



Promoting Positive Behaviour in Young People

Jennifer Sheridan MSc, BCBA
 Director of Behavioural and Educational Services
 Positive Behaviour Ireland

What do we mean by positive behaviour?

- This term has various aliases
 - Adaptive behaviour
 - Appropriate behaviour
 - Typical behaviour
 - Good behaviour
 - Compliance/ cooperative

But what does it all mean?

Ask Ourselves

- What is the most effective thing we can teach young people in order to maximise their potential?
- What is the most adaptive/ appropriate/ typical/ good/ compliant/ cooperative thing we have learned?

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Choice!

- The one thing that affects all of the things we decide to do is the ability to make positive choices.
- Our independence and the ability to direct our own future is what we value
- This starts out as a baby with “I do it myself!” “Why?” and “Don’t want to!” and is in full flight during teenage rebellion

Choice as a right

- The right to eat too many donuts and take a nap (Bannerman et al., 1990)
 - Paper outlined the delicate balance between the right to habilitation and the individual’s right to make their own daily decisions
 - Freedom and choice seems to play an important role in the individual’s successful functioning
 - ABA literature argues that choice is not free, but acknowledges that it is extremely valued by many people

Choice as a right

- Potential Issues:
 - Typically, those who have the freedom to make choices have a large repertoire of skills and are aware of long term implications of their behaviour
 - E.g. unhealthy options, sick days
 - Intensive teaching can be required for people with developmental delays to enable them to make these larger decisions, but we can still incorporate as much choice as possible
 - E.g. Maybe can’t give choice over whether to get dressed or not, but can give choice on what clothes to wear

Choice as a right

- Potential Benefits
 - People with DD have the same rights as other citizens, and everyone has the ability to make some choices.
 - Ability to make choices can prepare individuals to live in the community, leading to a more normalised lifestyle
 - Research shows that people prefer situations where they have choice, choice rarely proves to be detrimental



Research

- Dunlap et al (1994) found that choice of academic tasks reduced disruptive behaviour and increased task engagement for two young people with behaviour disorders.
- Koegel et al (1987) found that social avoidance behaviour in a child with autism was reduced when the child was allowed to select an activity himself.



More Research

- Tiger et al (2006) isolated the act of choosing as a reinforcer.
 - To make sure it was choice itself that was the reward, not choosing a more preferred reward
 - Children had choice of different coloured worksheets, the reward for completing these was one red m&m given by the teacher, or one m&m from a plate with five m&m's
 - Reward was the same – one red m&m
 - All children consistently chose the worksheet paired with the choice of m&m's



Research Contd.

- Pushing choice further
 - Would the children continue to prefer the choice as a reward if they had to work harder for it?
 - Yes – even if they had to complete up to 32 worksheets! (32 was maximum)
 - All children continued to select the choice link even when the work required in the choice link was much greater than that arranged in the no choice link
 - So how can we incorporate more change into daily life for young people?



Daily Decisions

- It can be argued that all behaviour is a choice – to do something rather than something else
- For people who need more exposure to decisions, we need to make this more explicit
- Clothing, menu planning, deciding when to do homework, activities to attend, subject choices, tv programmes
- Not necessarily completely open choices, even choice between two things can be very effective

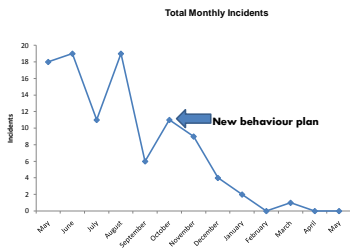


Case Study: Michael

- Michael is a 12 year old boy in full time residential care
- Foster placement broke down due to extreme challenging behaviour
- Displays pronounced lack of social skills and empathy, has long gaps in education, reading difficulties, control and anger management issues, lack of social norms, didn't value social praise, very little cooperation, no reasoning skills
- Behaviour change programme designed to primarily target physical challenging behaviour, but some smaller less direct parts of the programme had hugely positive effects.



Reduce challenging behaviour



Analysis

- Previous behaviour management plan unchanged since May, some token and points systems in place but not applied consistently and not effective
- Began analysing the data in October and changes made mid October – decrease in incidents in September due to starting school
- Incidents were decreasing, but too slowly for such dangerous behaviour and pattern of controlling behaviour in the car leading to incidents was emerging
- Tried to control all caregivers, plans for the day, directions drove in car, music played, windows etc

New Programme

- Functional Assessment interviews carried out with staff, analysis of previous incidents to identify functions and triggers, review of daily logs, informal interview with Michael
- Found that sanctions given were not consistent, depended on staff working at the time and their view of the seriousness of incidents
- Due to nature of challenging behaviour, and failure of previous programme, we implemented a consistent system where access to tv and computer was contingent on appropriate behaviour, and so removed access to these for 24 hours following an incident
- When behaviour was incident free, had access to these items

New Programme

- As TV was highly valued, it would be a huge change for Michael, critical to help him choose more positive behaviours
- Provided many opportunities to be rewarded for this – new behaviour contract, new points system, new token system with 'surprises' incorporated, more choice in rewards and more visual prompts – rewards far outweighed any sanctions
- Analysed previous points system – tasks had become too easy so combined these into larger ones, Michael could choose which tasks he would complete, but could only do each once

New Programme

- Put in new token system to earn school trip, targeted behaviours that were not of immediate concern, but that all caregivers agreed they would like to see increased
- If an incident did occur, these concurrent programmes ensured that Michael could still contact reinforcement
- Again, Michael could choose which tasks to complete, but some tasks were worth more tokens, to encourage him to choose these

Good Behaviour Contract

- Started with a target of 14 days incident free, to earn a Sky box
- Took two months to earn this, came very close on a number of occasions, contract was reset if there was an incident
- Completed this first contract at Christmas – made the staff very happy!
- Gradually increased the length of the contract up to one month
- Extremely proud of himself, responded to the praise, encouragement and pride of staff also

Behaviour that increased

- Behaviours targeted by token programme increased and became incorporated into daily routines.
- One behaviour that became naturally rewarding was reading with staff, Michael would never read out loud before this, earned tokens for it, then asked to read with staff every night before bed – still does this now even though no token system in place
- This has helped his reading ability, relationship with staff, and bedtime routine
- Staff gave very positive feedback on this aspect of the programme



Extra reinforcers identified

- Michael now responds to social praise as it was always paired with his tangible rewards
- Asks staff if they are proud or disappointed
- Finished a full year in school and had award ceremony!
- Earned his school trip
- Small surprises were very powerful rewards for Michael – used this as a reward on another programme targeting personal hygiene

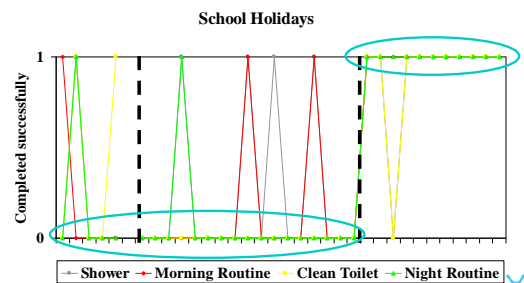


Personal Hygiene

- After analysing data, found that personal hygiene routine not completed on weekends and school holidays
- Very poor hygiene over Christmas, so during Easter holidays had a surprise box for completing routine, very inexpensive items
- Extremely effective, now cooperates with hygiene routine
- Now takes more pride in appearance, electric toothbrush, hair gel, more haircuts
- Again, shows how to encourage positive choices, also once the behaviour has gained momentum, can talk about it more easily – why we have hygiene etc.



Data for Unstructured Days



Services at PBI

- Small group supported study evenings
- ABA Training courses for staff and parents
- Centre Based Home Tuition
- Behaviour assessment and support
- Incredible Years Parenting course
- Possible summer camp week
- Contact jennifer.sheridan@pbireland.ie 087-2466-246

