**CHANGING BEHAVIOUR WITH POSITIVE**

[](http://www.fotosearch.com/CSP354/k3548288/)

**CHANGING BEHAVIOUR WITH POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT**

To increase the likelihood of appropriate behaviour being used more frequently students need to be reinforced often and consistently. Effective behaviour change can be systematically achieved through a structured reinforcement program.

**Target the desired behaviour**

Isolate observable problematic behaviour. Is the student calling out, fidgeting with objects or out of seat?

Target one behaviour at a time, starting with an achievable, simple target.

Word the desired behaviour clearly and positively. What is it that you want the student to do?

E.g. I will stay in my seat

I will raise my hand to speak

**Choose a powerful reinforcer**

Identify those things that are reinforcing to the student. What do they like to do, eat or play?

It is only reinforcing if it is something the student wants to work towards or achieve.

The student needs to feel it is worthwhile to change.

If the behaviour isn’t changing, perhaps the reinforcer isn’t valuable enough to the student and therefore you need to change the reinforcer.

Reinforcers can be

Non-verbal – smiles, thumbs up

Verbal

Tick on a chart

Sticker or stamp

Free time

Oral reinforcers – biscuits, lollies

Material rewards – canteen pass, pencils

**Immediate, Short Term and Long Term Reinforcers**

Attempts to comply with desired behaviours need to be positively reinforced immediately.

Spontaneous reinforcement can be given whenever the student is observed to be behaving or attempting to behave appropriately.

With young children and students who need to substantially modify their behaviour the reinforcement must immediately follow the desired behaviour.

In a structured program students need;

* Immediate reinforcement

a tick on the chart and verbal recognition when they raise their hand to speak

* Short term reinforcement

5 ticks = a sticker

* Long term reinforcement

5 stickers = 10 minutes free time

**Reinforce frequently and consistently**

Initially, attempts to comply with the desired behaviour need to be reinforced immediately and every time they occur.

Immediate, frequent and consistent reinforcers need to be continued until behavioural change has begun and then the frequency can be gradually decreased.

The frequency and timing of the reinforcement should be documented and clearly explained to the student.

Be consistent by following the plan and doing what and when you say you will.

Be sure the student knows why they are getting the reinforcer. ‘David, you raised your hand to speak, you have earned a tick on your chart.’

**Regularly review the student’s progress**

If the reinforcer is no longer motivating the student, change it!

Some students need reinforcers to be changed or alternated daily.

Some students may like to choose between 2 reinforcers offered by the teacher.

When behaviour has been modified, frequency of reinforcement can be reduced gradually to spontaneous and instructional reinforcement.

**Phase out**

A structured extrinsic reinforcement program can be gradually phased out once the student is intrinsically reinforced by the success pro-social, appropriate behaviour brings.

Immediate and short-term reinforcement can be replaced by a daily or weekly reinforcer or by a whole class reinforcer.

Often when a student is being intrinsically reinforced they will indicate that they no longer require an extrinsic reinforcer.

They enjoy being a regular class member like the other students and might say, ‘I don’t need my free time anymore.’

**THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PRAISE AND ENCOURAGEMENT**

**PRAISE**

Many give praise to students thinking that this will motivate them to perform to a higher standard and use the behaviours the teacher wants. In fact, the opposite can occur.

Praise gives students the message that they have performed to the standard expected by others. It is seen as a value judgement of the task completed or of their behaviour.

The one giving praise assumes a superior or judgemental position and students can interpret their position as inferior and as only being worthy when judged so by another.

The message he or she receives from the praise might be:

“I am only worthwhile when I do what someone else wants me to do and to the standard they set.”

“I need to conform to be accepted.”

“I need to be the best or better than others to be valued.”

**ENCOURAGEMENT**

Encouragement focuses on effort, contribution and improvement. It gives feedback to students by acknowledging effort made, skills developed and small steps made and recognises strengths.

Encouragement accepts students for who they are and gives them the message that they are respected, valued and deserving. The student learns that their contribution is important and that they do not have to be perfect to be accepted.

Encouragement empowers and motivates students to accept tasks and to work through a task to completion. Students develop responsibility for their behaviours and achievement and a belief in their ability to achieve their own goals.

Put simply, praise is an evaluation of the PERSON by another whereas encouragement focuses on the EFFORT they make.

**EXAMPLES OF PRAISE AND ENCOURAGEMENT**

PRAISE ENCOURAGEMENT

Good. You’re being very careful to keep you’re writing on the line.

Ten out of ten, good girl. You must enjoy working on these problems.

Great. You have written an interesting introduction. What are you going to write next?

You have done the best story. I could really picture that beach in my mind.

Good work. Tell me how you did that?

**INTRINSIC and EXTRINSIC**

**REINFORCEMENT**

There are two basic types of reinforcement – Intrinsic and Extrinsic.

***Intrinsic reinforcement***

Is incidental and directly related to the task itself. These may be the feelings and messages someone tells themselves regarding their behaviour and the outcome of this behaviour.

For example, you may derive satisfaction, enjoyment or entertainment in reading a book. The value and meaning a student attaches to their behaviour is learned over time. For example, a student may get a good feeling inside from helping another student or completing their work.

As students develop socially, behaviour is reinforced more internally than externally. Intrinsic reinforcers are more likely to occur when the behaviour is well established or is learned easily and accomplished well.

***Extrinsic reinforcement***

Is that which comes from another person and is outside the act of performing the task itself.

If a student is struggling to learn to read, it is unlikely that they will be intrinsically reinforced by the entertainment or enjoyment in the story.

When a new skill is being learned, some level of extrinsic reinforcement is likely to be required to encourage the student to continue the task.

**SELECTING APPROPRIATE REINFORCERS**

**When behaviour has been positively reinforced it is likely to occur more frequently in the future. Reinforcers can be non-verbal or verbal, intrinsic or extrinsic, material ‘things’ or time spent with a valued other. What is reinforcing for one child might not be reinforcing for another. Indeed, what a young child finds reinforcing one day might not be seen as reinforcing the next. Effective reinforcers can be identified by observing the child’s chosen activities during free time, through discussion with the child’s parents and teacher and by direct questioning of the child.**

The following survey has been designed to assist in the identification of effective reinforcers for a specific child. The student is asked to choose between tangible, consumable, adult approval, peer approval or activity type reinforcers. There are ten questions. The child selects one of the two reinforcers offered.

For example:

**“Which would you like the most – to have 5 minutes game time, or to read a book on your own?’**

Tick the box of the child’s preferred choice.

1. a) To receive a personalised pen, or ❑ TANGIBLE

b) To have a canteen pass. ❑ CONSUMABLE

1. a) To have ten minutes of computer time, or ❑ ACTIVITY

b) To receive a yoyo. ❑ TANGIBLE

1. a) To help the class teacher collect materials, or ❑ ACTIVITY

b) To have a piece of fruit. ❑ CONSUMABLE

1. a) To choose from a lolly jar, or ❑ CONSUMABLE

b) To receive a certificate at assembly ❑ ADULT APPROVAL

1. a) To have a friend pick you to be on their sports team , or ❑ PEER APPROVAL

b) To receive a netball or football to keep ❑ TANGIBLE

1. a) To play a class game like Bingo, or ❑ ACTIVITY

b) To have your friends pick you as the star of the week. ❑ PEER APPROVAL

1. a) To have your teacher write a good comment on your work, or ❑ ADULT APPROVAL

b) To receive a sticker. ❑ TANGIBLE

1. a) To have your parents tell them they are proud of you, or ❑ ADULT APPROVAL

b) To have your friends tell you your project looks fantastic. ❑ PEER APPROVAL

1. a) To play a board game, or ❑ ACTIVITY

b) To be sent to the office with great work. ❑ ADULT APPROVAL

1. a) To have your choice of ice cream, or ❑ CONSUMABLE

b) To have your friend select you to have free time with them. ❑ PEER APPROVAL

**Tally and total the number of choices in each Category**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Continuum Categories | Tally | Total |
| Adult Approval |  |  |
| Activity |  |  |
| Consumable |  |  |
| Peer Approval |  |  |
| Tangible |  |  |

**Ranking in order of preference**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Rank | Category |
| 1 |  |
| 2 |  |
| 3 |  |
| 4 |  |
| 5 |  |

**NOTE: Reinforcers should be selected with the involvement of caregivers and the teacher.**

**Some ideas:**

10 minutes computer time

10 minutes tablet time

Sit near a friend for 1 hour

Sit at the teacher’s desk for 1 hour

Sit on the special chair for 1 hour

Sit at the Desk of Glory for 1 session

One copy of a piece of amazing work to take home

Certificate home

Homework free night

Use a pen for the whole day

Hot Milo at break time

Wear your slippers or uggs in class for a day

Sit on a cushion for a session

Warm up with a blanket for one session

Look after a cuddly toy for the day

Listen to some music for 15 minutes

Free drawing during silent reading time

Play a game with a friend during silent reading

Extra silent reading time

Show the class one news item

Choose from the prize box

Use a mini whiteboard 10 mins

Play dough for 10 mins

Work on the floor with a friend for 1 hour

**SENDING CLEAR MESSAGES**

Adapted from Unknown Source

What we want is to give a clear and accurate message to students which takes into account our goals and needs and gives students the opportunity to take responsibility and change their behaviour, at the same time allowing acknowledgement of their needs. Feedback should not destroy a relationship rather enhance and maintain it.

**GIVING FEEDBACK**

Source: Adapted from the MSB Program – Department of Education and Training of WA

Feedback is often seen in two categories:

* Descriptive
* Evaluative

**Descriptive** is the preferred as it gives specific information on what behaviour is desirable or undesirable.

Some characteristics of helpful, non-threatening feedback are as follows:

* Focus feedback on **behaviour** rather than the person.
* Focus feedback on observations rather than inferences.
* Focus feedback on description rather than judgement.
* Focus feedback on descriptions of behaviour which are in terms of “more or less” rather than in terms of “either-or”.
* Focus feedback on behaviour related to a specific situation, preferably to the “here and now” rather than on behaviour in the abstract, placing it in the “there and then”.
* Focus feedback on the sharing of ideas and information rather than on giving advice.
* Focus feedback on exploration of alternatives rather than answers or solutions.
* Focus feedback on the value it may have to the receiver, not on the value of ‘release’ that it provides the person giving the advice.
* Focus feedback on the amount of information that the person receiving it can use rather than on the amount that you have which you might like to give.