Reinforcement

What is Reinforcement?

Reinforcement is an evidence-based practice used to increase the likelihood of a behavior or skill occurring again. Reinforcement is provided immediately after the desired behavior or skill and can be someone saying, "thank you," smiling after receiving help, or giving a snack after finishing a difficult task. Reinforcers should be something the individual really enjoys or interacts with often. There are six types of reinforcers.

Type of Reinforcer	Definition	Examples
Natural	Something that naturally occurs after the behavior	Playing outside after putting on shoes
Social	Forms of attention from people	Receiving a high-five or saying "Nice job!"
Focused Interests	Enjoyable topics or activities	Accessing a favorite TV show or high-interest topic
Activity	A preferred activity	Engaging in drawing, reading, or outdoor play
Tangible	Items that can be held or used for play	Playing with toys or accessing an iPad
Edible	Food or drink	Having a favorite snack or juice

How do I use it?

1. Identify a behavior or skill to be increased.
2. Identify reinforcers that are motivating to the individual.
3. Give the reinforcer right after the behavior or skill occurs and explain why the reinforcement is being given (e.g., "You get 5 minutes on the computer because you picked up your toys").
4. Reinforce the behavior or skill with all people and places.
5. Fade reinforcers such as edibles, tangibles, and activities over time by pairing them with natural or social reinforcement.

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