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PSYC 587

Antecedent Intervention for Escape Maintained Problem Behavior Competency

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Client Background Information:

E. is a six years old boy who was diagnosed with ASD 2 years ago. He has below-average

language and cognitive skills for his age. His programing is all Discrete Trial Training. ABA in-

home sessions occur Monday to Friday from 4 am to 6:30 pm in his playroom.

Escape Maintained Problem Behavior:

Operational Definition

Protest:

Two or more of the following behaviors: Crying with or without tears, yelling, and/or whining.

May or may not include increased repetition of letters and numbers (e.g., counting forward or

backward, reciting the alphabet).

Background

E. attended a day school with special care Monday to Friday from 9 am to 3 pm and the ABA

sessions every afternoon. In both school and home settings, he is required to stay with instructors

(or peers) around the table. Because of deficits in verbal and listening response skills, he was not

able to sustain his attention with the instructors more than 3 minutes and displayed multiple self-

stimulation behaviors (e.g., air writing, repetitively counting numbers, or letters). This may be a result of denied access to a highly preferred item. The escape maintained problem behavior frequently occurs when E. accesses to non-preferred activities, table work, or when instructors place unknown demands (i.e., the demands that he did not learn before).

Antecedent Strategies Brainstorm:

Activity choices

The highly preferred activities of E. are playing puzzles, jumping or lying on the couch, play-doh, and watching a video. Before E. sits on the desk, those four choices will be presented below the token board. E. will be prompted to choose one preferred activity picture and stick it on the token board. It indicates that he will earn this activity after earning five tokens. The strength of activity choices is that E. will know what to earn after the table training, and he will be motivated to sit on the desk. The instructor can implement manding training with this antecedent strategy. The limitation is that E. sometimes changed his mind after the five trials of training (i.e., he is no longer interested in the chosen activity).

Clear expectations

When E. sits on the table, the instructor will show him the token board immediately and tell him that after earning 5 tokens, he will be allowed to play. Without completing the 5 tokens, he will be blocked from leaving the table. The program stimuli will be placed simply and slowly, such as "touch your ankles." If he complies but then protests, he does not get the token. The strength of clear expectations is that it will improve his compliance and make him understand the procedure.

After a few months of training, he can be more compliant in the school setting. The limitation is that at the beginning, he will be challenged, and the protest behaviors or self-stimulation behaviors will be increased.

Non-contingent escape

After every 30 minutes of the session, E. is allowed to go outside and jump on the trampoline. Usually, E. is forbidden to going outside to play, therefore going outside is the biggest reinforcement for him. The strength of non-contingent escape is that this can immediately reduce his protest behavior. The limitation is that this can be hard to implement in his day school because the school schedule is not as flexible as the home session.

Conclusion:

The behavior analyst is concerned about three main points, 1) invokes more maladaptive behaviors, 2) increase difficulty in school setting, 3) E. is not able to understand the instruction. After the analysis above, the clear exception strategy will be the most effective to E. This strategy will probably invoke self-stimulation behavior at the beginning of the intervention. After a few sessions of training, he will immediately learn from the 5-token procedure; then, the escape behavior will significantly decrease. As we learned, teachers also use the token system in his school. Therefore, he will be more compliant in school after training. Clear expectation reduces the confusion of arduous command so that E. can use his current level of understanding to respond to the request appropriately.

The least effective strategy is non-contingent escape. It creates more challenges in the school setting because of the fixed schedule.

The last but not least, besides the antecedent strategy, the treatment plan should focus more on expanding his listening response repertoire, such as "stop," "come here," "sit down," etc.