**Learning – (1)**

**Definition of Learning:**

Psychologists define learning as a relatively permanent change in behavior (or behavioral capacity) resulting from experience. The key is the change in behavior itself. Learning equips us with new skills and knowledge, enhancing our ability to adapt to a changing world

**Types of Learning:**

**(i). Associative Learning:** This involves forming connections between stimuli, behaviors, or both. The core idea is that if event A occurs, event B is likely to follow. This helps us predict future events based on past experiences

* + **1. Classical Conditioning:** We associate two stimuli that occur sequentially. A neutral stimulus becomes associated with a meaningful stimulus, eventually producing a similar response.
    - **Example:** A child stung by a bee (painful stimulus) after seeing it (neutral stimulus) will likely fear bees in the future. The bee becomes a conditioned stimulus, causing fear (conditioned response).
  + **2. Operant Conditioning:** We associate behaviors with their consequences. Behaviors followed by positive consequences are strengthened (reinforced), while those followed by negative consequences are weakened.
    - **Example:** Studying hard (behavior) leads to good grades (positive consequence)
    - **Reinforcement:** A stimulus that increases the likelihood of a behavior being repeated
      * **Primary Reinforcement:** Satisfies basic needs (e.g., food, water)
      * **Secondary Reinforcement:** Associated with primary reinforcers (e.g., money)
      * **Positive Reinforcement:** Adding a desirable stimulus (e.g., praise) to increase behavior
      * **Negative Reinforcement:** Removing an undesirable stimulus (e.g., ending class early) to increase behavior

**🡺 Example For Operant Conditioning:**  
 **Scenario:** Imagine you're training a dog to stop barking excessively.

**1. Positive Reinforcement:** Adding a pleasant stimulus to increase a behavior.

* **Example**: Every time the dog stops barking on command, you give it a treat. The treat encourages the dog to stop barking in the future.

**2. Negative Reinforcement:** Removing an unpleasant stimulus to increase a behavior.

* **Example**: The dog is wearing an uncomfortable collar that stops buzzing when it stops barking. The removal of the buzzing reinforces the dog's behavior to stop barking.

**3. Punishment:** Adding or removing a stimulus to decrease a behavior.

* **Example**:
  + **Positive Punishment**: When the dog barks, you spray it with water. The unpleasant experience of being sprayed discourages barking.
  + **Negative Punishment**: When the dog barks, you take away its favorite toy. The removal of the toy discourages the barking behavior.
* **Applications:** Operant conditioning is used in education, gaming, and therapy to shape behavior and decision-making Positive behaviors are rewarded, while negative ones are discouraged.

**(ii). Non-Associative Learning:** This involves changes in response magnitude to a single stimulus, without forming connections between stimuli. It’s a simpler form of learning.

**1. Habituation:** Decreased response to a repeated, harmless stimulus.

**Example:** Getting used to the noise of a train passing by your house, eventually ignoring it.

**2. Sensitization:** Increased response to a range of stimuli after exposure to a strong stimulus.

**Example:** Becoming more easily startled after experiencing a loud crash. The heightened arousal makes even minor sounds seem amplified.

**Everyday Examples:** A baby stops crying after repeated exposure to a loud noise (habituation); a person develops an allergy (sensitization).

**(iii). Cognitive Learning:** This emphasizes the purposeful and thoughtful nature of learning, going beyond simple associations. It involves mental processes like thinking and observation.

* + **1. Latent Learning:** Learning that is not immediately apparent but becomes evident when needed. It involves forming mental representations (cognitive maps).
    - **Example:** A rat exploring a maze without reward still learns its layout, demonstrating efficient navigation once a reward is introduced. Similarly, a student passively learning a new route to school only uses that knowledge when their usual route is blocked.
  + **2. Observational Learning (Social Learning or Modeling):** Learning by observing and imitating others. Albert Bandura highlighted the importance of this type of learning, and the influence of media on behavior.
    - **Example:** Learning table manners by observing others at a formal dinner