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Positive Reinforcement: A Behavior–Management Strategy

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What Is Positive Reinforcement?

Positive reinforcement is a behavior-management strategy. The goal of positive reinforcement is to give something to somebody to make a behavior happen again. You see examples of positive reinforcement every day—a dog sits up and behaves and gets a bone; a child sits quietly in class, raises his hand to answer a question, and the teacher calls on him instead of the child shouting out; you compliment your children on what a nice job they did setting the table, and they offer to do it again the next night. These examples show how positive reinforcement can influence behavior.

You can vary how often you give positive reinforcement and what you give as positive reinforcement. These will vary for each individual. It is usually best to give positive reinforcement for good behavior as soon as you see it and not wait to give praise. With positive reinforcement you may notice more than an increase of a behavior—you may notice an increase in self-esteem, an increase in motivation, and an increase in gratitude.

Below are some ways to increase good behaviors with positive reinforcement.

Positive Reinforcement in the Classroom



1. Have a rewards chart with each student's name on it. Each time the student completes the required activity, give him/her a sticker to place by his/her name on the chart.



2. Simply say "Good Job" and smile when passing back papers and tests.



3. Compliment a student's good behavior in the classroom (e.g., "Jimmy, I really like how you're being a good listener and waiting your turn.>").

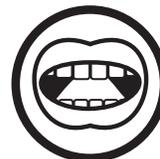


4. Create a Classroom Contract for behavior and have the students sign it.

Positive Reinforcement in the Therapy Session



1. Allow students to select the next session's activity from time to time if they follow the rules, are kind to one another, take turns, and complete all their tasks during a session.



2. Let the students earn tokens for each correct production of a target (e.g., a correct 's' sound in speech therapy or holding the pencil correctly in occupational therapy).



3. Say "I really like the way you are answering all my questions," "You are being a good listener," or "You are doing a nice job of turning the pages" when giving an assessment.



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4. Have a student be the “teacher” when he/she has mastered a certain skill and teach you and the group what he/she knows.



2. Display your child’s homework assignments and art projects on the refrigerator.

Positive Reinforcement at Home



1. Reward your child with a special treat or trip he/she likes when he/she completes a difficult task such as making the honor roll or improving a grade in a class.



3. Make your child’s favorite meal or read a favorite story to let him/her know how special he/she is to you, how you like his/her jokes, how you appreciate him/her getting along with a sibling, etc.



4. Give hugs.

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