

Techniques Parents Can Use to Address Connection Seeking Behaviors

By Freddie Barahona MFT



About Me

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-Graduated with an M.A. in Counseling Psychology from the California Institute of Integral Studies in 2013

-Worked as a behavioral coach for high-risk youth, psychotherapist, hypnotherapist

-Currently the Mental Health Specialist at La Familia Counseling Center, Cultura y Bienestar and Hayward Promises Neighborhoods



Who Is This Presentation For?

- Parents with children 5-17 years old
- Counselors/coaches
- Anyone curious about psychology and human behavior



Source: <https://rolandoforispeaks.wordpress.com/2016/01/07/where-our-parents-got-it-wrong-the-two-fatal-errors-in-african-parenting/>

Disclaimer

- The information presented today is not a substitute for psychological treatment
- I will present basic knowledge aimed at helping you to evaluate your own approaches
- Feel free to put questions in the chat and there will be time for more questions at the end of the presentation

The Role Of Culture

- For the purpose of this presentation, culture is the experience, values, presentation and spirit of a particular group of people. Within one major culture there can be microcultures
- Many of the studies cited here have the bias of upper middle class Caucasian researchers
- The behavioral principles can be found in all cultures and it is up to us to consider our culture with regards to parenting

Goals For This Presentation

- Define Behaviorism
- Name 1 or 2 behavioral strategies for starting behaviors
- Name 1 or 2 behavioral strategies for stopping behaviors
- Loosen up and laugh a little because parenting is a full time job!!!

How to Train Your Kid? Or Kid Trains You?



Definition for Behaviorism

- The theory that human and animal behavior can be explained in terms of conditioning, without appeal to thoughts or feelings, and that psychological disorders are best treated by altering behavior patterns
- Treatment using the practical application of the theory of behaviorism

Source: Oxford Languages

A Brief History of Behaviorism

-**Pavlov** (1897) published the results of an experiment on conditioning after originally studying digestion in dogs.

-Radical behaviorism was founded by **B.F Skinner** and agreed with the assumption of methodological behaviorism that the goal of psychology should be to predict and control behavior.

-**Bandura** (1963) publishes a book called the *Social Learning Theory and Personality development* which combines both cognitive and behavioral frameworks.

Source: <https://www.simplypsychology.org/behaviorism.html>

The 3 Major Types of Behavioral Learning

Classical Conditioning



A neutral stimulus is associated with a natural response

Operant Conditioning



A response is increased or decreased due to reinforcement or punishment

Observational Learning



Learning occurs through observation and imitation of others

verywell

Source: <https://www.verywellmind.com/learning-study-guide-2795698>

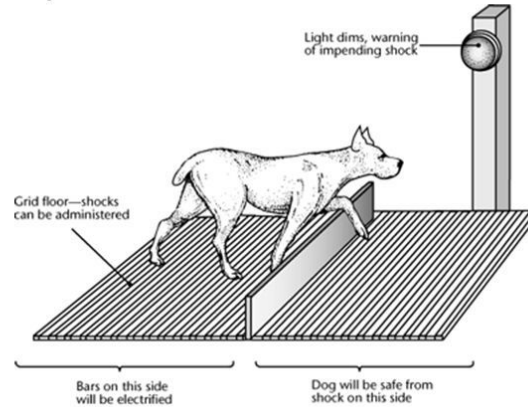
What Doesn't Work?

- Insanity: Doing the same thing over and over expecting the same result!!!
- Yelling excessively, insulting, hitting
- Being inconsistent
- Saying one thing but doing another "Do as I say not as I do"
- Withholding empathy and warmth

Learned Helplessness – Martin Seligman

- Dogs in electrified cage at first not able to escape the impending shock.
- Later, all they had to do was cross to the other side but they didn't even try.

• The dogs had learned they were “helpless” to avoid the shock and just sat there and took it without trying to escape.



Source: <https://medium.com/@briangoosen/understanding-learned-helplessness-66e0da746bdf>

So What Does Work?

-Reinforcement and consequences: Positive means you add something and negative means you take away something

-Positive reinforcement could be adding a compliment **immediately after** the child finishes their homework

-Negative reinforcement could be taking away a chore or something undesirable such as taking medication to eliminate a headache.

-Positive punishment is adding an undesired consequence immediately after an undesired behavior, such as giving a child a time out for hitting a sibling.

-Negative Punishment is taking away something such as taking away phone privileges for child using it in class

Examples of Reinforcement

- Praise
- Attention (both desirable and undesirable)
- gifts
- money
- shared time



Examples of Consequences

- Natural consequences such as a parking ticket or a fine
- Planned Ignoring
- Take away a device
- giving more chores
- time out/in



Source: <https://raisingchildren.net.au/pre-teens/behaviour/behaviour-management-ideas/discipline>

So Which Strategy Should I Use?

-Depends on the type of behavior. Is this one you want them to keep doing or one in which you would like for them to stop?

-What the research suggests is that the most effective strategy for starting behaviors is positive reinforcement and for stopping behaviors it is negative punishment

-Consider the following: Would my child be more motivated to do his/her chores by me giving them extra allowance or taking away their phone? Every child may be different but in general the former has more success

Preparing For The Training

- Pick one behavior that you would like to work on: hitting, tantrums, swearing, avoidance of homework, etc
- Pick two behaviors that the child is already doing well such as brushing their teeth, getting to school on time, playing calmly with their siblings, etc
- Ask yourself is the behavior I want them to work on a start or stop behavior? That will determine which strategies to do
- With the behaviors that they are doing well, increase the positive attention given. For example praise them for playing well with their sibling or getting to school on time

Adjusting for Age

-Dr. Thomas Phelan mentions the rule of dictatorship to democracy. When the child is young the parent needs to be more stern and demanding. As the children become adolescents, parents would benefit from learning to negotiate to prepare them to be adults.

-For example with young children your tone of voice and words need to be clear and simple. If unsure use the 8 second rule where if you have to explain things for longer than that you need to try again. Use of “I” statements can help... “When you hit your sister I feel angry and I need to give you a time out”...

Freedom Of Choice

-For stop behaviors be prepared to give 2-3 choices as a replacement for undesirable behaviors. “You can either go to your room for 10 minutes, do your time out here for 10 minutes, or practice taking deep breaths when you are upset”

-More than 3 choices can feel overwhelming and is not as effective

-For very severe behaviors that would endanger the child, a stronger intervention may be needed. I.e. self-injurious behaviors, danger to others, and the list goes on

Negotiating Choices With Teens



Negotiation Tips

- Be aware of what you are willing to loosen up on such as more rewards or less bedtime
- Think of what skills the teen learns from being able to negotiate with you (salary negotiations, courtroom negotiation, etc)
- Also teaches that although some things are negotiable, not all are.

Common Mistakes

-Lack of consistency with new interventions. In my practice I hear it when parents say “Mr. Freddie we tried that but little Jose would not listen”...

-Too much talking/emotions and not enough action. This can be tough for some parents who do not have a healthy outlet to express their frustration. Phrases like “You always” or “You never” start us off on that unhealthy path

-Waiting until behaviors are more severe. The progress of escalation might be anger, defiance, yelling, screaming, and finally hitting. Do not wait until your child starts to become dysregulated to enact a consequence.

Case 1:

Jaime is a 10 year old boy who loves playing on his phone at all hours of the night. Consequently he has not been doing well in school and falls asleep intermittently while in class. Jaime lives with his single mother and has not seen his father for several years now. When not in trouble, Jaime enjoys playing soccer with his friends, spending time with mom shopping, and taking his dog for a walk. Jaime's mother reports that in her culture, spending time with family by going to church is very important. As a consultant, what would you suggest to this family using appropriate behavior principles, assuming that this family shares your cultural background? Hint: Think about what would motivate this client and what limits need to be set.

Possible Suggestions for Jaime

- Limits on phone time (1.5 hrs max after homework is done)
- more one -on-one time with caregiver doing activities that are child-directed
- Jaime could earn time at the park if he does his homework
- Having church members praise the child for his progress (positive reinforcement)

Case 2

Renee is a sixteen year old female and only child, who does well in school but reports feeling very depressed. She lives with her mother and father who reported that they wish she would call her friends more and socialize. Renee is an avid reader, loves art, poetry, and nature. Renee's parents report that they themselves don't have much extended family nearby and that they all mostly keep to themselves. Renee reports that she identifies herself as a "citizen of the world" who wishes to travel someday. As a consultant, what kind of behavioral principles can you suggest to help Renee feel motivated, assuming that you share a culture with this family? Hint: Think about what types of relationships might help Renee feel more connected to others.

Possible Suggestions With Renee

- Find peer support group that will validate Renee's experience as an adolescent and reinforce socialization
- Have a special day out of the week where family shares a meal and checks in about their week
- Have client earn computer time by socializing with same aged peers
- Go workout as a family
- Use family rituals that signify growth for a young woman i.e. quinceanera, xilonen, sweet 16, cotillion

Magic 1, 2, 3

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VIEcrJqRmdk>

Resources

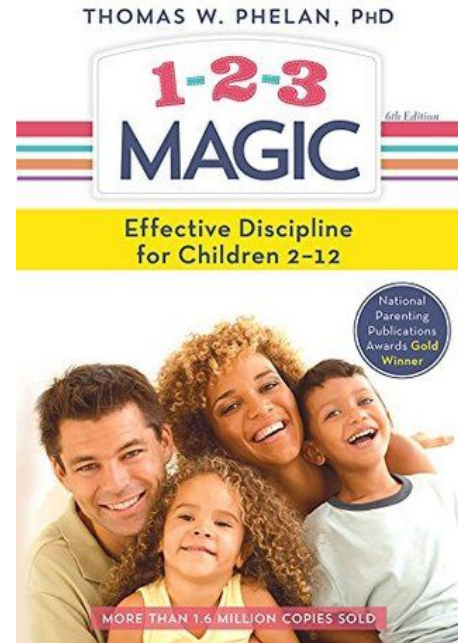
Magic 1,2,3 by Dr. Thomas Phelan

Behavior Charts

Use of Timers

Good Kids, Difficult Behavior by Joyce Divinyi

Source: https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/209009.1_2_3_Magic



Questions/Comments/Feedback

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