

**Task as Reinforcer**

For kids who don't really like to work

**Proactive vs. Reactive**

- This presentation primarily discusses reactive treatments of a common problem (non-compliance). This is not to suggest that proactive factors are less-relevant...
- Identifying current motivation
- Demand fading
- Schedule of reinforcement
- Establishing rapport
- "behavioral momentum"
- Etc,

**The problem**

- Some kids really don't like to work, so they're hard to teach.
- Popular reactive treatments have flaws...

**Treatment 1, working through it**

- Working kids through protest...
  - Correct responses are on extinction
  - Or,
  - Correct responses reinforced, but so are non-desired collateral behaviors
- More importantly, protests tend to maintain on a long term basis

**Treatment 2, "renegotiating"**

- Teachers reactively remind the learner of potential reinforcers (or actually give reinforcers)

<u>Before Protest</u>	<u>After Protest</u>
Direction lingering	New contract

**Treatment 3, "kinder, gentler task"**

- Teachers redirect to a task that is easier and/or more fun.

<u>Before Protest</u>	<u>After Protest</u>
Relatively non-preferred task	relatively preferred task

## Zero-second Prompting

- (Proactive) "Zero-second prompting" involves prompting at the same moment as presenting a direction.
- Prompt may be too intrusive
- Stimulus control for the prompt may differ too much from stimulus control for target SD.
- Teachers reinforce too many prompted responses. (breeds prompt dependency)
- Student effort may not shaped

## One better solution

- "allow access" to tasks only when the learner is performing relatively well.
- "But, isn't that counter-intuitive (insert derogatory name)?"
- "Yes it is. But check the next slide for what we're communicating to the learner."

## The learner "hears"...

- "You may initially feel like it is a victory to have the task removed, but you will also soon discover that you will not access any other reinforcers until you've completed the task nicely. You won't be given attention, either, as this could predict that other reinforcers are forthcoming. You will eventually appreciate being given the opportunity to perform the task nicely."

## How is this communicated?

- |                         |                                 |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|
| • <u>Before Protest</u> | <u>After Protest</u>            |
| • Lingering direction   | No apparent lingering direction |

## Eventually...

- |                         |                             |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| • <u>Before Protest</u> | <u>After Protest</u>        |
| Lingering direction=SD  | task withdrawn<br>= S-delta |

## Basic Procedure

- When learner protests work, say something like "NO", and withdraw task.
- While withholding task, don't say anything or look at learner (or reinforce mands)
- Don't allow learner to leave or "stim"
- When calm for a "relatively long time" (meaning?) ask "You ready?" while grabbing work materials.

### Basic Procedure, continued

- If the learner looks at you calmly, says "yes", echoes "ready" or does anything else that suggests they're ready, present the task. If not, don't present task.
- If learner whines again, escalates, "stims", etc. repeat Step 1.

### Good signs...

- Learner gets upset when you withdraw the task
- Learner mands reinforcers with decreasing frequency (while you're withholding the task)
- Learner starts to look when you say "You ready?"
- Learner tries to reach for (or mands) the task
- Learner protests less frequently
- Learner works more quickly

### Shea's work sessions

- Roughly 30 minutes of work sessions were observed, and were replete with instances of renegotiating, zero-second prompts that were both too intrusive and did not shape effort, self-stimulatory behavior (and other protests), and guessing. This was true though the tasks were easy and access to preferred materials was available on an FR:1 schedule.

### Data

- Date: \_\_\_\_\_
- Opp. Task Desc. +/- duration
- 1. +
- 2. -, -, + 1'29"
- 3. +
- 4. -, -, -, + 12'35"
- 5.

### Shea's data, 1<sup>st</sup> 10 tries

-10 bears, prompt every response, praise every response, not all post-mand

- Average of 3.5 failures before every success
- Average of 17 minutes from 1<sup>st</sup> try to eventual success

### Shea's data, middle 10 tries

3 bears, all post-mand, all prompted, all praised

- Ave failures before success = .5
- Ave. duration = 10 seconds

### Shea's data, last 10 tries

- 8 bears, some post-mand, some prompted, all praised
- Ave. failures before success = .25
- Ave. duration = 12 seconds

### There are NET applications

- Jon in the tub, example
- BUT, DON'T OVER-APPLY!!!!!!!
- Don't, for example, ask a kid to leave a pool then, when they refuse, say "Fine we'll wait right here until you're ready!"

### Red Flags

- A continued, frequent need to withdraw tasks.
- No decrease in duration of withholding tasks.

### Helpful Pointers

- Begin tasks when there is a relatively strong EO/MO in effect.
- Do more "post-mand" work. (Caution, recognize proactive vs. reactive!)
- Use tasks that require manipulatives, so the learner sees how much has to be done.
- If learner doesn't accept "you ready?", wait longer and longer to offer.

### Pointers, continued

- Don't use this procedure if your learner demonstrates very high rates of "stimming" without materials.
- Start with a generous schedule of reinforcement. (You need a decent ratio of successes, from the beginning.)
- Prompt quickly, as appropriate.
- Begin with tasks below the learner's ability.