

# Modification of duration and frequency of personal studying routine

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The negative behavior to be modified is B. F. Skinner (1950) stated that there are many stages of change that will occur through a behavior change plan: Pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, maintenance and termination. In order for the program to be effective, all these stages must be considered and carefully planned. One must understand that the ability to visualize change or outcomes promotes a behavior.

In addition and of great importance, is ones confidence in the effectiveness of the modification plan. It is important that all expectations are realistic and achievable. Failure with the plan can be attributed to the lack of commitment, unsuitable reinforcements, and an almost impossible goal. Therefore, beliefs, thoughts, perceptions, antecedents, behavior and consequences are all contingent upon ones initial behavior management plan. Essentially, behavior modification is based on the principles of operant conditioning, developed by the American behaviorist B.

F. Skinner (1904-1990) in the early nineteen-sixties. These principles detailed a simple fact of life originally developed by psychologist Edward L. Thorndike (1874-1949) which he called the " law of effect," (David, G. Myers, 2001, p.

301). This law simply states, " rewarded behavior is likely to recur," (Myers, 2001, p. 301). According to Meyers (2001), the principle of operant conditioning is defined as a type of learning where the strength of a specific behavior will increase if followed by either positive or negative reinforcements. Positive reinforcement strengthens a desired behavior by presenting a stimulus after a response.

Contrastingly, negative reinforcement removes an aversive stimulus to increase the desired response. Positive and negative stimuli are presented into the environment according to a schedule of which there are two basic categories: continuous and intermittent. Continuous reinforcement simply means that the behavior is followed by a consequence each time it occurs. Intermittent schedules are based either on the passage of time (interval schedules) or the number of correct responses emitted (ratio schedules). Intermittent reinforcement is preferable since it produces a greater “resistance to extinction,” (Meyers, 2001, p. 304), than is found with continuous reinforcement.

Primary and secondary, or conditioned, reinforcers are used through association, both as reinforcing stimuli. According to Skinner (1951), “The best way to reinforce the behavior with the necessary speed is to use a ‘conditioned’ reinforcer. This is a signal, which the animal is conditioned to associate with the food. The animal is always given food immediately after the signal, and the signal itself becomes the reinforcer,” (p. 232). Another aspect to be used in the behavior plan is demonstrated in the following experiment.

Thomas Simek and Richard O’Brien (1981, 1988) applied principles of shaping and reinforcement to teaching golf and baseball. Both novice golf and baseball students were started off with short putts and half swings. As their mastery gradually increased, so did their putting and swinging schedule. This concluded that in the comparison of children taught by routine methods and this behavior reinforcement method, a faster

improvement of skill in testing and game situations was noted by the students, taught by the behavior reinforcement method. This demonstrates Skinner's procedure of "shaping: an operant conditioning procedure in which reinforcers guide behavior toward closer and closer approximations of a desired goal," (Myers, 2001, p. 302).

The behavior management plan is comprised of correlations of this principle with Thorndike's law of effect as well as other components of operant conditioning. The plan should yield similar results. Another experiment executed by B. F. Skinner (1959), elaborates this theory.

Simply put, Skinner put a pigeon in a cage. Mounted on one wall of the cage was a lever or bar. When the pigeon pecked the bar, food could be delivered to a small tray next to the bar. Skinner used many trials and kept careful records. This "behavioral technology revealed principles of behavior control," (Meyers, 2001, p.

301). These experiments exhibit advantageous results and are all incorporated into the behavior change plan. Another important aspect in the modification plan is motivation THE behavior management process, which involves the cessation of negative behaviors by implicating positive and negative reinforcements, is an arduous task. This gist of this study is to refashion the dissatisfactory studying routine of a subject through a behavior management plan, which will be applied to the daily schedule of the subject. This gradual process modifies the continuance in time and the frequency of the routine with the application of reinforcements throughout a six-week program. The contingent leisurely activities and monetary rewards will be

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administered so long as the subject strives to reach their goal of two-and-a-half hours a day of studying from not studying for longer than half-an-hour a day.

The antecedents of the behavior will be taken into account for and eliminated by avoiding such situations. The gradual studying time increase with contingent reinforcements should increase the studying behavior from sixty minutes to a full two and a half hours by the end of the six weeks.