



# The importance of reinforcement

Yvonne Yap  
BCBA & Founder of Be Me Services

19 May 2020

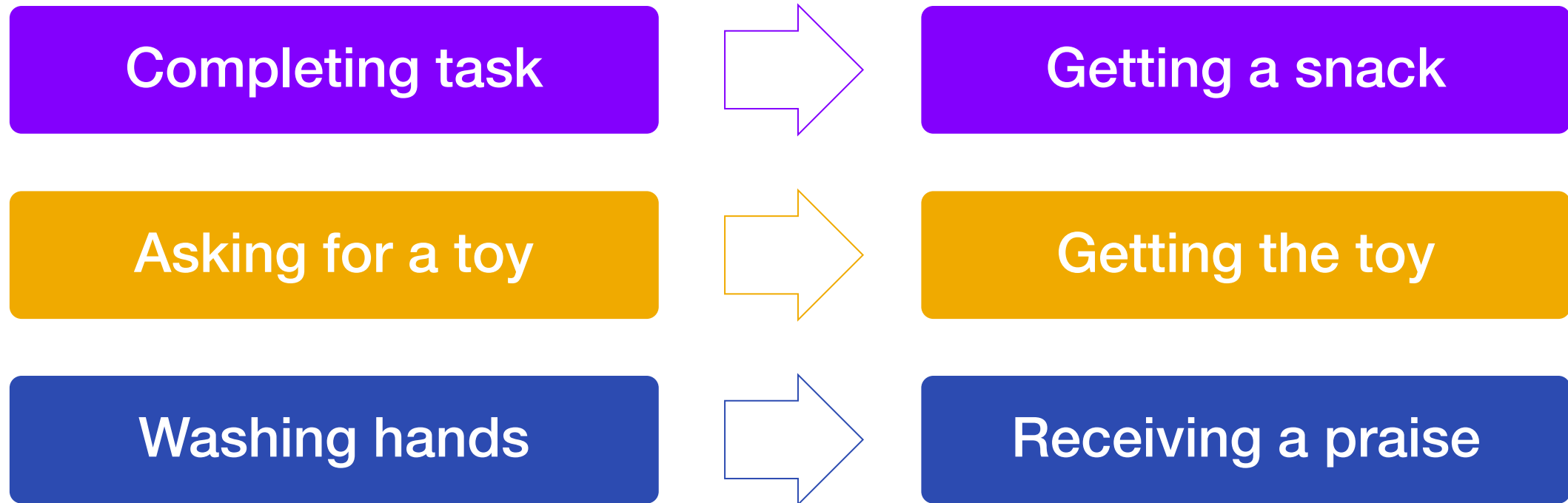


# A-B-C of behavior



# Reinforcement is a consequence

Reinforcement is an event following a behavior which increases that behavior:



# Positive vs. negative reinforcement

Both positive and negative reinforcement increase behaviors

## Positive reinforcement

- Adding something pleasant
- Providing praise upon completing task will increase probability of completing more tasks in future

## Negative reinforcement

- Removing something unpleasant
- If child can leave the table only after finishing the dinner, the probability of finishing the dinner faster in future will increase

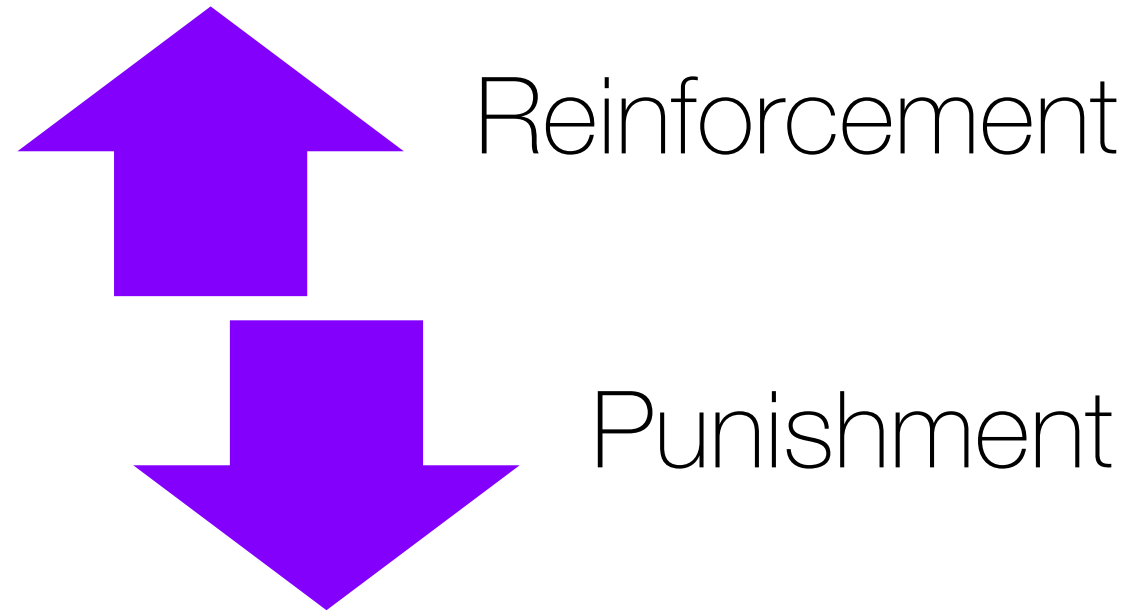
# Active Student Responding

What are some examples for things that motivates you to remove them?



# Negative reinforcement is not the same as punishment

Punishment is supposed to decrease behaviors, while negative reinforcement is increasing behavior through removal aversive stimuli.



# Primary vs secondary reinforcement

## Primary reinforcers

- We do not need to learn that we want them
- Food, water, safety

## Secondary reinforcers

- We have to learn that they can be valuable
- Money, toys, social approval

# Goals that can be addressed by using reinforcement

- **Teaching new skills**
  - Academic
  - Social
  - Self-help skills
- **Teaching replacement behaviors for an inappropriate behavior**
- **Increase desired behaviors**
- **Decreasing challenging behaviors**





# Reinforcement for different age groups

Reinforcement has been proved to be effective with children from 0 to 22 years old by multiple studies. Reinforcers picked should be age appropriate.

0-2 years	3-5 years	6-11 years	12-14 years	15-22 years
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Joint attention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social</li> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Joint attention</li> <li>• Academic</li> <li>• Play</li> <li>• Motor</li> <li>• Adaptive</li> <li>• Compliance</li> <li>• Inappropriate behaviors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social</li> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Compliance</li> <li>• Academic</li> <li>• Play</li> <li>• Cognitive</li> <li>• Adaptive</li> <li>• Inappropriate behaviors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social</li> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Compliance</li> <li>• On-task</li> <li>• Adaptive</li> <li>• Vocational</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social</li> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Inappropriate behaviors</li> <li>• Play</li> <li>• Adaptive</li> <li>• Vocational</li> </ul>

# Begin with identifying right reinforcer

- Child must like the reinforcer which is intended to increase the behavior
- Reinforcement immediately follows the target behavior
- Reinforcer is appropriate for the behavior and is meaningful for the child
- Reinforcer should be age-appropriate and safe
- There should be a variety of reinforcers available
- Preferably the reinforcer should only be available when child exhibits specific behaviors

# Active Student Responding

Is reinforcement and bribe the same?



# How to deliver reinforcement

- When you just begin to target a specific behavior and use reinforcement, it is better to use reinforcement **continuously**, which means providing reinforcers **each time** the child performs the behaviors or target skill
- When delivering reinforcer, make sure you **specify** for the child what is the reinforcer for:
  - “Good job using nice words”, “Now that you finished your math, you can have a muffin”
- Ideally the reinforcers used to increase specified behaviors, should not be available for the child freely during the day, otherwise the reinforcer would not be as motivating
- Make sure you pair (use together) chosen reinforcement with natural social reinforcers, such as:
  - Praises, hugs, hi-fives, smiles etc. It will help fade using of reinforcers in future.

# Vary reinforcers to prevent satiation

- Vary reinforcers frequently
- Use different reinforcers for different behaviors
- Try to avoid using edible reinforcers
- Try to switch from primary to secondary reinforcers as soon as possible. This can be done through using them together - pairing

# Thin using of reinforcers

- Even if your child is consistently performing desired behavior, you cannot stop using reinforcement abruptly as the behavior may disappear
- Decrease using of reinforcement gradually through using intermittent schedules of reinforcement
- Thinning reinforcement is used to maintain previously learned behaviors and skills and to help child progress to naturally occurring reinforcers
- For example, instead of praising for each word read, you can praise after every second, third, etc.
- Or instead of providing toy after 5 minutes of on task behavior, you can deliver it after 10 min, 15 min, etc.

# Differential reinforcement

- Differential reinforcement is used when you want to increase appropriate behaviors and at the same time decrease inappropriate behaviors
- For example, you want to replace screaming with asking using words, or you want to increase on-task behavior while getting rid of out-of-seat behavior
- In this case, you do not pay attention to aversive behaviors, but reinforce desired behaviors instead
- You can reinforce a specifically identified replacement behavior, OR you can also reinforce all behaviors except the challenging behavior

# Short video about reinforcement

## Positive & Negative Reinforcement/Punishment in the Classroom





# Scenarios and problem solving



# Child was progressing, but became uninterested

## Reason:

- Most probably a child is satiated with the reinforcer and reinforcer is no longer motivating enough for the child

## Solution:

- Identify new reinforcers and vary them more frequently



# Child is not performing behavior long enough to receive reinforcer

## Reason:

- Expectations and criteria could be too high, while the behavior or skill too difficult

## Solution:

- Lower expectations, lower performance criteria, and/or break up the task into smaller parts



# Reinforcement does not increase desired behavior

## Reason:

- Reinforcer is not identified correctly, is not strong enough, or is available freely anytime

## Solution:

- Try to identify strong reinforcers which would be motivating for the child, and/or limit access to the reinforcers to the situations when child exhibits target behaviors



# Negative reinforcement does not work

## Reason:

- Negative reinforcer might not be “bad” enough to motivate child to get rid of it

## Solution:

- Try to identify another negative reinforcer, or think of using positive reinforcement instead



# Questions?





# Contacts

**Yvonne Yap**

Be Me Services

bemeservices.com

[yvonne@bemeservices.com](mailto:yvonne@bemeservices.com)

+971568312217

*beme.*

**Thank you!**





# References

- Cooper, J.O., Heron, T., & Heward, W.L. (2007). Applied Behavior Analysis. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson/Merrill-Prentice Hall
- Sam, A., & AFIRM Team. (2015). Reinforcement. Chapel Hill, NC: National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorder, FPG Child Development Center, University of North Carolina. Retrieved from <http://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/reinforcement>

