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Behaviors and Functions of Behaviors



What is behavior? What is not a behavior:

According to Skinner, a behavior is “the movement of an organism or of its parts in a frame of reference provided by the organism or by various external objects or fields” (Skinner, 1938, p. 6)



What is behavior? What is not a behavior:

According to Johnston & Pennypacker, a behavior is “portion of an organism’s interaction with its environment that is characterized by detectable displacement in space through time of some part of the organism and that results in a measurable change in at least one aspect of the environment” (Johnston & Pennypacker, 1993a, p. 23).



What is behavior? What is not a behavior:

According to Cooper “Behavior is the activity of living organisms. Human behavior is everything people do, including how they move and what they say, think, and feel” (Cooper, 07/2012, p. 25)



The Dead Man Test

What is a dead man test?



The Dead Man Test

” The “Dead Man Test” Odgen Lindsley designed the “Dead Man Test” to assistance schools in deciding if they were measuring actual behaviors or states of being (like sitting quietly). The “Dead Man Test” includes BOTH **overt** and **covert** behaviors as “behaviors”.



Behaviors (A dead man can't)	Not behaviors (A dead man can)
Cry when sad - Overt	Not pay attention
Walk to Work- Overt	Not pay a phone bill
Sweat during a Test - Overt	Get wet in the rain
Think about a Song - Covert	Sit quietly
Feel Hungry - Covert	Bleed



*Skinner and Johnston & Penny packer do not consider covert behaviors as “behaviors” because there is no observable or measurable interaction with the environment. (differences in the definition of “behavior”)



REMEMBER: THE LACK OF A BEHAVIOR IS NOT A BEHAVIOR!!

The client did not turn in his homework = NOT A BEHAVIOR! (A dead man can “not turn in homework”) The client verbally and physically refused to turn in his homework = BEHAVIOR! (A dead man cannot verbally and physically refuse a task)



Response “a specific instance of a behavior”

Response Generalization

When untaught but functionally equivalent behaviors or responses are emitted instead of the taught behavior or response
E.g. You taught the client to say “Hello” when they arrive for a session. Today when they arrived for a session, the client said “Hi! How are you?”



Stimulus : Any energy change that affects the receptor cells.

Plural is stimuli- **Stimuli** are events or activities within the environment that are capable of forming relationships with behavior as either an antecedent or a consequence.



Stimulus Generalization When similar but novel/untaught stimuli evoke a taught behavior or response (relaxed stimulus control).

Example: You teach the client to say “apple” when you present a red apple. You then present a green apple; the client still says “apple”.



Discriminative Stimulus – A stimulus which signals the availability of reinforcement. In other words, a stimulus in the presence of which a specific behavior is reinforced.



Reinforcement

The principle of reinforcement is deceptively simple. "The basic operant functional relation for reinforcement is the following: When a type of behavior (R) is followed by reinforcement (SR) there will be an increased future frequency of that type of behavior. (Michael, 2004, p. 30).



Two Types of Reinforcement

- **Positive Reinforcement:** Adding a pleasant stimulus after a behavior to increase the likelihood of that behavior occurring again.
- **Negative Reinforcement:** Removing an unpleasant stimulus after a behavior to increase the likelihood of that behavior occurring again.



Punishment

Punishment- When a response is followed immediately by a stimulus change that decreases the future frequency of similar responses.



Two Types of Punishment

1. Positive Punishment: Adding an unpleasant stimulus after a behavior to decrease its occurrence.

- Example: A child touches a hot stove (behavior) and feels pain (unpleasant stimulus), making them less likely to touch the stove again.



Two Types of Punishment

2. Negative Punishment: Removing a pleasant stimulus after a behavior to decrease its occurrence.

- Example: A teenager comes home past curfew (behavior), and their parents take away their car privileges (pleasant stimulus), making them less likely to break curfew in the future.



The ABC Model

In the field of behavior analysis is used to understand and analyze the relationship between a behavior and its environmental context. Here's a breakdown of each component:

1. **Antecedent:** This is the event or stimulus that occurs before the behavior. It can trigger or prompt the behavior.
2. **Behavior:** This is the observable action or response of the individual.
3. **Consequence:** This is the event or outcome that follows the behavior. It can reinforce or discourage the behavior in the future.



The ABC Model

Examples of Behavior modification

❖ Before:

Antecedent:

The child is working on a challenging task and starts to show signs of frustration (e.g., fidgeting, sighing).

Behavior:

The child starts to throw the materials or cry.

Consequence:

The therapist immediately gives the child a break from the task.



The ABC Model

Applying the ABC Model to Modify Behavior

The goal is to teach the child to request a break appropriately rather than engaging in disruptive behavior.

Antecedent (Modification):

The therapist notices the early signs of frustration and prompts the child by saying, "If you need a break, you can say 'I need a break, please.'"

Behavior (Desired):

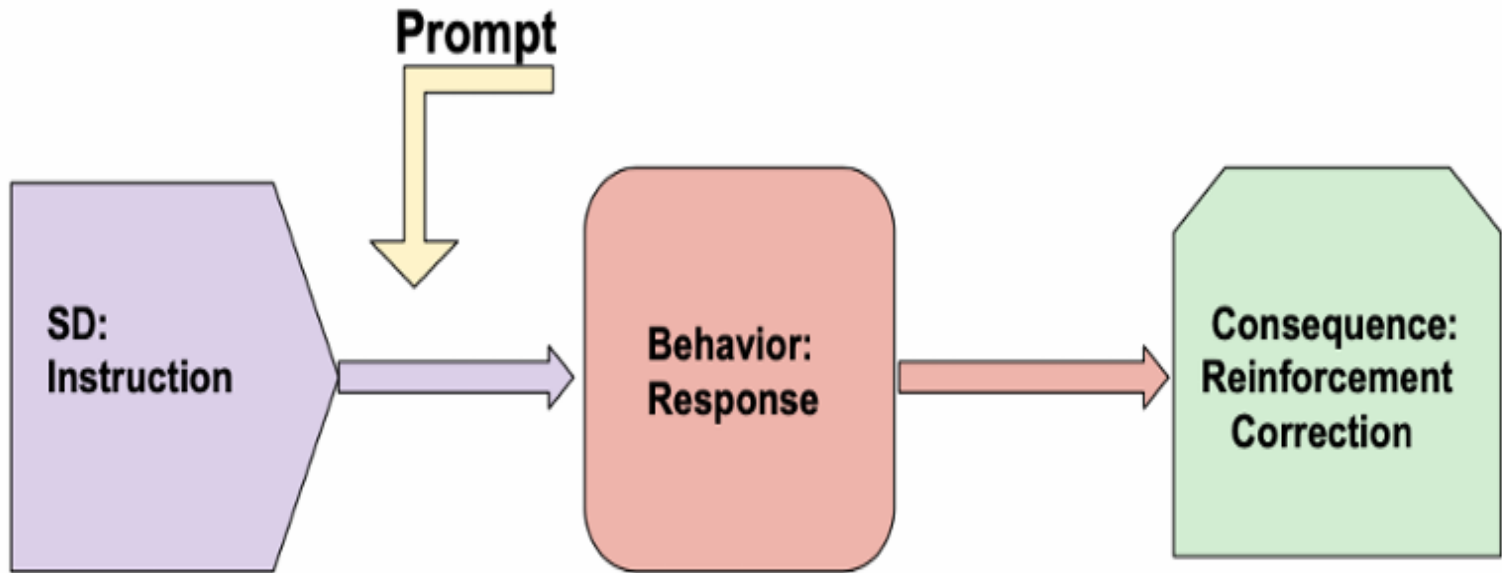
The child says, "I need a break, please," instead of throwing the materials or crying.

Consequence (Reinforcement):

The therapist immediately grants the child a break and praises them for using their words to request a break.

❖ ***(After)***





Prompts

Are antecedent stimuli that supplement SD in order to produce a specific target behavior or to get a correct response.



Types of Prompts

- **Natural Prompts** Is an environmental stimulus that naturally occurs prior to target behavior.
- **Verbal Prompts** Most common type of prompts
When gestural, modeling, and physical prompts are necessary pair these prompts with verbal prompts
- **Gestural Prompts** Refers to a simple gesture, usually a pointing prompt, that visually directs an individual in a particular direction.
- **Modeling Prompts** Consist of demonstrating part or all of the desired behavior to the student who imitates or repeats the action immediately
- **Physical Prompts** Physically guiding a child in the performance of a targeted behavior.



Purpose of Prompts

- **Teach New Skills:** Prompts are used to help individuals learn new skills by providing the necessary support to complete the task correctly.
- **Increase Independence:** Over time, prompts are gradually faded (reduced) to help individuals perform the behavior independently.
- **Reinforce Learning:** Prompts can reinforce learning by guiding the individual toward the correct response and providing opportunities for practice and reinforcement.

Prompts are essential tools in ABA to facilitate learning and skill acquisition while working toward greater independence and self-sufficiency.



Functions of Behavior

In Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), behaviors are understood to serve specific functions that can be identified and addressed to improve or modify behavior. The primary functions of behavior in ABA are:



Functions of Behavior

1. Attention

- Description: Behaviors are performed to gain attention from others, whether it's positive (praise, interaction) or negative (reprimands).
- Example: A child may act out in class to get the teacher's attention.



Functions of Behavior

2. Escape/Avoidance

- **Description:** Behaviors are used to escape from or avoid a situation, task, or demand that is perceived as unpleasant or challenging.
- **Example:** A student might refuse to complete an assignment to avoid the work or its associated stress.



Functions of Behavior

3. Access to Tangibles

- **Description:** Behaviors are exhibited to gain access to a specific item or activity.
- **Example:** A child might engage in a tantrum to get a toy they want.

4. Sensory Stimulation

- **Description:** Behaviors are performed to obtain sensory input or stimulation that is enjoyable or satisfying.
- **Example:** An individual might rock back and forth or flap their hands to provide sensory feedback to themselves.



Functions of Behavior

5. Automatic Reinforcement

- **Description:** The behavior itself is reinforcing, meaning the individual finds it intrinsically rewarding without external input.
- **Example:** A person might engage in repetitive behaviors like hand-flapping because they find it soothing or satisfying.

Understanding these functions helps behavior analysts develop targeted interventions to address challenging behaviors and promote desired behaviors effectively.



How to Collect ABC Data?



ABC CHART

Student Name: _____ School: _____ Grade: _____ Observer(s): _____

Instructions: For each instance of behavior, record the context of the behavior (date, time, designated activity, people involved, location, etc.). Also, briefly describe the antecedent, behavior, and consequence. Based on the observation of the behavior, determine a possible function of the behavior (e.g., seek attention, escape/avoid task, leave an area or person, access a preferred item, sensory consequence, avoid interruptions, communication pain/illness, etc.).

	Antecedent: What happened immediately before the behavior?	Behavior: Describe the behavior in observable terms (e.g., kicked a peer)	Consequence: What happened immediately after the behavior?	Possible Function: What is the "payoff"? Why is the behavior happening?
Date: Time: Activity: People: Place:				
Date: Time: Activity: People: Place:				
Date: Time: Activity: People: Place:				
Date: Time: Activity: People: Place:				
Date: Time: Activity: People: Place:				



□ **Some guidelines about behavior**

1. Most Behaviors Are Learned
2. Most Behaviors Are Stimulus-Specific
3. Most Behaviors can be Taught, Modified, and Change
4. Behavior Change Goals should be Specific and Clearly Defined
5. Behavior Change Programs should be Individualized
6. Behavior Change Programs Should Focus on the Here and Now
7. Behavior Change Programs Should Focus on the Child's Environment.



□ **Some misconceptions about Behavior**

1. Changing another person's behavior is Coercive
2. The use of Reinforcement to change Behavior is a form of Bribery
3. Students will Learn to Behave appropriately only for Reinforcement
4. Students should “work” for Intrinsic reinforcers
5. All students should be treated in the same way





THE **FUTURE**
BEGINS **HERE**

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For assistance:

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