

The Learning Curve

When a person's motivation and/or function are blocked, there is a predictable pattern of behavior, called an "extinction burst". If behavior continues to not be reinforced, the behavior will eventually extinguish. However, before the behavior reduces, it increases dramatically. It is often at the point of escalation that caregivers give the person what he/she seeks and reinforces heightened behavior.

The learning curve looks like a traditional bell curve.



When behaviors on the escalating side of the bell curve are reinforced, the escalation of behavior stops. The person is getting what they wanted. It is only when the person is blocked from getting the desired outcome that behavior escalates to the point of a "rage burst".

Communication:

When a person can communicate wants/needs, and those items are provided, there would be no cause for an extinction burst. If caregivers can "read" the wants and/or needs of the person and provides those items, there is no cause for an extinction burst.

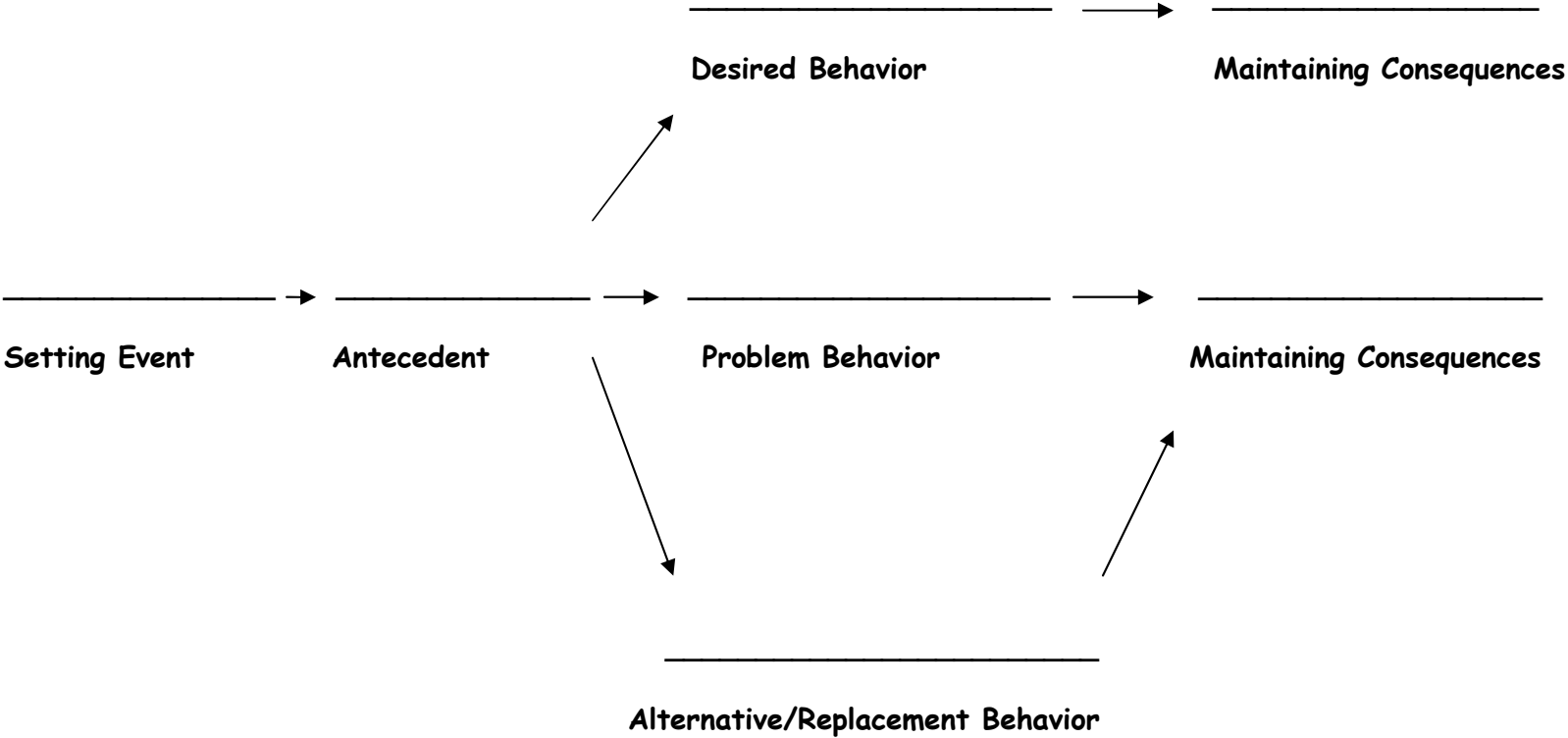
However, if the motivation of a person's behavior is for other than reasonable items or events (available levels of attention, pleasant surroundings, good tasting foods, fun activities), the provision of those reasonable outcomes do not resolve behavior. Rage bursts continue to occur. The frequency, duration, and intensity of the rage bursts are out of proportion to the environmental stimuli. When this occurs, two behavioral explanations should be considered.

1. Has the person been given desired outcomes at the height of escalation? This would indicate that the repertoire has been learned.
2. Has the person been given reasonable access to desired items/events? If so, and rage bursts persist, a communication deficit alone is likely not a sufficient explanation.

Positive Probe:

Teach the person a simple behavior that is in their skill repertoire to acquire a desired item. Shape the alternative behavior by providing the item based only on the taught behavior (e.g. raise hand). If the person initiates the taught behavior to acquire the item, a communication deficit is likely a basis for problem behaviors.

BIP PATHWAYS DESIGN



Skill Deficits that contribute to the problem behavior:

- 1. _____.
- 2. _____.

1. At the Antecedent Level, the following prompts/cues will be used to encourage the replacement behavior:
2. When the student demonstrates an alternative/replacement behavior, the following positive consequences will be implemented:
3. When the student demonstrates the problem behavior, the following corrective consequences will be implemented (reactive):
4. The following teaching strategies will be implemented to correct skill deficits that contribute to the problem behavior:

LINKING THE ABC DATA TO FUNCTION: COMMON SEQUENCES

Target Behavior:

Number of Observations:

Dates:

Antecedent	Consequence	Presumed Function	TOTAL
Demand/Work	Break/removal	Escape/Avoid	
No Attention	Interaction	Attention	
Student Request	Request Denied	Tangible	
Peer Provoke	Peer Responds	Attention/Control	
Nothing	Nothing	Sensory	
Teacher Correction/Re-direct	Interaction	Stress/Control	
Confrontation	Staff Walks Away	Escape	

Presumed Function:

1. _____
2. _____

Comments:

➤ ESCAPE EXTINCTION

- **What it is:** Extinction refers to both a process and an intervention. In this case, we are referring to an intervention that results in the reduction and cessation of a behavior.
- **Escape** refers both to a function or motivation of a behavior and an action or attempted action.
- **Escape extinction** refers to an intervention in which escape is blocked. The student is not allowed to escape from a task or condition.
- **Escape extinction** is a powerful tool in reducing a class of problematic behaviors.
- **Escape behaviors** can be topographically dissimilar, thus they could include any behaviors that tend to bring an end to a demand. These include but are not limited to hitting, pulling away, screaming, throwing items, spitting, pica, self-injury, crying, vomiting, and anything else that has resulted in the delay or end of a demand or removal from a situation.
- **Reduce language.**

HOW TO DO IT:

1. A stimulus condition is presented.
2. The child exhibits a problem behavior.
3. The stimulus condition/demand is not removed. The teacher continues to hold the stimulus in the same position.
4. Behavior is overridden. Problem behavior may be blocked but the stimulus continues to be presented.
5. As soon as the child responds to the stimulus, it is removed.
6. A positive contingency may be added as well (access to preferred item).

SHAPING

Shaping is a method of reinforcing approximations of behavior toward an objective goal. It is a system that builds a skill; this is often a better way to address problem behavior because you are replacing a deficit or a bad habit with a skill. It is especially powerful if you teach a replacement behavior that is incompatible with the problem behavior.

1. Write up the target behavior in observable, measurable terms.
2. Consider an opposite behavior that could replace the target. For example, 'Blurting Out' can be replaced with 'Quietly Raise Hand', or 'Stays quiet for 5 minutes'.
3. Divide the replacement behavior into tiny steps. For example, 'stays quiet for 5 seconds' may have to be the starting place.
4. Select a reinforcer that can be applied in the instant following the replacement behavior.
5. Continue to increase the steps toward the goal very gradually, and based on success. The biggest reason for failure of shaping programs is moving too quickly.
6. Maintain success when the student has reached the goal by continuing to present the reinforcer on an intermittent basis.

DIFFERENTIAL ATTENTION

Use only for behaviors that are NOT a safety risk or intrusive to other students.

- 1. As soon as the target behavior is emitted (annoying but not harmful behavior), shift your eye gaze and body slightly away from the student.**
- 2. Do not speak to the student, or reference his/her behavior in any way.**
- 3. Monitor the student subtly.**
- 4. As soon as the student stops the target behavior, or initiates a much lower level of the behavior, return your attention to him/her.**
- 5. Give the student a lot of attention when the student is emitting an appropriate behavior.**
- 6. Make sure that there is an obvious contrast between attention and no attention.**
- 7. Be aware that behavior tends to escalate when the student is not receiving the desired results, so be prepared for the escalation. If the escalation can not be ignored, it is better to avoid this technique altogether and opt for modified differential attention or overriding instead.**

MODIFIED DIFFERENTIAL ATTENTION

- 1. When the student emits the target behavior, instead of shifting your attention away from the student, acknowledge the student in a non-committal, neutral manner (“neutral acknowledgement”). Say, “oh,” or “hmm”, nod and say, “I hear you...” or just nod as though you are listening but not agreeing or disagreeing.**
- 2. When the student’s behavior shifts to a more appropriate response, increase the vitality of your response; appear more interested, impressed, and focused.**



CHICAGO BEHAVIOR CONSULTANTS, Inc.

1945 West Wilson Ave., Suite 2117 Chicago, IL 60640-5256
PHONE: 773.769.9170 FAX: 773.769.9215
EMAIL: chicagobehavior@sbcglobal.net

Alice Belgrade, M.S. Ed., L.C.P.C., B.C.B.A.

James L. Lawyer, L.C.S.W., D.C.S.W.

COMPLIANCE SHAPING

Key factors:

1. The child's state of deprivation or satiation when the direction is given
2. The child's momentary motivation (to get something, avoid something, change something)
3. The amount of effort required to follow the direction
4. The child's perception of time (influences choice making and self-control)
5. The child's attention control
6. The value of the outcome (size, quality, immediacy of reinforcers available contingent on compliance)

METHOD:

- **CONTROL THE RESOURCES!** This means that everything your child uses and values must be carefully presented or withheld in order to bring out the best in your child. This is the underpinning of *SHAPING*.
- **PRESENT THE 'MOMENTS OF JOY'** (see handout) frequently based on cooperation, kindness, and increasing effort.
- **APPLY ESCAPE BLOCKING** technique consistently.

SHAPING THE SKILL:

1. Start with 'Inhibition Shaping'
2. Add time according to the Shaping Schedule
3. Move on to 'Sneaky Compliance' when your child reaches 10 seconds consistently on the shaping schedule for waiting ('Inhibition Shaping')
4. Add 'First...Then' directions when your child can follow 5 sneaky directions.
5. Use 'Escape Blocking' when your child is oppositional to a direction.

MOMENTS OF JOY

1. Set up a back table with an experiment of the week, such as magnets, simple machines, silly putty and newspaper, lava lamp, static electricity lamp (turn it on, touch it and it looks like rays of lightning), heavy/light objects to float in water, moon sand, etc. When given a "break" any child may be sent to the table to try an experiment.
2. clacking teeth on your desk for a few seconds.
3. silly putty, clay, goo, etc.
4. stamp on your hand
5. pin wheel
6. confetti thrown on you
7. tell a joke or riddle
8. do a 1 minute show and tell
9. be 'first' for something
10. show the class a magic trick
11. tickle (you can buy those hand held massagers)
12. treat (peanut-free)
13. have a trophy on your desk for a period (remove it if inappropriate behavior occurs)
14. special job such as the announcer, or the person to call on others
15. view master
16. spin a wheel and each color or number gives you something different
17. silly string (not to everyone's liking, but works well, especially at the end of the day)
18. free time (read your own book, do a hand puzzle, such as rubik's cube, play a quick game with a friend who has completed his work, such as tic tac toe)
19. make a wish on a magic 8 ball
20. treasure hunt (hide a small object, such as toy dinosaur somewhere in the room and he has 1 minute to find it)
21. stream of bubbles
22. spinning in the air, or on a spinning chair
23. visual activation toys
24. enclosed hand basketball game (a big favorite)
25. taking photos with a digital camera

Happily EVER after...

How can we help our children work happily at the table? The answer lies in understanding the nature of reinforcement. Children seek pleasure, excitement, stimulation and mastery. When a child refuses to come to the table to learn, throws his materials, engages in self injurious or aggressive behavior, self-stimulates, acts silly or hides, he is telling us that the task is too boring or too hard. Anything that gets him away from the table is worth trying! Based on the work of B. F. Skinner, researchers have devised a system of bringing our children back to the table to learn. Here is a simple way to remember the basic elements:

- E:** embed the reinforcers. Associate coming to the table with things the child loves. Bring the toys/music/videos, etc to the table and present rewards without demands. Gradually slip in a small part of the task. Reinforce immediately and at a high rate. Slip in more a bit at a time. Slowly, increase the task between presentations of the reinforcer. When the child starts acting disinterested, read the clues! She is telling us that the value of the reward just isn't worth the effort.
- V:** vary the tasks and the reinforcers. Present only a few samples of one task, then move to something different. Mix up pictures with songs, mimetics, manipulables, objects, games, and go back to pictures. Vary between expressive and receptive tasks, numbers, gross and fine motor, etc. Vary the reinforcers to avoid boredom.
- E:** errorless teaching! This means that your child can virtually never make a mistake. After a question, wait only a few seconds for your child's answer. If she doesn't respond quickly, provide the answer, by pointing, gesturing, or verbalizing the correct answer. Then, ask again without the prompt. Return to this question later, without providing the answer. If she gets it right, great! If not, give the answer and make a note to teach this target later. Remember, not knowing the answers is frustrating, and our children will do anything to avoid it!
- R:** reinforce at the table. This means that you associate rewards with being at the table. When breaks move the child away from the table, she learns that all the fun happens *away* from the table and *away* from learning!