

Psychology punishment and reward

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Punishment and Reward Kathryn Brady 538/PSYCH September 12, 2010

Jacqueline Peterson How behavior is selected, reinforced, and motivated is an essential question in psychology. What makes a behavior more likely than a different behavior? There is a lack of agreement among psychologists as to what processes create behavior. The descriptions of motivation are varied and the process by which motivation is created is firmly rooted in two distinct camps: extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation. The concept of intrinsic motivation is distinctively illustrated by... a well-demonstrated experiential state of ecstasy, pleasure, or satisfaction that occurs during the performance of tasks that represent the matching of demand and skill “ (Marr, para 4, 2000).

According to Alfie Kohn in 1995, Rewards and punishments are both ways of manipulating behavior. They are two forms of doing things to students. And to that extent, all of the research that says it's counterproductive to say to students, " Do this or here is what I'm going to do to you," also applies to saying, " Do this and you'll get that. (Brandt, 1995, p. 1). Mr. Kohn believes that rewarding students for learning things that they are inherently interested in learning on their own is counterproductive to the learning experience.

“ The more kids are induced to do something for a reward, whether tangible or verbal, the more you see a diminution of interest the next time they do it” (Brandt, 1995, p. 1). By using the things that students love as “ levers” to get them to perform -much like pets which we train to be obedient with treats- the enjoyment of the reward diminishes and serves as a manipulative tool. Mr. Kohn is not alone in his opinion about rewards working more as

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punishment to the intrinsic motivation we all possess to satisfy our curiosity and expand our knowledge-base as people. According to Hall (2009), using rewards as motivation for behavior does nothing to change the moral intent or understanding of a student. In his article, “ Beyond Rewards,” he claims there is a better way.

Studies have shown, according to Hall, that a token-reward system for learning causes a slight, temporary increase in student achievement among students who are capable of doing the work and just lack an incentive to complete assignments. The increase is short-lived and even impossible to attain for the child with learning disabilities. The child with a learning challenge may not ever earn the reward, causing him or her to give up on learning or even to gain answers from friends, when what is truly needed is the basic understanding of how to complete the work expected. Perhaps even more on the mark is Hall’s belief that “ Humans are certainly rewarded for learning, but they do not need systematically given rewards in order to learn” (2009, p. 50). While affirmations and rewards may provide a role, rewards don’t produce any learning on their own. Instead, providing sufficient and necessary conditions that children need are more important and have longer-lasting results.

However, the conditions for optimal learning can be different for every child. These conditions are not always obvious or even easy to create, but according to Hall, there is no room for failing to provide optimal conditions or falling back on easily applied but ineffective reward systems. When children are repeatedly given rewards for engaging in expected, appropriate behavior, they become conditioned to expect those rewards and may even

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create scenarios in which they engage in inappropriate behavior just so that they may bargain for a reward. This manipulation of the system comes as no surprise to Hall or to this writer. After all, most reward-systems have taught students how to be manipulative by manipulating their behavior through elementary and middle school. Instead, says Hall, teachers and parents should implement logical consequences to curb inappropriate behavior. According to Hall, there are four facets to a logical consequence: A logical consequence has four attributes: It immediately stops the child from continuing to impose on the rights of others.

It creates an opportunity to enhance the child's moral development. The loss of a privilege motivates the child to learn new social skills so that he can regain the temporarily lost privilege. Helping the child learn new skills strengthens the teacher-child relationship (p. 51). Using logical consequences and removing a privilege, rather than manipulating, bribing, or controlling behavior through a reward system makes a lot of sense to this writer. Response-contingent rewards serve to establish a hierarchy of power. It gives teachers the power and makes students subservient.

By using logical consequences in place of rewards, teachers begin to equip children with skills they will use in their adult to adult interactions. Giving children power over themselves, their behavior, and their learning as they mature and prove themselves capable of handling additional responsibilities and privileges sets them up to become self controlled and self determined citizens in the future. An experiment within four cities: Chicago, Illinois; Dallas, Texas; Washington D. C. and New York City has shown that paying students for performing behaviors related to learning increases achievement, <https://assignbuster.com/psychology-punishment-and-reward/>

but when payments were awarded for higher test scores, achievement was not increased by any measurable degree. " Providing incentives for achievement-test scores has no effect on any form of achievement we can measure," wrote Harvard University economist Roland G. Fryer (Aarons, 2010, p.

13). However, if cash rewards are connected to behavior that can help students gain better outcomes, then these incentives may be a feasible strategy to raise achievement among even the worst students in the lowest-performing schools. Fryer conducted the experiment during the 2007-2008 school year, using more than 38, 000 students. Collectively, the students earned a total of \$6. 3 million. Both public and private funding were given to students who participated. Test scores in New York City high schools gained minimally by students paid.

Chicago high school students saw very little increase in grade point averages, and there was no increase in overall achievement for students in either city. Reading achievement among younger students in Dallas was affected. Dallas 2nd graders saw statistically significant increases in reading comprehension, vocabulary, and language, posting test-score gains that continued even after the experiment was over. D. C. students saw " moderate gains" in their reading and math scores after middle schoolers were paid for factors including attendance, behavior, turning in homework, and wearing school uniforms (Aaron, 2009, p. 13).

These cash incentive programs show surprising results. Usually, high school students know what it is they need to do to improve academic achievement.

In this case, the offer of cash for behavior served no real incentive for altering behavior. Perhaps the reward was not large enough. The reading incentive program did have some positive outcomes in Dallas for at least a short time, until the experiment ended and the reward was removed. Fryer says that the mixed results show that students lack the know-how to translate excitement about receiving the financial awards into actions that would boost their achievement (Aaron, 2009). This writer's opinion is that the introduction of a reward for achievement is motivating in the beginning for the younger students, but like most rewards, the behavior-changes are short-lived.

Once the reward is removed, the behavior reverts. Because the motivation of the reward is completely extrinsic, nothing within the students change. By connecting to the students' desire for a tangible reward for something that is, in fact, intangible (educational effort,) the reward is neither appropriate nor successful. In order to get students interested and motivated, there must be a connection made within the individual –an emotional connection must be present in order to create true desire and motivation that is intrinsic and can overcome obstacles along the educational path. How an educator does this, in this writer's opinion, has to do implementing the highest levels of Bloom's Taxonomy. By expecting students to make connections to their learning, apply it within new circumstances, and synthesize learning to become an outward expression of an inner change, teachers are re-writing scripts which run in their students' heads and become a permanent part of their " selves. "