Rethinking Support to Increase Independence
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Purpose
In our traditional model of support, teachers, therapists, paraprofessionals, and others working with the child are told to make sure the student does X behavior. The teaching staff often act as planners for students and then prompt them to engage in activities, participate in social interactions, and use appropriate behaviors. While this does ensure that the child finishes the assignment, is engaged in the lesson, or interacts and behaves as expected, it does not give students an opportunity to learn needed skills to succeed independently.

If our solution is more professionals in place to manage behavior, we get more prompting, the paraprofessional (or other) does the work, and the student does not learn the skill. As professionals, this is OUR FAULT. If we are giving multiple prompts, the student develops prompt dependency, not the skill. Furthermore, some students struggle with the same issues but do not qualify for 1:1 support in their IEPs. To help all of our students succeed, we need to teach students to use different systems that allow them to perform the behavior independently.

1. Prioritize instructional goals for the student (follow classroom routines, complete work, maintain appropriate behaviors).
2. Teach independence and self-management. This pivotal behavior shifts the responsibility of behavior management from the teacher (or other) to the student.

Self-Monitoring and Self-Directed Learning Strategies

Antecedent cue regulation is the use of visual or auditory prompts to assist a student in performing a target behavior. These are seldom used in isolation when teaching self-management. Modeling, reinforcement, and other learning strategies may be needed.

In self-monitoring, a student observes and records whether or not he/she has performed the target behavior. When creating a self-monitoring program, set the timing of the student’s observation of him/herself as needed for the child’s current knowledge of his/her behavior over time. Often, simply being aware of the behavior leads to modification of the behavior. Other times, reinforcement is critical.

When using self-instruction, the student provides instruction (usually verbal) to him or herself for the steps to perform a task or solve a problem using the following process: identify a problem, state the solution, evaluate the action, deliver reinforcement.

Self-evaluation requires a student to compare his/her performance of a target behavior with a set of predetermined criteria. Depending on the goals and current measurements of behavior, this might be something the student does at the end of a class period, end of the day, end of the week, etc.

Using self-reinforcement tools, the student accesses his/her own rewards or consequences. The reinforcement might be part of the visual instruction. This teaches a student to be independent over a period of time without needing teacher help to access reinforcement; however, it often requires MUCH instruction.

Teaching Accurate Self-Reporting
It is critical that we teach students how to use a self-management system; they will not be able to use it effectively without being taught to use it. Use the following steps to teach a student to use a new system:
1. Teach discrimination between correct and incorrect responding.
2. Teach the student to use the self-management system.
3. Reinforce the student for accurate recording.

When teaching a self-management system, reinforce accurate recording, not changes in behavior. Even if recording is not accurate, the behavior may improve just because of increased awareness of it. To start and periodically once the student has mastered use of the system, the student only gets reinforcement if his/her score matches yours.

When is Self-Management Appropriate?

A self-management intervention might be appropriate if you can answer “Yes” to the following questions:

- Can the student perform the expected behavior?
- Can the student control the challenging behavior?
- Does the behavior occur frequently?
- Can the behavior be easily observed and recorded?

Self-management strategies are most effective in predictable, consistent environments. The environment affects behavior, so also teach students to identify and change their environment to increase their success.

Steps to Implement a Self-Management Intervention

When designing and implementing a self-management intervention, use the following steps:

1. Operationally define the behavior.
2. Collect baseline data.
3. Choose methods for recording and cuing (what type of self-management system will you use, when/how often will the student record/monitor, what will prompt the student to record/monitor).
4. Teach the student the procedure, focusing on reinforcing accuracy over changes in the target behavior. Do not expect the student to be able to use the system accurately and consistently right off the bat. Just like any other new behavior, it has to be taught. This may take time and practice.
5. Monitor progress and fade gradually. You should see progress quickly, and it should be significant. If not, you may be targeting the wrong dimension of behavior or using a self-management system that is too complex right now. Consider changing some aspect of the system or do more teaching. As you consider fading, you might decrease the number of recordings in one class period, extend observation intervals between recordings, or require fewer recordings per day.

References


Self Monitoring Tools Examples

Image Source: Vic o'rey and Autism

Self Monitoring Tools Examples

Self Instruction Tools Examples

Identify a problem.
State the solution.
Evaluate the action.
Deliver reinforcement.

Problem: I feel upset!

State the solution: I use one of my strategies to calm down.

Evaluate the action: I find calm, count to 50, take deep breaths, change the channel.

Deliver reinforcement: I can get back to my friends.

Listen to my Teachers:
- My body and face are turned toward the teacher
- I am not talking when the teacher is talking
- I am not fidgeting with clothes or drawing

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Do I add or subtract to solve this word problem?

Look for words like “more,” “take away,” or “leave.”

Is my answer more or less to match the words in the problem?

I get credit for the correct answer.

Self Evaluation Tools Examples

Want more or less to match the words in the problem?

I get credit for the correct answer.


Self Evaluation Tools Examples

Goal: The student completed class assignments/projects independently, as defined by needing no more than 1 prompt to complete the assignment.


Self Reinforcement Tools Examples

I am working for:

I did it!

Self Reinforcement Tools
Examples

Put together the puzzle.

Eat one m&m!