

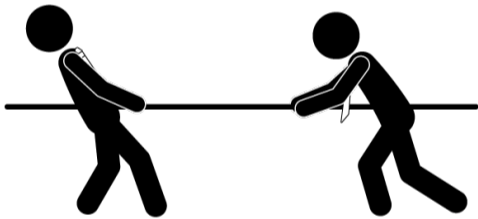
10 QUICK WINS FOR BEHAVIOR CHANGE

1 Go from bribery to reinforcement.

Reinforcement is something that comes after a behavior that causes an increase in the chances that behavior will happen again. After I say a funny joke, people laugh. Now I'm more likely to say that funny joke in the future. Bribery is something given before the desired behavior happens in hopes that the behavior will occur. I tell my child, "if you sit quietly, I'll give you the iPad." I give the iPad with the hope that quiet sitting will come. Bribery may work in the moment but it creates a long term problem. It teaches that to get what you want you should engage in a negative behavior first.

Action step: Look at the way you are using reinforcement. Make sure you provide reinforcers only after positive behaviors occur.

2 Change your language to avoid a power struggle.



Nobody wins in a power struggle so avoid one before it starts. Be intentional with the language you use with your students. Use language that is direct and free of sarcasm. Tell your students what you want them to do, not what you don't want them to do. Keep the conversation on the positive behaviors you want to see more of. Avoid lectures, nagging, threats, and ultimatums. Make sure your nonverbal language communicates calmness and respect. When you tell a child 'no,' follow up with what they can do or have instead.

Action step: Make a reminder for yourself. Put a post-it on your computer or lesson plans with the word LANGUAGE to remember that the words you say are part of your students' environment and effect their behavior.

3 Make sure it's really a problem.

When approaching a problem behavior, ask yourself "Is this a problem for me or a problem for the student?" If it is a problem for the student, it is affecting the learner's education, opportunities for inclusion and independence, and abilities to make and maintain friendships. If the problem behavior is not affecting one of these areas, it may just be a problem for you. Collaborate with colleagues to ensure that behaviors they are targeting in other settings are really a problem.

Action step: Reexamine your approach to sensory behaviors. If the sensory behavior is not negatively impacting the individual, it is not really a problem.

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4 Starve the negative behavior and replace it.

With problem behaviors the goal is to starve it and replace it. Starving it means making it so the problem behavior no longer works or no longer works as well. Make changes to your responses and the environment so the problem behavior isn't followed by a desired result (ie. attention or getting out of work). While doing this, also teach a replacement behavior. Teach a new, positive, prosocial behavior that will work for the student. Ensure that the replacement behavior is consistently reinforced.

Action step: Review your behavior plans. Does every behavior have a replacement behavior being taught?

5 Are you part of the problem?

We are part of our students' environment. How we respond, share expectations, and communicate help shape our learners' behaviors - both positive and negative. Identify where you play a role in the persistence of negative behaviors. Once you identify the role you play you can change your behavior. The only behavior you have complete control of is your own. Your students' behavior change starts with you.

Action step: Write down 3 ways you have unintentionally reinforced a problem behavior. Write down what you could do instead.

The only behavior you have complete control of is your own.

6 Utilize non-traditional reinforcers.

Reinforcement is individual. What's a reinforcer to me may not be a reinforcer to you. Identify a range of potential reinforcers for your students. Note non-traditional interests students may have. Observe. See what things your students like to do and talk about. A reinforcer could be tearing paper, talking about a specific movie, or putting together plastic straws. Look to your students to identify potential reinforcers.

Action step: Schedule a 10 minute time block to observe your students. Then make a list of potential reinforcers for each individual.

7 Be intentional with your praise.

The best kind of praise is immediate and specific. It tells the individual exactly what they did that was amazing, right when they did it. Vague statements like "great job" or "good work" require inferencing skills that may not be strong in all students. At first, provide this praise consistently and then fade it out. Build up the good that is there, then transition to a schedule of praise that mimics the real world.

Action step: Count how many specific praise statements you give in a 10 minute period. Make it your goal to double it.

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8

Identify when you are responding vs. reacting.

There is a big difference between a response and a reaction. A response is planned and purposeful. It's done with intention while thinking about what is causing a problem behavior. A reaction is going off of emotion. It may feel good in the moment but it's not productive. You snap or yell when you feel frustrated. That reaction may release frustration but could actually be making a problem behavior worse. Focus on controlling yourself, not controlling your students.



Action step: Discuss the difference between responding and reacting with your team. Make it the culture of your classroom to call each other out when a reaction occurs.

9

Make sure the replacement behavior is incompatible with the problem behavior.

In the starve it and replace it model (see tip 4), the replacement behavior is what we teach the student to do instead of the problem behavior. Negative behaviors usually communicate a lack of skills. Teach replacement behaviors that are incompatible with the negative behavior.



The replacement behavior and the negative behavior cannot be done at the same time. An incompatible behavior to running in the hallway is walking in the hallway. You can't run and walk at the same time.

Action step: Review your behavior plans. Ensure the replacement behaviors cannot occur at the same time as the problem behaviors.

10

Avoid "hoopla."

"Hoopla" is the made up term for the extra reinforcement and activity that often happens when a student is in crisis mode or following an instance of extreme behavior. In these situations, people seem to come out of the wood work to help or throw in their two cents. Suddenly, the student is seemingly surrounded by adults. If the problem behavior was attention seeking, this worked in a big way. The extra people, opinions, and advice is "hoopla" and "hoopla" is not helpful for behavior change. Politely ask people to please step aside and make it the culture of your school to ask "Do you need help?" before stepping in.

Action step: Discuss the idea of asking "Do you need help?" before stepping in to help with a behavior crisis with your admin and ask if you can send out a school-wide email detailing this protocol.