

MODIFYING BEHAVIOURS

UNIVERSAL BEHAVIOURAL METHODS

REACTIVE:

BEHAVIOUR MODIFICATION

PROACTIVE:

COMMAND MAKING

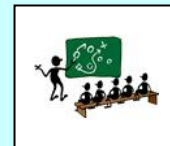


SELF REGULATION



SPECIALIST NEEDS

COMMUNICATION



SENSORY FUNCTION



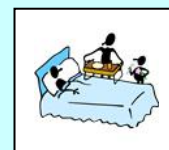
MOTOR FUNCTION



LEARNING ABILITIES



MEDICAL NEEDS



EMOTIONAL NEEDS



With Limericks!

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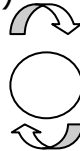
INTRODUCTION

MODIFYING BEHAVIOUR

BRAIN CIRCUITS (MEMORIES) govern everything we say or do.

A large part of the brain circuitry we use throughout life is already present at birth, and the rest develops by copying things we see and hear.

Genetic component ~50%
Gives 'personality' (no choice)



Modelling ~50%
Many choices

Circuits are automatically strengthened by ANY reactions

*A young brain is just full of ideas
Some of which drive us to tears
You've only to look
And by hook or by crook
They'll continue to do it for years*

The way we choose to react can have a major effect on the development of behaviours and learning (**reactive**), but the ways in which we approach teaching and learning (**proactive**) are even more important. How to respond to a young person tends to cause most worry, and so that will be dealt with first. If your initial feelings in this section are 'how are we supposed to teach then!', please go on to the proactive recommendations.



BASIC REINFORCEMENT (REACTIVE RESPONSES)

Whenever you show ANY interest in, or reaction to, a behaviour or learning task, it will strengthen the memory of it, and make it more likely to repeat itself! SO, for all brain circuits, whether behaviours, learning or coordination:-

IF YOU LIKE IT

LOOK THAT WAY

TOUCH

SAY SOMETHING

*It's good to take note when it's fine
To ensure behaviours divine
But when it goes bad
And you're inclined to be mad,
It's better to leave than show sign!*

So that you **strengthen** the behaviours you approve of. Sometimes it will bring a negative response as a test to see which behaviour interests you more (SWITCHING).

IF YOU DON'T:

DON'T LOOK

DON'T TOUCH

DON'T SPEAK

This refusal to react will weaken the behaviour, though there may be an initial marked increase to see if it is true that you are no longer interested ('STORMING').

IF YOU FEEL UPSET OR ANGRY and there is **no danger**:

Then QUIT at once to a place you can relax in. This makes sure your emotions don't strengthen the child's behaviour; you are modelling the correct behaviour for emotional stress; and you do then have a chance to relax!

IF THERE IS A DANGER:

*THEN MAKE IT SAFE. > Remove the danger without a word, eye contact, or sign of concern, to a safe place, **or**, separate the young person without words, eye contact or sign of concern, to a place where they can learn to relax their own mood!! It is not a punishment, but an opportunity to learn to control moods. It should be comfortable. Allowing outdoor trampolining, digging, or indoor music, play or reading (there are many alternatives) may help to settle, and helps the child to find that thing that best settles them.*

RE-INFORCEMENT 'TESTING' (REACTIVE RESPONSES)

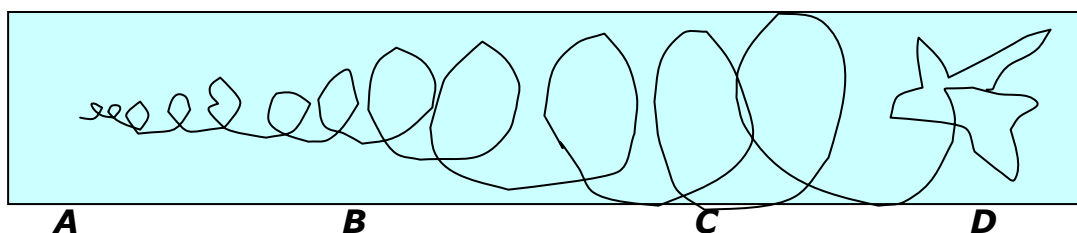
Behaviours use **emotional terrorism** as a game to check out whether you really are, or are not, interested in what's going on. *These reactive responses are **automatic**, and not planned. The responses may feel at times to be personal, but for the most part at least, they are not.*

*If the brain is not sure that you're calm
it will test and try to alarm
it could shout, hit or grump
To put you under the pump
Without any concern about harm*

The first reactive response comes when you attempt to show no interest in a behaviour that you would rather not have...



The **game** of **STORMING** is a natural and automatic response when you ignore a behaviour. The four phases, and the right reactions are:



The Storm (Game 1)

A. Ignore. B. Quit C. Risk you can remove. D. Go to Rest Area

When you '**quit**' a behaviour by walking out, you are teaching the young person to take time out when stressed; you are preventing any reinforcement of the behaviour; and, of course, it is a chance to relax oneself. You might have to ensure that you cannot be followed to your quiet area.

The **time out/ chill out/ rest area** is the place where the control of emotions is learnt. It should be a calm, quiet area. Separation should ideally occur with

* **NO warning,**

* **NO explanation or eye contact**

* **NO sign of emotion**

This is a matter of **LEARNING to control strong feelings** and **NOT punishment for what got in the way of the mood.** It is **NOT** a problem of lack of knowledge!!. Asking the child why they have been naughty, or explaining to them why the behaviour is bad, will simply reinforce the failure and ensure it happens more often!

If you are able to see any **early warning signs**, and can positively intervene to redirect behaviours, then that is clearly a good approach.

A child **will not understand** what you want, or are interested in, if you are not **consistent** in the way you react. If you react one time but not the next, a child will **continue** with the behaviour on the belief that you will react some of the time, or that you will react in particular circumstances. A young person will quickly work out which person reacts to which behaviours and when!

When carers get caught in storms, they feel angry and irritated for a long time afterward, and often long after the child has moved onto the next thing. When you resist involvement in an unwanted behaviour on the other hand, there is a great feeling of strength.

Remember, for the child, their brain is simply trying to find out what you are interested in. There will be **no later grudge** of any kind, provided you are clear and consistent in your responses.

We all should have a good place
 To escape from the human race
 With emotions extreme
 A place to dream
 And return without loss of face

1. The second reactive response is a rather surprising one.

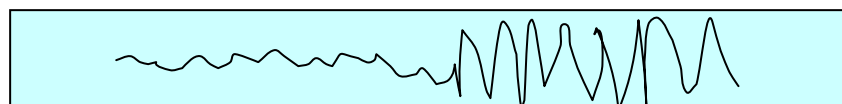


Just when you were being so kind,
 A response that plays on your mind.
 By refusing your praise
 They confuse and daze
 By switching from good that you find

The **game** of **SWITCHING** is a natural response when you praise success or offer rewards, and then find it is rejected/ denied/ 'switched' to the opposite behaviour. It is a similar response when a child gets things wrong that they know, or shows marked anxiety about something they are capable of. The right reactions are:

Calm and coping. I Anxiety, refusal, 'failure' behaviour

Reaction: Correct and Vital I No Go Zone



Do respond

The 'Switch'

Do not respond

(Game 2!)

Involvement in 'A' is essential; involvement in 'B' leads to anxiety, low self esteem, 'failure' behaviours, and even anger.

The length of time that it takes a child to alter behaviour depends on how clear you have been, how

consistent you have been, and how quickly the child understands and believes you. The next section will deal with how to ensure you are clear in the ways you provide information and ask for things, so that the child will understand first time!

DELIVERING INFORMATION, MAKING COMMANDS PROACTIVE RESPONSE



Preventing difficulties by creating an environment where a child does not need to stress is more important than trying to deal with stress when things have gone wrong. A child needs to be certain about what you want if a command is to be obeyed, and to believe that **only** obedience is of any interest to you. The command or delivery of information should have all of the following 'features':

A. REASONABLE

Not only reasonable for the child's ability, but for the child's ability to do it in the time requested! You should be happy that it is realistic for the child to absorb the information, or the command in the time you are setting



B. UNDERSTOOD

Humans will not hear a command if their brain is already processing information (eg thinking about something). You will need to empty the brain of thoughts so your information can be received. 'Power commands' are designed to do this. Any or all of the following sensory elements could be used.

- Name the child
- Approach from the front and enter the personal space.
- Make eye contact (even if not returned - **some** children listen better without it!!);
- Use shoulder pressure or hand pressure
- Point at the task;

*Then use slow, clear, deliberate, and simple speech. How does the child communicate? Are you using **their** ways, so you can be understood? . NO CHOICES should be used unless meant. **ONLY** offer alternatives where you will not mind which one is chosen.*

I try to be terribly clear
 But, it's not understood I fear,
 So I come up close
 Name, touch and pose
 Where I know they'll be able to hear

C. WHAT TO DO

Always say what **to do**, and never what NOT to do. This way you show trust, and are not offering an unwanted idea!

Eg: 'Stay beside me on the footpath' rather than 'Don't run off, you could be hit by a car.'

'Share your toys with Freddie' rather than 'Don't be mean'

'Come and do this thing' rather than 'Leave that alone. How many times have I told you'



D. STRUCTURES, WHEN

Essentially, this is a **'first this, then this, then this'** approach, adapted to age. Breaking tasks down into pieces that you **know** the child can manage both for complexity and for time.

Timers, timetables, calendars, and lists all add **structure** to commands so a child is clear about when tasks should start, the sequence to follow, and when they should stop. Some children perform better if there are a lot of visual supports (eg a sand timer rather than alarm, using modelling, picture sequences [provided one at a time or as a complete sequence. Posting each one when done adds to the structure], or social stories.). Timers can also be used to lengthen or shorten concentration. Music is an excellent structure that improves memory for sequences (a common example is singing the alphabet in order to learn it). Other possible structures are poems or alliteration.

Check the App on www.iasku.co.uk for a more defined and easy to use visual structure for communication, for those who are ineffectively, or, non verbal.

It's hard to remember some stuff
 It seems to be lost, and that's rough
 But, if it's in song
 Or in a list long
 Then I can find where it's hiding. Enough!

E. BRAIN PROCESSING TIME?

This is the gap between issuing a command and it reaching the 'action' button. It must first go through alternative ideas in the brain, some of which are out loud, and others internal. This 'noise' [often described as 'cheek'] as the idea travels, should be ignored so as to minimise response times. Whether the task is done or not, is a different objective (see below). If the command is repeated during this phase, then the brain starts the whole train of thought again, and you have both delayed the time to the right answer, and reinforced the child stopping the train of thought at an unwanted place!!

When the information or task is successfully completely or partially completed, there should obviously be praise about that success. If the information or task is not taken on board, where the child **is capable**, then the child **should not be 'rescued'**. This is the method by which responsibility is taught (see also attachment 'rights and responsibilities'). If a child who is able, and has clearly understood, refuses to come to a meal, for example, then the attitude would be 'That's perfectly alright. The next meal will be ...'. There is NO criticism of the poor decision, but no making up for it either! As noted before, discussing a failure will only act to reinforce it. 'RESCUING' a child from something they CAN do, will block them from learning that task.

I have a young man who's obtuse
 and replies to my words with abuse
 But when he thinks on
 Well past his last 'now'
 He goes to my task without cues



F. ENGAGEMENT

(see 'Floortime' materials on the web)

At the beginning of command making, it may be difficult to engage a young person's interest in **your** task. The real 'secret' is to go to **their task, on their terms**. This is now the opposite situation to making a command or delivering information when you do NOT want a child to be thinking. To allow the young person to think about you, and not be concerned by you, any or all of the following strategies may be useful. For some young persons who are happy in their own world, and who resist the presence of others in it, patience is required!

- **Read the body language** to see how the young person deals with their activity. Consider their sensory choices (rubbing their neck, wringing their hands, pacing, tapping; ambient light; ambient noise; the noises the young person is making; the body position they take up while in their interest, and the nature of their play or interest.
- **Approach in a non threatening way.** Do not make eye contact, do not face the child directly, have simple plain clothing without 'bling', approach at the same body level.
- **Imitate the child's movements, noises OR play** but more quietly and more simply. If accepted, then you can begin to mix your play with theirs in the same way. If this is accepted, then try to change the rhythm of the activity, or to be a bit 'silly' (which builds in flexibility). If this is accepted and the young person is now looking at you, or enjoying the activity, you can **NOW make eye contact** (briefly at first). You can **NOW try to extend the play** to include a teaching point (eg counting, colours, relationships, mood management etc). **Failure at any level means backtracking** and trying again, or another route in!
- **If the child moves on to a new task,** then start anew with the new task. Once a young person sees you as non threatening, then each encounter becomes easier.

The basic principle is obviously to build your teaching task into the area of the child's interest, or to provide objects of the

child's interest in your task. The principle continues into adolescence (? and beyond).

I know I seem quite remote
 I play all alone in my coat.
 But come and join me
 Bye and bye you will see
 I'll learn to join you, and emote!



Rewards.

*Rewards are a positive way of reinforcing success. They should ideally be offered immediately after the event at first, but then may be able to be delayed as the task becomes established, and patience is learnt. A reward is something pleasurable (praise, a touch, cuddle, game in the park, desired object or even money) that if offered without warning **after** a success. It is not necessarily reliable in that it should only be offered if the carer feels that it has required an effort on the part of the child. A good example is to have tokens in the pocket that give an extra 5 minutes on the computer for example. An immediately 'cashable' reward is better than having to build up tokens before a reward ensues, though a combination allowing a young person choice of immediate, or working to a more valuable target is good. The reward system is not negotiable, or up for discussion if it has not been offered [eg. when a child demands it for something the carer does not feel warrants it). It should never be offered beforehand (a bribe) as this tends to be discussed when the child is failing, and therefore reinforces the failure.*

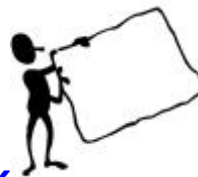
It is useful to offer rewards for different things from day to day, so there is a general feeling that a success in any area might bring responses.

*The best reward will always be the **time** a carer can give in response to a success. The reasons for success are always worth pointing out, and this acts as a strong reinforcement. Occasionally, reasonably delaying the reward helps a child to develop patience.*

It's right to reward a good job
 With a hug, a game or a bob.
 It should be a bonus
 So it's clear that the onus
 Is job first ..and not win by a sob

Detentions

Detentions or threats of them generally act to reinforce the error. It is common to see children with neurodevelopmental disorders deteriorate acutely when they are used. If a child needs to do more work on a subject it is much better to style it as a positive event (even a favour!), where you are offering catch up support, in a supportive rather than critical environment.



Log Book, Communication Book

*It is useful to create and maintain a **log book** of ANY **SUCCESSFUL** strategies in day to day management. Although any one method may fade for a while, it is often able to be used again in the future.. The log book is also useful if it contains any relevant and up to date assessments, and any appointments that need to be kept.*

A communication book should contain ONLY SUCCESSFUL behaviours, learning tasks or physical tasks, whether at home or at school. This allows home to reinforce any school based success, and school to reinforce any home success. Children are usually well aware of the tenor, if not the detail, of communication books and are certainly influenced by their contents. Negative recording books can do a great deal of harm.

*The family may similarly construct a '**wow**' **book** for home that records one or two successes (only) of the day.*

The Serious Reputation Disorder.

If you go looking for bad
In any likely young lad
You'll find some for sure
Thus make it endure
And make him think he's a cad

*The **serious reputation disorder** occurs when a negative trait is reported. People then look for it, which means that they will usually find an example of it, react to it, reinforce it, and so it becomes self fulfilling, **including for the child's beliefs.** Undermining it means focussing on reporting desirable behaviours, a refusal to acknowledge undesirable behaviours (including 'switches'), using strong equitable reward systems, remaining very focussed on clear precise demands that are reasonable and finally acting against ALL parties in a disputation equally no matter who seems to have set it up or who has reacted to it (to prevent 'playing off')*

SELF REGULATION RESPONSE

PROACTIVE

Self regulation refers to the ability to deal with your own mood. This is not always easy, but can, and often needs to be, taught. There are two phases to it.

The stress or frustration children feel most often arises through errors in communication, though frustration can also arise for a number of other reasons. The discussion you have already read, is all about trying to reduce stress (frustration) in communication, as well as any other developmental areas.

*Many children benefit from an alerting system that helps both their carers and themselves to understand how stressed they are at any time, and what to do at each stage. **The 'Incredible 5 point Scale' [www.5pointscale.com/ -] has been a particularly useful tool in helping young people to understand and describe how they feel as stress builds up, how to explain it, and how to plan what to do about it.***



RELAXATION STRATEGIES

*The control of feelings is a quality of 'mature' behaviours, and needs to be progressively learnt through childhood. It is used in the two phases of **internal** methods, or use of **escape routes**.*

Internal methods have been in common use for thousands of years. Methods which can be used silently, without the help of others are ideal:-

- a. **Controlled breathing** is the art of progressively slowing breathing, relaxing as you breathe out. EG. 'in .1.2, out.1.2' five times then count to 3, and so on.
- b. **Progressive muscle relaxation** is the art of progressing up the body from toes to scalp, tightening then relaxing muscle groups.
- c. **Imaging** is the ability to recreate an image or story realistically in the brain by 'seeing', 'hearing', 'smelling', 'tasting', 'feeling' and 'performing', in the mind, the images.

*Escape routes are the pre-planned places of safety, a child can go to if the internal methods are not enough to calm. It can be helpful to either have an arrangement where a child can access these rest areas without question, or to utilise escape cards that can be used **without question**. Provided these absences are not referred to in any way, they will be minimised.*

Consider **sensory regulation strategies**, both preventative and controlling. Develop de-stressing breaks at the end of lessons, and at the end of the school day.

FRIENDSHIP SKILLS

It's nice to have friends when you play.
 Listen, be nice, share your day,
 And when they're unkind
 Pretend you don't mind
 And agree with a smile with their say

This is where the ability to relax is often challenged! There are 5 essential qualities to teach, that are NOT surprising:-

- a) **Share** (not give)
- b) **Take turns**
- c) **Thank** others for company or help
- d) Tell others **nice things** about them (that are true!)- develop into the art of courtesy.
- e) When others are unpleasant:- **deep breath, smile, and AGREE or THANK**, in order to remove any emotion from the encounter.

These skills are generally best taught by using engagement techniques (eg demonstrating with toys, power-rangers, superheros, dinosaur etc), interests (football stars etc) or role play., that leave the young person with a visual memory of how to do it.

Both relaxation and friendship skills should be taught for a BRIEF time EACH evening, rather than for long, but rare, times. They should ONLY be taught to people in a good mood, with praise and encouragement for any or all who are co-operating.

SPECIAL NEEDS MANAGEMENT: (PROACTIVE RESPONSE)

These are the qualities that need to be thought about to ensure that information delivery, and command making are reasonable.



- a). COMMUNICATION SKILLS** - Communicates clearly? / takes time to process what to say, or how to respond.?

- Understands others?

May need :
(SALT)

Speech and Language Therapist



- b). SENSORY PROCESSING** -Detects normal senses at unusual level (high OR low) and with/without distress.

-Understimulated/ easily overstimulated

-Spatial Awareness

-Can follow visual and sound cues
Hearing, vision tests, Sensory

May need:
profiling,

Occupational Therapist (OT), SALT



- c). MOTOR PROCESSING** - Power, Tone, and ability to Coordinate fine and gross motor activities

May need:

Physiotherapist, OT.



- d). LEARNING ABILITY** -Broad difficulty or specific area

May need:
Psychologists

School, Educational and Clinical



- e). MEDICAL NEEDS** - Adverse effects of poor sleep, ear infections, constipation, poor nutrition, hearing and vision loss, etc.
May need: School nurses, Doctors, Paediatricians



- f). EMOTIONAL NEEDS** Consider life events, emotional nutrition.

May need: Psychologist, Social Care worker

*These are all qualities that may need assessment from experts in the field, in order to see how they may interfere with the ability of the child to feel calm, learn, and interact with the world. There may be special measures which make a **vast** difference in behaviour, learning or coordination.*

GENERAL DEVELOPMENTAL POINTS

TOUCHPOINTS (described by Brazelton)

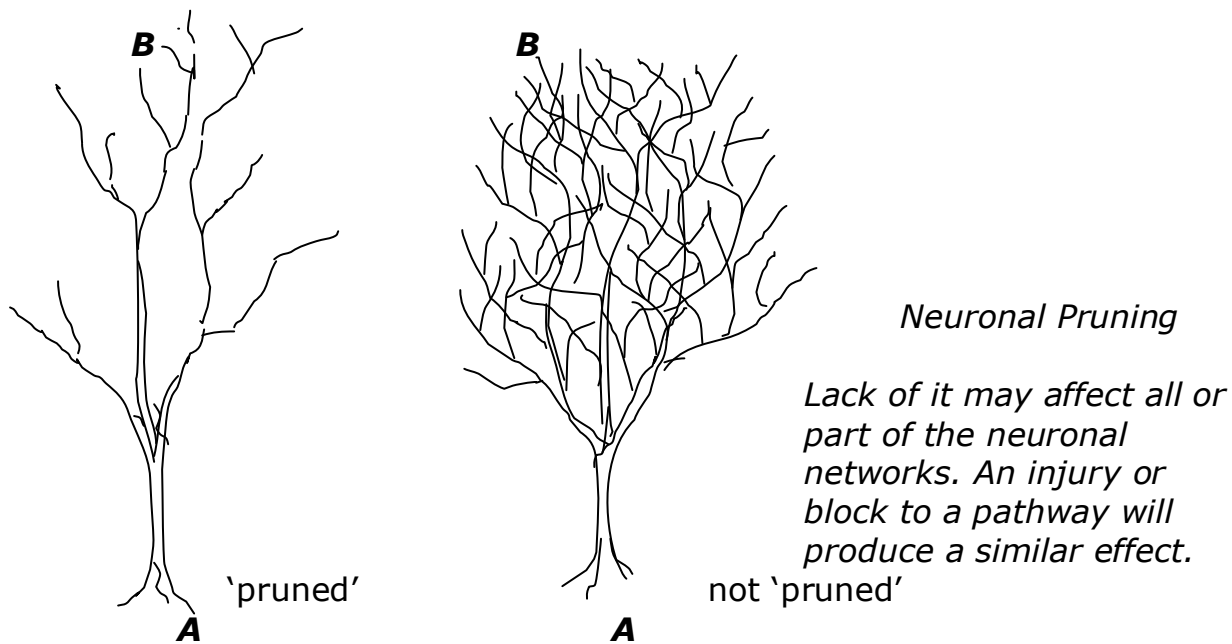
Development does not progress smoothly. It goes in fits and starts, with a sudden developmental burst followed by a period of consolidation where nothing much seems to be happening.

At 'burst' times other milestones may regress temporarily as the old tasks work out how to interact with the new skill (a good sign, not a bad one!).

As a child (and indeed anyone of any age) in a rest phase moves to the next 'burst', there is often increasing frustration as the target becomes tantalisingly closer. 'Rescuing' a child at this stage will delay their progress, as you are depriving them of the experiences necessary to overcome the hurdle (the frustration is the driving force to take the next step).

*This is a time to provide the **minimal** amount of assistance **necessary** to complete the task eg. modelling without helping.*

BRAIN DEVELOPMENT / MIRROR NEURONES



If you wish to go from 'A' to 'B'

*If pruning has **not** occurred, a child will be 'lost' as soon as a command is made and will therefore be inclined to show # **frustration** or # **anxiety** or # **anger**, within themselves, or because they can see others who seem to know where to go. They may appear # **hyperactive** or # **inattentive** as they seek for clues to how and where to go. They will need clear **signposts** (lists, card sequences etc) to navigate to the end point. They may talk to themselves **out loud** to work the ideas through (not always complimentary). Once they have learnt a way through, it may be the **only way** they are confident in. Repeating instructions while a child is navigating the sequence will cause them to return to the **START**, and thus only delay reaching the target*



MIRROR NEURONES are a whole network of circuits in the brain that help us to mentally role play and understand the things other people are doing and thinking. They may not be properly formed in children who are diagnosed as having autism, in any one of its forms, meaning that it is very difficult to learn from observing what other people are doing. These neurones normally develop over the first 18 months of life, so many children appear to be going along reasonably initially, until the lack of this facility begins to kick in.