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MOCK EXAMS

Parent Training Methods for Teaching New Skills

Introduction

Applied behavior analysis (ABA) parent training is an important aspect that should be included in any ABA program. Parent training involves teaching parents or caregivers important skills that ensure generalization, improves the service recipient's functioning in the natural environment, reduces the stress on the family and on parents and other family members, and often makes life more enjoyable for those involved.

Parent training is typically used frequently by ABA professionals and may appear to be a common notion within any ABA-based program. Insurance providers often require that parent or caregiver training goals are delineated within an individualized treatment plan and that progress is provided on these goals for each authorization that is sought out.

The principles of ABA can be used to change behavior and teach new skills to an individual. ABA-based services will require hard work from all individuals that are involved in the service delivery to an individual. These services do not occur in a vacuum or in isolation for a few hours a day. ABA-based services are considered a partnership, working as a team to improve the life of an individual that is receiving services through consistent changes in behavior over time.

Parent training and parent education are sometimes used interchangeably; however, it is important to understand that there is a clear distinction between the two terms. Parent education has been referred to as the delivery of information that is viewed as being helpful regarding different topics such as viable treatment options for an individual, a diagnosis that is obtained, evaluations that may need to occur as well as advocacy (Bearss et al., 2015). Parent training, on the other hand, necessitates the use of teaching techniques as a method for addressing any challenging behaviors through use of an analysis of antecedents and consequences or the integration of different strategies.

Additionally, parent training has been found to have better outcomes than the use of parent education (Bearss et al., 2015). Therefore, it is important to understand that parent education should not be used alone and that different components used within parent training are beneficial for families.

Parent training is often implemented by a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA®). This is primarily due to insurance providers requiring that a BCBA® be the individual that is responsible for teaching the skills that the parents will need to learn as well as being the person that had the best understanding and knowledge base to fulfill this role.

In this course, participants will learn to (1) discuss methods for structuring the environment to optimize learning, (2) identify ways to motivate a child, and (3) identify prompting levels that can be used to teach a new skill.

Section 1: Structuring the Teaching Environment to Optimize Learning

When a parent or caregiver is attempting to have their child listen to them and follow their instructions, this is known as instructional control. During periods of earning instructional control with an individual, it is important to make sure the parent or caregiver also has control of the favorable items within the child's environment. Any item that the child plays with or prefers to engage with can be viewed as potential reinforcement. Therefore, it is important that the parent or caregiver be able to identify items or objects that the child enjoys and the access that they have with each item throughout the day.

The parent or caregiver is viewed as the individual that designs the child's environment. They are able to decide the items or objects that go into and come out of the environment. They also determine when, where, and how long the

child is able to enjoy their preferred items, objects, or activities. When a learning environment is being designed and set up, the parent or caregiver will need to evaluate the environment in which the child will be learning in. The first step that should be taken is to restrict access to preferred items within the environment. This is known as sanitizing the environment. This can be accomplished by determining the items or objects that the child views as reinforcers and placing these objects or activities into clear bins that are out of the reach of the child. This first step may require a significant amount of time and organization on the part of the parent or caregiver; however, it will ultimately be for the benefit of the parent or caregiver and the child. The environment will be able to be set up for learning and allow for the opportunity to teach the child how to follow instructions as a method for gaining access to the items they prefer or want.

Once the previous step has been completed, the parent or caregiver will need to observe the child in the environment to determine if anything was missed. It will be important to determine if a child sits on a chair and stares out a window or what the child does when there is nothing to do. These things will need to be noted and attempts will need to be made to restrict access to these items or activities. For example, access to the window may be able to be limited through the use of curtains or blinds. Additionally, certain items may need to be hung up or blocked off so the child is not able to access them. Items that the child determines to be a reinforcer may not look like a typical toy or game; therefore, it is important to complete this observation of the child within the environment. These missed items will need to be restricted or blocked.

On the other hand, for some children that are older or for more advanced learners, removing or restricting access to everything in the environment may not be necessary. In these situations, it may be enough to just limit access to highly reinforcing items such as video games, electronics, or specific toys. Ultimately, the hope with sanitizing the environment and limiting access to reinforcers is that

when the child is presented with a task or demand to complete, there will not be anything in the environment that is available or good that the child will attempt to escape to. For example, if the child leaves the table or work area and does not want to complete their worksheet, the parent or caregiver will not want the child to be able to go into their room and play with toys or games. With this example, if the child decides that they do not want to do what the parent or caregiver is asking them to do, the parent or caregiver can then wait the child out, and the child is not provided with an opportunity to escape to a toy or game. It is important to understand that it is better to over-restrict an individual's access to reinforcement than under-restrict access. By using this method, the parent or caregiver can be the individual that provides access to all of the good items that the child wants in their life. It is a much better opportunity to be the person that is able to hand out access to reinforcers than it is to remove or take away a child's access to reinforcers.

It is important to keep in mind that restriction of an individual's items or objects under all circumstances is not the ultimate goal with an intervention. Ultimately, the goal of an intervention is to use restriction of reinforcement as a tool for motivating an individual as well as create an effective learning environment for the individual receiving services. If there is a time where the child is not working on specific skills, or the child is able to complete their homework for the day, then the parent or caregiver can open up access to all of the items and activities that are typically restricted. This can be the time to get out a child's favorite activity and play. It is not expected that a parent or caregiver will be "on" 100% of the time. It is also important for a child to work on independent play skills as these are valuable skills to work on as well.

By keeping items and activities organized and placed out of reach for the child throughout the day will help to set up the learning environment to teach a child various skills for asking for items they need or desire as well as for cleaning up

toys prior to getting additional toys out to play. For example, the parent or caregiver can let the child know that they are not able to get down the cars until they have finished cleaning up the art supplies.

Parent Training Goals

As a conversation continues between the BCBA® and the parents or caregivers of the individual receiving services, parent training goals should be discussed. These parent training goals are often included as part of an individualized treatment plan and necessary for insurance authorizations. Goals are also used as a method for tracking progress and can be used to determine the next steps within teaching. Parent training goals should not be an afterthought when developing a treatment plan for an individual. Instead, parent training goals should have real meaning for the parents and incorporate the culture and values of the family. When writing parent training goals, it is valuable to consider the following information as goals are being developed.

Things to Do:	*Things to Avoid:*
Write goals that align with the values of the family	Write goals on what the BCBA feels is important for the learner to know
Use flexibility when approaching parent training goals	Use pre written and stock parent training goals
Develop goals that address the quality of life for the entire family	Prioritize goals to work on generalizing skill acquisition programs
Developing goals that address a variety of the needs of the family	Developing goals that only focus on reducing challenging behaviors
Encourage parents or caregivers to develop their own goals	Write goals that only the BCBA® feels is important
Make sure that goals are realistic for the family	Determine goals that will stretch the family so they feel burdened

Parent training goals can be utilized as a method for addressing different aspects within the life of a particular family as well as their interactions. Goals can be integrated within the course of an individual's service delivery that include:

- the parent or caregiver's participation within the training
- methods for understanding the context of the individual's behavior within the antecedent, behavior, consequence framework
- ways to implement and integrate reinforcement practices within the environment
- how to follow through with interventions that are implemented
- opportunities for demonstrating different prompting methods that can be used to teach a skill
- ways to integrate procedures that promote the generalization and maintenance of learned skills
- the process for collecting data for a targeted behavior or skill in acquisition
- a level of understanding as it pertains to the functions of behavior and how to determine the function of an exhibited behavior

There are also a multitude of possibilities that can be considered when developing parent training goals. Each situation that will require parent training will be unique, and the goals that are developed should be individualized to the individual, their parent or caregiver, and the context in which the training is needed.

There are also various parent training curriculums that are available. A predetermined curriculum may not be a method you have considered using before; however, it may be able to be used to provide the development of your

training with new ideas, structure, materials that have already been created, and use language that is parent-friendly to assist with explaining the jargon that exists within the field of ABA (Helton & Alber-Morgan, 2018). A parent training curriculum can be used to help even a seasoned BCBA® with coming up and developing ideas that can be beneficial for structuring sessions, topics that can be discussed to further skill development, and words that can be used to help explain difficult topics. These curriculums also help with preparation for upcoming sessions and reduce the time that is spent on developing and creating materials needed for these sessions. A parent training curriculum can be used as a guide for training opportunities and a resource for future ideas. It is best to only incorporate materials and ideas that make sense for your individual that is receiving services and their family. All of the information provided does not need to be utilized, especially if it does not align with the goals and values of those receiving services.

In the information provided below, there are various parent training curriculums that are listed that may provide additional information or resources to help develop or even supplement the parent training goals that are targeted for use within an individual's service delivery model.

Curriculum	*Description*
ACHIEVE Parent Training Curriculum: Effective ABA Training through Partnership	Contains 29 lessons designed for and two lessons for BCBA®s
	Has goals, materials for teaching, quizzes, and reading assignments that can be for homework
	References information that addresses goals for skill acquisition and reduction of challenging behaviors
RubiParent Training for Disruptive Behavior: The RUBI Autism Network (Programs that Work)	Has scripts for therapists to use, various handouts, and an assortment of activities and checklists

Curriculum	*Description*
	References information that is directly related to challenging behaviors
One-Year ABA Parent Training Curriculum: Parent Training Manual for Behavior Analysts & Other Human Service Professionals	Contains 26 lessons and an additional bonus lesson
	Has material to read, assignments that can be used for homework, and handouts
	References information that aligns with different techniques and ABA-based instructional strategies that can be used for the reduction of challenging behaviors
ABA Parent Education and Training	Contains 50 lessons that also have worksheets that can be downloaded for free
	Has material to read and worksheets that can be downloaded
	References information that addresses various needs for skill acquisition goals and the reduction of challenging behaviors

Prior to implementing any parent training, though, it is important to understand the parent or caregiver's current skill level and knowledge base. Some parents or caregivers may have already been exposed to ABA-based procedures from a different provider or information they have gathered. Other parents may want to expand their knowledge base even further while some just would like a basic understanding. Depending on the parent or caregiver, it is best to gather information regarding the current practices they are already using in their everyday interactions with the learner.

It may be found that an informal assessment that is conducted during observations of the parent or caregiver while they are interacting with the learner may be the most valuable way to gather information for determining goals that will guide parent training. Parents or caregivers can be observed in their natural environment so that the pressure placed on them is limited. The parent or caregiver can be directed toward different interactions by asking various questions associated with information that is trying to be gathered. These questions can then be followed up on by asking the parent or caregiver to demonstrate a particular interaction. For example, the BCBA® may want to ask the parent or caregiver questions such as "how do you respond when your child hits you?" Then, the BCBA® can follow this particular question up by asking the parent or caregiver to demonstrate what they do in this situation.

Section 1 Personal Reflection

Have you attempted to have a parent or caregiver organize toys, games, or activities that are preferred so that they are able to be put up and out of reach from the child during instruction based times? If so, how were you able to suggest doing this with the parent or caregiver and were you met with any resistance?

Section 1 Key Words

Instructional control - when a parent or caregiver is attempting to have their child listen to them and follow their instructions

Parent education - the delivery of information that is viewed as being helpful regarding different topics such as viable treatment options for an individual, a diagnosis that is obtained, evaluations that may need to occur as well as advocacy

Parent training - the use of teaching techniques as a method for addressing any challenging behaviors through use of an analysis of antecedents and consequences or the integration of different strategies

Sanitizing the environment - restricting access to preferred items within the environment

Section 2: Motivating a Learner

The Premack Principle

The Premack Principle delineates that a person will perform an activity that is less preferred (low probability behavior) in an effort to gain access to an activity that is more preferred (high probability behavior) (Klatt & Morris, 2001). An activity that is less preferred is one that an individual is going to be unlikely to select to complete on their own. A high preferred activity is an activity that is more preferred and one that an individual would be more likely to select to complete on their own. When a behavior that is more preferred is made contingent on the engagement of a less preferred behavior, then the high probability behavior will act as a reinforcer for the low probability behavior which will result in that behavior being more likely to happen. This is typically presented to the individual through the use of an If/then statement. For example, “if you want to go play outside, then you need to eat all of your vegetables at dinner.”

These types of statements can be used by any individual that is attempting to gain compliance or that wants to increase the probability that a behavior will occur. The main focus behind these statements to ensure they are effective is to ensure that the behavior that is high probability is a high probability behavior when it is delivered to the individual. It is important that the parent or caregiver is aware of

the child's current motivation for different activities as the child's preferences for various activities can change often and for different reasons.

The Premack Principle can be utilized when the parent or caregiver wants a child to do something that the child does not know how to do or does not like to do. This principle can be a helpful tool for a parent or caregiver to have as it may make it easier for a child to do something that they do not like to do by allowing them to have access to something they really enjoy immediately afterward.

A parent or caregiver should be made aware that mistakes can occur when using the Premack Principle. For example, a mistake can be made with how the information is presented to the child. When using the Premack Principle, the parent or caregiver will want to first explain what the reinforcement will be. For example, "if you want to play outside, you will need to eat your vegetables at dinner." The Premack Principle can be extremely successful as it allows the child to decide whether they want to earn or lose the reinforcer. If the child does not eat their vegetables, then the child does not get to play outside. This empowers the child to make a decision on their own.

Lastly, the parent or caregiver will want the child to be able to focus on the reinforcer that they will be receiving and not on what they are having to do. When the child is able to be focused on the reinforcer that they will receive, the work that they have to complete will not be quite as painful for them to do. If the parent or caregiver states what the child must do first, then the child will only hear the demand and not focus on the reinforcer that they can earn access to. By having the parent or caregiver state the reinforcing item or activity first, it will be much easier to get the child to comply with the task.

Oftentimes, the parent or caregiver will get used to providing demands, and the child will become noncompliant. Then, the parent or caregiver will remind the child of the item or activity that they will lose. This is a common mistake that is

made and will typically escalate into an argument, bartering of items, or aggression with no one winning in the end. Imagine the scenario below:

> Parent/Caregiver: “Charlotte, finish your worksheet that is due for math class tomorrow.”
>
> Charlotte: “I don’t want to finish that worksheet right now. I will do it after dinner.”
>
> Parent/Caregiver: “If you do not finish your worksheet for math, then there will be no talking on your phone tonight.”

In the scenario mentioned above, the child will be focused on the completion of the activity that is not preferred (math worksheet), and the item that they will lose (talking on the phone). The child will more than likely become upset, exhibit task refusal, and the parent or caregiver will become frustrated with the child. Therefore, it is important for the parent or caregiver to set themselves up for success by ensuring that they are presenting the demand correctly.

Throughout the time that occurs within one day, an individual will receive hundreds possibly even thousands of demands. These demands always have the possibility of either being followed or being ignored by the individual. If a parent or caregiver can be more careful with how they relay their demands or requests, then this can help to ensure that the child will be more successful, receive reinforcement, and increase the chances that they will respond favorably to demands or requests in the future.

In the following section, there are a few examples of how the Premack Principle can be used correctly to help guide compliance for future tasks and demands.

- We can play a video game if you finish your homework first.
- You can play on the swings at the park if you put your laundry away.

- Would you like to eat a piece of candy? Finish eating your vegetables.
- Let's go on a bike ride after you finish cleaning your bedroom.

Steps for Implementing the Premack Principle

Although the Premack Principle may seem easy and straightforward to follow, it is important to follow the following steps in order to help ensure success:

1. Identify the less preferred (low probability) behavior or activity
2. Identify the more preferred (high probability) behavior or activity
3. Present the contingency to the child either by verbally telling them or by providing visuals
4. Allow for time to pass so the child can complete the less preferred behavior or activity while still continuing to withhold access to the more preferred behavior or activity if the child does not complete the less preferred behavior or activity
5. Provide the child with access to the more preferred behavior or activity after completing the less preferred behavior or activity

Factors that Influence the Effectiveness of the Premack Principle

The most effective way to utilize the Premack Principle effectively is by understanding the child's motivation at any given moment. The Premack Principle requires that there is motivation for a specific activity or behavior in order to make it a more preferred (high probability) activity or behavior. In order to ensure that there is motivation for an activity or behavior, an understanding of the factors that have an influence on the effectiveness of various reinforcers including motivating operations is necessary (Davis et al., 1992).

Motivating operations alter an item's or activity's current effectiveness when used as either a reinforcer or a punisher at any moment in time. Motivating operations also alter the current frequency of behavior that has come in contact with either reinforcement or punishment with that item or activity previously. These motivating operations have two primary effects on a behavior. One effect is a value altering effect where the value of a specific consequence as either a reinforcer or a punisher is changed. The other effect is a behavior altering effect where the current frequency of a behavior that has either been reinforced or punished previously is changed.

There are two different types of motivating operations that exist: establishing operations and abolishing operations. Ultimately, as motivating operations relate to the Premack Principle, they are viewed as being factors that influence the effectiveness of an item or activity as a reinforcer and can evoke behaviors that have produced the item or activity as a reinforcer previously. Establishing operations make an item or an activity more effective as a reinforcer and evoke behaviors that have been reinforced by that item or activity previously. On the other hand, abolishing operations make an item or an activity less effective as a reinforcer and abate behaviors that have been reinforced by that item or activity previously.

Additionally, as motivating operations are being accounted for, competing contingencies may be encountered. These competing contingencies are often unexpected and will interfere with effective implementation of a treatment intervention. Competing contingencies may be unintentional or delivered by an individual that does not understand the concept of motivation.

Precautions when Using the Premack Principle

Prior to integrating the Premack Principle within a treatment intervention, a behavior analyst as well as a parent or caregiver should be aware of the ethical

implications that are involved when motivating operations are manipulated. At times, it may be common and appropriate for a parent or caregiver to restrict access to different items or activities that a child may enjoy. However, the restriction of different activities may be unethical depending on various factors. One of these factors is the age of the individual that is having their items or activities restricted. Often, it may be viewed as being unethical if an adult is having access to their preferred items and activities restricted. Additionally, the nature of the activity is another factor that may contribute to the restriction of items and activities as being unethical. If an item or preferred activity provides comfort or other basic needs, then this may be viewed as being unethical as well.

Ethical Considerations when Implementing the Premack Principle

There are several ethical considerations that should be considered when using the Premack Principle (Herrod et al., 2023).

Autonomy

The implementation of the Premack Principle as a method for reinforcing certain behaviors may be viewed as ultimately intruding on the autonomy of an individual. In order to avoid this and as a method for respecting an individual's autonomy, informed consent should be obtained prior to implementing the Premack Principle or any intervention and the individual should be involved in the decision making process. If the individual is unable to provide consent, though, it is important that the individual is observed for cues that demonstrate assent.

Coercion and Manipulation

When the Premack Principle is used, it may be viewed as manipulating an individual into engaging in an undesired behavior. In order to avoid this, it is important to ensure that the reinforcement strategies that are used are voluntary and not coercive. The individual's free will should be respected at all times.

Equity and Fairness

Throughout implementation of the Premack Principle, there can be a risk that reinforcement is not being distributed equally if some individuals have access to activities or behaviors that they prefer while other individuals have their access to these items restricted. Therefore, it is important to continually promote fairness and equity by ensuring that all individuals have an equal opportunity to contact and access reinforcement as well as consider each individual's preferences and needs throughout the implementation of an intervention.

Potential for Exploitation

When the Premack Principle is being used, there is a potential that this principle could be misused to exploit an individual by requiring them to engage in an activity or behavior that is undesired just for the sake of accessing reinforcement. As a method for avoiding this, it is important that the Premack Principle is used ethically by ensuring that goals are mutually agreed upon and are the center of the intervention, and that each individual is not exploited or harmed during any intervention.

Lack of Individualized Treatment

It may also be viewed that the Premack Principle overlooks the differences that exist among each individual and that these specific needs and preferences of each individual are not addressed within the intervention. As a method for circumventing this view, reinforcement strategies should be tailored to the characteristics, interests, and abilities that each individual demonstrates so that a more personalized and effective treatment is encountered.

Potential for Emotional Manipulation

If a parent or caregiver is not careful, the use of reinforcement may have unintended effects such as inadvertently manipulating the individual's emotions

as a method for achieving a desired behavior or outcome. Therefore, it is important that a parent or caregiver be aware of the emotional impact that can be had through various reinforcement strategies. The emotional well-being of an individual should be fostered through the use of a positive and supportive environment.

Informed Consent and Decision Making

Some people may feel that an individual's right to make their own decisions about their own behavior and informed consent may be compromised through implementation of the Premack Principle. Therefore, it is important that informed consent is obtained from the individual that will be receiving services as well as any legal guardian that is involved in the decision making process. This will help to ensure that the rights of the individual receiving services will be respected throughout the implementation of the treatment intervention.

Reinforcer Appropriateness and Effectiveness

It is important for a parent or caregiver to evaluate the reinforcers that are selected to be used within any intervention. One concern is that with the use of the Premack Principle, the selected reinforcers may not necessarily be appropriate or effective for the individual. If this is the case, then this will lead to outcomes that are not ideal or are ineffective. Therefore, it is important that assessments are conducted in an effort to identify those reinforcers that are preferred and effective for the individual. An individual's preferences, needs, and developmental level should always be taken into consideration when reinforcers are selected for use with an intervention.

Generalization and Maintenance of Behavior

At times, the implementation of the Premack Principle may need to be used to focus only on specific behavior within a specific context. This narrowed focus does

not often encourage generalization or maintenance across different contexts. Therefore, it will be important that different strategies are implemented in order to ensure that generalization and maintenance of behaviors that are desired are facilitated, particularly through the use of systematic fading of reinforcement as well as consistency across the variety of settings.

Potential for Overjustification

It may be viewed that if parents or caregivers rely too heavily on the Premack Principle, this may then have an affect on the intrinsic motivation within an individual to exhibit different behaviors. Therefore, it is important to ensure that a balance is maintained with use of the Premack Principle and different opportunities that can be used to encourage the use of one's intrinsic motivation. This will help to ensure that a healthy balance exists between the use of external reinforcement and an individual's internal drive.

Long Term Impact on Behavior

If the use of external reinforcement is continually relied on or solely used within the integration of other skills, then the development of internal self-regulation skills may be limited. Therefore, the use of external reinforcement should be gradually faded. This will allow for the opportunity to promote the use of intrinsic motivation and self-regulation skills so that behavior change and independence can be encouraged over a long period of time.

Cultural Sensitivity and Diversity

It is important to understand the choices that are provided for reinforcement of an individual's behavior. One concern is that some of the choices for reinforcement may not align with the individual's cultural values or these reinforcement choices may inadvertently perpetuate biases that are present. When determining the reinforcement choices that will be used, it is important to

respect cultural diversity by considering the beliefs, values, and practices that are used by the individual when determining the reinforcers that will be used. Additionally, it is important to consider these items to also ensure that the reinforcement strategies that are implemented are culturally sensitive.

Individual Rights and Dignity

When implementing the Premack Principle, the use of reinforcement should not compromise the dignity and self-worth of the individual receiving services or violate the rights of the individual in any way. The rights and dignity of an individual can be protected and upheld by treating each individual that receives services with respect, promoting their autonomy, and avoiding any practices that are demeaning to or devalue the worth of the individual.

Potential for Satiation and Habituation

When a selected reinforcer is overused or relied on excessively, this may lead to satiation or habituation. In turn, this can reduce the effectiveness of the selected reinforcer. Reinforcer effectiveness should be monitored over time and throughout the course of its use. Preferences of the individual should be reassessed periodically and a variety of reinforcers should be made available. This will help to prevent satiation and habituation effects that can occur with the use of reinforcement.

Section 2 Personal Reflection

Have you encountered any of the ethical concerns mentioned above when implementing the Premack Principle? If so, what were the ethical concerns that were encountered and how were you able to overcome each one?

Section 2 Key Words

Habituation - A decrease in responsiveness when an eliciting stimulus is presented repeatedly over a short period of time

High probability behavior - an activity that is more preferred and one that an individual would be more likely to select to complete on their own

Low probability behavior - An activity that is less preferred and one that an individual is going to be unlikely to select to complete on their own

Premack Principle - a person will perform an activity that is less preferred (low probability behavior) in an effort to gain access to an activity that is more preferred (high probability behavior)

Satiation - occurs when a person has been exposed to a reinforcer continuously until the item or activity loses its motivating effect on their behavior

Section 3: The Use of Behavioral Momentum

The term behavioral momentum is used to describe the build up of momentum to the desired task or demand by providing simple instructions that the individual is likely to complete and followed by an instruction that the individual is less likely to comply with (Cowan & Candel, 2017). With behavioral momentum, it is important to first focus on things that the individual might actually want to complete or do. These tasks can be simple demands such as giving a high five, jumping up and down, or even spinning around. Then, the hard task that the individual will need to complete that they are less likely to comply with should be focused on. With this procedure, the idea behind it is that momentum will be built up by having the individual complete tasks or demands that they find easy to do as a method for having them access reinforcement. This, in turn, will make it more likely for them

to complete a task that is difficult for them to complete at a later time. Ideally, the individual should be presented with several easy tasks and then the hard task.

When using behavioral momentum, it is important to begin this procedure by ensuring that the individual implementing the procedure knows how to provide directions appropriately. There are a few things to keep in mind when giving instructions (Fisher et al., 2018).

- Refrain from asking the individual if they want to do something
- Make sure to obtain the attention of the individual prior to placing a direction by making eye contact with them
- Ensure that the instruction is delivered using clear and precise language

When deciding on whether or not to implement behavioral momentum, it is important for the individual that will be delivering the demands to think of what they would like the individual to complete and then make a list of two to four tasks that are easy for the individual to complete prior to completing the difficult task.

For example, a scenario that implements behavioral momentum may look like the following:

1. Jump up and down (easy task)
2. Touch your ears (easy task)
3. Spin around (easy task)
4. Tie your shoelaces (hard task)

The easy tasks that are being asked of the individual should be tasks that they can already complete without assistance and are simple. If the individual is working to master a skill such as clapping or touching their ears, then these tasks should not

be made as an easy task. It is important to remember that what is easy for one individual may be found to be difficult for someone else.

It is also important for praise to be provided to the individual once they have completed each easy task. Receiving reinforcement for each part of the chain that is completed is an important part of building momentum. If at any part during this process the individual refuses to complete an easy task, the person delivering the instructions should not continue with the process. This will hinder the ability of one to build momentum if part of this chain is not completed. The process will need to be started over from the beginning until compliance is achieved for each easy task.

If the individual does not comply with the request that is made of them, it is important to review possible items that may need to be done differently next time. The following items should be considered:

- Was the easy task or high probability demand a task that the individual is able to complete on their own and without any assistance or prompting?
- Was the more difficult, less preferred task too difficult for the individual to complete?
- Were the easy tasks provided to the individual in rapid succession?
- Were there enough easy tasks provided to the individual as a way for building momentum?
- Was there ample reinforcement provided to the individual after completion of each of the easy tasks?
- Were you able to obtain the individual's attention prior to placing any demands?
- Did the individual understand the more difficult, less preferred task?

After you have reviewed these considerations, it is also important to review both the easy and more difficult tasks that are being requested of the individual. It may be valuable to begin with an easy task that the individual is less likely to resist and then build up to the more difficult task that is being requested of them.

An additional benefit of implementing behavioral momentum is that it will also pair the person delivering the instructions and their presence with the reinforcement that is being delivered. When an individual learns that a particular person provides a demand each time that they are approached, they will eventually start running away from that person or ignoring their requests. Therefore, behavioral momentum will allow for the approach process to become paired with good things such as praise with those easy (and hopefully) fun tasks.

Generalization and Behavioral Momentum

Generalization occurs when an individual is able to successfully apply what they have learned across a variety of environments and contexts. This is a skill that occurs naturally with most individuals; however, some individuals may fail to do this without an intervention being consciously implemented to acquire this skill. Davis et al. (1992) found that when children were exposed to several adults that all used behavioral momentum, then generalization was able to occur. Therefore, it is important that as behavioral momentum is being used as an intervention, other individuals that are in the same environment as the learner should also be encouraged to use behavioral momentum. These individuals could be family members, teachers at a school, or siblings.

Section 3 Personal Reflection

Have you had to use behavioral momentum previously to assist an individual with completing a difficult task? If so, what were the easy/difficult tasks that were provided to the individual and how did the process conclude?

Section 3 Key Words

Behavioral momentum - the build up of momentum to the desired task or demand by providing simple instructions that the individual is likely to complete and followed by an instruction that the individual is less likely to comply with

Section 4: Prompting an Individual to Complete a New Skill

Teaching an individual to complete a new skill may require the use of prompting. Prompting is used in ABA to guide an individual to complete a new task by moving from incorrect responses to correct responses. The use of prompting can help increase an individual's rate of responding, lower the frustration level of both the learner and the instructor, and help the individual to learn as efficiently as possible. Prompts are able to be used in a variety of contexts and are applicable to everyone as a method of guiding and reminding people what to do and where to go.

Prompting can be an important tool that an instructor can use to prevent an individual from the continual practice of making a mistake over and over again. When an individual practices making an error over and over, this can ultimately impede their progress and learning. The main goal behind the use of prompting is to ensure that errors are not continually practiced across time.

When using prompting, it is necessary to know that it consists of a hierarchy. There are some prompting levels that are found to be more intrusive to the individual than other prompting levels. Within the field of ABA, the least intrusive prompt that allows the individual to be successful is typically the first choice when utilizing the prompting hierarchy (Leaf et al., 2016). When a new skill is being taught, errorless prompting may be provided which is when the individual is immediately provided with the answer so that they can provide a successful response.

The prompt that is used is faded slowly so that it is less and less intrusive to allow the individual to be successful with their response. There are a multitude of prompting levels as listed below:

Physical prompts

A physical prompt exists when the individual is guided through use of hand-over-hand as the method for completing the task or demand. There are different levels associated with physical prompts. A full physical prompt includes the individual being guided at their hands, and a partial physical prompt includes the individual being guided at their wrists or forearms. Physical prompts can be even less intrusive than previously mentioned by having the individual be guided at their shoulders in order to complete a task with their hands.

Verbal prompts

A verbal prompt can include telling an individual exactly what they need to do or say to someone. There are different levels associated with verbal prompts. A full verbal prompt can include asking an individual a question and immediately following the question with the correct response. For example, “What is your name?” and then stating, “Jessica” immediately after the question has been

asked. The individual would then repeat “Jessica.” This type of prompt could then be faded to a partial verbal prompt. An example of this would be asking the individual “What is your name?” and the saying to the individual, “J-j.” The individual would then be required to say, “Jessica.” Verbal prompts are typically best to use when requiring skills to be completed that include the use of verbal language. If a skill is being taught that does not require the use of verbal language (i.e., washing hands), then it is best to try to refrain from using verbal prompts to assist the individual with task completion. The reason for this is that verbal prompts can be difficult to fade.

Model Prompts

A model prompt can be used to demonstrate or show an individual the task or skill that needs to be completed. Some individuals learn well from the use of video modeling or from someone providing a live demonstration of the task prior to being asked to complete the skill. Some individuals have imitation skills that are strong and useful when attempting to imitate a task. Therefore, it may be best to use a video model or a live model where the individual is able to follow along with each step of the task as a method for teaching an individual how to perform a targeted skill.

Visual Prompt

A visual prompt can include the use of a picture to show the individual the task that needs to be completed next. Specific stimuli can be made larger or highlighted using a certain color to further enhance the task that needs to be completed. These types of prompts are able to look in a variety of different ways and are typically easy to fade out from being utilized.

Gestural Prompt

A gestural prompt includes the use of an individual pointing to a particular item, tapping on a selected item, or any type of nonverbal guide that can be provided to demonstrate to the individual the task that they need to complete next.

As a new skill is being taught to an individual, a prompt that is more intrusive may need to be used as a way of helping the individual learn the skills that are being taught. This approach is referred to as errorless learning. As an individual progresses with learning the skill, a less intrusive prompt may be needed as this approach can be used to help an individual gain independence.

A person teaching a skill may need to use a variety of different prompts at different times, especially when a newer skill is being learned. As an individual gains mastery with a particular skill, though, they will require less and less prompting or no prompting at all to complete the desired task.

It is important to consider a skill that is being taught to someone you work with. For example, you may be working with the individual on washing their hands, spelling their name, identifying items within the environment, or even tying shoes. For each skill that is being taught, it is vital that all of the parts of a particular skill are identified, especially any part of the skill that the individual can complete on their own without prompting. Write all of the steps down and determine where the individual is at with each step. Then, have the individual complete the skill for you. Next to each step listed, include whether or not the individual completed the step with independence or if they needed help. For those steps that are still being developed, determine the type of prompt that is required to complete the step.

In the information below, the task of hand washing is being addressed with an individual:

Skill Broken Down Step by Step	**Prompt Level Example**
Turn on water	Independent
Rinse Hands	Verbal prompt
Get Soap	Gestural prompt
Rub Hands Together	Full Physical prompt
Rinse Hands	Partial Physical prompt
Turn off water	Gestural prompt
Wipe hands	Model prompt

Once you have been able to complete the assessment of the skill by steps necessary for completion, the type of prompt that will be used on future trials of the skill will need to be determined based off of the assessment completed. It will be necessary to determine how a less intrusive prompt can be used as time progresses. For example, if you are using a full physical prompt to complete the "rub hands together" step of handwashing, then as the skill is being taught it will need to be determined how one can fade from using hand-over-hand prompts to only needing to guide at the individual's wrists, to their forearm, to their shoulder, and less intrusive as further incidents of teaching occur. There may be moments when it is necessary to move in and out of the prompting hierarchy with an individual. There may also be times when it is necessary that you are physically close to the individual that is learning the skill so you can immediately prompt using touch or a more intrusive prompt so that an error is not made. This process will also help an individual when they are unsure of how to complete the task or any step within the skill. Through the availability of fading in and out with using prompts, this will allow the individual to receive the level of support that they need as each step is being taught to them along the way.

Section 4 Personal Reflection

What skill have you taught to another individual that required the use of multiple steps (i.e., washing hands, making a phone call, making a bed)? Within this skill, were there some steps that the individual could perform independently and some steps that required assistance? If so, what types of prompts were you able to use with the individual and how were you able to move in and out of the prompting hierarchy to assist them with learning the new skill?

Section 4 Key Words

Errorless prompting - the individual is immediately provided with the answer so that they can provide a successful response

Gestural prompt - the use of an individual pointing to a particular item, tapping on a selected item, or any type of nonverbal guide that can be provided to demonstrate to the individual the task that they need to complete next

Model prompt - used to demonstrate or show an individual the task or skill that needs to be completed

Physical prompt - the individual is guided through use of hand-over-hand as the method for completing the task or demand

Prompting - used in ABA to guide an individual to complete a new task by moving from incorrect responses to correct responses

Verbal prompt - can include telling an individual exactly what they need to do or say to someone

Visual prompt - the use of a picture to show the individual the task that needs to be completed next

Section 5: Methods for Teaching a New Skill

There are several methods that can be utilized to teach a new skill. One way that can be used is through the use of chaining. Chaining can be used to teach a skill that is more complex and includes several steps that have to be completed. These skills may include tasks such as bruising teeth, washing hands, making a bed, or getting dressed. The ultimate goal of using chaining is to be able to determine several small behaviors that are able to be linked or "chained" together as a way of learning a more complex skill.

At this point, an instructor may not know for certain if chaining is the correct choice for their learner. In order to determine whether or not it is the correct method to use, it is important to determine if the learner can only complete a few steps of a skill or task, if they miss or skip steps within the task, or if they complete the steps that are included in the chain incorrectly. If the learner does any of these mentioned items, then chaining is typically a helpful tool that can be utilized for teaching a skill or task to completion. Chaining provides an individual with a step-by-step set of instructions that they will need from beginning to end in order to exhibit a skill correctly.

There are three different types of chaining that can be used with an individual to teach a skill: forward chaining, backward chaining, and total task chaining.

Forward Chaining

The use of forward chaining includes having the individual that is learning the skill complete the first step identified in the chain and then the individual is prompted through the remaining steps that are included within the chain (Shrestha et al., 2013). In the example of handwashing, the individual would independently turn the water on and then they would be prompted or assisted to complete the rest

of the steps within the chain. This type of chaining is recommended if the individual is able to successfully complete the steps at the beginning of a behavior chain. It is also beneficial to use this type of chaining if the first few steps within the behavior chain are easier. This allows the individual to master those initial steps of the behavior chain quickly. If forward chaining is being used to teach an individual how to wash their hands, you would start by having the individual turn the water on and then prompt the remaining steps that follow. After the first step within the behavior chain has been completed independently and mastered, then you would move on to teaching the individual how to complete the second step, followed by the third step, and then so on until all of the steps within the behavior chain have been taught.

Backward Chaining

The use of backward chaining involves having the individual that is learning be taught from the last step within the behavior chain (Edwards et al., 2018). The individual would receive help through completion of each step within the behavior chain and would receive prompting for each step that needs to be completed. When the individual reaches the last step within the behavior chain, the individual that is learning the skill would complete this step. When we review the washing hands behavior chain, the individual would be helped through every single step within the behavior chain and then be required to complete the last step, such as wiping their hands. It is beneficial to use backward chaining if the individual that is learning the skill has an easier time with the steps that are at the end of the behavior chain. This type of chaining also provides the individual with immediate reinforcement for completing a step. If backward chaining was being used to teach a child to wash their hands, every step would be prompted and then the individual would be required to wipe their hands independently. As soon as the individual wiped their hands, reinforcement would be provided to the

individual. In this situation, the most work (i.e., independent step) would lead the individual to receiving the biggest reinforcement. After the individual is able to complete the last step within the behavior chain independently, then the instructor should move to teaching the last two steps to independence, then the last three steps, and so on until all steps within the behavior chain are able to be completed independently. It may be worthwhile to consider the use of backward chaining if the individual would benefit from receiving immediate reinforcement.

Total Task Chaining

The use of total task chaining involves teaching the complete behavior chain each time by instructing the learner how to complete each step, every time (Weiss & Russo, 2021). Total task is a relatively common and intuitive teaching procedure that is used in the field of behavior analysis. The instructor would have the learner complete each step within the behavior chain and then prompt the individual as it is necessary through the completion of the task. For example, the instructor may say: “Let’s turn the water on. Now, let’s rinse our hands. Let’s get some soap.” When this type of chaining is used with some individuals, it may be too complicated and too much instruction provided at one given time. It may be easier to use either forward or backward chaining depending on the individual.

When integrating the implementation of chaining in teaching a new skill, it is important that a task analysis is created first. Task analysis is a process of breaking down complex skills into smaller, more manageable steps. This process can be used to teach a wide range of skills, from basic self-care skills like washing hands, to more complex skills like social interactions and multiplication skills. A task analysis provides step-by-step instructions for an individual, so it is understood each step that is required to be completed for mastery of a skill. It is important that when a task analysis is being created, that the steps within the skill are not

written down from memory. It is advised that the skill is completed by the instructor just as they would expect the learner to perform the skill. The skill should be broken down as much as it possibly can be and each step within the skill should be written down. If little things are skipped within the skill, the learner may miss out on important steps or information that would be required of them to complete the skill. For example, the step that details turning off the water after the hands have been washed may be forgotten. If this is the case, the learner will not know to turn the water off when completing the behavior chain, and the water will end up being left on until someone else notices it. Make sure that as the skill is completed, the skill should be completed step-by-step, written down, and then the skill should be performed again by following the directions that were written down. This will help to ensure that a step has not been missed along the way.

It is important to follow the following steps when determining how to teach a new skill to an individual:

Step 1: Decide on the skill that you would like to teach the individual

Step 2: Create the task analysis of the skill that you would like for the individual to learn. Make sure to break down each step of the chain into smaller steps that are able to be prompted. Then, make sure you also complete the task analysis to ensure that there are not any steps that are missing.

Step 3: Select the chaining method that will be used to teach the individual the skill. There are pros and cons to each chaining method. It is best to take these into consideration when selecting the chaining method that is best for the learner and the skill being taught.

Step 4: Determine how the individual will be prompted through completion of the chain. Will the learner need to be prompted at each step, are they able to

complete some of the introductory steps, etc? Also, decide on if the learner will need to be prompted at the step that they are currently working on. Will the person teaching the skill need to use full physical, partial physical, gestural, verbal, or a model prompt?

Step 5: Determine the type of reinforcement that will be used with the learner as well as the method that will be used to reinforce the learner for completing the task. It is important to ensure that the reinforcement that is delivered is as natural as possible. Additionally, consideration should be given on the possibility of needing to use another reinforcer when initially beginning the process of teaching the behavior chain.

Section 5 Personal Reflection

Have you ever taught a learner a skill that required the teaching of multiple steps as a method for completing an ultimate goal? Were you able to teach this skill by using a task analysis and one of the chaining methods mentioned? If so, which chaining method did you use and why was it the best option for your learner at that time to learn the skill?

Section 5 Key Words

Backward chaining - having the individual that is learning be taught from the last step within the behavior chain

Chaining - breaks a task down into small steps and then teaches each step within the sequence by itself

Forward chaining - having the individual that is learning the skill complete the first step identified in the chain and then the individual is prompted through the remaining steps that are included within the chain

Task analysis - process of breaking down complex skills into smaller, more manageable steps

Total task chaining - involves teaching the complete behavior chain each time by instructing the learner how to complete each step, every time

Section 6: Practicing Social Skills

Individuals diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder may demonstrate some deficits as they relate to social interactions or the use of social skills within their environment. ABA-based therapy has demonstrated that it can be used to teach others how to respond, react, and engage in a manner that is socially appropriate with peers and members in the individual's community. Through these efforts, it is important to ensure that the ABA-based therapy is being utilized to focus on increasing an individual's social skills and not forcing the individual to create or maintain friendships with people that they are not interested in having. The individual should not be forced to fit in with a group of peers or to be liked by people within a certain environment (i.e., school, church). The individual should be encouraged to be themselves and to have an understanding as well as the ability to engage with others in an appropriate manner.

Whether we like this or not, social skills are a necessary component of the world that we live in. Every day, an individual will need to interact with peers at their school, talk to the cashier at the store in which they shop, and ask for help from a nearby friend when they need assistance with something. The use of social skills is more than just having the ability to play with friends as a child or getting along with others to complete a job. These skills may include a variety of things such as reciprocal smiling to knowing not to sneeze on the person standing directly in front of you. Here is a list of other examples of social skills:

- Making and maintaining eye contact with other people
- Be able to read another individual's facial expressions
- Knowing how to respond to different social cues
- Determining what bullying is and how to differentiate that from other individuals being kind
- Smiling or frowning
- Using acceptable manners when out in a public setting
- Knowing what appropriate physical touch looks like
- Knowing how close to stand to someone and what is a socially appropriate proximity to others
- Demonstrating appropriate personal hygiene
- Understanding when it is acceptable to use profane language and when it is not able to be used
- Responding to question from others
- Reacting and responding appropriately to compliments from others

Social skills are known to encompass a multitude of concepts, skills, or behaviors that involve the integration of other people. Throughout the course of our careers as behavior analysts, most of the individuals we provide services to will not learn social skills by accident and instead will require some use of a formalized teaching process to guide them through development of these skills. Instruction may need to be repeated numerous times alongside the application of reinforcement to strengthen these learned skills in order for an individual to completely master

these skills. Social skills should be addressed in an intentional manner, just like the work that is done to teach communication skills and behavior reduction strategies.

How Should a Social Skill be Taught?

When teaching social skills, it is key to select a specific skill that the individual would benefit from learning. Then, it is ideal to integrate the use of behavioral skills training as the method for teaching the particular skill to the individual. There are four basic steps that are used when implementing behavioral skills training. These steps include instruction, modeling, rehearsal, and feedback. Behavioral skills training can be easily used to teach the learner a new skill by using an effective approach.

When teaching a new skill, behavioral skills training can be best implemented by honing in on those four steps as they are applicable to the skill in acquisition.

Step 1: Written instructions should be provided for the learner. The learner should be able to reference what steps they are being asked to complete either by having written instructions or through the use of pictures. The method selected will be dependent on the learner and which approach works best for their learning style. These instructions can include the use of a social story, a checklist, or step by step instructions. Each step will need to be reviewed with the learner. This is completed to ensure that the learner is able to understand each step within the task and allows for questions to be answered as they pertain to the instructions that are written down.

For example: When a peer provides you with a compliment, you should look the peer in the eyes and say, “Thank you.” Then, you should provide a compliment back to the peer (i.e., I like your shirt/shoes/bracelet).

Step 2: Modeling. This step can provide some fun interactions for the instructor to

demonstrate. The instructor will be provided with a chance to show the learner what it is that the instructor would like the learner to complete. The selected skill will need to be modeled for the learner. Through the use of modeling as a method for demonstrating the expectations to the learner, it will be easier to transition to the following step (i.e., rehearsal), which is where the roles will be reversed. The selected skill can be modeled for the learner by having someone else come into the room or having the learner act as though they are the other person. Some learners may benefit from the use of video modeling. Video modeling is when the skill being taught is recorded as being completed correctly and then showing it to the learner. During the step of modeling, the learner may also be prompted to go back through the checklist of the written instructions to ensure that the individual that is modeling the selected skill completed each step correctly.

For example: Have an individual enter the room and provide a compliment to the instructor. “Joe, I like your hair.” Then, the instructor should model for the learner exactly how the learner should respond.

- Look at the person that provided the compliment
- Say, “Thank you”
- Provide a compliment in return. “I like your shirt.”

Step 3: Rehearsal. The learner should now practice the selected skill. The learner should have the written instructions, checklist, or pictures available to them so they are able to reference what steps need to be completed within the skill. The instructor should then let the learner know that it is their time to practice the skill. The learner should be set up with the situation and prompted as needed through completion of the task. As time progresses, the instructor should work to fade out the use of their prompts. Ideally, gestural prompts or visual prompts should be used during this step as they are easier to fade out over time.

For example: Provide the learner with a compliment and have the learner look at the written instructions so they can complete each step. At this time, the learner should look at the person that provided the compliment, say, “Thank you,” and provide a compliment to the individual in return.

Step 4: Feedback should be provided. During this step, the instructor should evaluate key points that the learner completed well and provide praise for completion of those items. The instructor should let the learner know what they were able to do correctly and provide feedback for steps that were completed incorrectly. The learner could be recorded so they are able to see themselves complete the steps of the task. The instructor could provide a checkmark or even a sticker for each step that was completed correctly within the task. On the other hand, some learners may be able to review and understand the parts of the task that they performed either correctly or incorrectly by talking through it. The instructor should then tell the learner the steps of the task that they would like for them to fix or change and then have them start the task over again. The directions should be reviewed, appropriate behaviors should be modeled, and the learner should demonstrate the skill. This should be repeated until the learner is able to perform each step of the task correctly and independently.

For example: The instructor could say to the learner, “You did not make eye contact when Bob said he liked your hair. That step will get an X next to it. You did say, Thank you, so a checkmark will be placed next to that step. You also gave a compliment in return so a checkmark will be placed next to that step.”

Section 6 Personal Reflection

Have you ever used behavioral skills training to teach a skill to an individual? If so, which step of behavioral skills training did you find to be the most difficult to

implement? Were there any methods that you considered implementing to help assist with the training?

Section 6 Key Words

Video modeling - when the skill being taught is recorded as being completed correctly and then showing it to the learner

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