

Symptom   Skill Deficit	Management and Intervention Strategies
Anxiety	Excessive worry, fear, and feeling out of control typically lurk just below the surface at all times. Reduce or eliminate the cause of the anxiety to reduce or eliminate the potential for an unwanted behavior. Adhere to the Principles of Food Security and the Principles of Life Security and provide PWS environmental basics: consistent routines, rules, boundaries, low emotional response. Use Empathy as an intervention.
Concrete Thinking	Abstract concepts are often challenging to understand. The concept of time can be especially difficult. Make things as “concrete” as possible by using visual or auditory timers or alarms. Use written schedules, charts. Specifically teach metaphors and slang. Teach meaning to reduce anxiety and increase social competence.
Egocentrism	People with PWS generally think about themselves first and foremost and have great difficulty seeing things from another’s perspective. Use egocentrism to create interventions. Don’t say, “Grandma will be late to her appointment if we don’t hurry.” Do say, “If we get Grandma to her appointment on time, we’ll be able to watch a movie.” Don’t say, “Your yelling is bothering the class/residents/workplace.” Do say, “When you speak softly, we will talk about what you want.”
Executive Skills Deficits	Planning, organizing, prioritizing, attention, transitions, and problem-solving skills are typically poor and require a lifetime of support. Keep the individual thinking, offer Preferred Choices, guide them to solutions rather than solving a problem for them.
Frustration Intolerance	Tolerance for anything that is or perceived to be a frustrator raises anxiety and could lead to a behavior problem. The word “No” is a natural frustrator. Use “No” infrequently and disguise all “No’s.” Don’t say, “No, we can’t go outside.” Do say, “Yes! As soon as we finish homework/chores we’ll go outside!” Preemptively check in: “You look upset. What’s up?” Do not give in to tantrums, especially for food. Use Empathy as an intervention.
Inflexibility	Persons with PWS often have difficulty with transitions and changes in routine. Provide verbal or visual countdown prompts: “5 minutes until we leave. 3 minutes ‘til we go so let’s put your shoes on. 1 minute till we leave so let’s stand up. Great job getting ready on time!” Avoid using <i>words</i> to “hurry” the person; use excitement, music, praise. Give advance notice of change whenever possible. Use Empathy as an intervention when there is upset. Build in extra time.
Impulsivity	Persons with PWS generally want what they want, when they want it, which is right now. Before entering a setting/situation reduce anxiety by ‘Painting the Picture’ of what the individual can expect: what things will look like, what will happen, expectations for behavior, what will occur if there is an unwanted behavior. Reward for patience/self-control. Know that what occurred in the past will be expected to occur in the future so “fix” the picture if it needs fixing to avoid a behavior problem.
Motivation	Most persons with PWS have low internal motivation. Use external motivators such as praise, token rewards (points, stickers, etc.), visual reward system, earning special time, asking individual to be your ‘special helper’, etc.
Need to be Right/Good	Most persons with PWS have a strong need to be right at all times and at all costs. Avoid power struggles by allowing for the possibility of the individual’s “rightness.” Use phrases like, “You might be right” or “That’s interesting. You think x and I think y.”
Obsessive-Compulsive Tendencies	The brain believes ‘if 1 is good, 100 is better.’ Collecting, hoarding, picking, sorting, pulling, and tearing can be associated with the brain’s obsessive-compulsive tendencies. Give limited, preferred choices. Use Empathy as an intervention. NAC supplement or medication can be helpful for some.
Oppositional Tendencies	The brain’s automatic reaction is often to respond with “No.” This looks like oppositional, stubborn, defiant, argumentative behavior. Avoid “Yes/No” questions. Give limited, preferred choices and as much perceived control as possible: “Do you want to wear your jacket or carry it?” Avoid open-ended questions which can be difficult to process and create anxiety. Allow lots of time to process past the brain’s natural oppositionalism. Build in extra time.
Self-Monitoring Deficits	The ability to monitor one’s self and accurately evaluate one’s performance is often impaired. Continuously remind to speak softly: slow down eating, etc. Monitor for safety until actual skill level is determined.

