

Wednesday, 10:00 – 11:30, D2

Developing Successful, Strengths-Based Behavior Plans

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Objective:

Identify effective methods for the practical application of concepts related to improving the delivery of services for persons with developmental disabilities

Identify and emphasize attitudes that enhance the opportunities for persons with DD to achieve their optimal potential

Notes:

Developing Successful, Strengths-Based Behavior Plans

Elisabeth Dahl, Psy.D.

Background/Expertise

- › Professional degree in psychology
- › Experience in wide variety of settings
- › Introduction to applied behavior analysis (ABA therapy) as a wrap-around provider in PA under supervision of Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBA) for 5 years
- › Primary population/expertise with children 12 and under
- › Outpatient setting as clinical child psychologist in group practice working with children and their parents

Application of Information

- › Behavior plan development is a complex topic
 - Specialized training in applied behavior analysis (ABA) takes years
 - A tiny glimpse into its application in a very paired-down manner
 - Distinct from "Positive Behavior Support" as coined and packaged
- › For the sake of limited time and desire for attendees to walk away with something immediately useful, the most detailed information will be on setting up an effective, ABA-based reward system/plan
 - Reward plans are already widely used in a wide variety of settings where behavior outcomes are needed
 - Reward plans are a useful, hands-on tool that can be developed and used effectively with training and oversight
 - Not going to be addressing how to approach unexpected behaviors, just how to promote expected ones
- › Strengths-based refers to a single individual's likes, positive qualities, and abilities
- › Successful strengths-based behavior plans are highly individualized
- › Can be applied to nearly any child under the age of 12, useful with individuals with developmental delays of many types across the age-span

Application of Information cont'd

- › Disclaimer:
 - Not intended to be used, as presented, with severe or extreme behaviors without additional support
 - My personal approach is informed by many therapies
 - › Aim to be as scientific/ABA-rooted as possible within time constraint
 - › May be some minor deviations due to complexities of ABA therapy
 - Approach these concepts with guidance and consultation whenever possible
 - › Consider your resources
 - At an agency/organization: look into having a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) on staff (ideally) or other behaviorally-trained therapist
 - Parents and other individuals: consider consultation with a BCBA or behaviorally-trained therapist
 - Therapists: seek ongoing supervision or consultation with a BCBA or behaviorally-trained therapist

Major Components of Strengths-Based Approach

- › Effective strengths-based approaches take into account:
 - Individual's support system
 - › Family, school staff, group home staff, friends, etc.
 - Individual's favorite activities
 - Individual's perspective or view of the world
 - Individual's positive qualities and activities they do well
- › Does not just identify these, but actually *uses* them – cannot overlook the importance of this
 - Support system: what are they *realistically* capable of implementing and/or how can they be helpful (e.g. modeling and/or encouraging an individual to use new skills); in "the real world" there are many people constantly influencing any individual
 - Favorite activities: very useful as rewards
 - Perspective/view: Why is this important to me? Why would I want to do this? What is my buy-in? How much do I already know about this?
 - Positive qualities/activities done well: we can compare a new skill to something already acquired or use a current skill as a foundation for teaching a new skill

Major Components of a Behavior-Therapy-Based Reward Plan

- › Identifies a "social problem"
 - Problem impacting the individual or those around them
 - Fairly broad in application
- › Is rooted in ABA tenets
 - Scientific, systematic, data-based
 - Not just trial and error

Reward Plans 101

1. Identify the Unexpected Behavior(s)

- › Common examples:
 - Not following directions/refusal to do particular work/chore/demand
 - › School setting: student calling out when teacher is talking
 - › Community setting: individual takes off from the group during outings
 - › Home setting: individual refuses to put dishes in dishwasher after meal
 - Social manner issue: wide-ranging, but can include anything from not answering others when they greet the individual to yelling at peers
 - › School setting: student will not share classroom materials
 - › Community setting: individual picks nose in public
 - › Home setting: individual takes toys from sibling without asking
 - Coping skill:
 - › School setting: student tantrums when the schedule changes
 - › Community setting: individual cannot wait in line without an outburst
 - › Home setting: individual gets highly upset when loses a board/video game

Reward Plans 101

Identify the Unexpected Behavior(s) cont'd

- › Narrow the list to most important
 - The more behaviors being addressed, the more challenging it becomes to achieve individual goals with single reward plan
 - Becomes overwhelming and complicated
 - › Ideal number is 1, do not recommend taking on more than 3 at same time
- › Prioritize
 - Consider needs of self and others (e.g. Maslow's hierarchy of needs) to prioritize
 - › 1. physiological/body-based needs like eating, drinking, bathroom
 - › 2. safety needs
 - › 3. social belonging
 - › 4. independence / achievement
 - › 5. self-actualization (being the best me I can be) like writing neatly or getting my answers correct
 - Put lower needs on back burner until higher needs met
 - Consider how long the behavior has been in place – will be more difficult to address a longer-term behavior without complexity/oversight
 - Frequency: if not occurring very often, will be more of a challenge due to lack of opportunity

Reward Plans 101

2. Identify a New Skill to Teach

- › Can define by time period
 - Less obvious skills = skills accounted for through time lapse
 - › "keeping my hands to myself" – this is happening almost all the time, so I need to pick a time period in which the unexpected behavior is not displayed (information on picking a time period to come)
- › Can define by clear occurrence
 - Obvious skills = concretely observable the moment they occur
 - › "joining the group when directed" – I can see if you did this within moments
- › Word it "in the positive" for the goal
 - "calling out" = "raising my hand to share my thoughts with the group"
 - "taking off from the group" = "staying with the group"
 - "refusing to load dishes" = "load my dishes after I'm done eating"
- › "Dead Man's Test:" If a dead man can do it, it's not a goal
 - "don't call names" (a dead man can do this) = "talk to others without insulting them and calling them only their given name"

Reward Plans 101

2. Identify a New Skill to Teach cont'd

- › Make it clear and measurable
- › Make sure anyone could understand what is expected (no room to misinterpret)
- › Make sure it cannot be further broken down into various skills
 - Not measurable/Unclear: "be good," "be nice," "be kind," "do what you're expected," "pick up your things"
 - Measurable/Clear: "hand in your paper before the timer goes off," "complete your homework before 6:30pm"
 - › May wish to define further (e.g. "without being reminded by an adult"), but avoid nit-picking and avoid setting the individual up for failure
- › Make it palatable by writing a Social Story
 - Carol Gray's books, articles, or video teach how to write an effective, clear Social Story
 - Invented for use with those with autism, but effective with nearly any population on which a behavior plan would be used
 - For a small sample of what these entail: <http://carolgraysocialstories.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Summer-1998-ISSUE-and-WORKBOOK.pdf>
 - Can teach an entire sequence/new routine, or can teach a single skill

Reward Plans 101

3. Identify Appropriate Rewards

- › 3 types of rewards
 - Tangibles: items that can be touched and kept
 - › Stickers
 - › Toys (everything from component of larger toy – e.g. 1 Lego – to large toy – e.g. full Lego set)
 - › Money
 - › Edible treats
 - Activities: independent hobbies of interest
 - › Time to play with Legos
 - › Extra recess time
 - › Time on electronic
 - Social: 1-1 or group endeavors
 - › Games (board game with 1 or more people, video game with 1 or more people)
 - › "Special time:" lunch with teacher, 1-1 time with parent to do activity of child's choice
 - › Outing to a preferred location with 1 or more preferred people

Reward Plans 101

3. Identify Appropriate Rewards cont'd

- › "Reward" is defined by being valuable – individual cannot have access to or control over this outside of the reward plan
- › Should fit the setting/behavior (e.g. time to watch TV would not work in most school settings)
- › Should be of sufficient value to motivate (e.g. 5 minutes to watch YouTube after a whole day of meeting a goal is not highly motivating, but 5 minutes to watch YouTube each ½ hour might be)
- › Research shows some of the most disruptive behaviors in individuals with disabilities are "negatively reinforced," meaning that taking away something has increased the behavior
 - e.g. removing the demand to comply only increases the chances that we will see noncompliance when we give a direction or command
 - Important to follow through on individual doing the expected skill even if not meeting criteria for reward
- › One of the best rewards for an expected skill is removing the demand or situation
 - e.g. stop instruction time as a reward for paying attention/working during instruction time
 - This is best done when something rewarding is also presented
 - › e.g. not "just free time" but fun activities during free time

Reward Plans 101

3. Identify Appropriate Rewards cont'd

- > Most effective plans are going to have highly-preferred rewards, as determined by the situation/child
- > Most effective plans are going to have several of each type of reward ("menu")
- > Most effective plans are going to offer choice
 - Moment-to-moment motivation/gratification is not stable (no one is ALWAYS satisfied by the same thing all the time)
- > Most effective plans are going to rotate reward choices
 - Satiation (you will get "full" at some point)
- > Most effective plans are going to pair up ALL rewards with some form of social rewarding ALWAYS
 - Smile, praise
 - > Most effective praise is a specific statement related back to the skill being taught (e.g. "I'm so proud you put your dishes in the dishwasher" versus "Good job")

Reward Plans 101

4. Set up a Reward Schedule

- > Complex topic on its own, but a few elements are necessary
- > Baseline/starting point of success
 - 1 of every 10 times? 6 of every 10 times?
 - Cannot expect someone at 10% to meet a plan expecting 100%, but can expect someone at 10% to meet a plan expecting 10-20%
 - For goals involving longer-term participation, this may need to be broken down into time chunks
 - > If store trip is typically 20 minutes and individual stays with the group only 5 minutes, cannot expect 20 minutes with group at first.
 - > If teaching block is 1 hour, and student typically calls out 8 times, cannot expect student not to call out at all for 1 hour
 - Meet the individual where they are at first to establish their success (use the starting point as the first goal; if at just about 50%, require 50% for a reward for a short time)
 - > If using time blocks, determine the typical length of time the individual is successful (e.g. 5 minutes, 10 minutes) - that becomes your measuring block for goals
- > Make small shifts in expectations
 - Cannot expect someone to go from 50% to 80%, but can expect them to go from 50% to 60%

Reward Plans 101

4. Set up a Reward Schedule cont'd

- > Use more frequent rewards to start
 - May need to reward each time the individual is successful (e.g. reward every 5 minutes the individual stays with the group)
- > Over time, move to intermittent rewarding ("slot machine" rewarding)
- > Consider the ability of the individual being rewarded to experience a delay before getting rewarded
 - Immediate gratification versus delayed gratification
 - Not just a factor of age or development, but also personal characteristics and circumstance, though can use age and development to help guide decisions
 - > E.g. 3-year-old child may need to be rewarded at least 1 time per day even when less consistent
 - > E.g. 15-year-old high-functioning individual may be capable of waiting a week or more for a reward
- > Make sure a plan is not ended before moving to intermittent rewarding to make the skill resilient

Reward Plans 101

5. Put the Plan into Place

- > In a review of studies regarding teaching social skills, research found the 3 most effective behavior approaches for teaching and generalizing (seeing it across different settings) a skill include a combination of "before and after" interventions:
 - Instructions on how to do the skill
 - Prompting to use the skill
 - Positive reinforcement when the skill is exhibited

Reward Plans 101

5. Put the Plan into Place cont'd

- > Set the individual up for success
- > What tools will help the individual meet their goal?
 - What is their skill-set?
 - > If able to read well, tools may be written; if a poor reader, tools may be picture-based
 - > If individual is knowledgeable or capable with a similar skill, reference it to build the new one
 - > If skill is highly interactive, model/role-play it repeatedly

Checklists (word-based) or picture prompts for routines or multi-step tasks

Calendars or charts for infrequently occurring tasks

Visual/verbal reminders of rewards

Reward Plans 101

5. Put the Plan into Place cont'd

- Call the individual by name to get their attention
- Get the individual's eye contact before giving a direction
- Give a single direction rather than multiple
- Use a positive, even-toned voice that assumes compliance rather than noncompliance
- Make sure directions are clearly directive (e.g. do not ask a question like "will you?")
- Allow enough time to be successful
- Wait 10 seconds to repeat a direction
- Set a time limit (e.g. by 8:00pm) when a task will be done

Reward Plans 101

5. Put the Plan into Place cont'd

- › When rewarding each time a skill occurs, a reward chart is not needed initially
 - Infrequently occurring skills (maybe only 1-2 opportunities per day) like getting in the car to leave the house without a tantrum
 - Success for skill = immediate reward
 - › Important for cause-effect; do not offer rewards that are not available for immediate gain
- › Take data; *accurately* record information on how often the individual is successful with their goals to know when to reduce rewards
- › When rewarding less frequently (e.g. for 50% success), use a reward chart
 - Mark on reward chart replaces tangible/social/activity reward
 - Set up a time frame for rewards if predictable
 - › E.g. School setting: may be able to identify 10 opportunities/time frames predictably during morning classes and again for afternoon classes, so reward periods can be scheduled for just before lunch and just before end of day
 - Keep a copy of every reward chart as data for knowing how often the individual is successful
 - › Basic math: divide number of successes by number of opportunities for %
- › When using "slot machine" rewarding, make sure to use verbal praise and provide reward immediately after skill to maintain cause-effect

Example Reward Chart

Goal: 60%	9:00-9:15	9:16-9:30	9:31-9:45	9:46-10:00	10:01-10:15	10:16-10:30	10:31-10:45	10:46-11:00	11:01-11:15	11:16-11:30
Raised my hand and waited to be called on to speak or kept my thoughts in my head										

Reward Plans 101

6. Maintain the Plan

- › Consistency is key
- › Be methodical – major distinction between ABA and PBS
 - Take data – to ensure the plan is working and to know when to raise the bar (e.g. individual is able to meet the 50% goal with mastery – consistent meeting of goal over several weeks – so move to 60% goal)
 - › As previously mentioned, can use reward chart to track data or keep separately recorded
 - Change 1 factor at a time – if it is suspected 1 element of the plan is not working, only modify 1 thing at a time to identify what has an impact
 - If something isn't working, consider having someone observe your use of it or otherwise seek a more objective perspective before giving up

Reward Plans 101

6. Maintain the Plan cont'd

- › Communicate major changes to the individual in advance so they are prepared; may even need to use a new social story depending on their needs
- › Do not abruptly end rewards
- › Over time, as individual's reward schedule becomes less frequent, ensure you maintain praise and smile
- › Social praise and chart may be continued indefinitely on their own
 - May be able to transfer responsibility of completing the chart to the individual over time depending on abilities and depending on skill (e.g. appropriate for completing chore, but not for sharing)
 - Rewards may continue to fade away (social/natural takes its place)

References

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