



Real-World Strategies for Behavior Intervention Plans for Children with Autism

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Real-World Strategies Outline

- **Purpose of function-based treatment**
- **Basic function-based treatments for:**
 - **Attention**
 - **Escape**
 - **Tangible**
 - **Automatic**



Purpose of a Functional Approach

- **Function-based treatment: To get rid of the problem behavior and replace it with more appropriate behavior that serves the same function**
- **Knowing the cause of the problem behavior will help you eliminate it**



Basic Functional Treatments

- **We don't have time for a comprehensive workshop on function-based treatments**
- **Let's briefly hit the most basic, practical treatments**
- **Everything in applied behavior analysis comes down to reinforcing behaviors we want and not reinforcing behaviors we don't want**
- **This is called differential reinforcement of alternative behaviors (DRA)**



DRA

- **DRA procedures can be used to treat most all problem behaviors**
- **We will briefly look at DRA for each function**
- **And then briefly consider what to do when you can't implement extinction**
- **Let's look at each function...**



DRA for Attention

- **DRA is extinction for problem behavior and reinforcement for alternative behavior**
- **Extinction**
 - don't pay attention to the behavior any more
- **Train alternative behavior:**
 - Prompt alternative behavior frequently
 - Reinforce immediately and intensely
 - Fade out prompts



Tangible

- **Extinction**
 - don't ever give the client the item/activity for at least 30 seconds since the last occurrence of target behavior
- **Train alternative behavior:**
 - Prompt alternative behavior frequently
 - Reinforce immediately
 - Fade out prompts



DRA for Escape from Demands

- **Extinction**
 - Do not discontinue, postpone, or negotiate any aspect of demands contingent on target behavior
 - Demands have to continue at the same rate and difficulty as though target behavior did not occur
 - Do not decrease the number of demands when target behavior is occurring
- **2 good choices for alternative behavior:**
 - Asking for break and/or help
 - Compliance with demand



Asking for a Break

- **If this works, the client will probably not get any work done!**
- **That's fine at first, then you need to fade it out**
- **Fixed time schedule: Client needs to work for XXX seconds before asking for a break**
- **Fixed ratio schedule: Client needs to complete a certain number of demands before asking for a break**
- **Break "coupons": Give client fixed number of demand coupons, can trade them in whenever he/she wants**
- **Start easy and only fade when client is successful!**



DRA for Automatic Reinforcement

- **Extinction**

- You may or may not be able to do this
- Response blocking
 - physically prevent the response from occurring, **WITHOUT** restraining client
- Sensory extinction
 - alter the environment so that it does not produce the sensory input the child wants (pad a table so it doesn't make a banging sound when the child bangs it)



DRA for Automatic Reinforcement

- **Alternative behavior**
 - Choose something that will *become* automatically maintained once it occurs enough
- **Toy play**
- **Object manipulation**
- **Other forms of automatically reinforced behavior that are more appropriate and/or less harmful to self**



Picking Good Alternative Behaviors

- **Good alternative behaviors**
 - **Communicating for reinforcer (FCT)**
 - **Communication is good because it:**
 - **Gives the client what they wanted to begin with**
 - **Is likely to be reinforced in the client's natural environment**
- **Topographies:**
 - **Vocal, sign, card**
 - **Make it easy to be successful at first!**



Picking Good Alternative Behaviors

- **Bad choices for alternative behavior**
 - Behaviors that aren't functional or useful in the client's natural life
 - Behaviors that aren't likely to be reinforced in his/her natural life
- **Examples:**
 - Hands in pockets
 - Clasping hands together
 - Sitting on hands
 - Having "hands down"



Prompting Alternative Behavior

- **Don't prompt alternative behavior contingent on problem behavior**
- **It's okay to reinforce alternative way too much at first, then if it works, thin out reinforcement very gradually**



Without Extinction

- **Sometimes extinction is impossible**
 - **Severe SIB**
 - **Severe aggression**
 - **Any aggression to peers**
 - **Severe property destruction**
 - **PICA**
- **Tips**
 - **Minimize reinforcement for target**
 - **Maximize reinforcement for alternative**
 - **VERY frequent prompting for alternative**



Demand Fading

- ***Don't do so much work all at once***
- **Start with one demand and then a break**
- **Then increase number of demands to break gradually**



Task Modification

- **Change some aspect of the task so that work is less aversive**
 - Do easier demands
 - Intersperse maintenance tasks with acquisition tasks
 - Let client decide order of tasks
 - Do work in another location (e.g., on floor instead of at table)
 - Enrich the environment (e.g., music, preferred work materials, etc.)



“Behavioral Momentum”

- **High-P Low-P Sequence**
- **Assess which demands client complies with and do not evoke challenging behavior (“High-P”) and which are the opposite (“Low-P”)**
- **Present demands in sequences of several**
- **High-P first, then one Low-P**
- **Gives client a “running start” before presenting non-preferred tasks**
- **May help but is not good enough by itself**



Antecedent Modifications: NCR

- **When in doubt give more reinforcement!**
- **Noncontingent reinforcement (NCR) is a great supplemental antecedent manipulation**
- **Easy to implement**
- **Does not require monitoring of contingencies**
- **Decreases EO that makes reinforcement for problem behavior valuable**
- **But it's NOT a complete behavior intervention plan – it doesn't help teach adaptive behavior, in itself**



NCR for Attention

- **Give attention frequently, regardless of behavior**
- **Determine how often by seeing how often the behavior occurs in baseline**
 - **If it occurs every 5 minutes, on average, then make sure to give attention MORE frequently than that**
- **Be careful not to give attention when the behavior is actually occurring because you might accidentally reinforce it**



NCR for Tangible

- **Give frequent access to the item or activity the kid wants**
 - **Schedule it the same way as you would schedule NCR for attention maintained behavior**
 - **Example: every hour, give 5 or 10 minutes of computer time**
- **Again, watch out for adventitious reinforcement**



NCR for Demand

- **Provide frequent breaks, regardless of behavior**
 - Example: every 5 or 10 minutes, take a break
- **Generally, if the kid is doing tons of work without a break, give more breaks!!**
- **Watch out for adventitious reinforcement**
- **No bargaining with the kid! Set the rules beforehand and stick to them**
- **When the child is NOT having the behavior, allow him her to help set his own goal for the next session / day / etc.**



Evaluating Effectiveness

- **Evaluating effectiveness**
- **If the treatment is going to work, you should see a change in behavior very rapidly**
- **Do not continue to “see how it goes” for months, with no sign of behavior change**
- **If treatment is being implemented accurately, 2 weeks is plenty of time to see at least some change in behavior**



Conclusion

- **Identify function**
- **Extinction for target behavior, if possible**
- **Train a replacement**
- **Prompt replacement frequently**
- **Use LOTS of reinforcement**
- **Make alternative behavior easier than target behavior**
- **Gradually fade out contrived reinforcement**
- **Train all relevant caregivers and supervise their implementation**