**PS360: Applied Behavior Analysis I**

**Discussion Board Lecture: Unit 6**

**Introduction to Unit 6: Extinction: Withholding the Reinforcing Variable**

Welcome, students! This lecture will focus on the applied behavior analysis (ABA) principle of extinction. We will cover the following topics:

* + Extinction procedure
  + Functional Behavior Assessment
  + Behavior function
  + Antecedent-Behavior-Consequence recording
  + Factors that may influence extinction
  + Characteristics associated with extinction procedures

Let’s get started!

Thus far in the course, we have examined many principles of behavior. We’ve delved into positive and negative reinforcement and punishment, and we have even had the opportunity to learn how we can use motivating operations (MOs) to increase the effectiveness of our behavior plans.

The Unit 6 focus is on a procedure used to extinguish – or greatly reduce behavior. ***Extinction*** is the process of withholding the usual reinforcer of a behavior in order to do away with it.

**However, in order for us to implement the procedure, we must identify the function of the target behavior and the maintaining reinforcers.**

We identify the probable function of a target behavior through direct observation, data collection, and examination of the patterns that emerge in that data – all within the boundaries of the Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA).

The FBA allows us to develop effective behavior intervention plans by allowing us to identify the antecedent variables that can be altered to prevent unwanted behavior, allowing us to identify reinforcement contingencies (maintaining consequence) that can be altered so the unwanted behavior no longer receives reinforcement, and by allowing us to identify possible reinforcers for alternative replacement behaviors.

* Recording Antecedent-Behavior-Consequence (A-B-C) data during the Direct Descriptive Assessment phase of the FBA allows us to identify the triggers (antecedents) and the maintainers (consequences) of the behavior, which allows us to identify the probable function – and the usual reinforcers.
* Once we identify the reinforcement working to maintain the target behavior, we can withhold it (extinction procedure). When reinforcement is withheld, the target behavior will begin to diminish.

The history of the target behavior and the schedule of reinforcement that has maintained the behavior will impact how quickly the behavior is extinguished.

* + Typically, behaviors maintained on continuous reinforcement are more quickly extinguished than those maintained on intermittent reinforcement.
  + And, behaviors that have a long history are more resistant to extinction.
  + Response effort is an important component when considering resistance to extinction. Behaviors that require great effort are more quickly extinguished than those requiring little effort.

While extinction seems like a simple process, one has to prepare for some characteristics of the procedure, such as **extinction bursts** and **spontaneous recovery**.

* **Extinction bursts** occur when the extinction program is first implemented. You may see a sudden spike in the target behavior. The individual is accustomed to gaining the desired consequence through the expression of the target behavior and when that doesn’t happen, the individual will increase the frequency; duration; or intensity to gain that access. Those implementing the program must “hold the course” and maintain the integrity of the program. If implemented as designed, the target behavior will soon begin to diminish.
* **Spontaneous recovery** is the temporary re-emergence of the extinguished behavior. Again, those implementing the program must continue to implement it as designed and this re-emergence should be short lived.

**Once the behavior has been greatly diminished or extinguished, the extinction program must remain in effect permanently to maintain the effect.**

* When implementing an extinction program, one must teach and reinforce an appropriate, alternative behavior. The behavior targeted for extinction has functioned well for the individual – perhaps for a long time. We cannot leave the person without a way to get his/her needs met. Therefore, we work to identify, teach, and reinforce functionally equivalent, appropriate replacement behaviors.
* **Warning:** Extinction programs are not appropriate for self-injurious or aggressive behaviors. These types of extreme behaviors require methods that will work to reduce the behavior more quickly than extinction.

Thank you for viewing your Unit 6 Lecture!