then since that was 10 or 15 years ago.

Matt: [00:23:38] Ok cool.

Matt: [00:23:40] That must have made for some interesting conversation between the presentations I do you standardize your that conversation with folks do you have an A you know kind of a standard assessment that you questionnaire anything like that or do you just kind of elicit your area and develop your hypotheses through you know general conversations. In other words do you have this kind of list of questions in your head and you just kind of run through them as you're talking with families and I knew you'd have a hard time spotting what I'm doing.

Pat: [00:24:19] Because my style is very conversational very relaxed. It wouldn't even look like it was a formal psychologist client relationship it would look like an ordinary conversation between two adults. But what's embedded in that conversation is what's called a typical day interview. And I just started to bed time and go around the clock and I'm looking for all the points of interface between the parents and what they want the child to do and the child in what they want the parent to do. And those points of conflict are the points where you're most likely to find patterns of behavior and patterns of environmental reactions to behavior that need to be modified. So for example bedtime is one of those. Usually you get two people involved the parent and the child and both want different things. It once the child down the child wants to be up that's a point of conflict.

Pat: [00:25:19] So I examined that that you just go around the clock. They stay in bed all night. What's the morning routine like what's the breakfast like. What's the ride to school like. Skip school and sestet later and then what time do they come home from school. How was the ride home from school what did they do the time between school and coming home to dinner.

Pat: [00:25:44] What's that like. And then after dinner what is that all routine like between dinner and bed time. What do you use for discipline and how does the child react like that.

Matt: [00:25:56] I see. So that seems to be.

Matt: [00:26:01] You know is that from you know kind of you know clinical psychology training to do that type of interview without it looking like you're reading off of a sheet with you know 15 questions I'd scored a scale and et cetera.

Pat: [00:26:15] No not at all. OK. Why the opposite. There's lots of ways to learn. And one of the ways is to help people demonstrate how you don't want things to work in other ways by negative example. And I would want to say colleges assessing their client's and think to myself that that seems so formal and stilted and it almost seems as if there's a good one up and one down relationship it there isn't any need. Given the kinds of problems I work on the other person I'm working with feel like a quote patient. So my whole context and my whole approach to this is usually is to normalize it as much as possible. And so I thought to myself is probably a better way

to do this and that better way in my opinion would be to normalize the conversation and have it be as matter of fact in as casual as possible. Which puts a person at ease and I feel like I'm much more likely to get good information that way than if I'm if I use a formalized structured approach I could be wrong about that but I've been doing it that way for 30 years.

Pat: [00:27:43] Is there one or two critical questions that you know absolutely fit into this conversation. And you know in other words you know I'm as you're describing how this conversation might go I guess there's you know part of my learning history is you know thinking about OK well you know what OK what are those elements you know and in almost making a bullet list in my head and probably going against exactly what you're just saying but what are the key elements I guess you know that you know it the extent to which you haven't already described some of them earlier this for them seem pretty cute to me.

Pat: [00:28:24] One is a bet on you know what I ask you know what's a good time and what I usually get in response is a theory. So I run away and all this trouble. Bear in mind bedtime occurs every night. And so yes the child is compliant with bedtime every night. Then they're practicing being compliant at bedtime every night and getting better at being compliant with that time every night. What if what I get is a theory I know they're not being compliant bedtime every night. So the opposite is true. They're practicing being non-compliant with bedtime every night and that level of noncompliance at bedtime and reverberate all throughout the day. And so I guess my target is my initial target and then I want to know how much of the morning routine is independent. The morning end of the morning routine is the more the child is practicing going through the motions of what the parent wants them to do in the morning when they're not at their best and their ability to do that will reverberate out through their day. Conversely if they're not very good at their morning routine they're not independent they are resisted or non-compliant. That too is going to regret reverberate out throughout their day. So those are two high points that I want to know one of the parents used for discipline. Usually when I get a response to that as a theory what they like to use and then I have to work a little harder to find out what they truly use.

Pat: [00:29:49] And it's almost always the version of yelling which they're reluctant to talk about and take away the universal take away. And when the in my office you know they pretty much taken everything away and they're still not getting any complaints or they're upset. And the fourth thing isn't so much a question is more an observation and that is I want to know how they exhibit appreciation to their child I want to know how they exhibit approval to their child. I want to know how long can they acknowledge their child. I want to know how the good stuff in the kids life is being delivered and how much of it is being delivered. So I'd say those four areas are pretty cute for me. I mean just lots of other stuff. If you were to go to the most important features of what I'm asking now is appropriate.

Matt: [00:30:41] I see. So you can kind of define in that process where the. Challenging behaviors occur. Yeah. To them more or less the ratio of you know positive to negative interactions and so forth.

Pat: [00:30:56] Yeah that ratio is really important. I don't get to see it in real time very often. So I had to divide it from my questions.

Matt: [00:31:04] Yeah I noticed in one of your presentations that you reference the 5 to 1 ratio and I think you like it was developed by the researcher. Gottman.

Matt: [00:31:18] The couple's researcher Yeah you know what's interesting at least from my point of view is that yes there's some behavioral folklore that I think gets handed down from time to time and one of them is you know the kind of four or five to one ratio of positive to negative interactions

if you will.

Matt: [00:31:37] And so it was it was good to know there was some actual research behind it because I always wanted to what is what is the empirical basis for that.

Pat: [00:31:45] Yeah. Well that is research. I mean this is an abundant amount of research on mariages. We've done research using the ratio here on campus Boystown. We use a card system here. And they have afforded one requirement for every point fine. The teachers are supposed to find the four point award interactions and the cap is the Boystown home campus program uses my shop to address the needs of kids who look like they're going to be terminated from the program. I say that that's not a good thing. You know this is like the kids that are in a residential care program they're on an escalator funded metaphorically speaking and they step off the escalator and into a residential care program. If they succeed then they get back on an escalator and that one is going up up into the world where you and I live. When they got off of when they came to residential care I was going down whereas I going down too that's going down to homelessness right. So if a kid fails in a residential care program they go back on the escalator but it's going down.

Matt: [00:33:04] It's going the wrong direction. Now that you've brought boys town up it might be a good opportunity too if you wouldn't mind describing what Boystown is to folks who may not be familiar with it.

Pat: [00:33:16] Yes you are Boystown is the best known residential care program for our home youth in the United States and possibly the world that it catapulted into fame is a function of a movie called Boystown starring Spencer Tracy who won an Academy Award for playing Father Flanagan and Mickey Rooney who played a troubled youth and the people listening to this probably don't know the movie Boystown but their parents do.

Pat: [00:33:41] And Father Flanagan was famous in his day one of the best fundraisers probably in the history of fundraising.

Pat: [00:33:50] Everybody that was anybody at the time this is in the 30s 40s and 50s visited Boystown there pictures on canvas Your Babe Ruth Hopalong Cassidy presidents actors and actresses.

Pat: [00:34:06] So is a function of his PR skills you develop this program into what it is today but it started out as just five kids on the outskirts of Omaha. And there was a basic philosophy which is very similar to Skinner's philosophy he just said in a more prosaic way while Wang is said after seeing the kinds of kids that were in Omaha at the time there were a lot of out-of-home kids orphaned kids and they were you know dirty and underfoot and they were pickpockets and thieves and they ran in packs. People thought of him as dangerous. People thought of them as bad kids and said as often as he could there's no such thing as a bad boy. It's only that environment bad teaching and bad modeling. In other words bad circumstances. In other words he was making the very case to be a Skinner made throughout his entire career. He just said it in a more artsy crass the way and that's the philosophy of Boystown now. Now we have a city voice that is a city with its own zip code zone fire station police station postop Yeah. All right at the center of Omaha used to be way out of town in Omaha now instead of the city.

Pat: [00:35:21] So we're our own little city but we're surrounded with another city called Omaha. There are several hundred kids living here. Boys and girls. They live in homes with highly trained married couples who are their surrogate parents and the entire campus is run and the point system in this massive ground spot a square mile is the safest pasture ground in Omaha. But when you're on the campus of Boystown you're surrounded with more thugs and thieves and robbers and rapers

Abbas murderers than you would be anywhere else in the state of Nebraska unless you visit a prison system and you know we've got no walls no fences no lock doors and no security guards. So the question would be how can you achieve that level of safety with those kinds of kids without those protections in place. And the reason we're even with you that is because of our of our behavioral economy because of the system that we've set up. So using. It is actually miraculous. So when kids are going to be expelled in the program they'll send him over here for us to take a look at them.

Pat: [00:36:27] And one of the things that we've done in the past is identify the ratio that we were talking about earlier.

Pat: [00:36:33] And the intervention may be used with some success is just to identify what it is and double so if they come their ratios like four awards for point and words to every point fine. And we just double that to eight It doesn't matter to us how the family teachers find to be able to reward their design is just double that ratio so that the kid is now getting 12 places many winning awards this point finds as he was or she was before they came to see us and we got a paper showing the utility of that approach and the success of that approach.

Pat: [00:37:11] And I think the Journal of behavior modification came out some years ago and now this is sort of standard practice now when you say pointed to the points involved praise or you know in other words when you say double the the ratio is just finding more things to it.

Matt: [00:37:31] You know to use the common phrase catch them being good at or this you know which is people are not good at this by you use that kind of you know dime store neurology are our wiring our neurological wiring isn't designed to find good things because it doesn't that they don't have survival value.

Pat: [00:37:53] Right. Our neurological wiring is designed to find that things because they can hurt us. And so we're a lot more tuned tuned to people's foibles than we are to their virtues.

Pat: [00:38:05] And so you have to program people to look for good stuff they overlook it and it sort of stems from what I call the miracle of the tucked in shirt. So nobody really thinks to know that in any school system in the United States where any home in the United States nobody really pays any attention to a tucked in shirt that everybody pays attention to shirts that are tucked in. I don't know why one deserves more attention than the other one is what we want and one is what we don't want we don't want gets all the attention. And I know that we want you to walk up to a kid every time you see a shirt tucked in and say hey girls really should tuck in.

Pat: [00:38:45] But every once in a while is probably a pretty good idea. Give the kid an eye they give the kids the the sense that it pays off. It pleases people to do what you're supposed to do in order to get them to have that message.

Pat: [00:38:57] So we've got every once in a while to show them that that's important to us and so much of appropriate behavior gets ignored in favor of inappropriate behavior.

Pat: [00:39:06] Is that the idea of doubling that ratio always trying to correct for that. You know getting it more often.

Matt: [00:39:13] Yeah. Yeah. I mean of course it you know you're talking to an audience of behavior analysts and to make sense and things like that. But one question I did have is there are some kids that I've seen in my practice who you know they might have some sort of whether they're coated with or have a diagnosis of oppositional defiant disorder or something like that or not or just you know have a history of challenging behaviors noncompliance etc.. Some kids I've worked with

actually react quite negatively to praise if you say you know nice job tucking your shirt with you you know you look nice with your shirt tucked in a pocket. It's almost like that that phrase provides them the opportunity to engage in behaviors that have a history of attention.

Pat: [00:40:07] You know as a as you know as a form versus function problem are not the same thing here on campus. It's the same thing is going everywhere. You know women like to be thought of as beautiful men like to be thought of as know so you can't just walk up to a woman and say she's beautiful or walk up to him and say he's handsome the timing and the delivery of that comment is so important. The words aren't nearly as important as the timing and the delivery and it's the same with these kids.

Matt: [00:40:36] So so what will be some essential tips for this.

Matt: [00:40:40] Let me give you two examples. What one would be from a brand new family teacher and let's say that the behavior they're working on is posture and so that even the teacher comes up and goes.

Pat: [00:40:53] Nice job Johnny you're standing very straight I know you're working on posture so when you give yourself 500 points or you know it's going to be if his friends were anywhere nearby and heard that and he's going to be offended and probably still being this other family teacher won't do that again. But we've got some couples on campus that look like ordinary people when you see them but they're actually magicians I can think of one whose name is John real. He was doing that interaction. He would go up to Johnny take a walk side and go you know Johnny I was watching you standing there I looked at you and I just thought and you're standing so I reckon when you do that you look strong powerful it's really impressive.

Pat: [00:41:40] Look I know you're working on posture yourself down for 500 points and that goes right in right to where Johnny lives.

Pat: [00:41:48] So it is really a function of how you deliver the information. So those kids that are resisting craze Well depends on the context of how that grace is delivered. They don't want to look to their friends like the kow towing to the man so to speak but they still want to get those points because they can use them and all of us run on a frugal appreciation and admiration doesn't matter for oppositional defiant or as cooperative as anybody can imagine. Everybody runs on the same stuff. But the timing livery of this stuff is critical.

Matt: [00:42:21] That that's a terrific example. Be sure to remember that one. Are there other aspects of Boystown you want us to know about. It sounds like a just a remarkable place.

Pat: [00:42:35] Yeah there's one part of it that's important. Where did we go work on social skills here you know so I would be a good choice. And the clinic that I run serves the community of Omaha more than it does the community in Boystown. You know we see 5000 families a year and are waiting room and is often full. But we also see Boystown kids. So I run an APA approved internship in my interns provide counseling for the Boystown kids. So any given time in my waiting room there are teenagers from the community of Omaha and there are teenagers from the community of boys down with these kids in the community of Boystown are established as the delinquents dropouts thugs. These kids have been in a lot of trouble. You go to my waiting room and pick out which is which one group of kids that sit up erect they're well-dressed. They don't have sagging bag and they're out way too much make up they make eye contact with the girls. You sustain the eye contact they're likely to stand up and introduce themselves to you. And there's another group of kids that are slouched exude exuding attitude maybe pierced and tattoo and wearing ragged clothing and exuding insolence at anything else and you say those must be the

Boystown kids and those with the Omaha kids and the kids sitting erect making eye contact those be the worst of kids because we train our kids.

Pat: [00:44:09] Exhibit certain kinds of social skills that work in social environments I just had Jim Carr out here visiting and he came up on campus and took them over to the field house and our car my car was his brand new car is a really nice car was swarmed by a gang of teenagers from Boystown.

Pat: [00:44:31] They were just coming into the field house and they were asking me if they could wash my car. Well that's the boys tell me that that same group and that same car would have been in some inner city where these kids came from.

Pat: [00:44:51] The question they would be asking me would have been entirely different than can I wash your car. Yeah you come here and you run into a group of teenagers say 10:00 at night at one of our streets they're coming towards you and you start to get nervous. What's going to happen is you're going to get served. And if you look lost you're going to get directions. So our social skills training program is transformative while the kids are on the campus. Once they go back to where they came from if they do a lot of those skills disappear. We know this chair but there's also something that we give these kids that no street No community can take away as we have our own schools. And what we aim to do is give these kids a high school education and there isn't any street anywhere they can take that away once they have it.

Pat: [00:45:37] So that's the kind of medicine we're trying to supply. Medicine we know probably we're up under certain circumstances and medicine that we know will never wear off no matter what happens.

Matt: [00:45:48] So we're trying to do both. Have you taken this model for lack of a better term on the road. You know has had other other other satellite locations. Have you done any like a day contacts perhaps in a different community and so forth.

Pat: [00:46:03] Yeah. Yes to all those questions are there are many. I think we have nine other sites across the United States and then the model of care that we have is called the teaching family model which was derived from the experimental setting called achievement place run by Watros Wolf and Ellery Philips and that resulted in teaching family association in any given time United States there are 50 to 100 programs that use that technology. So it's been replicated widely and there is a long series of systematic replications of systematic pieces of research in Java as well as other places showing what this model can do and what it has done.

Matt: [00:46:46] Oh yes it's pretty potent cool. Well that is just an amazing overview and it sounds like you guys have just you know really impacted these kids lives for the better. So I really appreciate you taking the time to kind of lay that out. I do want to ask you some questions about parenting and can I touch on that earlier. All right I want to circle back to that are very common. And from your perspective the most common parenting problems that that you see when people come in to us seek your counsel.

Pat: [00:47:24] You know this one that is central to just about all of them and it involves the point of intervention that if parents are lax and they inevitably wait too long for discipline. So my own writing mantra is that when when children are disciplined they are the ones that are supposed to be upset. There isn't a need for the parent to be upset if the parent is upset. Then usually it's because they waited too long to intervene and they're frustrated. So parents will issue an instruction of some sort in an ordinary tone of voice and there isn't a more meaning with verbal utterance probably in our culture because nobody ever follows up on that one. You know so for example we go John you

pick up the toys plays and it doesn't do it right there should be an intervention. It's a brief little say time out or withdraw that or privilege or opportunity for you pick up his toys before he can do anything else. But what happens is that is the instruction gets repeated in a slightly more firm slightly larger tone of voice. And that pattern mounts until the parent has lost your patients become extremely frustrated and then they you know then they threaten and sometimes they quirkily discipline but all that has nothing to do with the behavior. It has more to do with the frustration the parent experiences because frustration is nothing other than the experience of the absence of options and what they need to do is intervene more more more sooner and have more options have an abundance of options.

Pat: [00:49:07] So I don't like it. I never met a parent that really thought highly of their yelling.

Pat: [00:49:16] And I probably work with eight or ten thousand parents over the course of my career and all of them to varying degrees are embarrassed by how much they know.

Pat: [00:49:26] Sure they don't need to yell if they intervene on the front end the misbehavior yelling with the unnecessary yelling occurs not as a function of kids having hearing problems but is a function of the parent having let the behavior go on too long and become frustrated and like lose their temper and then you know so like when I when I'm demonstrating to parents how I'd like them to proceed and I give any instructions to kids. I use a very small voice. Can you hear what I'm saying. You hear me reader I'm actually talking to you OK.

Matt: [00:50:04] Yes I can I thought you were. Yes.

Pat: [00:50:10] They don't hear it. I mean the kids they hear it but they don't attend to it because it is in that tone. And the next thing they know their time out and then when you're out of time out they take them back to the same scenario. And I use exactly that same tone of voice and this time they hear it. And from that point forward whenever that guy is in the room and that guy is me. Everybody in that room is listening very carefully what I have to say because they know that that guy doesn't raise his voice. And if you don't pay attention to what he says things should go badly very quickly. And I'm trying to do is demonstrate to parents that they don't need all that drama like when you get a speeding ticket you know the policeman could care less if you care about your driving habits.

Pat: [00:51:05] This is just a simple speeding ticket doesn't raise his voice or threaten you with a like not being able to get into college or tell you you're never going to get a future just basically or she basically will tell you what you did wrong ask you for your stuff. Write it down check your stuff give you back your stuff and ask you to sign it take it to tell you where you can get it disposed of and then wish you a happy day. And what happens what happens afterwards is the person they got to take it signals to leave the shoulder of the highway. Nobody ever signals to leave the shoulder of a highway. They've gotten a ticket because they're signaling to the officer that they are such fantastic right.

Matt: [00:51:41] Hey I'm following the rules.

Pat: [00:51:43] And then they drive away with their hands attendant to driving under the speed limit like they just got to a driving school and they drive like that for days. Why has that happened. Because they got a ticket from a dispassionate source. The point is the ticket does the work. The drama is absolutely necessary. And this is one of the fundamental things I'm trying to get across everything parent that never work with is let the consequence do the work and remain dispassionate as you administer it and you'll feel better about what you're trying to accomplish.

Pat: [00:52:18] It be more inclined to use it more often because it won't make you feel bad and the kid will learn way way more and they won't learn that they need to be afraid of you.

Pat: [00:52:26] So that that's one of the central points of just about all I do is intervene sooner and intervene dispassionately.

Matt: [00:52:34] I see. OK. When you talk about parenting particularly if you're talking to an audience where there are behavior analysts present if you will if you're doing like a you know a conference presentation or what have you. Yes very bad behavior analysts are BCBA types come up to you in the kind of whisper.

Matt: [00:52:56] Yeah you know I kind of have this you know in other words I know I was kind of a joke or you know sometimes you see something on the BCBA Facebook groups or something someone is talking about you know struggling with their own parenting and things like that.

Matt: [00:53:14] Do you ever have people come up to you who you know who who despite having a lot of training and so forth you know say everyone.

Matt: [00:53:25] You can see you know and they're they're you know kind of perhaps you know trying to be you know whispered almost embarrassingly you know virtually everywhere I go.

Pat: [00:53:35] No kidding. I'll tell you something about Behavior Analysts when they get in trouble with their life.

[00:53:46] Behavior Analysts get depressed Behavior Analysts get divorced Behavior Analysts get anxious Behavior Analysts was have trouble with their kids Behavior Analysts have trouble with their marriage and when they encounter real trouble in any of those domains they don't to Behavior Analysts they're more inclined to go to a mainstream psychologist that has a reputation for being a warm and accepting insightful that would completely missing the boat on some very important areas of human experience and the evidence of it it is found in where did the ever analyst go when they get into trouble and they don't go to the environmentalist's. They don't want any push pull quick quick stuff.

Pat: [00:54:27] Really I don't.

Matt: [00:54:30] Do you think that's just kind of a you know it at least in terms of the more recent focus on autism and treatment and things like that that perhaps some more newly trained behavior analyst may be less apprised of you know kind of you know broader behavioral therapy roots of the practice.

Pat: [00:54:53] Well I think that that more senior members of the field actually have been disparaging of behavior therapy modification interventions that are conducted without a functional analysis.

Pat: [00:55:10] And so the junior members of the field the people who are in school are just taking you know taking to heart what they are learning from their from their advisers.

Pat: [00:55:22] We have a very technical approach to human behavior and we have very technical language when we talk about human behavior and it makes sense in certain environments.

Pat: [00:55:32] It doesn't make sense in other environments. For a lot of the kids that the particular kids on the spectrum are the person on the spectrum that highly tailored approach probably is very

very useful especially on the front end. However even it can be made more naturalistic and I don't feel like the technical language that we use with each other is the right language to use with the consumers. It sort of gives a non-human feel to the whole enterprise. And it terminates the conversation right there because the consumer is not going to be able to tell their friends and family what they're doing with their kid because their friends and family can understand the language. As the consumer is trying to talk about what's happening in clinic in ordinary terms then they can talk about it with their friends and family and friends and family will understand how sort of an overly technical approach to human behavior that seems to fit when persons have disabilities. So well when they don't especially if they're adults. In my opinion is it can be made get everybody continue with the same concepts the same principles just delivered differently and talk about it differently.

Matt: [00:56:58] I making sense here I think so yeah. I mean it just sounds like you know how do we well let me let me I guess answer your question with a question. I'm wondering if we had behavior analyst you know for lack of a better word oh this is a you know pardon the kind of mentalism inserted into this question but overthink things.

Matt: [00:57:20] You know for example if I guess I'm comparing and contrasting you know kind of the way you would decelerate a behavioral event that you described a few minutes ago versus you know you know for example I have three three children I've got a 7 9 and 11 year old at the time of this recording at least. And you know I'm thinking through you know if there's a negative interaction between the siblings you know my youngest is a master at getting my oldest to freak out over you know you know what we might otherwise describe as trivial things. And so I'm thinking function I'm thinking you know how do I get my oldest to not respond. You know and how do you know I've I've had conversations that are trying to explain to her not using the term extinction.

Matt: [00:58:10] In other words I guess you know it's not that I'm looking for parenting advice on the air here but you know you know I just kind of comparing and contrasting you know my and my thinking too hard or would that be kind of a metaphor for what you're trying to describe actually.

Matt: [00:58:26] You just did an example of that when you posed the question. You did. You always thought using the term goodness you know I've said yeah I did yeah you put a caveat in there about mentalism when it's a perfectly acceptable way to talk about what's going on here is like thinking but the ram was there so skittish about using terms they think even have a little with. It wasn't to them it still stirred entire approach to conversation. So overthinking is a perfectly good way to talk about what you're talking about. I don't think it needs and doesn't need it. Have you not. And whether you're overthinking it I don't know. Because what you're doing is what I was recommending earlier and that is you're conducting your own hypothesis driven assessment of what's going on with your kids and basically watching it and trying to figure out what it is without having to get in there and do you know full bore functional analysis right. You're doing your own kind of how what do they call it. I don't know there's a term for the functional assessment that people do. It's hypothesis driven anonymous observation driven and incorrect or just is a combination of indirect and descriptive descriptive word yes.

Pat: [00:59:41] So maybe I mean maybe you're overthinking it doesn't sound like it. Although the problem that you sketched is not uncommon which one of the two kids is better behaved.

Matt: [00:59:54] Well you know they have their moments I guess both of them probably the I don't know that's a tough one because they say you know it's funny because I'm Our middle kid and not to kind of deflect the question I'll get back to it in a second but our middle guy you know kind of gets it's almost like the image that's con conjured is a guy with a bag of popcorn at the movies kind of like little kids learn that when they're sitting in the middle or sitting in a great spot to learn which way to go and how to stay out of the fray. And he's the farmer. He's he's the most compliant one of

the three certainly co-op or whatever.

Pat: [01:00:36] We used to use the term White Knight Black Knight.

Pat: [01:00:40] Maybe that's freighted with this unfortunate significance now I don't know.

Pat: [01:00:48] I'm thinking of chess. I'm thinking of cartoons that the white knights job was to make the black knight look bad any way they could. And so the way you can smoke out the white knight is by disciplining Black Knight and then the white knight starts doing appropriate things like you got one kid you put him in time out and you got a little white knight kid going on and I'm just going to do these dishes and I'm going to make the beds and I'll come down to you can you need more help in doing that.

Pat: [01:01:19] They're making their sibling look terrible. And the way you can smoke out a white knight is by disciplining the White Knight.

Pat: [01:01:27] Is they misbehave in their own way. And so when you're looking at your youngest then your oldest and your youngest is is going the oldest Well sometimes you always have to pay for that. And sometimes the youngest probably would have to pay you just wouldn't be as obvious what they did wrong. That doesn't matter doesn't have to be really clear on some level we know what they're doing.

Matt: [01:01:49] Right. Right. And the occurrence is notable by the reaction of the eldest regardless of whether the initial location was observed or not.

Pat: [01:02:00] I think in the age of nine it's probably too soon to educate the 9 year old about the fact that their reaction is reinforcing the very thing they're upset about.

Matt: [01:02:10] Yes I thought about that as well.

Pat: [01:02:12] There's a little young for that insight. And even when they're like adults it'll still be hard to grasp sometimes the way we act at people is a reinforcer for what they did in the first place. But we keep doing it anyway because the provocation is so intense. But for a nine year old I be able to grasp that. And I just I just want everybody yeah. OK. Barrett Barrack's justice.

Matt: [01:02:44] Yes. Yes. All right. I'm going to kind of move this conversation a little bit away from home. It's with me not you it's so. No that's good. Good. Good stuff to consider so appreciate it. And my larger hope is that this is instructive to people who are listening so I think you're kind of being know sacrificing myself for the good of the others or exposing myself rather. But anyway moving right along.

Matt: [01:03:24] Do you see that the problem behaviors are evolving.

Matt: [01:03:29] You know sometimes there's the tendency for you know an older generation you know to say well these kids these days you know and I'm you know now you know securely in my 40s so I guess I've got license to start using you know those types of terms you know or do you see the same you've been doing this for a while and do you see things changing with either the aspects of technology or I think one of the things that you've talked about in the past is kind of like the child first mentality. And so forth. How do you see things moving or do you see things moving or are they more universal in nature in terms of the types of challenging behaviors parents face.

Pat: [01:04:07] Well one of the things that Universal is kids today kids today has been going on

since there were kids and today I mean every generation since the dawn of time has done kids today.

Pat: [01:04:22] That's not going to stop because the kids today are responding to the contingencies of their world which is different than the contingencies of their parents world. And so the parents inevitably interpret what the kids today are doing as a problem because it's not what they did or what they would do. So the kids today kids today that's always going to be there with every generation.

Pat: [01:04:50] Well the question is are there certain things that kids today are doing that are unique problems and there's no question that's the case the whole social media is something that no kids of any day ever had to deal with like they have to now. And I really feel like kids today are going to come a whole short it and what I might call face to face communication skills because they're so reliant on their instruments to communicate with each other they don't get much practice actually having conversations. And I I make fun of some of the teenage boys that I work with by saying something like Look buddy I was your age I steal your girlfriend. No problem. And he's like oh yeah how'd you do that.

Pat: [01:05:41] Well we'll tell you how I do it.

Pat: [01:05:44] I talked to her.

Pat: [01:05:45] He would be talking and she'd go what is this.

Pat: [01:05:49] And I go well this is a conversation my parents taught me how to do and I like it and she'd say I like it alive and then before long but you know what we be talking about you and pretty soon she'll be my girlfriend and well I'm just trying to get across to the kid is don't try and conduct your relationship with your girlfriend using your cell phone.

Pat: [01:06:11] You're over there and saw your face or your emotions showing your how you express yourself including all of your oddities all your idiosyncrasies all your eccentricities or your shyness or your shuffling see and let her see you as a human being and that kind of power will be very attracted to her and find more attractive than the senses of text that she gets from other boys.

Pat: [01:06:37] Well I don't think that's good. I don't think that's going to play out. I think that the people that are designing the technology are so incredibly good at it and the products they're developing are so powerful that they're really going to outstrip the capacity of human beings to manage that stuff. And I feel like a small voice the voice and face to face conversations are not going to be a dying art but there will be a diminishing skill set and maybe as a result the kind of impoverished set of relationships that these kids have in their lives. So I don't know that it's going to be true but that's the way things look to me. I saw I see teenagers having two arguments with each other where they're in the same room using their cell phones rather than actually talking. So how are they supposed to learn that given that take up a disagreement when you're face to face with somebody when they're relying on their cell phone. And they can keep their emotions under better check when they're just typing right away. I don't like the direction of that.

Matt: [01:07:43] Yeah. And certainly as adults you know sometimes we're not always the best models of that either. No kidding. You know I have you know I've seen people argue with their spouses via text and well it's know nothing good could come of it.

Pat: [01:08:02] I do a lot of marriage counseling that greatest thing that's most of what I do and I have to admonish the couples that I work with not ever have significant exchanges via text because

neither of them is Shakespeare. So they're not getting their true feelings across very well. They're not getting their true intentions across very well. Know it's very hard to capture your true feelings your true intentions with the written word. It takes an exceptional writer to do that and they're dashing off these text without even thinking about them and they land badly and off they go to the races not because there's a fundamental disagreement between them but because of the way they communicated a small disagreement. I think the cell phone for them should just be about who what where and when.

Matt: [01:08:49] Right. And what I see too is that then you have you know the permanent product of the exchange and that that's you know that kind of permits people to kind of relive the experience as well and that doesn't obviously help really bring an end show to me. Oh

Matt: [01:09:09] yeah yeah. You believe what do you get. I'm like why are you guys at this exchange on line. Anyway

Pat: [01:09:15] I like the point I was making. Yeah the permanent product is the problem. Indeed indeed I often forget. Wow.

Matt: [01:09:24] Well Pat I'm looking at the clock now and I'm just realize we've covered your induction into psychology and overview of Boystown parenting my parenting in particular and now are on the marriage class think of that like if we had you know more time we could probably continue talking about a variety of different topics.

Matt: [01:09:49] But I think for the at least the purposes of this episode of the podcast it might be an appropriate time to bring this to a close. It's been a fascinating conversation. Do you have any last thoughts you know or piece of advice particularly you know thinking that the audience is probably you know it's probably a behavior analyst on her way to work driving through and on her way to a clinic or a school or a home or what have you. You know so any any any parting shots if you will to our listeners.

Pat: [01:10:24] I have a warning shot for Behavior Analysts. Sure. I really don't think Behavior Analysts realize what they've got.

Pat: [01:10:32] Here's what we have central to our field central to our world view is the most powerful idea ever invented by mankind for understanding knowing and approaching human behavior especially when it's a problem that the behaviors of circumstances that ID is in competition with really old ideas that are damaging to human relations such as Mavor is a function of problematic morality or behavior as a function of problematic character behavior is a function of a problematic psyche. And those are actually dangerous ideas that are kind of central to all the horrible things that humans do to humans. Once you take that circumstantial view everything improves and everything that that idea has touched from the human warehouses that are now emptied out all the way up to what we've done with the autism spectrum has improved tremendously. I just think it's really rationalised to kind of appreciate the power of the idea that central to their professional and personal lives I'll read them with that.

Matt: [01:11:35] All right. Great.

Matt: [01:11:36] All right well Pat thanks so much for joining us. I really appreciate the time you took out this morning to get to have this chat. It's been a lot of fun. Yeah. Yeah thanks a lot. Thank you.

Matt: [01:11:48] What a great piece of advice to end on and I hope you enjoyed that episode as

much as I did. If you did enjoy it I would really appreciate if you took a few minutes to head on over to iTunes and Liebler rating and review. It just takes a couple of minutes and it really helps make this podcast stand out amongst the zillions of podcasts that are out there. So again I would appreciate very very much. And stay tuned for Part Two of my discussion with Pat. I mean we kind of expand on a lot of the topics that we brought up during this conversation but until the next time.

Matt: [01:12:25] Thanks for listening. Yes. We'll see you later.

Outro: [01:12:30] Thank you for listening to the behavioral observations podcast with Matt Cicoria. You can find Matts notes on this episode at [www dot behavioral observations dot com](http://www.behavioralobservations.com). We also invite you to stay connected with us on Facebook at [Facebook dot com forward slash behavioral observations](https://www.facebook.com/behavioralobservations) and on Twitter [behavior podcast](https://twitter.com/behaviorpodcast)