

LEARNING TOGETHER



Specialized Services At Your Fingertips

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Sleep Hygiene Webinar Q&A

Q: Do you have any suggestions for individuals with Smith-Magenis Syndrome?

A: We would suggest creating a consistent, relaxing bedtime routine: no electronics before bed, little to no light or sound in the bedroom, and avoid meals or drinking liquids before bed to help foster a better sleep. Some research suggests that sleep issues in individuals with Smith-Magenis Syndrome is due to abnormal melatonin secretion and a dysregulation of the molecular circadian clock. The strategies listed above can help improve these issues.

Q: Our son has Downs-Syndrome aged 43 – falls asleep very early and as a result, wakes early. How can this be changed?

A: One good strategy would be to postpone the beginning of his bedtime routine until a later time. We also suggest keeping a sleep diary and see if any patterns can be linked to why he is waking early. For example: at night he drinks 2 cups of water 10 minutes before

Introduction

Happy Wednesday everyone and Happy Canada Day! Summer, and the hot weather it brings, is officially here and ready to stay.

In this week's addition of Learning Together, we will be discussing differential reinforcement! In previous additions, we've explained reinforcement as the event that happens after the occurrence of a behaviour that will strengthen it, in turn increasing the likelihood that the behaviour will occur in the future. If you would like more information on reinforcement, please check out the [2nd edition](#) and [7th edition](#) of Learning Together. This week we will take you on an in-depth dive of differential reinforcement, specifically what it is, how to use it, and things to consider when implementing.

On June 21st, the Learning Together team conducted a webinar on sleep hygiene. In this week's edition we address a few questions asked during the webinar in more detail.

Of course, as always, we have some fantastic ideas for activities you can do when at home.

Activities at Home

Join dad Sergei and his two boys as he teaches them how to think creatively while having fun doing it! [The Dad Lab on YouTube.com](#).

Whip up some edible playdough! This edible, dye-free playdough can be made with ingredients you likely already have on hand. Learn how to make it [here](#).

Chill out and relax with these easy-to-make calming jars! All you need is hand soap, water, and a handful of shiny glitter and beads to help you find your inner peace. Get the instructions [here](#).

Get gardening! Spend some time outdoors by planting flowers, vegetables, or herbs in the yard or a pot. Check out this [link here](#) for a full list of everything you will need to get started.



What is Differential Reinforcement

Differential reinforcement involves reinforcing appropriate behaviours, while withholding attention from the problem/target behaviour. By withholding attention from the target behaviour, it is no longer reinforced but other appropriate behaviours are.

When withholding attention from a behaviour, it is important to remember to never ignore the individual. Withholding attention from the behaviour can be done while still being aware of the individual and their safety.

When differential reinforcement is used consistently, behaviors that are reinforced will increase, and behaviors that are not reinforced will decrease or be eliminated entirely.

Please follow this [link](#) to view a training video on differential reinforcement. The video includes several examples so you can see the implementation of differential reinforcement in real life.

Stay tuned for a recorded webinar on differential reinforcement that will be released with the next newsletter, edition 11!

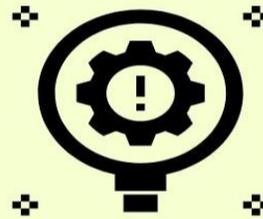
How to Use Differential Reinforcement

Once you have selected the specific target behaviour to be reduced and the target behaviour to be increased, share the details of the plan with your team or others involved with the individual's care to ensure consistency across people. It can be helpful to create the plan as a team to address everyone's point of view and suggestions.

When the individual engages in the target behaviour, all staff and/or caregivers are to withhold providing attention. We often think attention is limited to positive statements, but attention also includes reprimands, such as saying "no" or "don't do that". It is encouraged that staff avoid looking at the individual or making facial expressions.

When the individual is observed engaging in the target behaviour that you want to see more of, provide a significant amount of positive attention. The attention provided should be individualized and based on their likes. For example, if an individual enjoys physical touch, you could pat them on the back and say "wow, good job staying calm".

HOW TO USE DIFFERENTIAL REINFORCEMENT



IDENTIFY

Identify and define the target/problem behaviour.

WITHHOLD

Do not deliver any attention or praise while the target behaviour is occurring.

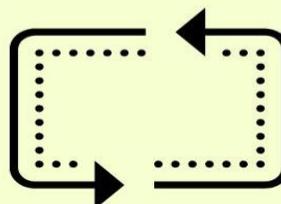
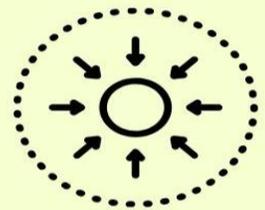


PRAISE

When the target behaviour stops for a brief amount of time, give praise and reinforcement for appropriate behaviour.

BE SPECIFIC

It is extremely important to **be specific** about what you are praising (e.g., "Great job showing calm hands!") Remember, you can't praise the absence of behaviour!



REPEAT

Do not deliver any attention when the target behaviour is occurring again.

How to Use Differential Reinforcement: Examples

Case 1: Bobby enjoys the company of others but often gains staff's attention by pulling on their clothing or throwing small items in their direction. After coming up with a plan, staff begin to ignore Bobby when he pulls on their shirt or throws items. The planned response is for staff to move out of the way, to not say anything, and avoid looking at Bobby. When Bobby asks staff a question, walks up to them appropriately, or gently taps their arm/shoulder to start a conversation, staff immediately provide him with social attention. Bobby does not like loud noises, so they use a moderate voice volume when praising him.

Case 2: Carrie is non-verbal and frequently engages in loud vocalizations that disrupts her daily routine. Staff recognize that Carrie is typically reprimanded following a loud vocalization and then she is given access to a preferred activity to distract her. After coming up with a plan, staff begin to ignore Carrie when she engages in loud vocalizations. They avoid eye contact, do not provide any verbal comments, and avoid making facial expressions in response. When Carrie is quiet and calm, staff provide her with positive praise and engage with her in a preferred activity.



Practical Things to Consider When Delivering Differential Reinforcement

Extinction bursts:

This occurs when staff and parents attempt to eliminate a behaviour by refusing to reinforce it. Usually an increase in the frequency or intensity of the unwanted behaviour will occur when this method is used.

The best example to use is when an individual has a tantrum. Ashley will start to cry every time it is time to do homework so her dad can help her. Once Ashley realizes her cries are not providing the attention that she is seeking from her dad, the behaviour will eventually cease.

Behaviour Traps:

These typically occur when the behaviour of an individual is being reinforced when something is either given or taken away and that action results in the behaviour happening again in the future.

The best example would be when a parent inadvertently reinforces a child's behaviour. Sam asks his mom to buy candy at the grocery store, but his mom says no. Sam then throws a tantrum and his mom is caught in a behavioural trap and chooses to give in due to the judgement of the other customers around her.

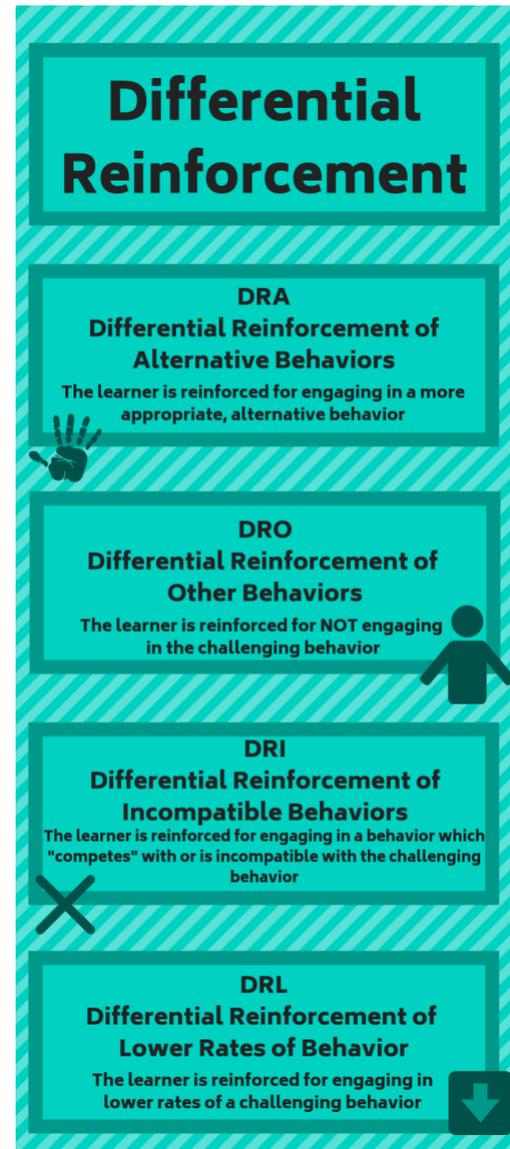
Non-Attention Behaviours:

Some behaviours are not always motivated by attention, and in these cases withholding attention is not effective.

For example, Ben engaging in self-injurious behaviours by hitting his head may serve other functions besides seeking attention from parents and staff. Ben may be hitting his head to indicate he is experiencing pain, wants to escape a task or is communicating his needs.

To Be Continued...

Next issue we will go into more detail on differential reinforcement with more examples, expanding on "things to consider", and go into the various differential reinforcement procedures. In the meantime, here is a diagram of some terms that will be important to know for the next issue.



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