

Positive Behavior Support

Training Topic

Behavior Management Techniques

There are four basic behavior management techniques that are used to try to elicit positive behavior. Each is explained below. Prolonged use of each technique should be defined in the individual's service plan and agreed upon by the team.

Positive Reinforcement Principle: Positive reinforcement describes the process whereby the chances of a behavior occurring more often in the future are increased when that behavior is followed by a positive consequence. To teach a person to respond in a desired way, you follow the desired behavior with positive reinforcement.

Effective reinforcement must be something the member likes or enjoys. (Just because the staff think it is something the member will like does not mean the member will desire it.) The reinforcement must come immediately after the desired behavior. If staff waits too long, the member may not associate the reinforcer with the behavior. And it must be consistent. Staff need to make sure they are providing the reinforcer each time the desired behavior occurs.

For example, after the member completes the daily tasks shown on their chart, they receive their \$1 as outlined in their service plan.

Negative Reinforcement: This describes the process whereby a behavior is strengthened when the occurrence of that behavior results in the removal of something that is aversive for the member. It may sound very confusing, but negative reinforcement strengthens behavior. The behavior is strengthened because it terminates an aversive event. For example, doing dishes is a very aversive for Jim, but because he cleaned up his room, staff offer to do the dishes for him. In this situation cleaning up his room is strengthened because it had the effect of terminating the aversive situation of doing dishes. Since the negative reinforcement principle is applicable only when aversive stimuli are present in the environment, it is not one that lends itself easily to interventions that respect the rights and dignity of a person. For this reason, we rarely use negative reinforcement paradigms.

Punishment Type I: This describes the process whereby a behavior is weakened when that behavior produces a negative consequence. For example, a boy fights with the neighbor and gets spanked when his father learns about it. Fighting leads to spanking, a negative consequence. Punishment Type I is against the law and cannot be used by staff.

Punishment Type II: This is very different from Punishment Type I. Type II describes the process whereby behavior is weakened when the occurrence of the behavior results in the removal of a positive reward. This form of punishment is generally far more effective than Type I. There are two basic forms of Punishment Type II.

1. Time out- Time out refers to the contingent withdrawal of the reinforcement for a specific period of time. For example, if every time John calls his housemate a name, he is removed for a five minutes to his bedroom. Since he does not like to spend time in his bedroom, his name-calling behavior will be weakened. The use of time out must be agreed upon by the team and defined in the member' plan.
2. Loss of something preferred – This is a contingent withdrawal of a specific amount of reinforcement. For example, when Tom uses profanity, he may lose his next community outing. This type of intervention must be agreed upon by the team and defined in the member's plan.