

## **Behaviour Modification Technique - to replace undesirable or inappropriate behaviours with more desirable ones.**

In this issue of Sneha Shabd, I would like share with you regarding the Behavioral Modification Techniques applied at Sneha Care Home. We have been observing a lot of behavioural issues among children from the time we started our programme and we wanted to regulate the same.

We started applying Behavioural Modification Techniques and succeeded in modifying their behaviour to great extent. The term, "behavior modification," is based on the principle that rewarding appropriate behavior is more effective than punishing inappropriate behavior. Since children at the early childhood phase of life are not cognitively developed enough to understand the concept of consequence, and due to their short attention span, it's better to reward good behavior as immediately as we can. We need to encourage them to have desirable behaviour and discourage them for undesirable behaviour.

As far as I can tell, the concepts of behaviour modification for children go back to ideas first written about in the early 1900's by Edward Thorndike. The ideas have grown and changed through research since then. B.F Skinner, one of the most widely known proponents of behaviour modification techniques discussed the concepts in his work on operant conditioning.

Basically, behaviour modification for children is an attempt to mould, or shape, a child's behaviours through reinforcement and inspire him or her to have desirable behaviour. What we need to have in this connection is a balanced approach. We need to reward as well as penalize them.

Positive reinforcement is used, in the context of behaviour modification, to encourage desirable behaviours through a system of rewards. We try to reward children whenever we notice a desirable behaviour. At Sneha Care Home and Shining Star School, we give different badges to our children such as Best Student, Responsible Star, Honest Star etc. Such children also enjoy special privileges like riding a bicycle for a week, enjoying special fruits, eating in a special plate, watching special TV programmes etc.

On the other side, children also receive penalties for the undesirable behaviour. Penalties are nothing but taking away some of the privileges which they enjoy in the centre. In such cases they won't be permitted to watch T.V or won't be permitted to play games etc. We don't use the term 'punishment' but 'penalty' in this regard. We have listed all the possible undesirable behaviours and have allotted a corresponding penalty to them. Children mostly are aware of the consequences of the undesirable behaviour they exhibit.

We noticed over the years that the Behaviour modification techniques for children when applied by the staff or teachers, replace the undesirable behaviour of the children with preferred behaviours. It is also

very important to let the child know whether he or she is improving or are failing to meet the expectations. Keep reminding them that they have the capability to bring about changes in their behaviour. Be very encouraging to the child when he or she behaves positively. Praise the child generously and reward him/her as and when required. This kind of response makes the children highly enthusiastic and they become willing to change their behaviour.

Remember there are no bad children - there are only bad choices and we the staff need to help a child learn how to deal with and come up with a better solution for those choices. According to experts and researches, punishment or penalty, and negative reinforcement will never create more than minimal effort. **ONLY POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT** will inspire our children to give extra, voluntary, enthusiastic effort. Use the negative consequences as necessary, and put extra effort into creating positive reinforcements. This is a key behaviour modification technique.

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