



16 lessons about behaviour management

1. WHY DO CHILDREN MISBEHAVE?

Child behaviour problems are unlikely to have only one cause. Many things can affect children's behaviour. At least four areas are important to think about:

1. PARENTS' CHARACTERISTICS

Parents differ in many ways that can affect their parenting. For example:

- their own experience of childhood and being parented
- personality factors
- problems of their own
- illness and stresses
- expectations of themselves and their children

2. CHILDREN'S CHARACTERISTICS

Children differ in many ways that can affect their behaviour. These include:

- temperament
- activity level
- attention span
- impulse control
- emotionality
- sociability
- biological factors (e.g. appetite, sleep, toileting)
- physical characteristics (e.g. appearance, size, co-ordination)
- developmental abilities (e.g. speech, learning)

3. STRESSFUL EVENTS (e.g. death, divorce, financial problems, illness)

- can affect a parent's emotional well being (making it hard to parent effectively)
- can affect a parent's perception of the child (leading to a distorted view of the child's behaviour problem)
- can affect a child's emotional well-being (leading to depression, anxiety, or distress: all things which can affect their behaviour)

4. THE EFFECTS OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF BEHAVIOUR

The consequences (or pay-offs) of a behaviour are important in increasing or decreasing the

- chance of that behaviour happening again in the future. Unhelpful patterns of behaviour can develop to increase the chance that problem behaviour will happen and decrease the chance
- that desired behaviour will happen. Common pay-offs for child misbehaviour include;

- getting attention, getting revenge, acquiring desired resources, and controlling the behaviour of others.

As we hinted at the top of the page, child behavior problems are likely to have complicated causes. It is likely that issues from some (or even all four) of the areas identified on this page are combining to cause a child's behaviour problems

2. BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

Behaviour management approaches have the best chance of working when they are used positively, when parents or caregivers work together in a consistent way, and when adult-child relationships involve positive ways of communicating.

1. *THE '3 FS' OF POSITIVE PARENTING*

Try to follow the "3 Fs" of positive parenting being firm, fair, and friendly.

- Be firm: state consequences for behaviour clearly and stick to them. Reward when you say you are going to reward and punish when you say you are going to punish.
- Be fair: make consequences fit the crime. State consequences in advance so the child knows what to expect. Think what you expect by way of fair treatment from other people.
- Be friendly: communicate in a friendly but firm way to give the child feedback about their behaviour. Try to avoid angry and hostile behaviour (for example, using put-downs) as this is likely to be unhelpful in building a positive relationship with the child.

2. *WORKING TOGETHER AS PARENTS OR CAREGIVERS*

It is important for parents or caregivers to work together in the same way by trying to:

- always agree about discipline in front of the children
- as much as possible have an equal share in the responsibility of discipline
- agree on what behaviour is desirable and not desirable
- agree on how to deal with undesirable behaviour
- treat the same behaviour in the same way
- only ever give an order, request, or command when able to enforce it
- remember that their own behaviour serves as a model for their children's behavior

3. *GUIDELINES FOR GOOD COMMUNICATION WITH CHILDREN*

- Look for times to talk with your child
- Physically get down to the child's level to talk, and when your child wants to talk take time
- to pay them careful attention.
- Take an interest in your child's interests.
- Show you accept them regardless of their behaviour.
- Reward your child for communicating.
- Show them the same courtesy you would expect from a good friend.
- When you are angry avoid using embarrassment, put downs, or harsh punishments. These are likely to lead to resentment, anger and hostility; not good communication and a positive relationship.
- If necessary take some time to cool down before you communicate with your child about their problem behaviour. Try to avoid preaching, lecturing, and moralising.

3. KEY GOALS OF BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

There are two main goals of behaviour management strategies:

1. Increase the chance that desirable behaviour happens
2. Decrease the chance that problem behaviour happens

KEY WORDS IN BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

1. Behaviour is anything that a person does.
2. Behaviour management is any strategy or plan aimed at reducing problem behaviour and increasing desirable behaviour.
3. Consequences are the events that happen as a result of a behaviour,
4. A reinforcer is any consequence which increases the chance a behaviour will occur.
5. A punisher is any consequence which decreases the chance a behaviour will occur.
6. Modelling is a process of learning by watching what others do. We watch to see what the pay-offs of their behaviours are, and we try those behaviours out to see if they can work for us as well. If they do, we are likely to use that behaviour in the future (reinforcement again!). Unfortunately, modelling works as well for problem behaviours as it does for desired behaviours.

KEY TECHNIQUES FOR BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

Increasing desirable behavior	Decreasing undesirable behavior
Actively teaching desirable behaviour	Planned ignoring
Modelling desirable behaviour	Reinforcing the absence of, or a reduction in, a problem behaviour
Giving positive attention	Making sure problem behaviour does not get reinforced by accident
Reinforcing desired behaviour (using praise, approval, treats, or favourite activities)	Avoiding modelling problem behaviour
Giving effective instructions	Avoiding harsh or inconsistent punishment
Using a token reinforcement system	Reinforcing behaviours that prevent the problem behaviour
Building caring and positive family relationships	Utilising effective punishers such as:
Managing your own feelings of anger and frustration when children	1. Fair natural, logical, and social



misbehave

consequences

Using behaviour management consistently across caregivers and settings

2. Time out from reinforcement
3. Response cost

4. CHANGING PROBLEM BEHAVIOR

Most of us naturally think of using punishment to decrease the chance that problem behaviour occurs. However, we can often use reinforcement strategies to reach the same goal. This helps avoid the hidden problems of punishment.

HOW IT WORKS

Increasing the level of desirable behaviour with reinforcement reduces the level of problem behaviour. There are many ways you can do this.

1. REINFORCE DESIRABLE BEHAVIOURS

Work hard at rewarding desirable behaviours whenever possible.

2. REINFORCE BEHAVIOURS THAT PREVENT THE PROBLEM BEHAVIOUR

a) Reinforce an alternative behaviour

- direct the child to interesting activities. Reinforce them for compliance and performance of the desired activity

b) Reinforce an incompatible behaviour

- direct the child to activities that actually prevent the problem behaviour. Reinforce compliance and performance of the desired activity.

3. REINFORCE THE ABSENCE OF A PROBLEM BEHAVIOUR

Reinforce the absence of problem behaviour. It is very easy to forget to attend in this way.

4. REINFORCE THE REDUCTION IN A PROBLEM BEHAVIOUR

Sometimes it is necessary to start by reinforcing reductions in a problem behaviour. If your child hits their brother or sister ten times a week, reducing this to five times a week might be a real achievement for them. Reinforcing even small improvements can be the motivation your child needs to make further improvements.

5. MAKE SURE PROBLEM BEHAVIOUR DOES NOT GET REINFORCED

If problem behaviour is continuing it may be because it is still getting some kind of positive pay-off (reinforcement). Observe the consequences of the behaviour carefully. See if you can identify and then remove the reinforcing consequences.

6. KEEP THE BIG GUNS FOR LAST RESORT

The first priority is to achieve verbal control, i.e. having children respond to verbal instructions. Keep punishment strategies as a last resort.

7. CHILDREN WILL LIVE UP TO THEIR PARENTS' EXPECTATIONS

If you expect your children to ignore/defy your instructions – they will!

5. THE POWER OF ATTENTION

WHY DO CHILDREN SEEK ATTENTION?

Children seek their parents' attention for good reason – they are trying to make sure that they survive! Remember that children are born pre-programmed to make sure that an adult stays close to them and pays them attention so they are protected against danger. They soon learn how to make their parents pay attention! Unfortunately, they learn that, if you want your parents to pay attention to you, behave inappropriately. When our children are behaving appropriately we tend to leave them to their own devices, as there is less chance of danger for them than when they are behaving inappropriately. So we need to turn this round and teach them that behaving appropriately is the way to get parents to pay attention!

It is very important to remember that children's inappropriate behavior is NOT designed to be a personal challenge to you; a personal insult to you; manipulative; or demanding. Children behave in ways that ensure that an adult pays enough attention to them to ensure that they are safe and get their physical, emotional, intellectual and social needs met.

You always have a choice when you respond to a child's behavior – you are in charge, and what you do will shape the child's future behavior. When you pay attention to behaviors that you would like to see more of, you increase the chance that the behavior will happen again. Equally, when you pay attention to problem behaviors, you increase the chance that the behaviors will happen again. Paying attention includes any kind of attention, including talking, touching, eye contact, yelling, hitting – all of these mean that the adult is paying attention. Children will work to ensure that their parents pay attention, even if it means attracting abuse.

WHY PRACTISE GIVING ATTENTION?

Giving attention to your child is an important way to increase the chance they will behave in desirable ways. It works in at least two ways.

1. Attention of any kind can be a great reinforcer of behaviour for children. Unfortunately it can work to strengthen problem behaviour as well as desired behaviour. How many times have you heard people say "He's (or she's) just doing it for attention"? It's important then to give much more attention to desired behaviour than to problem behaviour.
2. Giving positive attention to your child improves your relationship with them. They are more likely to be motivated to work for you if they see you in a positive way, and see that you see them in a positive way.

HOW TO PRACTISE GIVING ATTENTION

Start spending 5 minutes most days (at least five days a week) attending to your child in a totally positive fashion. This sounds easy, but in practise the “totally positive” part can be difficult.

1. Select a time to spend with your child, It’s a good idea to choose the same time each day so your child learns what to expect.
2. Let your child choose a play activity (not watching television!).
3. Now relax! Follow your child and watch what they are doing.
4. Give attention to them by simply describing what they are doing. Do this frequently during the practise session.
5. Take part in the activity. You can do this by copying your child, sharing turns, or whatever fits the activity best.
6. Remember, the aim of this time is to give attention in a totally positive way, so here are some tips to help.

- Stop yourself from asking questions.
- Stop yourself from giving instructions.
- Stop yourself from teaching your child.
- Stop yourself from judging your child’s performance at the chosen activity.
- Make sure other things wont stop you giving attention to your child.
- Have FUN attending to your child’s play.
- Make this playtime a regular activity and keep it up.

IF THERE ARE PROBLEMS...

1. If your child begins to misbehave, use body language to make it clear that you are ignoring them for a brief time (e.g. just turn away for a few moments).
2. If the misbehaviour continues stop the play session, making it clear that you are keen to spend more time with them when they are able to play properly.
3. If the misbehaviour gets worse handle it in the usually way. (Other behaviour management strategies will be covered later for this kind of situation. The focus at the moment is just on increasing positive attention.)

6. CATCH THEM WHEN THEY’RE GOOD

Don’t stop having quality play time with your child, but having practised giving positive attention in a play situation, it’s time to start giving positive attention more generally.

The idea main is to extend your positive attention to cover any situation in which your child is behaving in a desired fashion. Watch for opportunities to reinforce positive behaviour as it happens. Reinforcers can be as simple as giving praise and showing approval.

SUGGESTIONS FOR REINFORCEMENT OF DESIRABLE BEHAVIOR WITH PRAISE AND APPROVAL

1. To begin with....

- **BE SPECIFIC.** When reinforcing desirable behaviour using praise and attention it is important to be specific. This lets your child know exactly which behaviour is being reinforced and helps make a clear difference between reinforcement of desired behaviour and non-reinforcement of problem behaviour.
- **KICK BUT!** When you praise a child, never follow it with ...but... as in “You were so nice to your sister, but I wish you would always be nice to her” or “I like the way you settled to do your homework, but I’d like it even better if you kept your room tidy”.
- **BE IMMEDIATE.** Reinforcement is likely to be most effective when it is immediate
- **BE REGULAR AND CONSISTENT** in applying reinforcement as your child is learning desired behaviour.

2. As the behaviour becomes established you can gradually reduce the regularity and immediacy of reinforcement (but don’t stop it altogether)

SIMPLE WAYS OF PRAISING

Yes good	Good	Fine	Very
Excellent	Marvellous	That’s great	All right
Correct	Wonderful	That’s good	Wow
Oh boy	Very nice	Cool	Awesome
Good work way	Great going	Good for you	That’s the
Much better perfect	O.K.	You’re doing much better	That’s
Good idea	What a clever idea	Good job	Way to go
Good remembering		You’ve got it	Beautiful
Great job controlling yourself			

GIVING PRAISE WITH “I” STATEMENTS

I’m pleased with (proud of) you

I’m really glad you are my son/daughter

I had fun doing _____ with you

I like the way you _____

I like the way you _____ without having to be asked (reminded)



I like the way you do that

I like your _____

I love you

I feel really pleased when you _____

GIVING PRAISE WITH PHYSICAL GESTURES

Smile	Nod	Pat on shoulder, head, knee
Wink	High five (“gentle”)	Touch cheek
Tickle	Laugh (with, not at)	Pat on the back
Thumbs up	Putting your arm around the child	

REINFORCING THE ABSENCE OF PROBLEM BEHAVIOUR

So far the idea has been to take every opportunity to reinforce desired behaviour as it occurs. It is also possible to reinforce the absence of problem behaviour. For example, “I really liked the way you played so well with your sister and left me to get on with”. This helps your child to learn that they get the most out of both behaving in a desired fashion and NOT behaving in ways that cause problems.

7. USING IGNORING TO REDUCE UNDESIRABLE BEHAVIORS

Remember how giving attention to your child’s desirable behaviour is an important way to increase the chance they will continue to behave in desirable ways? Well, the opposite is also true! Removing attention from some problem behaviours can decrease the chance they will continue.

HOW IT WORKS

Behaviour is kept going by its rewards or pay-offs (called reinforcers). If we can identify the reinforcers for a problem behaviour and remove them, we reduce the chance the behaviour will continue (a process called extinction). When problem behaviour is reinforced by parent attention consistently removing the attention brings about a reduction in the problem behaviour. This is called planned ignoring.

HOW TO USE PLANNED IGNORING

Planned ignoring is simple and takes no effort on your part. When you notice the problem behaviour start just make it clear you are not attending to your child and their behaviour by:

1. Looking away. Turn side on, away, or even leave the room to make it really clear you are not giving attention to this behaviour.
2. Not talking to your child.
3. Not giving physical contact to your child.



It may help to picture yourself as a robot – literally switching off the eye contact, talking or

touching buttons on yourself.

When the problem behaviour stops give your child attention again by looking at them, talking to them, or touching them.

GENERAL POINTS

When to use planned ignoring:

- Best used for minor problems that are an annoyance rather than a danger
- Can be used for more serious behaviors if it is clear that parental attention is the payoff for the behavior and that no harm will result from ignoring behavior

When NOT to use planned ignoring:

- Planned ignoring is not suitable when the problem behavior is harmful to people, animals or property. However, remember that planned ignoring can work even if you have to touch the child (e.g. removing them to timeout or from some dangerous situation). Just be as robotlike as you can with the absolute minimum of attention.
- Planned ignoring is unlikely to be effective if the problem behavior is getting reinforcers other than parental attention (e.g. if a child is taking a toy away from another child by force – getting the toy is a strong reinforcer for the bullying behavior)
- Planned ignoring may be impossible with some behaviors that you find so irritating that you CAN'T ignore them

Be prepared for the behaviour to get worse before it gets better when you start ignoring it. If it does get worse this is telling you that attention is definitely the pay-off for the behaviour and it becomes even more important you ignore it! To give in and attend to the behaviour now will make it stronger. The good news is that ignoring it has a good chance of making it go away.

8. GIVING INSTRUCTIONS

The way you give instructions can greatly affect whether your child does as they are told. This is particularly true for children who have attention problems. Here are some guidelines for giving instructions.

THINK BEFORE YOU ACT

Before giving your instructions think about whether this the best time to be giving this instruction. Consider:

- is my child already busy doing something they really want to do, or already doing something I want them to do? Is there a better time?
- am I in the right state of mind to do this and deal with non-compliance if I have to?

GET YOUR CHILD'S ATTENTION

Make sure you have your child's full attention when giving instructions. Stand within two metres of your child, face them, and make sure they are watching and listening to you. You may want to lower yourself to their eye level. Make sure there are no distractions (for example, TV, loud noise) when giving instructions.

Remember that your child needs to see your commitment to your action – by going up close to the child, keeping eye contact, using a calm, firm, determined voice, and watching as they comply, you send them the message that you mean business!

STATE YOUR INSTRUCTIONS

1. Be specific, describe the behaviours you want your child to do.
 - For example: "Look at me and listen carefully" is better than "Pay attention"
 - Another example: "It's not OK to hit your brother, please play apart for the next five minutes" is better than "Don't do that"
2. Avoid expressing instructions as questions or indirectly.
 - For example: "Please tidy your room now" is better than "Would you tidy your room now?" or "Would you like to tidy your room?"
3. Keep it brief and simple. Long and complicated instructions could confuse your child, especially if they have attention problems. If you have tricky instructions or want several things done it's a good idea to give instructions one at a time. You might also use chore cards to list your instructions. Wait for compliance between instructions rather than giving all instructions at once.
4. Give your instructions in a positive rather than negative way. So, give start commands rather than stop commands, and do commands rather than don't commands.
 - For example: "Go outside and play on your bike" (a start command) is better than "Stop running hitting your sister" (a stop command)
 - Another example: "Please play quietly with your friend" (a do command) is better than "Don't make so much noise" (a don't command)
5. Be calm and unemotional. Use a calm, quiet, but firm voice. Speak more slowly than usual.

CHECK UNDERSTANDING

Make sure your child understands by asking them to repeat the instructions back to you.

EXPECT THE STORM!

If you expect some objections or resistance to your instructions, you'll be in a better position to deal with it

FOLLOW UP!

Now for the really important bit. Check what happens. Watch to see whether your instructions are followed. Reinforce compliance with attention, praise, preferred activities, treats, or tokens. (Methods for dealing with non-compliance are described elsewhere).

9. USING A TOKEN REINFORCEMENT SYSTEM/ REWARD SYSTEM

WHAT IS A TOKEN REINFORCEMENT SYSTEM?

Sometimes praise and approval are not strong enough reinforcers to bring problem behaviour under control, or motivate a child to behave in desired ways. One way of dealing with this problem is to use bigger rewards (stronger reinforcers). However, a problem with this is that parents can't be endlessly supplying big rewards for compliance with every small task. A simple answer to this problem is to use a system of currency that can be traded for rewards (back-up reinforcers) when enough has been earned. This approach is called a token reinforcement system. Token reinforcement systems have been used very effectively to modify serious problem behaviour in a wide range of settings.

SOME ADVANTAGES OF TOKEN REINFORCEMENT SYSTEMS

1. The parent can control the value of behaviour. This means the child doesn't have to get a new bike every time they make their bed!
2. Reinforcement with tokens can be immediate and frequent.
3. It is easy to target specific behaviours at specific times.
4. The token reinforcement system can be applied to groups as well as individuals.
5. The system can be used across several settings (for example: home and school, parents and grandparents).

KEY STEPS IN SETTING UP A TOKEN REINFORCEMENT SYSTEM

1. Select the currency.

Decide what you will use as tokens. There are many possibilities including; poker chips, stamps, stars, ticks, points, and punch cards. Important features of tokens are that they are safe, worthless items that are difficult to cheat with. (Cheating should be obvious if it occurs).

2. Identify the target behaviours.

Specify the behaviour you want to target. This might be one particular behaviour, or a small number of behaviours that you want to happen at certain times (for example, routines like getting dressed, making the bed). It is important that the behaviour is:

- something you can see
- something the child knows how to do

- clearly stated to the child (including the required standard of performance)

3. Identify the back-up reinforcers (rewards that are to be earned).

It is important to identify effective rewards. Figuring out what will work as a back-up reinforcer is sometimes difficult, but there are some useful guidelines.

- ASK your child what they would like as rewards
- OBSERVE what they like to do. Use their preferred activities (for example watching TV or playing Sega) as rewards for doing things they don't prefer (for example chores or r
- TRY a number of rewards to find out what works
- OFFER CHOICES of rewards

4. Set the rules of exchange.

To start with make it quite easy to earn tokens. Give token reinforcement regularly and immediately (straight away every time the target is met). As your child learns the desired routine you can gradually decrease token rewards on the original target behaviours and increase verbal approval and praise. At the same time you can start working on other target behaviours with the token reinforcement system. Make sure the child understands the system by discussing the token reinforcement system with your child.

5. Monitor and refine the system.

Keep track of progress by using a recording system to measure how often the target behaviour occurs. A chart or graph is good for this purpose. The will let you detect even small improvements in behaviour that tell you the system is working. You will probably need to refine the system from time to time to get the best results. Be prepared to experiment.

PRACTICAL ISSUES

1. The question of punishment

It will be tempting to take away tokens as a means of punishing problem behaviour. At the beginning stages of using the token system it is important you don't do this. Instead, use natural consequences of the problem as punishers (for example repairing the damage, making up the time apologising, paying back). This allows you to reinforce the desirable target behaviours when they occur while still having reasonable penalties for problem behaviour, Once the token system is working well you can consider whether some system of costs or fines is added into the picture~

2. Some possible problems

Children may attempt to cheat or avoid the token system. When cheating is discovered there should be some natural consequences to punish the cheating. This may be one situation where it is quite appropriate to remove tokens (perhaps by removing the cheated tokens plus a fine of up to the value of the cheated tokens). Attempts to avoid the token system by not co-operating with it can probably be ignored for a time.

If the system is not being effective it is necessary to make adjustments by changing the value of tokens, changing the back-up reinforcers (rewards), checking that the target behaviours are realistic, or making sure that your child is not getting rewards elsewhere without earning them.

3. Be consistent

If your child hasn't earned a token or enough tokens for a back-up reinforcer (reward) don't give it to them! If they have, make sure you do! If your child sees you are not following the system to the letter then neither will they.

Some parents worry that they're bribing their children to do things. There is a difference between a bribe and an incentive/reward:

BRIBE: When the benefit is mainly for the parent and the reward is given before the behavior has taken place (e.g. "Here's \$5 for you so you can stop irritating me"; "Here's a lolly so you'll be quiet in the supermarket")

INCENTIVE/REWARD: When the benefit is mainly for the child and the reward is given after the behavior has occurred (e.g. "If you can control your temper for a whole day, you can have a friend to play tomorrow afternoon" ; "If you don't nag about lollies while we're at the supermarket, we'll go to the playground for half an hour after lunch")

10. EXAMPLES OF TANGIBLE REWARDS

Inexpensive Items

- felts or pencils
- paints
- crayons
- money 50c-\$2
- new toy (specific cost limit)
- choice of fruit to eat
- rent a child's video tape (non-violent)
- special treat in lunch box
- section to train set
- clothing item for a doll, etc
- colouring books
- paper
- collectable cards
- choosing cereal at the supermarket
- special snack after school
- new parts added to a toy
- favourite drink
- new tool for tool box
- surprise "grab bag" with \$1 – \$2 objects
- (little car, marbles, erasers, jellybeans, balloons)

Special Privileges at Home

- choosing the dessert for the family
- using telephone



- dressing up in parents' clothes
- setting table
- riding in front seat of car
- choice of TV program or video
- having a friend overnight
- sitting in father's chair at dinner
- making play dough
- having a friend over to play

Special Outside Activities

- going to a sports game riding bicycle at schoolground
- staying overnight at grandparents
- ride an escalator 3-4 times
- go horse riding
- go to zoo, science centre, aquarium
- going to a movie
- trip to park
- go for a picnic
- go swimming
- go for breakfast alone with one parent

Special Time with Parents

- making biscuits with parent
- extra bedtime story
- plan a day's activities
- go some place alone with a parent
- 10 minutes extra playtime with parent
- playing a game with parent
- doing a puzzle with parent
- going with parent for parent's haircut
- listening with parent to favourite tape or CD

11. PROBLEMS WITH USING PUNISHMENT TO MANAGE BEHAVIOR

Effective use of both reinforcers and punishers is the key to the management of problem behaviour. However, punishment must be used very carefully if it is to be effective because it has a number of hidden problems.

1. REINFORCEMENT OF THE USE OF PUNISHMENT

When punishment is successfully used to reduce the chance that a problem behaviour occurs, the person dealing out the punishment is reinforced for using punishment. In other words, because their behaviour management strategy (punishment) was successful the parents are more likely to use it in the future. The problem with this is that it can lead to overuse of punishment and under-use of reinforcement strategies.

2. *EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS RESULTING FROM PUNISHMENT*

Overuse of punishment can result in emotional reactions including depressed mood, anxiety, anger, and low self esteem. Imagine how you would feel working for a boss who always demanded perfect performance, constantly made negative comments, and didn't notice when you did things well. Imagine how you would feel working for a boss who yelled at you, put you down, didn't live up to their promises, or hit you. Using too much punishment can lead to some very strong feelings towards the person dealing out the punishment, and this can be very damaging to the chances of a positive relationship.

3. *AVOIDANCE OF PUNISHMENT*

Instead of teaching a child not to behave in a certain way punishment may simply teach them to avoid the situation in which they get punished. As a result they may run away, avoid people who punish them, or deliberately continue the problem behaviour in a setting where they know they will not be punished.

4. *MODELLING OF PUNISHMENT*

When we successfully control a child's behaviour using punishment, the child may learn through modeling that they can control the behaviour of other people in the same way. This can actually reinforce problem behaviour when the child knows they are unlikely to be caught and punished.

5. *GETTING USED TO PUNISHMENT*

When children get punished often the punishment can stop being effective.

IMPORTANT MESSAGE!!

It is important to remember that by itself punishment does not teach desired behaviour, at best it only teaches children what not to do. To encourage and support desired behaviour it is essential to reinforce it.

12. USING CONSEQUENCES TO REDUCE PROBLEM BEHAVIOR

A REMINDER ABOUT USING CONSEQUENCES/PUNISHMENT

Remember the idea mentioned earlier that the management of problem behaviour depends on the effective use of both reinforcement and punishment. Remember too that there are some hidden problems with the use of punishment including:

- if the punishment works the person dealing out the punishment is reinforced for using punishment. This can lead to the overuse of punishment and under-use of reinforcement strategies
- overuse of punishment can result in emotional reactions including depressed mood, anxiety, anger, and low self esteem. This is particularly true for punishment that is physically or emotionally abusive
- punishment may simply teach children to avoid punishment, not learn desirable behaviours
- the child may learn to control others using punishment
- with regular use, punishment becomes ineffective



USING PUNISHMENT

Keeping these problems in mind, punishment can be used effectively when:

- the problem behaviour is dangerous to the child or others, and so cannot be ignored or modified more slowly with reinforcement methods
- punishment is not used often and the child is being frequently reinforced for desired behaviours
- the punishment is not cruel or abusive (verbally, physically, or emotionally)
- the punishment is consistent, immediate, reasonable, and the child understands what behaviour resulted in punishment being used

THREE METHODS OF PUNISHMENT

Three methods of punishment can be recommended for meeting these standards.

1. Natural, logical, or social consequences

- punishing the problem behaviour with a reasonable and natural consequence (for example; repairing the damage, making up the time, apologising, paying back)

2. Time out from reinforcement

- making sure problem behaviour does not get reinforced

3. Response cost

- problem behaviour results in some reasonable cost (for example; money, tokens, points)

13. NATURAL, LOGICAL OR SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES

DEFINITION

Punishing the problem behaviour with a reasonable and natural consequence (for example; repairing the damage, making up the time, apologising, paying back)

HOW IT WORKS

In real life, all our behaviour has consequences that affect how we are likely to behave in the future. Many behaviours have natural consequences, or natural results, that decrease the chance of us behaving in that way again. For example, burning your hand on the stove reduces the chance that you will choose to put your hand on a hot element in the future.

USING NATURAL, LOGICAL AND SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES

Use the natural consequences of problem behaviour as punishers for the behaviour. This can happen in different ways.

1. When problem behaviour occurs look for links between the behaviour and its natural consequences. Sometimes the natural consequences are very obvious to adults, but not to the child. Drawing the child's attention to the link between their behaviour and the natural



results (consequences) of their behaviour can increase the chance they will attend to avoiding those consequences in the future.

Examples of links between problem behavior and natural consequences

- running inside the house falling over and getting hurt
- playing with matches burning fingers

2. Some natural consequences don't just happen, but are a logical result of the problem behaviour.

Examples of logical consequences

- fighting over a TV programme TV gets turned off
- won't do homework no TV until it's done
- won't eat vegetables no pudding

3. Social consequences are very powerful. When we behave in antisocial ways, we run the risk of being shunned by society and we end up alone. Giving children a taste of that (by planned ignoring or timeout) teaches them what happens in the world outside the family. Apart from being cut off from other people, there are other logical consequences that result from social rules.

Examples of social consequences

- cleaning up the mess
- fronting up to the victim and apologising
- repairing the damage
- replacing something that's broken (when reasonable)
- contributing to the cost of something that's broken (when it's not reasonable to expect total replacement)

14. TIMEOUT FROM REINFORCEMENT

DEFINITION

Time out from reinforcement (or just timeout) is a way of making sure problem behaviour does not get reinforced. It involves putting a child into a timeout setting for a (usually brief) time

HOW IT WORKS

Behaviour that loses its pay-offs (reinforcers) typically just dies out. Time out is a way of trying to make sure that problem behaviours do not get reinforcement of any kind. This results in the problem dying out over time.

DISADVANTAGES OF TIMEOUT

Timeout sounds simple, but is hard to use effectively. Often the problem behaviour takes some time to die out, and it usually gets worse for a time before it begins to improve. This can mean parents give up on time out before it has had a chance to work, either because

they think it is not working or because the child's misbehaviour becomes too much for the parents to take.

Another reason people give up is that timeout takes a lot of hard work on the part of parents. It needs to be used consistently and to start with, used often. Using timeout can feel like war (end it sometimes is!!!).

ADVANTAGES OF TIMEOUT

- avoids the problems that go along with physical punishment
- is less unpleasant for the child than physical punishment
- can avoid a lot of stressful parent-child behaviours (yelling and screaming)
- helps parents to be consistent with managing problem behaviour
- helps the child identify which behaviours are acceptable and which are not
- helps the child to accept responsibility for undesirable behaviour and develop self control

HOW TO USE TIMEOUT

There are many different ways of using time out, depending on the exact problem.

However, the basic ideas are the same and involve these steps:

- Identifying the target behaviour
- Identifying the time out setting
- Getting to the time out setting
- Doing time out procedure
- Monitoring the time out procedure
- Getting and completing compliance with the time out procedure

IDENTIFY THE TARGET BEHAVIOUR

Identify the problem behaviours you want to reduce using time out. Discuss these with the child. Make your definitions simple but very clear. For example: "Hitting other people is not acceptable behaviour. Hitting means striking someone else with any part of your body or an object. From now on, every time you do this you will have to do timeout."

Explain the timeout procedure to the child before you want to use it. Explain why you are doing this. You might want to coach your child through the timeout procedure with a practice run.

IDENTIFY THE TIMEOUT SETTING

Choose a timeout setting. This should be easy to get to and somewhere you can monitor your child's behaviour. It is important that the time out location contain nothing of interest for the child (remember, the idea is to get rid of any reinforcement after a problem behaviour has occurred). A chair facing the corner of the room is a good starting point. Other commonly used places include the bathroom, laundry or a bedroom that does not contain TV, Playstation, books, toys etc.

GETTING TO THE TIMEOUT SETTING

When a child is told to go into time out, a parent should calmly and firmly say "(State the problem behaviour) is not acceptable behaviour. Go to timeout." There should be no



further discussion. If you have to physically move the child to the setting, do so with a minimum of contact and no speaking or eye contact. The door should be closed to avoid any accidental contact with other people.

DOING THE TIMEOUT

Once the child is in the time out setting they should stay there for a short period of time. The period of time starts once the child is quiet (no noise, no kicking the door, no throwing stuff, no coming out).

The length of time out should depend on the child's age. As a general rule:

2-5 years of age	approx.	2-5 minutes
6-8 years of age	approx.	no more than 5 minutes
8-10 years of age	approx.	up to 10 minutes

Giving the child a timer can be a useful way of helping the child know how long they have left in time out.

While in time out:

- the child sits there with nothing to do except wait for the time out to end. This means they are not permitted to talk to anyone, watch TV, listen to the radio, or do anything that makes time out anything other than very boring
- the parent should not communicate with the child in any way. This is a good time to use planned ignoring of any small behaviours designed to attract your attention

It is also very important that the whole household knows about the timeout system and that they do not interfere with it, either deliberately or accidentally.

MONITORING THE TIMEOUT PROCEDURE

Unless you are very lucky or naturally very skilled your first attempts at using time out will probably bring mixed success. This is partly because timeout is surprisingly difficult to use, and partly because behaviour usually gets worse when timeout is first used.

To help you see whether your timeout procedure is working it is very useful to keep a careful written record of your timeout procedure. Things to record include:

1. Before you start timeout

- record how often the problem behaviour happens each day
- make some notes about how you have been dealing with the problem behaviour, and what happens when you do this

2. When you start using timeout

- record how often the problem behaviour happens each day
- record how often you use time out, and what happens each time you use it



You can measure the success of your time out programme by seeing how much the problem behaviour changes when you use time out. If the problem behaviour is happening less often then time out is working. If not, read on

GETTING AND KEEPING COMPLIANCE WITH TIMEOUT

Any smart child will try to wriggle out of time out. They are likely to try this at all stages of the time out process and in all kinds of ways. Smart children find that some really good ways to escape time out include:

- increasing the problem behaviour
- increasing some other problem behaviour (for example tantrums, aggression)
- refusing to comply with the procedure (for example arguing, being defiant)

As a result of these timeout escape behaviours it's no surprise that parents often report they have tried using timeout and "it didn't work". If you've been monitoring things carefully and decided timeout really is not working hold on! This is not the time to give up on timeout. It is the time to figure out why timeout is not working, and to make changes to get around the escape behaviours the child is using. There are a number of ways to do this. None of these is guaranteed to work and you may need to mix and match several methods until you find what works for your child. Strategies include:

- reinforce compliance
- response cost for non-compliance
- back up timeout (chair to room)
- punishment

With some children it may be useful to use a reward program for complying with time out, at least for a short period, but if you're not careful, this may reinforce the original problem behaviour.

- Response cost for non-compliance

1. Give your child to the count of five to get to time-out. If they are not there by then the time will be increased.

2. Use response cost. Select an activity or object you can take away. Tell the child that until they do the timeout, they will not be able to use the object or engage in the activity.

Using response costs risks going back to relying on punishment as the main means of control.

- Back-up timeout

Another strategy is to have a back-up time out place. This might be a toilet, bathroom, or some other room that is quiet, safe, and where a child can be contained. In severe cases you may need to physically remove them to this place.

This strategy risks further escalation of problem behaviour to the point where the child may start "trashing" the time out room. In addition, having to physically move the child may put people at risk of injury.



- Back-up punishment

Yet another strategy is to use some other form of punishment for non-compliance with time out. Again, this risks relying on punishment as the main means of control.

These are some of the strategies parents have found useful in getting and keeping compliance with time out. Remember, with severe problem behaviour it may take a combination of these approaches: While time out has proved very effective as a means of managing severe behaviour problems, in the home situation this may mean having a back-up time out location that can safely handle destructive behaviour.

ALTERNATIVES TO TIME OUT

Children over the age of ten may view timeout as something for “babies”. From around this age onwards it may be best to use other behaviour management strategies such as contracting and response cost.

15. RESPONSE COST

DEFINITION

Punishing problem behaviour by building in a cost or penalty when the behaviour occurs (for example; losing pocket money, tokens, points, privileges).

HOW IT WORKS

We are unlikely to keep behaving in a way that consistently results in a cost (or fine). If we got even a small fine every time we broke the speed limit we would be much better at sticking to it!! The key to this approach is that punishment (cost) should be consistent, immediate, and fair.

HOW TO USE RESPONSE COST

Response cost can be used in different ways. Two examples are:

1. Remove privileges that your child enjoys each day. Make a list of daily privileges and tell the child that each time the problem behaviour occurs, one item will be crossed of the list for that day. Start fresh each day. Be careful not to remove so many enjoyable activities that your child's life becomes miserable.
2. If you are using a token reinforcement system (for example, behaviour charts and star charts) then using response cost can be easy. It just involves adding a system of fines or penalties whenever specific problem behaviours occur. This should only be done when the token reinforcement system is working well, desired behaviours are happening often, the rules are made very clear to your child, and you stick to them.

RISKS OF USING RESPONSE COST

Remember that response cost is a type of punishment and that punishment has risks if not used carefully. These risks can be kept small by using response cost consistently and fairly, in a calm but firm manner. Also, response cost will work best when desired behaviours are consistently reinforced, or rewarded.



16. TWELVE PRINCIPLES FOR MANAGING BEHAVIOUR WITH CHILDREN WITH BEHAVIOUR PROBLEMS

- Consequences should be more immediate than for other children.
- Consequences should be more frequent than for other children.
- Consequences should be more obvious than for other children.
- Rewards should be changed regularly.
- Act – don't yak. Children with severe behaviour problems often have difficulties controlling their behaviour through verbal processes. Consistent actions will speak more clearly than words.
- Use positives before negatives. For example 'I like the way you.....'
- Plan ahead to deal with problems.
- Remember that children with severe behaviour problems often have hidden difficulties that may make it harder for them to learn to control their behaviour. These may include attention problems, learning problems, anxiety and mood problems
- Keep a clear sense of priorities. Use your time and energy to focus on the most important issues and problems.
- Avoid getting personal.
- Avoid blaming the child or yourself.
- These problems are difficult to fix, so be prepared for mixed success.