

Client: that he has run away on occasion

[Entertainment](#), [Games](#)



Client: a 16 year-old boy (Adam) with Asperger's disorder. Problem Behaviors: verbal violence, physical violence to objects and irrational behaviors such as running away.

(Threatening his parents and brother with violence and running away if they deny his requests. There have been episodes that he has run away on occasion and broken furniture and windows in the house when his requests were denied or he been told not to do things.) In this case the aim is to decrease Adam's problematic behavior by using some behavioral techniques. Before we plan the intervention, we need to find target behaviors that we will work on. Target Behaviors: Using question sentences such as 'Can I...' or asking for something nicely by using the word 'please'. Secondly, we will apply functional analysis to see what are the ABCs (antecedent, behavior, consequence) of the problematic behavior.

Antecedents: Being denied by his parents and/or brother after a request, being told not to do things. Behavior: Non-compliance, threatening with violence and running away, and breaking furniture and windows.

Consequences: His parents are worn out and afraid of him. As the next step we need to find a technique to decrease the problematic behavior and increase the target behavior.

In this case, the best technique will be differential reinforcement of alternative behavior. Differential reinforcement is a very effective technique in order to decrease undesirable behaviors. While using this technique we need to consider two components of it: 1. Providing reinforcement:

selected items as reinforcers should be provided to client contingently when the problem behavior does not occur or occurs at a reduced rate, 2.

Withholding reinforcement: selected items as reinforcers should be taken away as much as possible from the environment when the problem behavior occurs. Differential reinforcement of alternative behavior is commonly used to decrease noncompliant behavior. Before starting the intervention with this technique, a behavior that is a desirable alternative to the problem behavior should be selected. The desirable alternative behavior should not be too complicated or too difficult and should be already in client's repertoire not to have any problems of adopting the selected desirable behavior. During the intervention, the item or items serve/s as reinforcer/s should be presented in any occurrence of desirable alternative behavior or if the problem behavior is reduced. According to what is explained above, the desirable (alternative) behavior should be already in client's repertoire and should require equal or less effort than the problem behavior. However, in this case, we have no access to client's repertoire and we will have to assume that the target behavior will require less effort.

Our alternative behavior that is selected to increase -as defined above- will be starting requests with 'Can I..' and using word 'please' at the end of the request sentence. Normally, to be able to detect a reinforcer we needed to conduct stimulus preference assessment, however, we have no contact with the client so we need to check the previous observation. The previous observation shows that he was using his iPhone and video games most of the time.

Therefore, we assume that iPhone and video games are preferred items and we can use them as reinforcers. Also the access for reinforcers will be no longer than 2 hours after they are presented. Next, we need to define the schedules of reinforcements. Since we are using DRA, in the beginning, reinforcements will be contingent; will be given after each occurrence of desirable (target) behavior. After the first successful outcome of the intervention (if the problematic behavior occurs at a reduced rate or if the selected behavior occurs at least 1 time instead of problem behavior) we will start thinning the reinforcement (the reinforcement will no longer be contingent). Thinning procedure: Variable-ratio scale will be used instead of contingent reinforcement. As mentioned above, we will start the intervention by presenting the reinforcement after each occurrence of target (alternative) behavior. Then according to the checklist that parents will fill out, if the first phase of the intervention works successfully and we can reduce the problematic behavior (if the problem behavior occurs only 80% at a time instead of 100% or the selected behavior occurs 20% at a time) the reinforcements will be presented after 2 occurrences of target behavior.

Later, if we see that there is no problem with adopting the selected behavior according to the checklist and the problem behavior was successfully reduced below the rate of 60%, then reinforcements will be presented after 4 occurrences of target behavior. If the occurrences of the selected behaviors are more than occurrences of problematic behavior (below 50% of problematic behavior, over 50% of selected behavior) then we will present the reinforcement after 6 occurrences of selected behavior. At the end, if there is a significant decrease on problematic behavior (occurrence below the

rates of 20%) and significant increase on selected alternative behavior (occurrence over the rates of 80%) then we will only present the reinforcement after 8 occurrences of selected behavior. We will continue this procedure until the problem behavior reduces below the rates of 5% (almost no occurrence) and the selected behavior occurs over the rates of 95% at a time (full adoption). By thinning the reinforcement as given above, we aim to generalize the target behavior into natural settings without any expectation of reinforcement.

However, if there are any increases of the problem behavior after we record 50% decrease on problem behavior, then we will go back to the beginning of the thinning process until the problem behavior successfully reduces to 50% again. Moreover, after he starts developing the target behavior, he is likely to develop better relations with his parents and his brother and will earn his sister's (that he is getting along well) appreciation more. Therefore, we expect him to be more successful at his school and develop better social skills. All those positive outcomes of developing the target behavior will be the generalized conditioned reinforcers of our intervention. As the DRA using methods require, we need to use extinction in our intervention to be able to strengthen the target behavior and decrease the number of occurrences of problem behavior.

Definition of extinction in general is blocking the access to reinforcers for selected amount of time after each occurrence of problem behavior. In our intervention, we will block the access to iPhone and video games for 30 minutes if non-compliance, aggression, verbal violence, and/or physical

violence towards parents and/or brother occur. The extinction duration should not belong because it may cause grater occurrence of problem behavior or may cause occurrences of different problem behaviors such as negative emotional reactions. However, if we do not observe any decrease of problem behavior after 30 minutes of extinction, then, we can enlarge the duration of extinction procedure to 1 hour or more according to the reduction rates of problem behavior. If we detect any negative outcome of extinction procedure no matter how long the duration is, then we need to withhold the procedure and try to reduce the problem behavior only by presenting the reinforcement. Therefore, we need to work on the aggressive behavior to prevent the negative outcomes of extinction procedure by directing the client to a professional therapist who is specialized in this specific area. If we can manage to prevent the negative outcomes, then we need to start implementing the extinction procedure again but with low durations.

For example, at first, we will block the access to the reinforcers only for 10 minutes after each occurrence of problem behavior. Then if the problem behavior starts reducing, we can enlarge the duration of extinction up to 30 minutes if there is no negative outcome. Moreover, punishment (another technique to decrease the problem behavior) can be applied during the intervention. Punishment has two components: Positive punishment and negative punishment. Positive punishment is applied by adding stimuli to the environment to reduce the undesirable behavior. It consists of reprimands (“don’t do it”, “no”), response blocking, contingent exercise, and overcorrection – restitutive overcorrection, positive

practice overcorrection. And negative punishment is removing stimuli from the environment to reduce the undesirable problem behavior.

It consists of time out – non-exclusion time out, exclusion time out, and response cost. In this intervention, we could apply positive punishment by adding contingent exercise or restitutional overcorrection since we may receive negative outcomes due to client's aggressive behaviors (disadvantages rather than advantages). Contingent exercise technique could include more task demands at school. If the problem behavior occurs more than 50% at a time every day, then we can ask the teacher/s at school to give more home assignments for the next day. And restitutional overcorrection technique could be applied if there is any occurrence of physical violence towards objects. If the client hits, throws or breaks any object, he has to clean the mess he makes and/or repair the objects he breaks and also he has to clean the whole house afterwards. The advantages of these techniques would be less likelihood of receiving negative outcome after application of punishment, reducing the aggressive behavior, reducing physical violation and therefore verbal violation, and better grades at school. Or we could apply negative punishment by adding direct fine response cost technique.

Definition of direct fine technique is fining specific amounts of positive reinforcement (1). For example as explained in the reinforcement procedure, we will present the reinforcement after occurrences of selected alternative behavior however, he will only have access to the reinforcers at a reduced duration if the problem behavior occurs (he can only have access to phone

and/or video games for 1 hour and 30 minutes instead of 2 full hours). The advantages of this technique is that it can be combined with other intervention techniques, easy to apply, and convenient. However, in this case, application of punishment procedures (positive or negative) would have more disadvantages than advantages. For example, punishment procedure might cause bigger issues like self harm, harm to others, emotional breakdown etc.

., and this may cause failure of the whole intervention. That is why, in this intervention, we will not consider applying punishment techniques. Overall, we need to consider what kind of involvement do we expect from parents and how are we going to make sure that they implement the treatment plan correctly. First of all, we need to consider the fact that his parents are worn out and afraid of him, and he does not have good relation with his brother. The only person he gets along is his sister. Before we do that, we need to consider the fact that he has access to items and he escapes from tasks he does not like as a result of his parents fear of him.

In the intervention we need to make sure that his parents maintain stronger attitude towards him in daily basis and will be able to block the access to items and get him back on tasks that he tries to escape. Whenever he engages in problem behaviors, they should keep their attitude and should not show any weakness that he can take advantage of. They need to be aware of the time durations and try not to extend or limit the durations of reinforcement and/or extinction.

To be able to make sure that they implement the treatment plan correctly, we will ask them to fill a checklist after each occurrence of problem behavior and target behavior and after each implementation of reinforcement and extinction (with durations). We should also consider the fact that the only person he seems to get along with is his sister and in the intervention we can observe the relational differences that he has with his sister to see to in which ways they get along with and how, so we can work on those behavioral attitudes and try his parents to adopt to those attitudes to be able to get along with him even after the intervention.