M6 Assignment: Learning

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**Part A: Classical Conditioning**

I have chosen to condition myself. In this hypothetical scenario, I am going to create a new behavior of feeling motivated and energized when I smell my pre-workout drink. Before drinking the pre-workout, I will visualize what my workout will look like, exercise selection, rep scheme, etc. The unconditioned stimulus in this scenario would be the introduction of preparing my pre-workout drink, followed by my workout. The unconditioned response would be the anticipation I feel while preparing my drink. The conditioned stimulus could become the smell or taste of my pre-workout drink after repeated pairing with the preparation routine, followed by the conditioned response which is the feelings of motivation and energy from the drink.

To combat extinction in this scenario, I would occasionally reinforce the association by visualizing my workout goals on rest days with other pre-workout rituals. Another ritual I could implement would be a warm-up that I can perform every day. Over time, the stimulus may become generalized, meaning other gym-related cues might become the associations, such as the act of driving to the gym. I see a particular road that leads to my gym, that could become the cue as well.

**Part B: Operant Conditioning:**

An example of operant conditioning would be me trying to reinforce the habit of saving money and rewarding myself with some type of treat (such as a favorite meal) each time I reach a savings goal. In operant conditioning, an organism learns to associate a behavior with its consequence, either reinforcement or punishment. This treat I am rewarding myself with by reaching a savings goal with be a form of positive reinforcement. In operant conditioning, positive reinforcement is found to be one of the most effective ways of producing change.

If I were to apply shaping to this scenario, I would instead reward myself with a treat each time I saved money, or decided against purchasing something I didn’t need. Shaping involves breaking down that behavior into smaller steps and providing rewards along the journey. With shaping, you only need to reinforce the resembled desired behavior, and once you see a response that is closer to the desired behavior, only reward that only the target reaches the desired behavior. However, transitioning to intermittent reinforcement (e.g., rewarding yourself once you've saved a certain amount or completed a set number of study sessions) can help maintain the behaviors long-term. Finally, to complete this experiment I would deploy a fixed interval to initialize the habit but allow for a reduction in treats as the habit solidifies.

By applying classical and operant conditioning principles to your interests and goals, you can effectively shape your behaviors and achieve your desired outcomes. Remember, consistency and persistence are key in both forms of conditioning!