Ch 15: USING BASIC REINFORCEMENT PROCEDURES TO INCREASE A BEHAVIOR

Identifying and Strengthening Positive Reinforcers

Identifying Potential Reinforcers
- Interviews and Questionnaires
  ◦ identify potential reinforcers
  ◦ such as the Preferred Items and Experiences Questionnaire (PIEQ) which assesses adolescers' and young adults' preferences for dozens of potential reinforcers
  ◦ limitations:
    ▪ these self-report measurements may be less accurate than direct methods
    ▪ young children and people with developmental disabilities, may be unable to answer the questions even when the items are read to them
- Direct Assessment Methods
  ◦ observing and recording the individual's reactions toward the stimuli when they occur or are available
  ◦ Naturalistic observations:
    ▪ observing the person in their natural environments and recording the frequency and duration of each behavior displayed
  ◦ Structured tests:
    ▪ presenting a previously selected set of stimuli and assessing which ones the person prefers
    ▪ useful when trying to identify reinforcers for individuals who have severe learning or motor disabilities

Enhancing Reinforcer Effectiveness
- Reinforcer sampling:
  ◦ an establishing operation (EO) that increases effectiveness by presenting a small or brief sample of the reinforcer before the behavior occurs to increase the likelihood that the person will make the response and get the reinforcer
    ▪ ex. sampling of food at grocery store encourages purchase
- Modeling:
  ◦ individuals who see others receiving and enjoying pleasant consequences for their behavior tend to increase the value they place on these consequences and copy the behavior they saw the other people do
- Explaining or demonstrating; is useful EO for token reinforcers, which have no value without an explanation
- Public posting; of performance data is an effective EO, especially if the reinforcer is feedback or praise
- Using varied reinforcers; useful because it combats the often decline of the potency of a single reinforcer, when one becomes "used to" it

How to Administer Positive Reinforcement

Reduce Extraneous Counterproductive Reinforcers
- 3 approaches used to stop people from reinforcing someone's problem behavior:
  1. describe the situation and ask them to stop reinforcing the problem behavior

       2. reinforce them for not reinforcing the target person's problem behavior
       3. having the other people share in the rewards the individual earns for improved behavior

Who Will Administer Reinforcement?
- Peer-Administered Reinforcement:
  ◦ using those who can perform the target behavior can monitor other's acts and provide reinforcement for correct responses
  ◦ individuals requiring the intervention can receive more frequent and individualized help than is available with standard teaching procedures
  ◦ peers who serve as administrators often gain from the experience themselves
- Self-Administered Reinforcement:
  ◦ used as a supplemental method in behavior therapy
  ◦ problem with using self-administered reinforcement is that sometimes people take unearned rewards
    - training by using modeling and instruction methods can teach the person to apply more rigorous or accurate standards
    - having the person make their target behavior and goals public appears to increase accuracy in self-reinforcement
    - using an accuracy-checking procedure in a behavior change program increases the person's accuracy, especially if there are consequences for inaccuracies

Use Easy Criteria Initially
- Achieve a starting response and gradually raising the criterion for reinforcement
- Behavioral deficit:
  ◦ level of the starting response might be higher than the average baseline frequency but lower than the highest frequency.
- For a behavioral excess:
  ◦ level of the starting response might be lower than the average baseline frequency but higher than the lowest frequency

Immediately Reinforce Each Instance of the Target Behavior
- The longer the delay of giving reinforcement, the less effective it will be in strengthening the behavior
  ◦ ex. giving prizes at the end of the day, for improved performance after a whole school day
- Use of additional reinforcers, such as tokens or praise, that can be delivered immediately can be used to "bridge the delay"

Gradually Thin and Delay Reinforcement
- Thinning the Reinforcement Schedule:
  ◦ thinning; where a progressively gradual reduction of the rate at which the behavior receives programmed reinforcement
  ◦ intermittent reinforcement; reinforcement of only some instances of a behavior
  ◦ at the end of an intervention is that the target behavior usually becomes even stronger
- Delaying Reinforcement:

◦ phase out a person's reliance on programmed reinforcers and maintain a target behavior after the intervention ends by increasing the delay between the occurrence of the response and its reinforcer

Switch to Natural Reinforcers
- Anticipating the likely natural reinforcers the person will experience and by use them when phasing out the programmed reinforcers this will help maintain the behavior

Using Negative Reinforcement
- Isn't applied it very often to change behavior, because it requires the person to be placed in an aversive situation that he or she can reduce by making a specific response.
- Behaviors rewarded through negative reinforcement are often superficial/insincere in order to escape aversive situation

When Negative Reinforcement Is Used
- Applied when the aversive situation is not very severe, and the target behavior is destructive, and other methods to change the behavior have not worked

How to Administer Negative Reinforcement
- Reward value; which appears to be determined by how much the escape or avoidance behavior reduces the aversive stimulus
  ◦ Negative reinforcement is more effective when the behavior reduces a more aversive stimulus than when it reduces a weaker one