Chapter 7 Punishment

I. Defining punishment

-- **Punishment** is a process whereby a consequence of a behavior suppresses that behaviour, decreasing its frequency, duration or magnitude.

-- If we are going to define punishers as "consequences people find unpleasant", we must be sure to assess the unpleasantness from the viewpoint of the person who will receive these consequences, not our point of view

-> **Two other reasons:**

  1) If the consequences were applied poorly, their effects may have been weakened.

  2) Scolding & spanking may be punishers for Brain, but the reinforcement he gets from making noise may be much stronger than the punishment being applied.

-- Natural and programmed punishment

  Natural punishers are consequences that decrease a behavior, happen spontaneously as a normal part of everyday life, and are not planned and given systematically to affect the behaviour

  Programmed punishers are consequences that are planned and are used systematically with the goal of decreasing a behavior

-- Positive and negative punishment

  Positive punishment: an aversive stimulus or condition is added as a consequence of the behaviour

  Negative punishment: a stimulus or condition the person already has at the time the behavior occurs is subtracted as a consequence of performing the behaviour

-- Unconditioned and conditioned punishment

  Unconditioned punishers: typically decrease behaviour on which they are contingent even though they were not learned to function that way.

  Conditioned punishers are stimuli that did not have the ability to suppress behaviour until they developed this function as a result of learning.

II. Types of punishing events

1) **Physically aversive stimuli**

■ Events that cause physical pain, discomfort, or other unpleasant sensations – mainly unconditioned punishers

■ Physically aversive stimuli are very common consequences of behaviour in our everyday lives.

  1) It can be provided deliberately with the intention of correcting behaviour.

    E.g.: parents or other adults hit children or animals for behaving in inappropriate or undesirable ways

  2) It can also be naturally occurring events that happen in our environments as consequences of our behaviours (**involving careless behaviour**)

    E.g.: Bruising your head by walking into a post because you were looking at a physically attracted person

■ Using physically aversive stimuli as punishers in therapy is usually avoided for humanitarian reasons:

  - When punishers are strong -> controversial

    E.g.: strong and painful electric shock

  - Other punishers to stop self-injury and self-stimulation that are usually successful and more acceptable including using mild, brief electric shock

    E.g.: Lemon-juice therapy

2) **Reprimands**

  - Reprimands are disapproving statements such as "No! That's bad" -or feedback that sharply criticize a behavior

  - These statements are added after the behavior, they provide positive punishment when they reduce operant behaviour.

  - Teachers use reprimands more than praise with their students, particularly after second grade.

3) **Aversive activities**

  - E.g.: Mark and his swearword-using behaviour

Aversive activities can serve as positive punishers
- The aversive activities selected as punishers in interventions can be related to the behavioural excesses we're trying to reduce.
- A punisher approach called **overcorrection** requires the person to engage in aversive activities that correct or are the opposite of the undesirable target behaviour when that misbehaviour occurs
- **Restitution:** correcting the effects of misbehaviour and restoring the environment, usually to a condition better than it was before the undesired behaviour
- **Positive practice:** when the misbehaviour occurs, the person must repeatedly perform an appropriate or useful alternative behaviour or competing response to that of the misbehaviour

4) **Time-out**
- Time-out: Punishing a behavior by converting or moving the person's environment from one that is relatively reinforcing to one that is less reinforcing.
- All of the time-out periods reduced deviant behaviour, but the 15~ and 30~ minute lengths reduced it the most and were equally effective.
- Brantner and Doherty described **three types or levels of time-out:**
  1) **Isolation time-out:** The target person is removed from the relatively reinforcing environment and placed in a separate, substantially less reinforcing environment
     E.g.: being sent to your room
  2) **Exclusion time-out:** Target individuals are removed from opportunities for reinforcement without isolating them.
     E.g.: moving the person to a separate part of the same environment and not allowing them to participate in any reinforcing activities that are going on.
  3) **Nonexclusion time-out:** Individuals who misbehave are not removed from the ongoing activities at all, but receive a signal indicating a period in which they cannot earn reinforcers that would have been available if the misbehaviour hadn't occurred

5) **Response cost**
- A negative punishment procedure in which a behaviour results in the person losing a valued item or privilege.
  E.g.: losing money as a result of misbehaviour
- Interventions have used response cost punishment in a variety of settings, usually as fines in the form of money and or tokens.

III. Advantages and disadvantages in using punishment
- ■ **Advantages of punishment**
  1) The **rapid results** it achieves in suppressing the undesired behaviour. Especially important when the behaviour is **dangerous** or **embarrassing.**
  2) **Positive side effects** it sometimes produces in nontarget behaviours.
  3) It often leads to a **complete suppression** of the unwanted response, important for two reasons:
  - When the target behaviour is dangerous, the most appropriate behavioural goal is to stop it entirely
  - Behaviours that have been strongly suppressed are less likely to recover and become problems again in the future.
- ■ **Disadvantages of punishment**
  1) **Emotional and escape/avoidance reactions**
  - People don't like to be punished-> sometimes being punished produces negative emotional reactions
  - A related side effect is that the unpleasantness of the aversive stimuli may cause the target person to try to escape from the situation
  2) **Aggressive behaviour**
     Sometimes individuals become physically aggressive toward the people who dispense punishment and other individuals in the environment

3) Future use of punishment
The likely role of modeling in children's using physical punishment
E.g.: a study of disadvantaged toddlers in four day-care centers that focused on helping battered children and nonabused children from "families under stress"

4) Should we use punishment
Gentle teaching: uses no punishment in training, the only consequences the teacher applies are social reinforcers – such as praise, hugs and smiles.