



MEET KEENAN

Pre-Reading Questions

- *Which independent living skills do you think should be taught in the classroom?*
- *How can you work on skills that take place in the home environment?*
- *How do soft skills impact a student's employment situation?*

Keenan is a 14-year-old African American male diagnosed with emotional behavioral disorder and a mild learning disability in reading. According to a parent report, Keenan can independently complete hygiene routines such as brushing his teeth, combing his hair, showering, etc. Despite his ability to complete these routines, Keenan does not maintain proper hygiene. For example, he only showers once per week, does not put on deodorant, and never combs his hair.

His teacher doesn't believe that she needs to teach Keenan to maintain proper hygiene. She feels that because he plans to be hired by his family after graduation, that they will not reprimand him for his hygiene. She also thinks that because he will be a mechanic, he will get dirty at his job anyways and it won't matter whether or not he maintains proper hygiene.

What's the Problem?

Although Keenan's family may be more understanding of his lack of cleanliness, he will be interacting with people outside of his family throughout his entire life. For instance, he may want to work for a company other than his family later on and his poor hygiene may not be acceptable during a job interview or as an employee in a different work environment. Establishing relationships is also affected by hygiene. People may be less willing to interact with Keenan if he doesn't smell good. Furthermore, he already has challenges with social skills, so having poor hygiene would make it even harder for him to make friends. Another extremely important consideration is the effect of hygiene on physical health. If Keenan doesn't take care of himself, he could be more likely to get sick, develop dental diseases, and get infections.

What's the Solution?

His teacher decides to talk with Keenan about hygiene. Keenan yells that he doesn't care about hygiene. His teacher then relates the issue to his interests. She talks about how cars need to be cleaned and have maintenance done in order to look good and run well. Keenan agrees that cars need to be kept in good condition, but he is



Transition

T E N N E S S E E

not thrilled about maintaining his own hygiene. To promote self-determination, his teacher works with Keenan to problem-solve the issue. They come up with a plan to use a self-management chart to keep track of his hygiene routines. If he completes the requirements of the self-management intervention, he can earn reinforcement at school. His teacher sends a laminated copy of the chart home. Each day, Keenan is responsible for reporting whether or not he completed the required hygiene routines. His parents confirm the accuracy of the report. Keenan's teacher keeps a stick of deodorant, a toothbrush, and toothpaste at school for him to use if he didn't complete the hygiene routines at home. He can use these products two times per week as a backup. As a result of this strategy, Keenan began to complete more hygiene routines at home. For example, his average number of showers each week increased from one to three.

Post-Reading Questions

- *How have you addressed issues related to hygiene with your students in the past?*
- *Which other education professionals could have been involved in planning this intervention?*
- *How do you feel about collaborating with parents on interventions that take place primarily at home?*
- *Would you have addressed this problem differently? Why or why not?*