

## **Reinforcement**

**Reinforcement** *occurs when a consequence to a behavior makes it more likely that behavior will happen again.*

- Simple example: Making eye contact when someone is talking to you. Saying “Good” when a child starts to tie her shoe.
- Reinforcers may be tangible (e.g. stickers, food, games, money, access to friends, privileges) or intangible (praise, attention, showing interest, encouragement)
- Social reinforcers usually work best!

## **Positive Reinforcement**

- First identify the behavior you want the child to learn.
- Know what motivates your child (which reinforcers work well).
- Break down the behavior into parts or steps.
- Reinforce each step separately until the sequence is complete (shaping).

## **Negative Reinforcement**

**Negative reinforcement** *occurs when an action stops a painful or obnoxious experience.*

- Actions that stop irritants become habit forming.
- Examples: Raising your voice when a child becomes irritating, yelling at a child when she argues
- Knowing when to stop lecturing to gain compliance

## **Linkage**

- Linkage means before you give in to a request from your child link it to something you have previously asked the child to do for you.
- Also known as contingency management, linkage works best when your child has failed to follow your request.
- Example: Luis has not done any of his chores all week. Luis asks Mom if he can spend the night at Carlos’ house. Mom responds, “Finish what you were supposed to do this week and then come back and ask me.”

## **Punishment**

**Punishment** is any action that suppresses or dampens a behavior. Such actions are unpleasant, irritating or painful

- Know what is painful to your child
- Effective punishments include temporarily restricting access to desired activities, persons, or things; menial chores
- Punishment is effective at suppressing unwanted behavior.

## **Problems with Punishment**

- Children build up a tolerance to pain that can cause punishment to escalate to the point of becoming abusive (name-calling, slapping, hitting).
- Its effects are temporary. That is, it stops the child's behavior only briefly, so that the same behavior will crop up again once the punishment is lifted or the punisher is not around.
- Punishment doesn't teach the child any new behaviors.
- Punishment leads to escape conditioning, whereby the child looks for any means to avoid the punishment, which sometimes leads to desperate actions, including aggression..

## **Problems with Grounding**

- Often lasts too long to be effective as a punishment
- Requires much time and effort to enforce.
- Vulnerable to "exceptions" which open the door to arguments.

## **Extinction**

**Extinction** is the *removal of reinforcement*, which is ultimately followed by a lessening of the behavior that was previously reinforced.

The first time you stop reinforcing a behavior after a history of reinforcing it, the behavior you are trying to extinguish actually gets worse!

## **Time Out**

**Time Out** is the *removal of a child from reinforcement for a specified period of time*.

Because it forces the child to leave a desired space or activity, Time Out is also a kind of punishment for the child

## **Rules for Time Out**

1. Time Out should only last long enough to stop the disruptive behavior. Five to ten minutes is sufficient for most children.
1. Like other forms of punishment, Time Out does not teach the child how to behave but merely stops the action altogether and gives the various players time to calm down and try something different.
1. Time Out is not effective if it is accompanied by a lot of attention from the parent (yelling, lecturing, explaining). It requires separating the child from the parent as well as from other children.
1. Time Out loses its effectiveness if the parent forgets the time.