



Reducing Inappropriate Behaviours Using Positive Interventions

Differential Reinforcement: Strengthening a specific **class of responses** and ignoring other classes

The idea of using Positive Interventions to reduce the frequency of inappropriate behaviours is to select appropriate behaviours whenever possible-attend to and strengthen those-and ignore inappropriate behaviours. The process “feels” positive to students – or does not feel negative.

The appropriate behaviours selected can be incompatible with the inappropriate behaviours (**DRI**) or they can specifically selected alternatives that are socially appropriate in the circumstances (**DRA**). If no incompatible or socially appropriate alternative behaviour is available, you can increase the amount of time a student does NOT engage in an inappropriate behaviour by praising him only for intervals when he does not do it (**DRO**) If the inappropriate behaviour occurs at low rates in the general population anyway, and you don't want or need to eliminate it, just lower its frequency, you can strengthen the behaviour of engaging in lower rates of the behaviour (**DRL**)

DRI and **DRA** are the same procedures with the only difference being the selection of the substitute behaviour. In **DRI**- the substitute behaviour is topographically incompatible with the target behaviour. Example: in-seat versus out-of-seat; talking in a quiet versus yelling etc.

In **DRA**, the substitute behaviour is NOT incompatible with the target behaviour. It is an appropriate alternative behaviour that will improve the social acceptability of the student. Some inappropriate behaviours do not have an incompatible opposite. Example; saying “excuse me” versus interrupting, or staring out the window versus completing assignment pieces.

In **DRO**, no new behaviour is taught or substituted. It is not feasible to teach a substitute that could function in any way like the aberrant behaviour. Therefore a strong reinforce is offered for small intervals of time when the inappropriate behaviour is NOT emitted AT ALL. This really is endurance building. You might consider this for self-injurious behaviours. Provide a strong rewarding consequence for NON-ENGAGEMENT in the SIB for short intervals of time.

In all these approaches, no behaviour is censored. No punishment is administered. The focus is on the positive but the intent is clearly the reduction and/or elimination of inappropriate behaviours.

Typically, the student does not experience the next level of intervention to reduce inappropriate behaviour as very positive. It is called **EXTINCTION**

DRA Reinforcement of an alternative behaviour while withholding reinforcement for the inappropriate behaviour



This basically means that you can pit an undesired behaviour on extinction, while simultaneously giving reinforcement to an appropriate behaviour.

Here are a few examples:

- **Child A has problem behaviour of mouthing non-food items** (toys, pennies, fingers etc.) to gain sensory stimulation. Every time child A attempts to place a non-food item in her mouth, you block this behaviour and redirect her to a sensory chewy toy. As child places the chewy in her mouth, you provide verbal praise.
- Using differential **reinforcement of an incompatible behaviour (DRI)** may be an effective way to redirect a dangerous behaviour, or it can be used as part of a behavioural (ABA) program that will extinguish the behaviour. In order to effectively extinguish behaviour, you need to be sure the replacement behaviour serves the same function. Clapping hands may very well stop a child from hitting him or herself in the head in the short run, but in the long run, if hitting him or herself functions to provide escape from non-preferred activities. Clapping hands will only temporarily keep the child from hitting him or herself.
- **DRI:** The team were concerned about the scarring occurring around a pupil's wrist/s from her self injurious behaviour. They have put scrunchy bracelets on her wrists and given her a lot of praise i.e. "What pretty bracelets you have Emily" A decrease in self-injurious writ biting has occurred. The team believes that this has been an effective use of **DRI: Differential Reinforcement of Incompatible Behaviour**
- **DRA:** It was time to address a pupil's hand flapping. It was observed that the hand flapping appears when the pupil is anxious, and when he is excited. Staff and pupil picked out some large beads that they have put on a piece of leather. They will be "worry beads" and the pupil self-monitors their use, earning a sticker for every 5 times he uses the beads instead of flapping his hands. This is **Differential Reinforcement of an Alternative Behaviour (DRA)** which serves the same function, providing him a sensory outlet for his hands during times of excitement of anxiety.
- **A pupil hits and scratches him/herself when he is frustrated.** The teacher gives him access to his favourite toy for 2 minutes for each 10 minute period he/she does not hit/scratch himself
- **The pupil is constantly out of their seat wandering around the room.** The teacher sets a timer for short intervals. When the timer goes off the student gets a token for being in their seat.