

Tingstrom

Scenarios -- Set 1

Psy 374

1. Michael, a 4th grader, has not been participating in class discussions much. In an attempt to increase Michael's participation, Mrs. Jones, his teacher, has made more of an effort to praise Michael when he answers questions by such comments as: "That was an excellent answer, Michael!" "I can tell you were thinking really hard about this problem by that answer...great!" In this instance, the teacher is assuming that the praise and comments will operate according to what process? How can she be sure?
2. Mrs. Jones, a 7th grade teacher, told another teacher in the lounge that she is "fed up with her class' misbehavior and disrespect." "From now on I'm going to start using some negative reinforcement. Students who misbehave in my class will have to copy a page from the dictionary." What, if anything, is wrong with Mrs. Jones' statement? What, if you answered that it is incorrect, does she really mean?
3. Susan, an 11th grader, sassed her mother. As a result, Susan's mother told Susan she could not speak on the phone for two nights. This is an example of ...?
4. John is the class clown. The teacher knows that John acts silly to get the attention of the other students. The teacher talks to the class one day when John is absent and agrees that in the afternoon, whoever **does not laugh** at John's silliness, will be allowed 15 minutes extra free time (those that laugh will have to work during that time). As a result, John's silly behavior has decreased. By what process has John's silliness decreased?
5. Mrs. Watson's class has been increasingly rowdy. Although she doesn't like to yell, lately when the talking is excessive she simply "can't help it" and yells loudly at the class to "be quiet or else.." Mrs. Watson has been yelling more and more lately, and the class **does temporarily** quiet down. However, despite the temporary relief, the talking has been becoming more frequent over the long-run.
 - a) What process might explain Mrs. Watson's increase in yelling?
 - b) What process might explain the long-term increase in talking by the class?
6. When 4-year-old Amy cannot get her way with her mother, she begins to whine. Amy's mother finds that if she seats Amy on her lap, pats her head, and gently tries to reason with her, the whining stops. However, Amy's mother is puzzled because Amy's whining is getting more frequent. Why?

7. John throws tantrums in the supermarket when he cannot get a toy he wants. His mother usually quickly gives in and buys him the toy to avoid further embarrassment. What can we predict about John's behavior over the long-run? What process does this follow? What process may govern John's mother giving in so quickly and easily?

8. Remember Amy in #6? Well, after consulting with a local psychologist, it was recommended to Amy's mother that she ignore the whining and not put Amy on her lap and pat her head, etc. Amy's mother tried this on two consecutive occasions and the whining got worse! Amy's mother is about to sue the psychologist for malpractice, but in your wisdom you point out what process the psychologist had in mind and the phenomenon which has occurred. Explain.

9. Mrs. Mills, a 3rd grade teacher, used a corner of the room for time-out with her students. However, before allowing a child to leave time-out, Mrs. Mills makes sure the child is quiet for about 30 seconds (i.e., no crying, yelling, etc.) before being released. Based on what process, why does she require this relatively brief period of appropriate behavior before releasing the student?
Hint: Why does she not want to release the student while they are whining/crying/yelling, etc?????

10. Does all positive reinforcement increase (or at least maintain) behavior? Why/Why not?

11. Does all negative reinforcement decrease behavior? Why/Why not?

12. Does all punishment decrease behavior? Why/Why not?

13. What is the difference between negative reinforcement and punishment, both procedurally and with respect to their effects on behavior?