

Lesson 15 Transcript  
Putting It All Together  
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OK now we've got to talk about problem behaviors or problems of learning. We want to remove and reduce the payoff for problem behaviors and then crowd out the problem behavior with or alternate behavior. So the problem behavior becomes irrelevant. I don't need to do it because I can get my reinforcement somewhere else. It's inefficient because I have another way that's easier to do it and it's ineffective because I never get reinforced for it. We've got to figure out how to make that problem behavior not work for the kid. What we can do is we can use noncontingent reinforcement which I won't go into. We increase reinforcers during high probability times. The one I really want to talk about is we can flip the reinforcer or create the fair pair. If you're going to try to get rid of a behavior, you should have an alternate behavior available to reinforce. That's a real important rule. Create the fair pair.

We do that by using functional communication. We can teach the request. Help. Look at me. How am I doing? We teach kids to recruit attention. Go ask the teacher how you're doing. Show her your paper. Hopefully the teacher doesn't say, "crummy." Hopefully the teacher says, "You're doing good." You have the kid go recruit. Ask how he's doing or I want requestings or look for things. Look at me. Watch what I can do. Help. You know all little kids, you see them do that, right? Teaching rejecting. No thank you. I want a break. Whatever. So you're teaching a escape and requesting.

So stuff to consider is they've got to be efficient, and they have to be able to accept delays and alternatives. Let me just give you an example of one here and then I'm going to show you a video tape of how we do that. We build this little diagram like this. This is that setting event I was talking about where sometimes something happens like they're tired, they're sick, something about the day went wrong, so the rest of the day is just lousy. We all have had that. Then there's a predictor.

Here's an example of a little girl where what happens is the kids come over and they try to help her. They come over to her. You know how the kids are. They want to all be little parents, little mother hens. I don't want to be sexist. They could be dad hens. They come over and they want to overly help and all this stuff. Well what this little girl says, is, "No way Jack. I'm the boss of me." So what does she do? She turns and she bites them, right? Problem behavior, bite. What does it get her? Removal of help. So what do we have here? We have the opposites. WE have help being given, help being removed. And the problem behavior is biting. So those are our opposites.

Now what are we going to do? We could put her in a headlock, give her an Indian burn, Dutch rub. We could do some really mean things to her, but we're more clever than that. We think we need a replacement behavior to get the same outcome. The desired behavior is accepts help, and the ineffective contingency is, when somebody helps you it's easier. If I help you do something, your task difficulty is reduced. Your task is easier. That's not working for us. She gets the removal of the help completely down here. She wants to do it all by herself, so we need a replacement behavior. So we get with the kids and we say, "OK kids when she says, 'myself' or 'me,' when she says that, you better book. You jump out of the way.

Because what's going to follow that is she's going to bite you." So we taught her to say, "me" or "myself". So we replace that and it got the same thing. The kids would then leave her alone. So that was a replacement for biting. Instead of biting, she could do this, and this worked for her to get the same outcome. She'll never work to this. So we built this fair pair. This is the problem behavior and is the behavior we want to increase. Does that make sense? That's a very powerful tool.

This is kind of interesting because we had a kid where we would give them a break after every time they got mad, where he got kind of mean. And their meanness was sort of low. And then we gave them a break only if they were mean or after the end of the section of 15 trials. They were mean a lot. Then we reversed it and went back and then back here. So they get a break every time they're aggressive or act out and then after the end of the session. That's the only way they get it. So then we taught them the sign, "I want break please." There's his sign usage right there. You can see the sign usage is this open dot. He does it a little bit, then it goes away. That black dot is his meanness. It escalates. So meanness escalates and sign usage goes away. Because it's a lot easier for me to just kick you and you leave than for me to go, "I want break please." What's up with that? I don't have time for that. That kicking stuff is real efficient. So then we change it to just a single word, break. There's the use of signing, and there's his aggression. It went away. Sometimes you have to think about, if the guy's going to go over there and get his Ouija board or his communicator or he's got to go to the computer and type something out to request something, or he's got to go somewhere and do this elaborate communication system, it's not going to replace the problem behavior because usually those are real efficient. They know just how to push your buttons to get out of situations. They're real good at that stuff. It's really shaped up. So that's just an example of something we did to show you that efficiency has to work every time and be easy to do.

Lastly, you're going to have to react to problem behaviors. It's not all about smiles and treats. Sometimes you have to have clear expectations. Make sure your expectations are clear. What we do for kids that run away, elopement, where they run out. Sometimes they have a lot of problems with that so what we do is we put a marker on the floor. We'll put tape on the floor and it's quite a ways from the door. It's early before they get to the door. So if they go to the line and walk away, they get a reinforcer. If they go over the line, they get in deep doo doo. Whatever that might be. We set a clear expectation. Because it's kind of unclear. What you'll find with kids that run away, is that they'll go to the door and they'll kind of push on the door, and people will not react to it. Well I don't know if he's leaving. It's kind of unclear and then finally boom he's gone. Sometimes, not having a clear expectation...the kid will test it and push the limit all the time. We try to have a clear expectation about what that limit is, so he knows what it is, because he likes consistency. Remember the physical environment is consistent, reliable, and trustworthy. You need to be the same. We just follow those same outcomes.

The first thing you can do is ignore things. You don't have to ignore the person, you can ignore the behavior. Remember Lovaas, when he was working with that little girl and she was screaming bloody murder. He didn't do anything about that. He just ignored that behavior and kept pretending that he didn't even see it. I don't see that. And you just kind of keep working through it and because of extinction, it will go away. Sometimes you can't do that because the problem behavior escalates to be too big.

The next thing you can do is give a good behavior prompt. Remember prompt that fair pair. If you're going into a situation where you know there will be a problem, prompt the good behavior. Say, "Remember to do this. Remember to ask. Remember to do something. Remember to," whatever it is. "Remember to walk. Remember to hold my hand." Whatever that expectation is.

The other thing is to just say, "No." Stand your ground. Just draw the line. Say, "No." The only thing we really ever use as a consequence is some sort of a time away. Sit away, time away. That's just anywhere from thirty seconds to a couple minutes. That doesn't have to be in the corner with a dunce hat on or something where it looks like you're a jailbird. We had one girl that what we did for time away was...if you were too obvious about it, she would come unhinged even more. So what we did is, when she was naughty or starting to act out, we'd catch her early, and we'd say, "Take this note to the secretary." So she'd go down to the secretary with the note and what does the secretary do? Wait there in that chair and I'll get back to you. Doesn't every good secretary do that? We put her on hold, right? Then we'd say, "OK take this back to class." And she'd take it back to class. We didn't go, "OK you're going to time out," and give the finger waving lecture about the whole deal. We just had her take this to the office. That's all we said. She went down there and it was time away from that area where the reinforcers are. Time away from all those reinforcers. It only had to be a few seconds or a minute or two, or something of that nature. It doesn't have to be, "Go take a break on the couch." Those are the only two consequences we use, are ignoring and time away. Then penalty which I told you about on that mountain. Where you take the toy away. You take the item away. You fall down the mountain. You start over.

If there's a crisis, you're first inclination is to do no harm. By that I mean, don't reinforce the behavior. Don't react. Don't get mad. Don't buy in to it. Try not to let the person be reinforced, but if you have a situation where you have to react, you might lose that battle, but you're not going to lose the war. Go back and regroup. Try to avoid these kinds of situations. If you have to do whatever you have to do to survive, survive, and come back later and regroup.

With that, I think I'm at the end of this thing. The pitfalls are: you want to make sure you're not giving the kids too hard of stuff, you're not criticizing too much, you're not confronting all the time, or you're misdiagnosing behaviors. When they act out you're giving them things they want. When they really want to escape, you're letting them out of a situation when they shouldn't. Whatever you're doing, you really have the hypothesis nailed down. If you go, "We're going to give time out to this kid every time he misbehaves," and really what he's acting out for is to escape, what's time out? A reward. So you might misdiagnose the behavior or you'll have staff that will be real confrontive. We have staff that have been raised, "I'm the adult and by god you mind!" That is like the death thought for some of these kids. OK do you have any questions about that?