

Changing behavior analysis assignment



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

A client approached me because he has a serious problem with procrastination. My client has procrastinated most satellites that were not comfortable or enjoyable for as far back as he can remember. Procrastinated activities include but are not limited to paying bills, doing homework assignments, making progress on assigned projects in the office, buying presents for birthdays or holidays and scheduling just about anything. Due to this undesirable behavior my client has lost a few jobs, failed out of school and is behind on his mortgage.

Of all of these activities my client would like assistance with procrastination as it relates to paying bills since that seems to be the most pressing issue. It should be noted that the procrastination has increased in frequency since childhood. My client blames this behavior for the extraordinary amount of stress in his life. Classical Conditioning: Classical Conditioning could be a source of my client's procrastination. In classical conditioning an unconditioned stimulus is observed to create an unconditioned response.

If a conditioned stimulus is paired with an unconditioned stimulus then eventually the conditioned stimulus will also evoke the same response as the unconditioned stimulus. The response to a conditioned stimulus is called a conditioned response. (Morris, C. , & Moist, 2013) In my client's case the unconditioned stimulus was paying bills with the family as a child. Money was tight in his family and the lack of money caused many arguments. The arguments resulted in very stressful situations that my client wanted to avoid. To put this in terms of classical conditioning, the unconditioned stimulus was the lack of money.

The unconditioned response was an argument that caused stress that my client tried to avoid. Since the arguments over money happened primarily when it was time to pay bills the conditioned stimulus became paying off bills. The conditioned response was to avoid the stress caused by paying bills by procrastinating. The repeated pairing of the stress from arguing while paying bills strengthened the desire to avoid the situation resulting in the habitual behavior problem of procrastination. Had the stress from arguing occurred only occasionally over bills, also known as Intermittent airing (Morris, C. & Moist, 2013), then it may have been less likely that my client would procrastinate his bill paying. In this scenario you could compare my client's procrastination with the results from Pavlov's experiment with his dogs. Pavlov's experiment measured how much his dogs would salivate when food was introduced. The food and salivation were the unconditioned stimulus and unconditioned response respectively. Pavlov also rang a bell each time he fed the dogs. After some time Pavlov noticed that his dogs would salivate when the bell rang even if there was no food present.

In this way the bell became the conditioned stimulus that elicited the conditioned response of the dogs salivating. (Morris, C. & Mammals, 2013)

Operant Conditioning: If we kick at my client's demeanor, from a teen perspective, an operant controlling teen we have to determine if there were reinforcers or punishers that affected the desired, or undesired, behavior. To explain how operant conditioning could cause procrastination we first need to define reinforcers and punishers. In Operant conditioning a reinforcer is some sort of stimulus that is introduced after the desired behavior that encourages the behavior.

A punisher on the other hand is a stimulus that is introduced after the behavior in order to discourage the behavior. Thorndike's Law of Effect states that behavior that is rewarded often will be “stamped in” and that behavior that causes some sort of discomfort will be “stamped out”. (Morris, C. , & Mats, 2013) Using the same example we used for classical conditioning, we will discuss my client's undesired behavior of procrastinating bill payments using an operant conditioning scenario. In this case paying bills was the behavior.

The punisher was he yelling and arguing that caused the feeling of stress. Due to continued exposure to the “stress of paying bills” my client developed an aversion to paying them. Thus his procrastination could be considered an operant behavior. This is backed up by Thorndike's Law of Effect as stated above. (Morris, C. , & Moist, 2013) Cognitive and Social Learning Theories: The social learning theories can be applied to my client's undesired behavior of procrastination and in my opinion may make more sense than the other two theories of operant and classical conditioning.

As a child my client was exposed to the stress caused by lack of money that my client related to bills. My client learned the behavior that bills were not fun to pay and should be avoided at an early age. This is a blend of cognitive and social learning. My client did not realize that he had learned to avoid paying bills. This is an example of latent learning since the behavior was learned but had not been demonstrated yet. Edward Thorndike was a pioneer in cognitive learning theories who theorized that learning does not have to be observable in order for it to have occurred. (Morris, C. , & Moist, 2013).

The effect of the unpleasant bill paying experiences was observed from the actions of the parents. My client was not actually paying bills as a child so the behavior was observed, or learned vicariously, from the parents as they paid bills. Specifically my client observed a vicarious punishment for the act of paying bills which resulted in a desire to avoid the stress involved in paying bills. This latent behavior manifested later in life as procrastination.

Recommendation: While there are options available with each theory discussed above I would recommend an operant conditioning solution for my client.

A reinforcer could be added to the bill paying process in order to make the behavior of paying bills on time more pleasant. The reward would need to be practical but significant enough to overcome the anticipated stress that my client associates with paying bills. Over time the act of paying bills will be associated with pleasant results rather than the stress of his childhood.

Thorner would probably say this behavior is “Stamped In” to my client once we are finished with the conditioning. References Morris, C. , & Moist, A.

(2013). Understanding psychology (10th ed.). Boston, MA: