When can Shaping be used as an intervention?

Shaping can be used to increase or decrease behaviors/delays. Consider the following:

1. Language delays- An adult can work with a child with language delay by reinforcing utterances or approximation of words. The adult should always consider reinforcing advancing attempts.

2. Increasing on task behavior- An adult can work with a child to increase on task behaviors by reinforcing time intervals where the child is staying on task at an increasing rate over time.

3. Decreasing undesirable behaviors- An adult can work with a child who is showing undesirable behaviors by reinforcing the number of times that that child refrains from engaging in that behavior for an increasing period of time.

4. Fears/phobias- An adult can work with a child who is showing fears or phobias by gradually reinforcing the child for tolerating the fear or phobia in closer proximity over time, or for extended periods over time.

5. Academic tasks- An adult can work with a child who is having trouble completing work by reinforcing the completion of work in larger chunks over time.

The possibilities are endless!!!

References


Questions?

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What is Shaping?

Shaping is used to reinforce approximations of a behavior or task with an end product in mind. It is working with a child to reinforce efforts at getting towards a target behavior. The child should be reinforced when they are demonstrating behaviors that show increase toward the final behavior.

Why is shaping important?

Shaping allows children to feel success while working towards a larger goal. Sometimes, to achieve a final product, it is necessary to make progress towards getting there. By shaping reasonable efforts to getting to a final product, the child can feel success and the adult can feel less frustration.

How do you complete a shaping intervention?

1. Determine a target behavior. What is it you want the child to do? Define this behavior in measurable terms. Chart this as the target behavior.

2. Determine all efforts that will be reinforced in working towards the target behavior? What will constitute the reasonable efforts in getting to the target behavior? Chart them on a list, starting with the first reasonable effort and ending with the target behavior.

3. Engage the child in play. Start at the bottom of the list, and reinforce the child for each effort. Tally the amount of times the child is able to complete the task at each tier. Determine when you will move to the next level. For example, if you want the child to complete level 1 for 5 consecutive trials, then move up, follow this pattern consistently.

4. Complete this intervention until the target behavior is reached. Continue reinforcing this behavior until the child shows they no longer need reinforced to exhibit this behavior on a regular basis.

Materials

Salient reinforcement: Find out what the child considers to be reinforcing. Reinforcement can include: tangible objects such as stickers, treats, tokens, etc. or intangible objects such as verbal praise, a pat on the back, a smile, etc.

A chart with all behaviors listed: All behaviors need to be defined so that anyone who is implementing the intervention can use the chart to tally success of the intervention.

Safe environment: The intervention should take place where the child is expected to complete the behavior.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chart example:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Behavior</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tier 1- Child will play in the same vicinity as an adult for 3 minutes with the same materials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tier 2- Child walks to an adult when that adult asks the child to play.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tier 3- Child will play with an adult for 1 minute when asked.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tier 4- Child will play with an adult for 2 minutes when asked.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Target Behavior</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Target Behavior**= Child plays with an adult for 3 minutes when asked.  
**Reinforcement**= Verbal praise, i.e, “I like how you…” and smiling at the child.