Responding to Problematic Behavior

Andrew L. Egel, Ph.D.

Differential Reinforcement

• A procedure in which a specific, desirable behavior is followed by a reinforcer while other behaviors are not. The result is an increase in the desirable behaviors and extinction of the other behaviors.

Reducing Problem Behavior Through Differential Reinforcement

Differential Reinforcement of Other Behaviors (DRO):
Reinforcing a child for emitting any behavior other than the inappropriate behavior for a specified time period.

Example: A child is reinforced for any behavior other than talking out of turn during dinner.
Reducing Problem Behavior Through Differential Reinforcement con’t.

Differential Reinforcement of Incompatible Behaviors (DRI):
Reinforcing a child for exhibiting a behavior that cannot be exhibited at the same time as the inappropriate behavior.

Example: Reinforcing a child for in-seat behavior when reducing out-of-seat behavior. The two are incompatible; they cannot occur at the same time.

Reducing Problem Behavior Through Differential Reinforcement con’t.

Differential Reinforcement of Alternative Behaviors (DRA):
Reinforcing a more appropriate behavior that the parents wish a child to learn, instead of exhibiting the inappropriate behavior.

Example: Reinforcing a child’s use of an alternative communication system rather than his/her engaging in a tantrum when making requests.

Procedures for Reducing Behavior

• Extinction
  Withholding reinforcement from a previously reinforced response.

• Issues in using extinction
  – Behavior must be maintained by attention.
  – Reduction in behavior is gradual; usually not an immediate effect
  – Extinction bursts
  – Differential reinforcement of appropriate behaviors
  – Ignoring student v. ignoring behavior
FUNCTIONAL ASSESSMENT

Conducting A Functional Behavioral Assessment

• Functional Behavioral Assessment is:
  – Built on the assumption that, if a child keeps repeating a problem behavior, that behavior must be serving some purpose or function for the child – otherwise, he or she would not keep repeating it

Conducting A Functional Behavioral Assessment*

• Functional Behavioral Assessment is:
  – A process of looking for patterns in what happens around and/or to the student just before and just after the problem behavior
Conducting A Functional Behavioral Assessment*

• Functional Behavioral Assessment is:

  – Examination of these patterns to identify their purpose or their “function”. Some possible functions are: avoiding something, getting something, and making something happen

Problem Behavior Usually Serves A Purpose

• Functional assessment is used to identify the purpose of behavior

• Problem behavior may serve many purposes and may require many interventions. Thus, a behavior shown by a child to his/her mother may be maintained by attention while the exact same behavior is exhibited with the child’s father in order to avoid something unpleasant.

• The goal of intervention is education, not just behavior reduction

Behavior Does Not Happen in a Vacuum

• Antecedents – events that set the occasion for a behavior to occur
  • Instructions
  • Introduction or removal of items
  • Teacher/peer attention (or lack thereof)

• Behavior – response that occurs

• Consequence – events that occur after a behavior
  • May make the behavior more/less likely to occur again

• Functions – what maintains a behavior
Theories of How Functions Work

- Common Functions of Behavior
  - Parent/sibling Attention (socially mediated positive reinforcement)
  - Escape or Avoidance of Unpleasant Events (socially mediated negative reinforcement)
  - Sensory Consequences (automatic reinforcement)
- Communication Hypothesis — all behavior serves a communicative function
- Behavior, even behavior that looks very similar, can serve very different functions. That means that the same behavior exhibited by the same child but in different situations may have different functions.

Functions Served By Behaviors

Positive reinforcement

Negative reinforcement

Sensory

Positive Reinforcement

- Socially mediated positive reinforcement occurs when a stimulus is presented by another individual following the occurrence of a behavior and the behavior is strengthened.
- In socially mediated positive reinforcement the reinforcers maintaining behaviors may include attention, tangibles, and/or access to preferred activities.

What are examples of socially mediated positive reinforcement that occur in homes?
Positive Reinforcement

Situation - A child sees a candy bar in the grocery store and wants it.

1) Child screams “I want candy” and throws a tantrum. Mom/Dad hands him the candy bar in order to keep the peace. (Reinforcement of inappropriate behavior)

2) Child turns to the adult with him and signs ‘candy’. Mom/Dad hands the candy bar to him and thanks him for asking nicely. (Reinforcement of appropriate behavior)

Discussion: In both examples, the child has learned that his behavior gets him what he wants, so he is likely to repeat this behavior next time.

Negative Reinforcement

• Socially mediated negative reinforcement occurs when an unpleasant stimulus or situation is terminated by another individual contingent on a behavior and the behavior is strengthened.
• In socially mediated negative reinforcement the reinforcing consequences for the behavior may involve escape from unpleasant tasks, social interactions and/or physical stimulation.

What are examples of socially mediated negative reinforcement that occur in homes?

Situation: The radio is playing loudly in the room.

1) The child comes into the room and begins screaming. Somebody rushes over to turn down the radio. (Reinforcement of inappropriate behavior)

2) The child comes in and covers his ears saying “Too loud”. Somebody asks the child if he would like to have the volume on the radio turned down. When the child answers “yes”, the volume is turned down. (Reinforcement of appropriate behavior)
Access to tangible reinforcement

- Access to tangible reinforcement, a form of positive reinforcement, maintains problem behavior when the child’s behavior results in their gaining access to a tangible item (e.g., toys). Thus, a child who receives access to a toy following a tantrum is more likely to tantrum again the next time they want a tangible reinforcer.
- What are examples of problem behaviors in the home that are maintained by access to tangible reinforcement?

Case Study #1

- Dylan’s mother gives him his homework which he is supposed to complete independently. Dylan begins to whine and refuses to work. He argues with his mother and throws his work on the floor. His mother says “It’s okay Dylan, I know this hard for you. Let’s take a break.” As a result, Dylan whines, argues, refuses to work and throws his work on the floor the next time he is asked to complete his homework.
- What is the function of Dylan’s behavior?

Case Study #2

- Jill whines and cries often when her father is making dinner. Her father rubs her back, verbally comforts her, and offers her a snack. Jill whines and cries more often when her father is not interacting with her.
- What is the function of Jill’s behavior?
### Factors To Consider In Assessing Causes Of Problem Behavior

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GENERAL SETTING</th>
<th>INSTRUCTIONAL ISSUES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low level of reinforcement</td>
<td>too difficult</td>
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<td>pacing is too fast/slow</td>
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<td>lack of variety</td>
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<td>lack of choice</td>
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### Factors To Consider In Assessing Causes Of Problem Behavior

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific Factors That Occur Before Behavior (Antecedents)</th>
<th>Specific Factors That Occur After Behavior (Consequences)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>introduction of new activities</td>
<td>escape from difficult instructions</td>
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<tr>
<td>unclear instructions</td>
<td>attention from parents or siblings</td>
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<tr>
<td>removal of reinforcers</td>
<td>tangible reinforcers</td>
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<td>too many demands</td>
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<td>asking child to wait</td>
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<td>transitions</td>
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### Selection of Tools
Types of Assessments

- Indirect Assessment
  - Ratings Scales
- Direct Observation
  - ABC Analysis
Indirect Assessment
Checklists and Rating Scales

- Forms that ask questions that point to the functions of behavior
- Also assesses events that may have occurred but nonetheless affects the response in question
- Advantages:
  - Easy to administer
  - Requires very few resources
  - Attempt to analyze environment for setting events

Motivation Assessment Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date</th>
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Setting Description:

Instructions: The Motivation Assessment Scale is a questionnaire designed to identify functional elements in which an individual is likely to behave in terms of the information, more informal situations, and to make assessing the function or inappropriate environment and responses. To complete the Motivation Assessment Scale, prior care behavior is of particular interest. A key step in the question of events is that the behavior under specific conditions is more likely to occur, such as the question or event and provide the task analysis and evaluate the environment for specific events.

Questions:

1. Which behaviors are observed? 
   - About the behavior that is not identified for the environment. 
   - About the observed behavior that is performed in a difficult task. 
   - About the behavior that is not identified for the environment. 
   - About the observed behavior that is performed in a difficult task.

2. What do you think is the likely cause of the behavior? 
   - About the behavior that is not identified for the environment.
   - About the observed behavior that is performed in a difficult task.

3. How does the behavior occur? 
   - About the behavior that is not identified for the environment.
   - About the observed behavior that is performed in a difficult task.

4. What do you think is the likely cause of the behavior? 
   - About the behavior that is not identified for the environment.
   - About the observed behavior that is performed in a difficult task.

5. How does the behavior occur? 
   - About the behavior that is not identified for the environment.
   - About the observed behavior that is performed in a difficult task.

6. What do you think is the likely cause of the behavior? 
   - About the behavior that is not identified for the environment.
   - About the observed behavior that is performed in a difficult task.

7. How does the behavior occur? 
   - About the behavior that is not identified for the environment.
   - About the observed behavior that is performed in a difficult task.

8. What do you think is the likely cause of the behavior? 
   - About the behavior that is not identified for the environment.
   - About the observed behavior that is performed in a difficult task.

9. How does the behavior occur? 
   - About the behavior that is not identified for the environment.
   - About the observed behavior that is performed in a difficult task.

10. What do you think is the likely cause of the behavior? 
          - About the behavior that is not identified for the environment.
          - About the observed behavior that is performed in a difficult task.

11. How does the behavior occur? 
          - About the behavior that is not identified for the environment.
          - About the observed behavior that is performed in a difficult task.

12. What do you think is the likely cause of the behavior? 
          - About the behavior that is not identified for the environment.
          - About the observed behavior that is performed in a difficult task.
ABC Analysis

- Allows the parent to record behaviors as they happen
- Easy to complete
- Easy to analyze for patterns

ABC Behavior Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Antecedent/Trigger: What happens RIGHT BEFORE the behavior of concern</th>
<th>Behavior: Describe what happened-detail the behavior of concern</th>
<th>Consequence/Response: What happens as a result of the behavior</th>
<th>Adult w/child</th>
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Interpreting the ABC analysis

• Look for common themes
  – Antecedents – events that set the occasion for a behavior to occur
  – Consequences – events that occur after a behavior
    • May make the behavior more/less likely to occur again
  • Do not make any causal inferences

ABC Behavior Chart

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Antecedent/Trigger</th>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Consequence/Response</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2/22 8am</td>
<td>Parent says “time to get dressed”</td>
<td>Child yells, “I am too tired”</td>
<td>Parent says “You can wait 10 more min and then you have to get dressed”</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2/22 10am</td>
<td>Parent says “come and eat your breakfast”</td>
<td>Child says “I am watching TV and I do not want to eat now”</td>
<td>Parent says “OK, you can come eat after the program is over”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/22 11:30</td>
<td>Parent says “We are going to visit Grandma now. Go out to the car”</td>
<td>Child says “I am playing with my toys. I don’t want to leave now”</td>
<td>Parent tells child they are leaving when the timer goes off</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/22 2pm</td>
<td>Parent says “time to go home. Say goodbye to Grandma”</td>
<td>Child says “I do not want to leave until after lunch”</td>
<td>Parent says “OK, but we are leaving right after lunch”</td>
<td></td>
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Developing a Behavior Intervention Plan

• Have hypothesis
  – Escape, attention, etc
• Develop plan based on functions
  – Integral part of BIP is to identify and reinforce an alternative acceptable behavior that serves the same function
• To assess effectiveness
  – Develop a system for collecting data
  – Data collection should now focus on the specific problematic behavior(s).
  – Continue to analyze the data
  – Make modifications as necessary
Things to Keep in Mind

Every moment is a “teachable” moment!

Data collection is valuable to track progress and troubleshoot, but it should never interfere with teaching.

If the child is not learning, it’s the fault of the teaching procedures, NOT the child!

If it’s not meaningful to the child, don’t teach it until it is!

Behaviors always occur for a reason. It’s up to US to figure out WHY.

Learning can (and should) be FUN!