



Applications of Punishment

Psychology 390
Psychology of Learning
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Applications of Punishment

- Many types of applications
 - Social Reprimands
 - Response Cost techniques
 - Points at beginning of day
 - Token Economies
 - Group Contingencies
 - Time Out
 - Isolation TO
 - Exclusion TO
 - Non Exclusion TO

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Social Reprimands

- Are expressions of disapproval.
- Does not include body language or intensity.
- Is a problem for teachers.
 - Usually give more reprimands (usually ineffectively as well) than reinforcers.

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- Examined students in grades 1-12.
- Found,
 - After grade two, in every class, reprimands excluded praise.
 - Teachers gave at least one reprimand every two minutes.
 - Often teachers gave more reprimands to students in “low ability classes” than “high ability classes.”

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Factors that Influence Reprimands

- Verbal and non-verbal behavior
- Verbal content
- Proximity
- Immediacy
- Intensity
- Firmness of voice
- Backup punishers
- Praise for alternative behaviors.

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Verbal and Non-Verbal Behavior

- Verbal content can have an effect.
- Using eye contact grasping the arm or shoulder markedly increases the effectiveness.
 - Depends on the setting and age of the person
 - School
 - Home
- Don't need to yell – use your normal voice.

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Studies

- Using verbal alone takes 4-7 times for a behavior change.
- Verbal + non-verbal only takes 1-2 times for behavior change.

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Verbal Content

- Specifically Define the Target Behavior.
- Johnny or Susie stop that = poor.
- Johnny or Susie stop talking = better.
- Johnny or Susie stop talking and work on your math = best.

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Proximity

- Closer you are when giving the reprimand, the greater the decrease in the behavior.
- 1 yard vs. 10 yards.

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Immediacy

- The faster the reprimand is given following the response, the greater the response suppression.
- Problem
 - If reprimanding all the time – organisms go on extinction.

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Intensity

- More intense the reprimand (loudness), the more effective the suppression.
- Note: Reprimands do not need to be loud to be effective.

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Firmness of Voice

- Use a “I Mean Business” tone.
- Firmness is very important.

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Backup Punishers

- When paired with backup punishers, reprimands can be very effective.

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Praise for Alternative Behaviors

- When you use praise for alternative behaviors, reprimands become more effective.

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Response Cost Techniques

- Is a procedure where positive reinforcers are removed contingent upon the occurrence of a specific behavior.
- Results in a decrease in the future probability of a behavior.
- Generally, involves removing something positive based on the occurrence of an undesirable behavior.

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Three Variations

1. Give points at the beginning of a day and points are removed based on the occurrence of an undesirable behavior.
E.g., give a therapist money.
 - Money is given to a group the client hates for the non-occurrence of a behavior.
 - Missed meetings
 - Data not filled out
 - Failure to meet target goals.

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2. Token Economies

- Remove tokens for inappropriate behavior.
- Can cause protests from the person having tokens removed.

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Group Contingencies

- Divide people into small groups and give points for inappropriate behavior.
- Fewest points at the end of the day gets some privilege.

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Problems with Response Cost

1. If the organism can escape from the procedure, then response cost will not be effective.
2. In token economies, a large increase of response cost procedures may decrease its effectiveness.
3. Low magnitude response cost procedures will be ineffective if preceded by high magnitudes of response cost.

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Problems with Response Cost

4. Increase of inappropriate behaviors.
 - Sometimes people will refuse to pay the fine and accumulate large debts.
 - Need to have backup reinforcers and punishers.
5. Ceases to be effective when the person runs out of tokens or money.
 - Then you can use another procedure such as Time Out

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Advantages

- Is effective in many settings.
- Is essentially neutral.
 - In social situations, response cost techniques usually do not trigger protests by special interest groups.
- Does not cause physical harm.
- When used in a token economy system, it necessitates few changes.
- It does not take the person out of an ongoing situation like timeout.

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Major Points to Note

- It can be very effective if used correctly.
- It can become overly punitive when overused by the staff.
- **THIS PROCEDURE CAN DESTROY A TREATMENT PROGRAM IF DONE INCORRECTLY.**

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Time Out

- Three Major Types
 - Isolation
 - Exclusion
 - Non-Exclusion

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Isolation

- Organism is isolated from the source of the reinforcement.
 - Put the person in another room.
- **NOTE: Isolation does not equal Seclusion or Solitary Confinement such as placing the person in a dark closet.**

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Exclusion

- Person is isolated but not removed from the area of reinforcement.
- Put kid facing a corner or behind a screen separate from their peers.
 - Child is excluded from their peers or activities but remains in class.

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Non-Exclusion

- Participation in a activity is lessened but not eliminated.
 - E.g., Contingent Observation
 - Person sits on the periphery of the activity and observes appropriate social behavior before rejoining the group.
 - Combines Time Out with Modeling

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Points to Note

1. Time out is not extinction.
2. Key – Place the kid in a less reinforcing environment.
 - Must be a distinct difference between Time in and Time out.
3. "Removal of reinforcement is aversive for every individual across all contexts" is not an accurate statement.
One person's punishment may be another's reinforcement.

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Important Parameters for Time Out

- Giving explanations does not increase the effectiveness of the time out.
 - Long discussions may actually be reinforcing.
 - May actually decrease the effectiveness of the timeout.
- Warnings can increase the effectiveness if combined with timeout.
 - Have a 5-10 second grace period.
 - E.g., "You are not supposed to be doing ____"

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Scale

Most to Least Extreme

- Seclusion Put in a bare room.
- Exclusion Put in another part of a room.
- Contingent Observation.
 - Removes the child to the periphery of the activity. Kid observes others.
- Removal of reinforcement.
 - Take away the stimulating event.
- Ignore the person.
 - 5 sec. – 3 hours
 - Problem, the longer the duration, the more self stimulation or aggression may occur.

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Duration of Time Out

- Variety may be effective - seconds to hours.
 - Generally, the longer the duration, the more suppression of the behavior.

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Two General Rules

- Avoid durations that are in excess of what is necessary to decrease the behavior.
 - Try to keep the organism in the learning environment as long as possible.
- Avoid inadequate or excessive durations that may increase the behavior.