

A Discussion of B.I.G. for Animals – What It Is and What It Means for You.

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"B.I.G. for Animals"

Effective, Efficient, and Optimal

Behavior Intervention Guidelines



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Whenever it is determined that a change of behavior is essential, animals deserve the most effective, efficient, and optimal behavior interventions and behavior change plans.



Effective: Procedures that have been shown to be highly reliable and extremely likely to produce the intended result.

Efficient: Procedures that produce the intended result while minimizing the use of limited resources (e.g., time, expense, space, etc.).

Optimal: Procedures that give careful consideration to the individual animal's well-being and avoid or minimize distress as much as possible.

B.I.G. for Animals Supports Individualized Function Based Plans



Developing a responsible behavior intervention plan that maximizes animal welfare, minimizes risks, and considers the needs of all stakeholders requires trainers to consider the combination of effectiveness, efficiency, and use of optimal procedures. Each factor must play a role in determining the overall course of action.

B.I.G. for Animals was created upon the foundation of 1) do no harm and 2) maximize possible benefits inspired by the Right to Effective Behavioral Treatment (Van Houten et al., 1988) and the Principle of Least Restrictiveness (Fernandez, 2020; Johnston & Sherman, 1993; Vollmer et al., 2011). B.I.G. for Animals, when correctly applied, includes an individualized approach based upon functional behavior assessment (see process below). These are critical components towards maximizing benefits and minimizing harms.

The Objective of B.I.G for Animals is to Maximize Benefits and Do No Harm








To learn why the complexities of proper treatment exceed the capabilities of hierarchical approaches click [here](#).

Big for Animals recognizes the complexities of proper behavior intervention exceeds the capabilities of hierarchies, recipes, and/or formulaic approaches. These are not supported by BIG for Animals as they do not provide individualized function-based intervention and can create increased risk as well as delays to proper treatment.

B.I.G. for Animals Supports Competency

Additionally, B.I.G. for Animals recognizes that competence both in theoretical knowledge as well as hands on skills are paramount towards achieving this objective. Animal behavior professionals should:

	Possess an in-depth understanding of how learning principles influence behavior
	Be skilled in the selection and implementation of behavior modification procedures that are congruent with a robust understanding of learning principles
	Be able to recognize typical, normal behaviors for the species served, and distinguish these from behaviors abnormal to the species and context
	Be able to perform a functional behavior assessment (i.e., develop hypotheses regarding the function for the behavior in question and under what conditions)
	Understand that labeling any learning process (aka operant conditioning quadrant) as inherently coercive, abusive, inhumane, bad or wrong reflects a misunderstanding of learning principles and is at odds with an evidence-based, objective approach

The B.I.G. for Animals Process Begins with These Steps

The first step to behavior intervention is to determine if a change is needed and justified. This must take into consideration the welfare of the animal, as well as the implications for humans and other animals who are directly or indirectly impacted if the behavior changes or does not change. This can require trainers to:



Identify all relevant stakeholders – the focal animal, other animals, and people



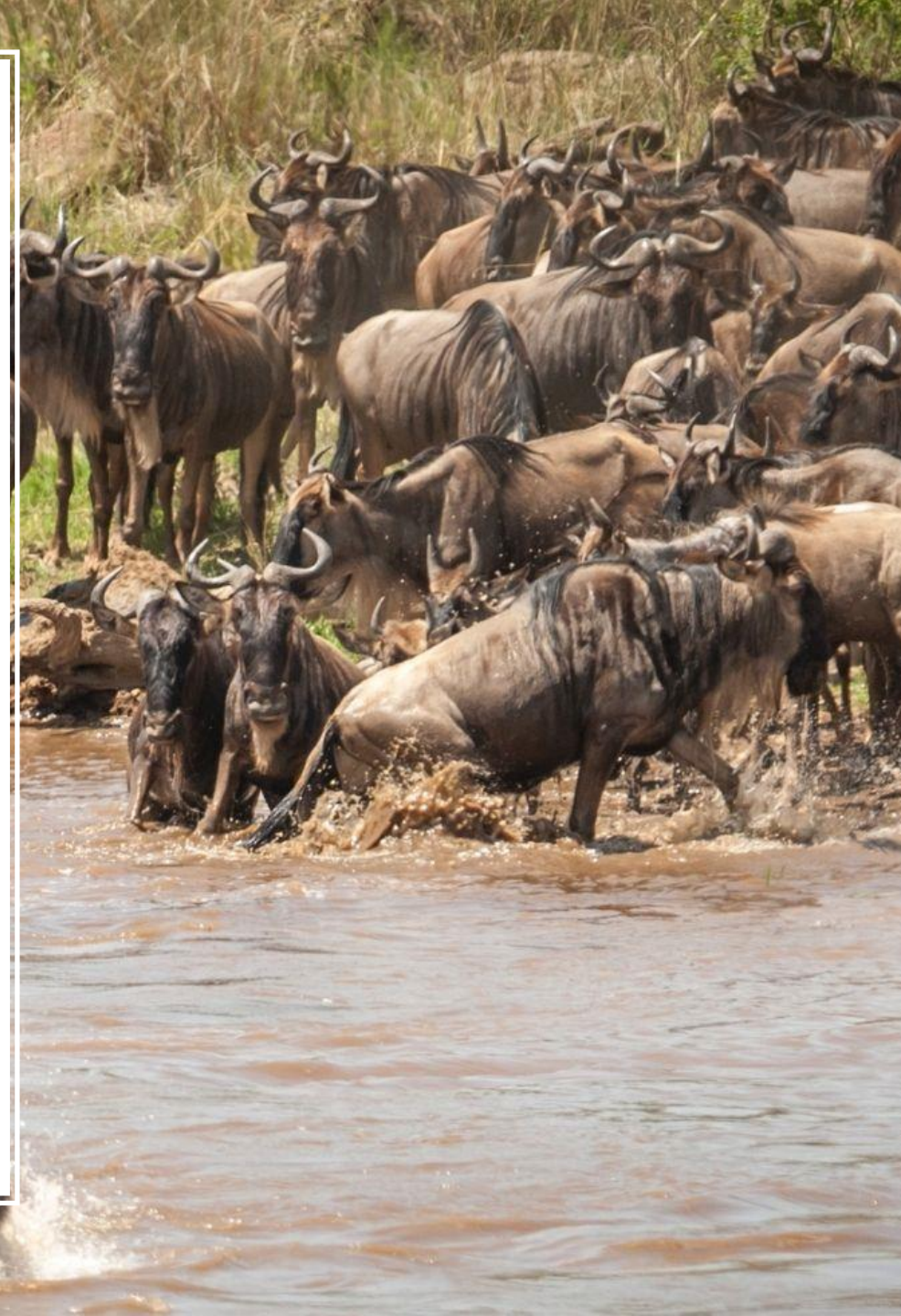
Understand how the existing behavior affects the welfare, safety, and behavior of these stakeholders, and how the success or failure of the intervention will impact them



Understand the availability or limitations of resources (time, money, space, etc.)

B.I.G. for Animals Supports Thorough Risk Benefit Analysis

Determining if change is needed and justified is best accomplished by conducting a thorough Risk/Benefit Analysis. Risk/Benefit analysis gives us a way to quantify our decision-making process not only for ourselves but for stakeholders. It allows us to measure the probability and magnitude of risks and benefits anticipated from implementing (or not implementing) the intervention or training the identified behavior.



Addressing Undesired Behavior Requires Additional Prep

If you are implementing BIG for Animals to address a behavior problem, additional preparations should include:








Obtaining a detailed behavioral history



Confirming veterinary assessment and treatment of any medical conditions that may be a contributing factor

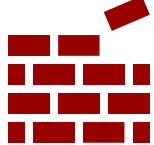




The B.I.G for Animals Process for Behavior Change

Visit BIGforAnimals.com for additional details

	1. What behavior does the animal exhibit right now (current behavior) ? Describe this behavior in as much detail as possible.
	2. What is your destination (final behavior), and what will it look like? Describe the desired behavior in as much detail as possible.
	3. If the current behavior is undesired, how do you think the behavior came to be established? If it is a new desired behavior, what reinforcers do you hypothesize will maintain the new desired behavior?
	4. What function do you hypothesize the undesired behavior first served and/or continues to serve the animal?
	5. Based on your answers to Questions #1-4. you can now fill in the blanks to either change an undesired behavior or build a new desired behavior.

The B.I.G for Animals Process for Behavior Change

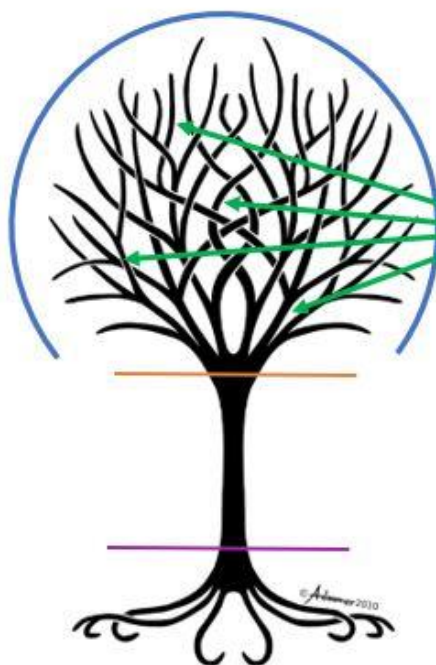
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	6. How can you change the environment to make it more likely that the animal will exhibit the desired behavior and less likely to exhibit undesired behavior?
	7. How do you control the environment so that you can continue to reinforce correct behavior and avoid any undesired behavior? During the training process undesired behavior may still occur, therefore you and your team must know what you will do when undesired behavior occurs.
	8. Are you prepared? What will you do if there is a crisis?
	9. How will you document the training intervention? (How will you make sure this information is collected and shared with the entire team?)
	10. Who will be implementing your behavior intervention plan?

Behavior Intervention Guidelines

The “B.I.G. for Animals Tree of Success” from the ground up:

- Behavior resolution or behavior goal achieved



- Procedures are implemented, reviewed, and modified as needed
- The most efficient, effective, and optimal procedures from all available behavior change strategies are chosen based on the process for implementing BIG for Animals

- Physical and medical concerns are addressed through veterinary participation
- Detailed behavioral history is collected

- Thorough risk/benefit analysis is conducted
- Stakeholders are identified; resource availabilities and limitations are evaluated

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Common Mistakes when Implementing B.I.G. for Animals



The behavior plan is not individualized! Make sure your plan is specific to the animal, behavior problem and context being addressed.



Not correctly identifying the function of undesired behavior.



Attempting to create a plan without completing Steps 1 - 5.



Not informing staff members of the intervention plan or revisions to the plan. Communication is essential.



Staff members are unprepared to train the new desired behavior or not informed on how to respond when the undesired problem behavior occurs.



No time built in to systematically train the new behavior.



Data is not kept and reviewed regularly. The behavior intervention does not objectively measure behavior to assess progress.



Objective data is not collected and reviewed by the team and used to make all training decisions.

A close-up photograph of a leopard's face, showing its distinctive rosette pattern on its fur. The leopard is looking slightly to the left. The image is partially obscured by a white circular overlay on the left side, which contains text.

Visit [BIGforAnimals.com](https://www.BIGforAnimals.com)

- For contributing authors
- Full reference list
- Supplementary videos
- Additional details
- Additional resources

Thank You for Watching!

For More Information -

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