This learning module, which is intended for use in in-service training for vocational rehabilitation counselors, deals with methods and procedures for eliminating or reducing client behavioral problems that may be interfering with the vocational rehabilitation process. The following topics are covered: ways of blocking or changing environments (including the use of restraints); extinction; reinforcement to reduce behaviors (differential reinforcement of incompatible response [DRI], differential reinforcement of other behaviors [DRO], and differential reinforcement of low rates of behavior [DRL]); punishment (time out, overcorrection, response cost, and satiation); and ethics. Four self-tests are also included. (MN)
Reducing And Eliminating Behavior (RA-9)
REDUCING AND ELIMINATING BEHAVIOR

by

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NOTE: Scattered throughout this module are questions which review the main points of the material presented. Be sure to answer these questions only in the student workbook.
MODULE: RA-9 Reducing and Eliminating Behavior

DESCRIPTORS: Time-out, response cost, overcorrection, punishment, deceleration, acceleration, ethics

OVERVIEW: Quite often, a person's independence is limited by severe behavior problems. These problems may cause difficulties in learning new behaviors, in working, or in living successfully at home or in the community.

This module deals with methods & procedures for eliminating and/or reducing these behaviors. A knowledge base will be supplemented by practical application of the techniques.
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BEHAVIOR

1. Analyze client data and identify specific behavior reduction techniques affecting the behavior. Will be either:

- Response Cost
- Time Out
- Extinction
- Overcorrection
- Satiation

- DRO
- DRI
- DRL
- Not a deceleration
- Not enough information
- Punishment

2. Develop a behavior reduction program which may include any of the procedures in #1 above.
EVALUATION

1. Class test. Will be given descriptions of procedures and client data.

2. Class test. Will be given behaviors to be reduced and a designation of what techniques to use.
Remember the four situations teachers may face? They are

1. The client does the behavior too little.
2. The client does the behavior at the correct level.
3. The client does the behavior too often.
4. The client never does the behavior.

What if a client does something you wish he did less often or not at all? If you have a client who talks too much, or breaks equipment, or wastes time, or asks too many questions, or even is aggressive or violent, this chapter should answer some of your questions.

A number of techniques will be discussed in this module for reducing and eliminating behavior. Keep in mind at all times that in addition to any of these techniques, it is extremely important to teach and reinforce appropriate behavior to replace the undesirable behavior. We can't just punish behavior we won't accept. We must also teach behaviors we will accept.
There are four ways to decrease behavior. These are extinction, punishment, blocking or changing the environment, and reinforcing on a DRO, DRL, or DRI schedule.
List 4 ways to decrease behavior.
BLOCKING

OR

CHANGING

THE

ENVIRONMENT
Blocking refers to preventing the problem from ever occurring. One example of blocking might be grabbing someone's arm to prevent him from hitting you. Another might be restraints. This is an extreme example of blocking. A person in restraints not only doesn't hit himself or others, but he doesn't do anything at all. The problem doesn't occur, but no learning takes place either.
Give 2 examples of blocking.
There are several problems with blocking. First, it is only a temporary solution to the problem. It may prevent an injury this time, but what if you're not quick enough next time? The most serious problem with blocking is that it doesn't teach the client what to do instead of the problem behavior. Another problem is that being grabbed or put into restraints may function as a reinforcer instead of decreasing the behavior. So be sure to keep careful watch on your data if you are doing these procedures. This can be an emergency measure to temporarily solve a problem. It should not usually be the programmed method of choice for a persistent or serious problem.

It is only a temporary solution!

It doesn't teach the client what to do instead of the problem behavior!

It may function as a reinforcer instead of decreasing the behavior.
List 3 problems with blocking.
Another environmental change to eliminate behavior is rearranging the environment so the behavior can't happen. The two year old can't break the vase if it is on the top shelf. Susan can't fight with Zeke if Zeke is in a different building. In both cases the problems are solved for now, but what if there is a vase on Grandma's coffee table or Zeke comes to Susan's building? The problems are obvious. Again, as with blocking, no alternative behavior is taught and it is only a temporary solution.

Rearranging the environment.
What are 2 problems with changing the environment to decrease behavior?
Blocking and changing the environment should only be used as emergency deceleration techniques or in conjunction with one of the increasing or teaching procedures learned in other modules.

Another possible use might be in a case where the altered environment can be a permanent change. For example, assume Zeke is going to be placed in a group home in Montana soon, and Susan will never see him again. Also assume he is the only person she ever fights with. In this case, there is probably no need to try to decrease her fighting. Just keep him away from her until the move. Be sure the client will NEVER have to deal with the problem before you use this method. It can, of course, be used along with other deceleration methods or as a first step in a continuing program.

REMEMBER... Change the environment ONLY...
List 3 situations when it is OK to use changing the environment as a procedure to decrease behavior.

See Self-Test #1
Another deceleration method is extinction. Technically, extinction is identifying and withholding a reinforcer through the initial burst of behavior until the behavior is at the previous baseline level.
Define extinction.
Many times this translates into "ignore inappropriate behavior." Sounds simple, doesn't it? Ignore the problems and they will go away. Unfortunately, it is not quite that simple. In fact, extinction is probably the most difficult procedure to use effectively. There are several reasons why.

One is that it is sometimes difficult to identify the reinforcer that is maintaining the behavior. In spite of hours of observation, you may not be able to tell what maintains Drew's vocalizations. As far as you can tell, no one ever pays attention to them. If you can't identify the reinforcer, you obviously can't withhold it.
What is 1 problem with extinction?
One characteristic of behavior undergoing extinction is that *it gets worse before it gets better*. If you think about this, it will make sense. If you have been getting what you want by crying, but now the desired result does not occur, your first reaction would be to cry harder. This is exactly what happens. A graph of behavior undergoing extinction would look like this:

![Graph showing behavior under going extinction](image)

**It gets worse**

**before it gets better!**
What is a 2nd characteristic of behavior undergoing extinction?
This means both you and the client have to be able to withstand this worsening of behavior.
When can you use extinction, assuming you can identify & control the reinforcer?
So what happens if you start an extinction procedure and find you can't stand the increase? You give in and give the person what they want for crying and just start over, right? WRONG!! If this happens, you have made the problem worse than it was before. Here is why: If you finally let a client stop work because she is really crying hard, you have simply required better crying before she gets reinforced. So you end up teaching her to cry harder. The result is a worse problem than you had before. This is usually how full-fledged tantrummers have learned to tantrum so well. They did not start at the high level they may now exhibit, but were probably carefully shaped until they reached the expert level. Shaping works whether you intend it to or not. It is just as easy to shape inappropriate as appropriate behaviors.

Another problem may arise when you do successfully ignore instances one, two, and three of the behavior; but give in on the fourth; then ignore instances five and six and reinforce the seventh. This turns out to be reinforcing on an intermittent schedule, making the behavior more resistant to extinction than it was before. This also makes sense if you think about it. If the client gets reinforced every once in a while, it is easy for him to believe the next behavior may be the one that will pay off. He will not recognize that there are, in fact, no more reinforcers available.
What are 2 ways to make the problem worse, when attempting an extinction procedure?
If you choose extinction, I think you can see it may not be as easy as it sounds. Because of the problems involved, I would hesitate to try extinction to reduce serious or very annoying behaviors. Extinction shares with all other deceleration procedures the disadvantage of not teaching what to do instead.

There are times when extinction conditions are in effect that the client recognizes these conditions and the behavior burst does not occur. This is known as Discriminated Extinction. Because of past experiences, the client has learned that reinforcement does not occur in certain situations and essentially does not "waste his time" with a behavior burst. This explains why one staff person may have no problems with a given client while others do. The client has obviously learned, or discriminated, that there is no "pay-off" with the one staff member.

The reinforcer is gone; no burst of behavior!
What is discriminated extinction?
How is discriminated extinction different from other extinction?
Ignoring is probably most valuable as a preventative rather than a curative measure. A general policy of differential attention can prevent many problems from ever becoming serious. This means that appropriate behavior is attended to and inappropriate behavior is ignored. If you never start attending to irrelevant talk-outs, you probably won't have the problem to deal with (unless it is attended to by others). If working appropriately is reinforced at the same time crying is ignored, the time spent not crying will increase and crying will probably decrease.

Don't ignore this behavior...

It might go away!
What is the most valuable use of ignoring inappropriate behavior?

See Self-Test #2
Reinforcing to reduce a behavior sounds contradictory, doesn't it? There are three ways to do this. One is to reinforce on a DRI schedule. DRI means Differential Reinforcement of an Incompatible response. This schedule is used when you select and reinforce a behavior that can't happen at the same time as the undesired one. For example, Jane can't walk around and sit down at the same time. So, if you increase sitting down, you have automatically decreased walking around.
Define reinforcing on a DRI schedule.
Another schedule that can be used to decrease behaviors is DRO. This is Differential Reinforcement of Other behaviors. It is a broader application of a DRI. DRO means reinforcing all other behaviors, not just the incompatible ones. So anytime Johnny is not self-abusing, he gets reinforced no matter what else he is doing. It turns out to be reinforcing, not doing the inappropriate behavior. Any time Sara is not talking out of turn, she gets reinforced, no matter what she is doing.

Differential Reinforcement of Other Behaviors
Define reinforcing on a DRO schedule.
There is a problem with this schedule. It may turn out that some undesirable behaviors may get reinforced. Sara from above may get reinforced for looking out the window or doodling, rather than working on task on a DRO for not talking out of turn. This can be a very powerful deceleration tool, but you do need to be careful and watch what you are reinforcing and therefore increasing.
What is a problem with DRO?
Reinforcing on a DRI or DRO are almost always used along with extinction. These two procedures together are called *differential attention*, the one most powerful preventative measure available. When one of these schedules is used with extinction, the problem of an alternative behavior is solved. That is, it adds a teaching component to the extinction procedure.
What are the components of differential attention?
The third reinforcement schedule to reduce behaviors is DRL. This means Differential Reinforcement of Low rates of behavior. DRL is when a client is reinforced for keeping his inappropriate behavior at an acceptable low rate. For example, if Dave, who argues at a very high rate, has no more than 4 arguments in a 24 hour period: he may earn a reinforcer. If Lynn, who is very distractible, switches activities no more than 4 times in an hour; she may earn a reinforcer.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Differential} & \\
\text{Reinforcement (of)} & \\
\text{Low Rates (of behavior)} & 
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\]
Define reinforcing on a DRL schedule.
There are two basic times when this is a good treatment of choice. One is in a shaping program. For example, Dave may earn the reinforcer for no more than 8 arguments at first, then 6, then 4, etc. until arguments have been eliminated.

The second and perhaps more common use of a DRL is when the behavior is not the problem, but the number of times it occurs is the problem. Lynn is an example of this. It is O.K. to switch activities in a free play situation but it is probably not O.K. to switch 30 times in an hour. It is good to ask questions, but one every three minutes is ridiculous.

These procedures are really a philosophy. They allow us to eliminate problems in a positive way. We do not always have to punish to reduce a behavior. It is possible by the use of these schedules of reinforcement to "accentuate the positive," while "eliminating the negative."
List 2 situations where DRL is useful.

See Self-Test #3
Everyone knows what punishment is. It is spanking, or yelling, or criticizing someone. That is the common understanding of the term. While these traditional moves may be punishment, they "ain't necessarily so." Being tickled or patted on the head, or even praised could be punishment. Punishment, then, obviously needs a new definition. Punishment is the presentation or removal of stimulus or event contingent on a behavior that decreases the future occurrence of that behavior. If the behavior decreases, it is punishment. If it doesn't, it isn't. Spanking may or may not be a punisher. The same is true of hollering or criticizing. It is defined by its function in the same way as a reinforcer.
Define punishment.
ALWAYS

Punishment *always* works. If you try something that does not decrease behavior, you simply have the wrong stimulus.
When does punishment work?
There are four categories of punishment that are generally accepted as ethical by most standards. These are *time-out*, *response cost*, *overcorrection*, and *satiation*.

- Time out
- Response Cost
- Overcorrection
- Satiation
List 4 kinds of punishment procedures.
GO TO YOUR ROOM!

Time out technically means a contingent removal of all reinforcers for a specific length of time that reduces the future occurrence of the target behavior. This is different from extinction where the reinforcer is withheld for a specific behavior, but the client may earn reinforcers for other behaviors. Time out is a more severe deprivation because no reinforcers are available for any behavior.

An example of a time out procedure in a workshop would be placing a client in an isolated room immediately after the client emits an undesirable behavior.
Define
time out.
Because it is a punishment, it is also defined by its function. It is only time out if it works. If the client would rather be alone than working, (and many would), it is not a punishment and it is not time out. Being alone may in fact be a reinforcer for some people. It is not working unless you use it less and less until the target behavior doesn't occur at all. You can only tell if time out is working by looking at the data. If the target behavior is decreasing, it is time out; and if it's not, it isn't.

Look at your data

If the target behavior decreases,

If it doesn't, it isn't!

It's time out!
How do you know if time out is working?
There are several variables that can be manipulated to improve the effectiveness of time out. First, the environment from which the client is removed has to be reinforcing. The reason for this is simple. If he is not being sent from a good place, he has little to lose and the procedure will probably not work. This is a trap some institutions fall into. They may attempt to use time out and not understand why it is not working. The problem is that the ward room is just not that different from the time out room.
Describe an environment in which time out could be used effectively.
Another variable is the behavior that results in time out. It needs to be well specified. Time out should also be used for only one or two specified problems. This limits the amount of time out being used. Like many things, if it is over-used, it may well lose its effectiveness. Time out is NOT a procedure to be used at a whim. It has to be well thought-out and part of a WRITTEN PLAN FOR A CLIENT. The behavior needs to be spelled out to all staff and to the client so everyone understands the rules.

1 or 2 specific
Describe the behaviors appropriate for time out.
Once more & you'll go to bed!

Giving the client a warning before being sent to time out helps make the contingencies clear. Even though you have explained it, the client may still not understand, so saying immediately on the first occurrence of the target behavior, "That's it! Tease him again and you go to time out," will make very clear what he is not to do and what will happen if he does. Just make sure that only one warning is used or it becomes an idle threat.
What should be done before sending someone to time out for the first time?
The time spent in time out should be specified and short. There needs to be a minimum time and an appropriate time designated. For example, a time out procedure might read like this: Contingent on chair throwing, Jason receives a 2 minute T.O. with 1 minute appropriate limit. This would mean that when Jason throws a chair, the least amount of time he will spend in time out is 2 minutes. The one minute appropriate means he has to be quiet and not trying to escape during the last minute of the time. He stays in until he has spent a total of 1 continuous minute being quiet. If he is quiet for the first one minute and 50 seconds, then starts to yell, he will not get out until he has spent one minute quiet. This is to be sure getting out of time out reinforces being quiet and not tantrumming. The shorter the time spent in time out, the better, because the bad behavior may not be happening, but no learning is taking place either. And, if the client would happen to perform a desirable behavior, it would not be reinforced.
Describe time spent in time out.
Where should the time out area be? First, it has to be safe, well-ventilated, and lighted. The client must be observed at all times during a time out. This means a two-way mirror or some way to have eye contact with the client at all times. These qualifications eliminate the bathroom and hall closet as time out areas. It does not have to be a separate room. It might be a chair in the corner facing the wall. It may be a specified bare section of the working area. It is also possible in some cases to time out a client by turning away from him for a short time, if all his reinforcers are coming from you. These guidelines are important ethical considerations because no one area is more controversial than the use of a time out, seclusion, quiet, or detention room. Whatever it is called, if these guidelines are followed, there can be few questions on the legality or morality of your procedures.
List 4 characteristics of a good time out area.
You have a place that meets the ethical standards. Your program has been written and approved. You have given a warning and Jason just threw a chair. What do you do? Jason is 6'4", weighs 200 pounds and doesn't want to go. First, tell him in your firmest, most commanding voice. This does not mean yelling; just say it like you mean it. There should be no lecture, no scolding. The MOST you would say is, "Jason, you threw a chair, go to time out." If he still doesn't go, you may have to physically take him. DO NOT, I REPEAT, DO NOT touch a client except as a last resort, and only then if you have enough help to overpower if necessary. Never let a client escape. It is better to let him avoid time out than to let him physically hurt himself or someone else, or escape.

Tell him in your firmest, most commanding voice!

As a last resort, physically take him!
How do you get someone to time out who doesn't want to go?
A second type of punishment is called overcorrection. There are really two kinds of this procedure. One that is sometimes called positive practice, is simply practicing the appropriate behavior many many times, contingent on the inappropriate behavior. This is what your mother did when you had to shut the screen door 10 times quietly after slamming it shut one too many times on a hot summer day. If a client assembles a package in the wrong order, you may have him do it correctly 5 times in a row. If your client always makes requests in a loud voice, you could have him ask quietly several times. While this procedure can be punishing, it also gives the client a chance to practice what they should do instead.

“So this is "overcorrection!"
Describe the first type of overcorrection.
The second type is leaving the environment better than it was before the client's mistake. This means that when a client spills something on the floor, he not only cleans up what he spilled, but the entire floor. Some courts are doing this for litterers. A convicted litterer may be sentenced to clean an entire ditch for a specified distance. If someone steals food from another client, he may have to return what he stole and some of his own as well.

I forgot to clean my plate!

Now I have to wash all the dishes...

This is called, "leaving the environment better than it was before."
Describe the 2nd type of overcorrection.
These procedures as outlined here are particularly **client specific** in their results. That is, they may or may not work. These procedures also may be particularly satisfying or reinforcing to the supervisor, whether they reduce the behavior or not. For these reasons, it is particularly important to **TAKE AND USE DATA** when using these procedures. Just as with all punishment, **if it doesn't decrease behavior, it isn't overcorrection**, so there is no ethical reason to continue.

You MUST take your data!
List 2
characteristics
of
overcorrection
that make data
very important
The next type of punishment to be described is response cost. This procedure is described very well by its name. It means that when a particular response is made, there is a price to pay. This is what happens to teenagers who get grounded for coming home late, or students who lose points for handing in assignments late. This may be what you do to Connie when you take some of her tokens away for failing to follow instructions. If these actions reduce the target behavior they follow, they are response cost procedures.
Describe response cost.
A component that is often useful to add to response cost is the earn back half specification. It works this way: "Jeff, you did not go back to your work station when break was over, so you lose 10 points. If you are at your station within the next two minutes, you will earn back five of those points." It means a cost has to be paid, but part of the loss can be regained through appropriate behavior. It prompts and pays off the correct response. Otherwise, Jeff might not return at all. There would be no payoff to do so. It also avoids the chain of fines.

He could keep losing points until he went to work, but what if he lost more than he had earned? The earn back half specification keeps the whole transaction on a more positive note.
What does earn back half mean?
Another punishment procedure is called satiation. This means continually presenting a stimulus until it loses its reinforcing value. This is what traditionally happens in our culture to the young smoker. He is forced to smoke until he is sick. A classic case in the literature is the case of a woman in a mental ward who would not turn her towels in after a shower. She hid them in her room. So towels were delivered to her until her room was full and she started taking them back. She ultimately started turning in her towels after showers and stopped hoarding them.

"Wanna get satiated?"

I have not mentioned electrical shock as a punisher. I do so now only briefly. While there may be an ethical application in some very severe self-abusive clients, these instances are few and far between. Few of you will ever see a case where this is necessary. Also, very rarely it may be appropriate to use a small slap on the wrist or something similar. Be very careful of these procedures, document your work with hard data, do them only under supervision, and as a last resort only.
Describe satisfaction.
There are more obvious ethical concerns when using deceleration procedures than when using acceleration ones. One rule of thumb says, "implement deceleration at a ratio of 1:3." This means for every behavior you are trying to decrease, you should be teaching or increasing 3 others.

Usually it is best to try a positive approach first, like reinforcing an incompatible. In some places documentation of this is required by law or agency guidelines.

Informed consent is required for some punishment procedures by law or agency rules. It certainly should be an ethical requirement. It is also good sense for agencies and individuals to be protected if anyone questions their procedures.

There is little physical or emotional harm possible to a client from praise that doesn't function as a reinforcer, or a prompt that doesn't work. There is danger of time lost and behaviors not learned, but that danger is less than the possibility of someone being hurt in a time out or overcorrection procedure, or becoming completely withdrawn from being completely ignored in the name of extinction. For these reasons, it is especially important to document your results in a deceleration program. If it isn't working, stop and change it. To do otherwise is unethical.

It is certainly your ethical duty as a fellow human being to demand a satisfactory explanation from your supervisor for any procedures you question. This is true whether you question the ethics or the effectiveness of any particular program.
List 5 ethical considerations for using deceleration programs.
This material should have given you some ideas about solving some of your more difficult problems. Add this to your knowledge about increasing, teaching, and maintaining behavior and you should be in good shape.

See Self-Test #4

HAPPY TEACHING!
Self-Test #1

1. What is meant by blocking? Write two examples.

2. What are two problems with blocking?

3. What is meant by rearranging the environment and what are two problems with this?

4. List a situation with one of your clients in which blocking or rearranging the environment might be effective.
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Self-Test #2

1. Why is extinction often very difficult?

2. How might inappropriate use of extinction actually strengthen a behavior?

3. Choose a client behavior and describe how an extinction procedure would be implemented.
Self-Test #3

1. How do DRI, DRL, and DRO differ?

2. What is one danger of a DRO schedule?

3. What is differential attention?

4. Take your procedures from Self-Test #2 and incorporate DRO, DRL, DRI.
SELF-TEST #4

Choose the best answer for each of the following 12 questions. If the answer is punishment, choose the specific kind of punishment if possible.

A. Response cost  G. DRI
B. Time out       H. DRL
C. Over correction I. Not a deceleration
D. Extinction     J. Not enough information to
E. Satiation      determine procedure
F. DRO            K. Punishment

1. When Irene cries, you reassure her that she is a nice person and everyone likes her. This is to improve her self-image and reduce the crying. Here are the data on % of time crying last week.

   M--27%  T--29%  W--42%  Th--57%  F--59%

2. When Terry misses putting a lid on a jar on the assembly belt, he has to stop working for 1 minute. Here are the data on the number of jars missed.

   M--29  T--21  W--18  Th--20  F--16

3. When Robert spills the wastebaskets he is emptying, he has to remove all the large garbage cans and swab the entire area. Here are the date on % of wastebaskets spilled.

   M--20%  T--25%  W--20%  Th--15%  F--10%  S--5%

4. Lynn used to get tokens for bolts threaded. The new supervisor has suspended the token economy but didn't tell the clients. Here are the data on number of bolts threaded this week.

   M--49  T--54  W--59  Th--42  F--31  S--22
5. When Patty assembles a package correctly, she puts a mark beside her name. Here are the data on the number of packages done correctly.

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6. When Joe insults a peer, he loses 4 tokens. If he then says something nice to that person, he can earn back 1 of the tokens. Number of insults last week.

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7. During the free time activities, Erin runs from activity to activity, often switching as many as 10 or 12 times in an hour. If she switches activities no more than 8 times, she can earn a can of pop. Number of switches last week.

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8. Whenever Joe makes an obscene remark, you tell him how bad this is. You know he is doing it less.

9. Sue snaps her fingers and taps her toes at a very high rate. You have decided to praise her whenever she is quiet. She gets praised in all settings as long as she is not snapping or tapping. % of samples she was snapping or tapping.

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Self-Test #4 (Con't.)

10. Sara is also a finger snapper. She only does it in free time so you decide to teach her to weave on the loom. % samples she was snapping in free time.

M--57  T--30  W--25  Th--20  F--18

11. Jeremy steals sandwiches whenever he gets the chance. He takes them out of people's lunch boxes whenever he can. For the past week, whenever he steals one, you give him 10 sandwiches to eat. Here are the number of sandwiches he stole.

M--8  T--6  W--3  Th--1  F--0

12. Ralph picks his nose in public. When he does this, you used to give him a lecture. Now you ignore him. Here are the data from the last two weeks. The first week he got the lecture; the second week he was ignored. % of samples nose was picked.

M--27  T--31  W--35  Th--40  F--42
M--45  T--50  W--54  Th--35  F--25