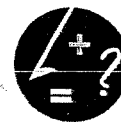


DIFFERENT ROADS
TO LEARNING

Autism
Spectrum
Disorders

Lester B. Pearson
School Board



Commission Scolaire
Lester-B.-Pearson

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Using Reinforcement to Motivate Students

All students who have an ASD can benefit from a system of reinforcement. By finding and using reinforcement systems, students who have an ASD will learn to associate work with positive outcomes and will be less likely to manifest avoidance behaviours.

Here are some tips to successfully using reinforcement to motivate students:

Give reinforcement immediately. In order for students to comprehend the association between their behaviour and the reinforcement, it is imperative to provide the reinforcement before another behaviour has the chance to pop up. As students begin to understand this association, introduce token economies (I am working for...) so that greater quantities of work can be expected before reinforcement is provided. Introduce this early, so those students learn to delay gratification.

Vary the reinforcers. Even for items that we like, if we are given too much of it, we eventually lose interest. This is true of students who have an ASD as well. It is important to find many things that the individual is reinforced by. Be

creative. For students who seem to only show interest in one same song or food item, try to find out what it is about that item that is so enticing, and to find similar items.

Link tangible reinforcers with praise. For typically developing children, the desire to please adults is an extremely powerful motivator. With enough repetitions, social rewards can become pleasurable and reinforcing to students who have an ASD.

Make the effort match the outcome. If students are rewarded equally for easy and difficult tasks, they will continue to avoid those difficult tasks. It is important to provide a quantity and quality of reinforcement that is proportional to the effort that the student exerted to complete the task. This ensures that the student will always want to put their best foot forward.

So use motivation to tap into the potential of the students that you work with!

Occupational therapy Corner

As mentioned in our previous issues, individuals with autism/PDD may have difficulty with registration and interpretation of sensory information. Hypersensitivity to movement is occasionally observed. The vestibular system, which is located within the inner ear, provides us information about movement, gravity and changing head position. It allows us to understand where we are located in space (globally), and to feel the direction and intensity (speed) of movement. Students who tend to OVER-REACT TO MOVEMENT input are fearful or insecure about movement experiences. They can be recognized through their head and neck rigidity, distress when feet leave the ground, and fear of falling and/or heights. They tend to avoid change of position; they hesitate going up/down stairs, and avoid climbing/jumping activities. They may be disoriented after bending over, and appear nauseous or dizzy during/following movement (in cars, elevators, rides). They generally become overly excited after a movement activity, and tend to seek sedentary play options (TV, books, and computer games).

When working with them, minimize body position changes and provide opportunity to have feet touching the floor constantly (a footstool may be necessary at their desk). Respect their fear and pace when

The Importance of
Motivation
Occupational Therapy
Corner
Library
SLP Tip of the Month
C of E
ASD Team
Quote

walking/sitting on uneven surfaces (e.g. pillows, inflated mats, etc.). Allow them to hold the railing when walking up/down stairs, and to lie on the floor/mats if they feel dizzy. Use slow, linear, rhythmical movement during movement activities. Avoid activities where head is upside down (somersault) or tilted backwards (lying on back), as well as stop and go, spinning, and intense up and down (vertical) movement. Caution is recommended with movement input as it can easily overload the nervous system.

Library

We have been accumulating many new books. The following are new ones that are available to you by contacting one of the ASD Team members.

1) *The Pyramid Approach to Education: Lesson Plans for Young Children*

2) *Incentives for Change: Motivating People with Autism Spectrum Disorders to Learn and Gain Independence*

3) *Activity Schedules for Children with Autism: Teaching Independent Behavior*

4) *Demystifying Autism Spectrum Disorders: A Guide to Diagnosis for Parents and Professionals*

Speech and Language Tip of the Month

Games are a fun way to help students practice language skills. Here are some ways of adapting language games to meet the needs of our students within the autism spectrum.

- Practice questions/skills prior to playing the game. This game should not be the first introduction of a particular language skill.

- Make clear when the game will be over. You may choose

to end the game when all of the cards in a pile are finished. Do not focus on winning but rather completing a game. Tell the students "There will not be a winner in this game. The game will be over when everyone has 3 cards. (This pile of cards is finished, the clock sounds etc.)"

Here is a list of language games that can be borrowed through the ASD library.

- **Positive Pragmatic Game Boards.**

- 10 game boards each practicing a given skill.

- For students with higher-level language skills.

- Skills include: giving information, using language to convince or persuade, ask questions in order to obtain more information, recognizing and correcting inappropriate behaviors

- **Pronoun Party**

- 8 game boards

- For students who confuse pronouns (I, you, we, me, he, she)

- **"Wh" Question Blast Off!**

- 1 game board

- provides practice for answering who, what, when, where, and why questions

- **Maxwell's Manor**

- A social language game

- For students with higher level language skills

- Skills include: Nonverbal communication, Conversation Skills, Being a Friend, self-control, Be Polite, Follow the Rules

- **Name it!**

- A categorization game.

- Students are asked to name an item from a specific

category (e.g.. animals, colors, and fruits) and cannot repeat an answer that has already been given.

For further information about how to implement these games with a student you can contact your school Speech and Language Pathologist.

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Questions or requests to the Center of Excellence from other school boards should be directed to Karen Zey.

QUOTE

" For some people, (school) is like fitting a square peg into a round hole. For me at the moment, the hole (the school) has changed its shape slightly to accommodate me and the square peg) me) has tried to soften its edges, so a better description would be a rounded square trying to fit itself with sticky-out bits!

-Luke Jackson, 2002

As quoted in "You're Going to Love this Kid! By Paula Kluth