Ask the Expert: Motivating an "Unmotivated" Child or Teen with ADHD

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Webinar objectives

- Discuss definitions of motivation
- Provide a definition of reinforcement
- Discuss issues around the use of reward and reinforcement
- Define the major classes of reinforcement
- Define factors that may affect the value of reward/reinforcement
  - Child and Adolescent Development
  - Physical and Mental Health Considerations
  - The role of relationships
- Describe procedures for selecting appropriate consequences (positive and negative)
- The role of functional Behavior Assessment
- Outline procedures for using reward systems

Jeffrey Sprague, Ph.D.  
(jeffreysprague@gmail.com) Motivating the Unmotivated
What is motivation?

• What is reinforcement?
• What is reward?
• Types of rewards
What is motivation?

- Motivation is the desire to act in service of a goal. It's the crucial element in setting and attaining our objectives.
- Motivation is one of the driving forces behind human behavior. It fuels competition and sparks social connection. Its absence can lead to mental illnesses such as depression. Motivation encompasses the desire to continue striving toward meaning, purpose, and a life worth living.
Sources of Motivation

• Motivation might be *extrinsic*, whereby a person is inspired by outside forces—other people or rewards.

• Motivation can also be *intrinsic*, whereby the inspiration comes from within—the desire to improve at a certain activity.

• Many discuss extrinsic and intrinsic motivation as dichotomous—*they are NOT!*
Sources of Motivation: Maslow’s Hierarchy

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Sources of Motivation

Maslow’s Hierarchy

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Definition of a reinforcing stimulus (aka reward or reinforcer)

- A stimulus that occurs after the performance of a response that increases the future probability of that response

Considerations

- timing: should be close as possible to the behavior (initial learning)
- schedule: continuous initially, fade to intermittent as soon as possible (thinning)
- type: edible, tangible, verbal, physical/sensory, symbolic, activity
- variation in delivery typically increases value---deliver a variety of reinforcing consequences

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Motivating the Unmotivated
Two basic types of reinforcers

- Primary (unconditioned) reinforcer
  - Unlearned
    - Food
    - Warmth
    - Physical Sensation
- Secondary (conditioned) reinforcer
  - Learned
    - Praise
    - Points/Grades
Examples of “Possible” Reinforcing Stimuli

• Social
• Tangible
  • Food
  • Items
• Verbal
• Activity
  • Access to an activity
  • Ability to terminate an activity and begin another

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Motivating the Unmotivated
Why use reinforcement?

- Teach new replacement behaviors
- Encourage/establish infrequent & recently acquired behavior
- Establish a positive relationship between student, others, & learning environment
- Strengthen specific replacement behaviors that compete with habitual undesirable behavior
Reward/Reinforcement is dynamic

- We reward intentionally
- We reward accidentally
- We don’t control all sources of reward
- Sources of reward “compete” and the balance shifts with the influence of setting events

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Issues Regarding Positive Reinforcement

• Children at this age should know what is expected
• Praising feels unnatural.
• Praise is coercive.
• Isn’t it bribing?
• Students will come to depend on tangible rewards.
• Awards are only for special achievements.
• We can’t afford this type of system.
• Middle and high school students don’t need it.

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Intrinsic or Extrinsic Motivation? That is not the question!

- What is the pathway?
  - External control precedes internal control
  - Children need years of external control before internal control takes over
    - In younger children, you may never see the “internal” effects
  - At risk children tend to favor short term, low value rewards vs. longer term, high value rewards
What does the research indicate?

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Intrinsic motivation is affected by

- The interest value of the task
- The student’s relationship with the parent/teacher/peer

Student’s will come to “depend” on extrinsic motivation if

- It’s too predictable
- Withdrawn without fading (tolerance for delay)
What else does the research indicate?

Extrinsic rewards are valuable during acquisition

Praise and acknowledge
- “trying”
- “risk taking”

Extrinsic rewards are valuable during fluency building

Practice is sometimes boring!

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Motivating the Unmotivated
Research on “intrinsic” motivation

• The undermining effect of reward does not occur if students are told they have achieved a preset standard and the task is at a challenging level for them.

• Rewards have a helpful effect on intrinsic motivation when given contingent on behavior.

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Factors that may affect the value of reward/reinforcement

- Child and Adolescent Development
  - Physical and Mental Health Considerations
  - The role of relationships
    - Family
    - Educators
    - Peers
Support or control?

Research has shown that if we think an individual has complete control over his actions, it can potentially invoke anger in us (Weiner, 1993). It increases the likelihood that we will use punishment.

On the other hand, if we think that the individual does not have complete control over his actions, we’re much more likely to reach out and help in some way (Katz, 1997).
Adolescent Changing Personalities

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Brain Reward Centers

- Early adolescents show fewer reward signals in the brain to stimuli, meaning that the intensity of rewards must be higher for early adolescents to feel rewarded.

Source: NIH/National Institute On Alcohol Abuse And Alcoholism
Some of what we know about behavior....

- Behavior is learned (we observe and imitate models)
- Once learned, behavior is maintained if reinforced – or extinguished if they are punished or fail to earn expected reward
- Behaviors are shaped by interaction with models for behavior and that control the sources of reinforcement and punishment

Some of what we know about behavior.

Learning depends on:

Both present modeling and reinforcement and the collective past modeling and reinforcement experience

The individual’s attraction to those model(s)

Social Bonding (attachment to others) and Appropriate Behavior

- Experiences that socially bond the student to a group engaged in overall appropriate behavior patterns are essential to the establishment and maintenance of prosocial behavior patterns in that student.

- This bonding gives the student something to lose when engaging in unacceptable behavior (his/her friends won’t like them, etc.)

- Social bonding (school attachment, being part of the community and it’s standards of conduct) tends to restrain problem behavior by increasing the cost of engaging in it.

Students of like values or characteristics can form “deviant peer groups”

- Ability
- Involvement in extracurriculars
- Race
- Other

These groups can reframe the goal of schooling and reinforce each other for achieving low expectations.
Implications for Families and Schools

• Build a culture and climate that promotes membership and community
• This bonding gives the student something to lose when engaging in unacceptable behavior (his/her friends won’t like them, etc.)
• Social bonding (school attachment, being part of the community and it’s standards of conduct) tends to restrain problem behavior by increasing the cost of engaging in it.


Motivating the Unmotivated
Procedures for selecting appropriate consequences (positive and negative)

Functional Behavior Assessment

Reinforcer sampling and menus
What is Functional Behavioral Assessment?

• A process for identifying the events that predict and maintain patterns of problem behavior

• Outcomes of a functional assessment
  • Description of the behaviors (problem and replacement)
  • Predictors and consequences of problem behaviors (likely and unlikely)
  • Hypothesis statements about the function(s) of the problem behaviors (aka maintaining consequences)
  • Direct observation data to confirm the hypotheses
FBA in research and practice

• The research supporting best practices in moving from FBA to BIP

• FBA can improve the effectiveness of behavioral interventions when implemented with fidelity
Three Ways to Conduct a Functional Assessment

Functional assessment interviews (hypothesis development)

Functional assessment observations (hypothesis testing)

Instructional and environmental tests (hypothesis testing/functional analysis)

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Motivating the Unmotivated
Big takeaways about FBA

FBA should be considered a continuous process

FBA results are not necessarily stable over time and repeat FBA activities will typically need to be done at regular intervals or during the ongoing implementation of a behavior support plan

An FBA should be conducted for a single routine or time of day, rather than for everything the student does during the entire school day.

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Motivating the Unmotivated
Selecting potential reinforcers

- Consider age, interests and appetites
- Consider the value of the behavior
- List potential reinforcers
- Ask the person
- Watch the person
- Consider novel reinforcers
- Consider “natural” reinforcers
Reinforcer sampling

• Reinforcer menu
  • Offer choice and observe

• Forced choice
  • You can have a or b
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What activities do you like to do after school?</td>
<td>______________________________________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. If I had twenty dollars, I would</td>
<td>______________________________________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. My favorite TV shows are</td>
<td>______________________________________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. My favorite movies are</td>
<td>______________________________________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. My favorite thing to do at school is</td>
<td>______________________________________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. My favorite time at school is</td>
<td>______________________________________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. My favorite games are</td>
<td>______________________________________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. My favorite music artists or kind of music is</td>
<td>______________________________________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. My favorite subject at school is</td>
<td>______________________________________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I like to read books about</td>
<td>______________________________________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. The places I like to go that are near my school are</td>
<td>______________________________________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. My favorite restaurant is</td>
<td>______________________________________________________________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Procedures for using reward systems
Premack principle:

- Premack principle: make a high probability behavior contingent on the performance of a low probability behavior.
Premack Principle

• When Ms. Token's students complete their history worksheet early, they can use the computers in the classroom to search the web for information on current events.

• When students in Mr. Time’s science class finish their project, they may talk quietly at their tables.
Guidelines for using rewards

• Timing
  • Use contingently
    • In close association with target or replacement behavior
  • Provide information to the student
    • You are getting this because.....

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Motivating the Unmotivated
Fade use from

- Tangible to social
- Least artificial to most natural
- Adult- to self-managed
- Frequent to infrequent
- Predictable to unpredictable
Guidelines

• Build toward “intrinsic motivation” by increasing
  • Academic success
  • Acknowledging both academic & social success
  • Teaching self-management
    • Self-assessment
    • Self-evaluation
    • Self-delivery of consequences
What is self-management?

• Identify problem behaviors

• Identify replacement behaviors

• Arrange contingencies to change those behaviors
  • Self-monitor
  • Self-record
  • Self-evaluate

• Self-instruct

• Self-deliver reinforcement
Why Teach Self-Management?

- It’s Practical
- An effective curriculum adaptation
- A way to make "thinking" overt
- A way to replace adult mediated behavior
- Promotes independence and positive behavior now and in the future
- Can minimize interactions during home or classroom routines
MUTTS

Vacation Shore House

To-Do List

1. Sleep late
2. Eat junk food
3. Read tabloids
4. Veg out.

Nothing gets done if you don’t write it down.

muttscomics.com
Self-management components

- Self-monitoring
- Self-recording
- Self-evaluation
- Self-delivery of reinforcement

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Implementation Steps

• Identify what observable behaviors you want the child to learn to self-manage.
  • Each step should clearly describe what the child should do

• Visually display the target behaviors using photographs or drawings on a poster, on a sheet of paper, or in a booklet.

• Provide a way for the child to monitor his/her behavior (e.g., a check mark, smiley face, thumbs up/thumbs down)

• Provide positive attention to the child when he/she correctly completes the steps to successful completion of the target behavior.

• Provide positive attention to the child when he/she correctly uses the self-monitoring system accurately.
# Daily Self Monitoring Chart

**Student Name:** __________________________  
**Date:** __________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Period 1</th>
<th>Period 2</th>
<th>Period 3</th>
<th>Period 4</th>
<th>Period 5</th>
<th>Period 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Behaviors</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time 1</td>
<td>Time 2</td>
<td>Time 1</td>
<td>Time 2</td>
<td>Time 1</td>
<td>Time 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hand to ask</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on or get out of seat</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hands and feet to</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>put on class</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>materials</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>attend teacher</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>questions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Goal (number of total “yes” to “no”): __________
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Before Lunch</th>
<th>After Lunch</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Behaviors</td>
<td>Needs Work</td>
<td>Okay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respected other students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worked on class assignments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Followed Teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructions</td>
<td>Morning Recess</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target Behavior:</td>
<td>Needs Work</td>
<td>Okay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interacted well with others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yard rules</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Describe how you responded to your child’s performance today (e.g., praised child, earned activity, loss of privilege, extra chore):**

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Motivating the Unmotivated
**HAWK Report**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date __________</th>
<th>Student __________________</th>
<th>Teacher __________________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0 = No 1= Good 2= Excellent</th>
<th>Be Safe</th>
<th>Be Respectful</th>
<th>Be Your Personal Best</th>
<th>Teacher initials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Keep hands, feet, and objects to self</td>
<td>Be Safe</td>
<td>Be Respectful</td>
<td>Be Your Personal Best</td>
<td>Teacher initials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recess</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recess</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Points =</th>
<th>Points Possible =</th>
<th>Today _____________%</th>
<th>Goal _____________%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**TRACING TRASH**

Collect your trash in a bag each day for 3 days. During the day you will record each piece in your chart.

Don't be mean, go green! 🌿 Don't be mean, go green!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MORNING</th>
<th>LUNCH</th>
<th>AFTERNOON</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>DAY ONE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DAY TWO</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DAY THREE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Look at your chart. What time of day did you have the most trash? Morning, lunch, or afternoon? __________ 
   Why do you think that is? __________

2. What could YOU do to create less trash? __________

Rachel Lee: graphic from TheHug
My Day in Pictures

Wake Up

Eat Breakfast

Feed the Dogs

Brush Teeth

Wrestle Marley

Go to School

Play with Zoe

Play at School
Big Ideas

- Design reinforcement for desired behaviors so it is more efficient, effective, and robust than the target or problem behavior
- **Match** the reinforcement to the function of the target behavior
- Consider child development when using rewards and setting expectations for success
- Lather, rinse, repeat!

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Some references

• Human Behavior is Learned

• Functional Behavior Assessment

• Self management and CICO