

**SUCCESS**



**OVER**

**STRESS**

**SUCCESS**



**OVER**

**STRESS**

Reinforcement – The Basics

Teaching skills is the same as teaching behavior

- **Behavior:** what a person does
- What we do depends on things that happen before and after the behavior
- In schools, what students do (learn) depends on what the teachers and other staff do (teach)

3

One of the reasons we behave:

Reinforcement

- When a person behaves and things get better it leads to the person doing the same thing in the future under the same condition
- We all do what leads to things getting better for us
- Reinforcement leads to behavior happening more often in the future

## Important things to know about reinforcement

- We reinforce BEHAVIOR not students
- Reinforcement increases both good and bad behavior
- Reinforcement occurs for everyone
- Understanding how reinforcement works is critical to understand for teaching skills and for reducing problematic behavior
- If you don't understand how reinforcement works it will often work against you

## Types of Reinforcement

### Positive



Positive Add

- something is added after the behavior



- makes the student's life better in some way



- Behavior happens more

### Negative



Negative Take Away

- something is taken away after the behavior



- makes the student's life better in some way



- Behavior happens more

For reinforcement to work best...

- Happens **after** the behavior
- Happens right away
- Must be of value in the moment

What makes the value change?

For all things we need for survival:

- Satiation:
  - When there has been access to large quantities of something
  - Things become less valuable
- Deprivation:
  - When there has not been access to unconditioned reinforcers for some time
  - Things become more valuable
- Satiation and deprivation only apply to unconditioned reinforcers: food, water, oxygen, etc.

## What makes the value change?

For all things we learn to value:

- Something changes or happens in the environment that makes something valuable
  - Example: something sticky gets on your hands...makes sink, water and soap valuable
- Something changes or happens in the environment that makes removing something valuable
  - Example: hard work gets presented...makes getting rid of the hard work valuable

## How do we keep reinforcers valuable?

- Vary type of reinforcers (more to come)
- Vary schedule
- Vary way it is delivered
- Limit how much is delivered at any one time
- Stop before it loses value

And don't forget to be part of the fun!

Use different types of reinforcers

*The more variety, the better!*

- Edibles
- Drinks
- Sensory toys: visual, acoustical, tactile
- Physical interactions: motion, hugs, squeezes, rock, activities such as swing, ball play
- Surprise: mystery motivator, what's inside the bag? or sudden appearances
- Activities: writing, drawing, coloring
- Technology: iPad programs, videos, music, etc.

Things that will compete with value

- **Effort:** student will engage in responses that require less effort. If it is too hard, reinforcer may not be worth it!
- **Rate:** if reinforcement is not delivered often enough, it may not be worth it
- **Magnitude:** if the reinforcement is not enough (quantity, quality), it may not be worth it
- **Immediacy:** if it takes too long to get it, it may not be worth it

## Other tips to make reinforcement work best

Reinforcement should be easy, fun, and enough!

- Cheerfully, enthusiastically
- Without a hint of demand (at first!)
  - May involve not looking at the student
- In sufficient amounts
  - Not too little, not too much
  - "Sufficient amount" (depends on difficulty of response)

Reinforcement should be easy and fun

## Differential Reinforcement

*Better responding should result in better reinforcement*

- Better reinforcement can mean:
  - More quantity
  - More time spent with reinforcer
  - Better quality
- Some examples of when to give better reinforcement
  - Target responses (things you are teaching)
  - More independent responses
  - Cooperative responding
  - Quick responses
  - Responses for non-preferred tasks

For questions or to schedule office hours contact [autism@pattan.net](mailto:autism@pattan.net)

Check out additional resources and videos in the **Success Over Stress** section link on the PaTTAN website



- Next Topic: Reinforcement Schedules
 

*Knowing when to deliver reinforcement is important because it impacts how it works on behavior*