

Chapter 18:

Using Time-Out and Response-Cost Punishment to Decrease a Behaviour

Deciding Whether to Use Punishment

- Punishment
 - Positive punishment: an aversive stimulus or condition added as consequence of behaviour
 - Negative punishment: stimulus taken away
- Advantages
 - Achieves rapid results in suppressing a problem behaviour
 - Eliminates often the behaviour entirely or near zero
- Disadvantages
 - Lead the target person to have strong emotional reactions, such as aggressive behaviour
 - Counterproductive behaviours
- Behaviour analysts try to avoid using punishment
- When to consider using punishment
 - Whether non-aversive methods have been tried
 - Characteristics of target person's behaviour
 - Causing injury to person or embarrassing – more acceptable
 - Our ability to control extraneous, counterproductive reinforcers of undesirable behaviour
 - Some behaviours have 'built in' reinforcers – when we cannot control extraneous reinforcement, punishment may be necessary
 - Types of punishers available
 - Strong pain or tissue damage – humanitarian concern, restricted

Negative Punishment: Time Out and Response Cost

- Time out: negative punishment in which target person's access to earn reinforcers is discontinued for a period of time as a consequence of a target behaviour
- Two main procedures as negative punishment to decrease operant behaviour
 - Either changing person's environment from one with opportunities (called time in) to one that is less reinforcing
- Three levels of time-out
 - Isolation time out → person is removed from reinforcing environment to separate setting (little or no opportunity for reinforcement)
 - Exclusion time out → person cut off from opportunities without being isolated
 - Non-exclusion time out → person is not removed from ongoing activities but receives a signal indicating a period in which they cannot earn reinforcers that would be available
- Greater the difference between time in vs. Time out – more effective punishment
- When using punishment method – good to apply differential reinforcement methods as well

Response Cost

- Response cost: negative punishment method in which misbehaviour leads to losing an item or privilege that was probably a reinforcer for an earlier behaviour
- Can take away item or privilege temporarily or permanently
- Response cost decrease target behaviour quickly and also implemented more quickly and conveniently than many other punishers

Issues with Time-Out

- Time-outs do have positive, almost immediate effects on negative behaviour and is often used by professionals
- Time-outs should not be given to children who have developmental disabilities
- When given a time-out, children are not able to partake in possibly important informational sessions, such as if they are in school, therefore a more suitable punishment should be given that allows them to still be punished for their bad behaviour or actions, but that also allows them to not fall behind in their classes
 - When giving time-outs, they should be brief, less than 15 minutes

Close-Up: Can We Use Response Cost for Behaviour Maintained by Negative Reinforcement?

- ✚ 33-year-old Shai, a woman with severe mental retardation, often performed self-injurious behaviours, aggression, as well as breaking and throwing objects

Case Study: Problematic Time-Out? The Cases of Sid and Paul

- ✚ Functional assessments can produce inconclusive outcomes, reinforcers must be identified to fix the problem behaviour
- ✚ *Basket-hold time out: physically restraining the target person for a short time in a chair or while facedown on the floor*
- ✚ Sid's problem behaviour was being reinforced by the attention he was receiving for what he has done
- ✚ The problem with Paul, is that when he does the problem behaviour and is "punished" by being put into time-out, he was actually being reinforced into doing the behaviour because he liked to be removed from some activities

Issues with Response Cost

Advantages:

- Response cost usually produces large decreases in a behaviour quickly
 - Easy to apply with most target persons
 - Is considered to be one of the most acceptable forms of positive punishment
 - Response cost *may be* more effective than differential reinforcement of other behaviour
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- Response cost can lead to a target person to react negatively (i.e. By avoiding the situation)
 - The terms or privileges must be identified, and when the target person misbehaves, they must be modified to fit their punishment
 - It must be determined whether when the target person misbehaves if the response cost will be applied immediately or after some time