

**VCU Autism Center for Excellence**  
**Lunch and Learn Series**  
**A Family's Guide to Reinforcement**



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# Welcome to Lunch and Learn: A Family's Guide to Reinforcement

While we wait to begin, put a stamp (using the annotation feature) on your answer, or type a number into the chat box:

On a Scale of Cat, how are you doing today?



# Agenda

- Preferences activity
- Why and How of Reinforcement
- How to determine what's reinforcing?
- Q & A
- Resource share

# WOULD YOU RATHER?

Eat White  
Chocolate

Eat Dark  
Chocolate

Get a hug

WOULD  
YOU  
RATHER?

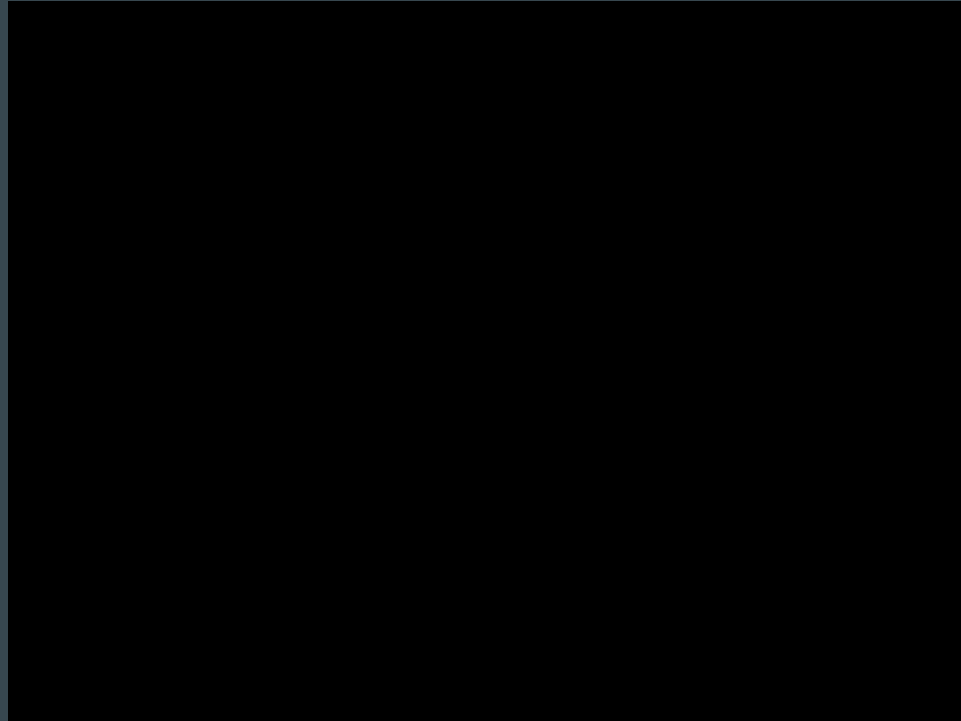
Get a  
compliment

# WOULD YOU RATHER?

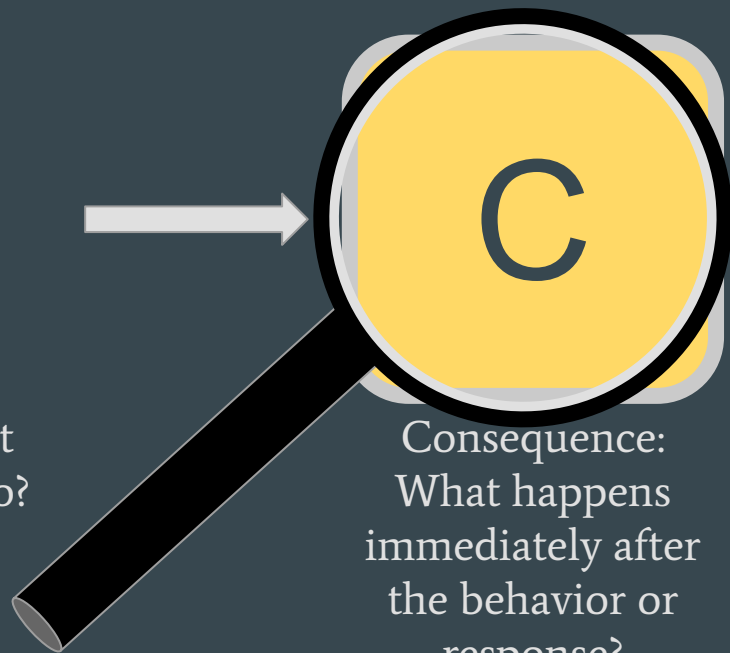
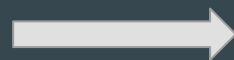
Go for a jog

Go to see a movie

# Reinforcement is Everywhere and for Everyone



# The ABCs of Reinforcement



Antecedent: What is the stimulus that immediately precedes a behavior or response?

Behavior: What does the child do?

Consequence: What happens immediately after the behavior or response?



**Reinforcement is  
a consequence  
that increases  
the likelihood  
that the behavior  
will occur again  
in the future.**

## Is This Reinforcement?

*Dad tells Kahlil, "Put your coat on." Kahlil puts his coat on and his dad takes him for a walk to the park. Kahlil puts his coat on everytime his dad tells him to, from now on. Is this an example of reinforcement for the behavior of Kahlil putting his coat on?*

A

Kahlil is told to put on his coat.

B

Kahlil puts on his coat.

C

Dad takes Kahlil on a walk to the park.



In the future, Kahlil always puts his coat on when his dad tells him to.

## Is This Reinforcement?

*Grandma says “Come here, Hope!” Hope walks over to Grandma. Grandma smiles and tickles Hope. The next 5 times Grandma tells hope to “Come here.” Hope does not walk over to Grandma. Is this an example of reinforcement for the behavior of walking over to Grandma?*

A

Hope is told to “come here”.

B

Hope walks over to Grandma.

C

Grandma smiles and tickles Hope.



In the future, Hope does not walk over to Grandma when told “Come here.”

## Is This Reinforcement?

*Brandy is asked to get in the car to go to the grocery store. Brandy falls to the floor crying and her mom says, “OK I will go by myself and you can stay with Dad.” Brandy always falls to the floor and cries when she is asked to get in the car. Is this reinforcement for behavior of falling to the floor and crying?*

A

Brandy is told to get in the car.

B

Brandy falls to the floor and cries.

C

Mom says she can stay home.



In the future, Brandy always falls to the floor and cries when asked to get in the car.

# Reflect on Reinforcement in Your Week



# Become the Keeper of Good Things



# Become the Keeper of Good Things



Become the Keeper of Good Things



# Reinforcement Must Be Contingent



# When and how of reinforcement

- Immediately after the desired behavior occurs
- Easier to make the association between new behavior and access to reinforcement
- Avoid accidentally or unintentional reinforcement



Toddler crying for mom



# Types of reinforcement



**Bonus Question:** Which of these are types of reinforcement? *Pick all that apply*

- A. EDIBLES/FOOD
- B. ACTIVITY
- C. ITEM
- D. ATTENTION
- E. None of the above



# Types of Reinforcement

-EDIBLE food or drink

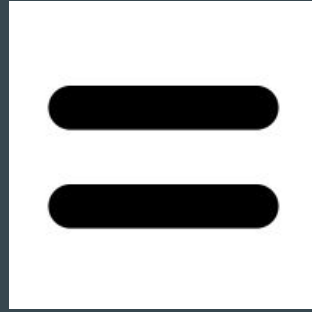
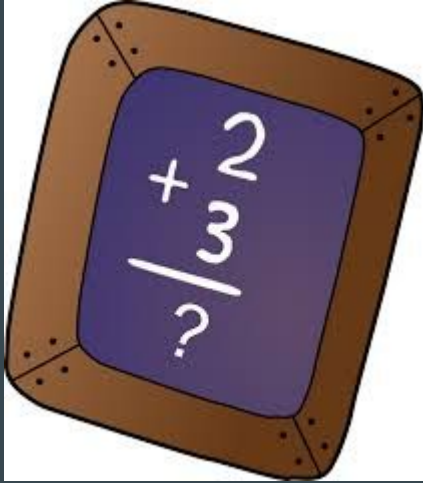
-ACTIVITY games, sports, walking dog..

-ITEM/TANGIBLE new toy, access to toy, pokemon card..

-ATTENTION praise, high five, smile, proximity, spending time with..

*CHECK OUT THE LIST!*











Reinforcement has to match effort



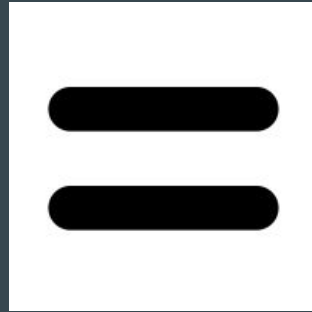
# Reinforcement has to match effort

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Fractions Worksheets**  
Comparing fractions. Which fraction is less/greater  
Mark with X in the box

|   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 | Which fraction is greater?<br><input type="checkbox"/> $\frac{5}{6}$  <input type="checkbox"/> $\frac{1}{3}$  |
| 2 | Which fraction is less?<br><input type="checkbox"/> $\frac{1}{5}$  <input type="checkbox"/> $\frac{4}{8}$     |
| 3 | Which fraction is greater?<br><input type="checkbox"/> $\frac{5}{8}$  <input type="checkbox"/> $\frac{2}{3}$  |
| 4 | Which fraction is less?<br><input type="checkbox"/> $\frac{4}{6}$  <input type="checkbox"/> $\frac{2}{8}$     |
| 5 | Which fraction is less?<br><input type="checkbox"/> $\frac{3}{4}$  <input type="checkbox"/> $\frac{3}{6}$   |

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# How to determine preferences?



# What is a preference assessment?

Variety of procedures used to determine:

- ❑ Preferred toys, food/potential reinforcers
- ❑ Which ones they like best
- ❑ Conditions under which preferences may change

(Cooper, Heron & Heward, 2007)



# Preference Assessment Types

Free Operant



Single Stimulus



# Identify Preferred Items

Create a list of preferred items



Items can be any type

- Edible
- Preferred activities
- Tangible rewards (stickers, pencils)
- Social interactions
- Escape or avoidance of non-preferred tasks

# Make a Plan!

- How will you present the items?
- How long will the child have access?
- What is Plan B if the student doesn't make a choice?
- Other Considerations?
  
- Does the child have problem behavior when items are restricted?



# Free Operant Assessment

- Free Operant (Roane et al., 1998)
  - All items available simultaneously
    - Parent left area vs parent in area
    - 5 minutes in length
    - No removal of items

# Video of Free Operant

[Free Operant Assessment- Vanderbilt University](#)

# Single Stimulus Preference Assessment

- Select an array of items
- Keep items out of reach and out of sight
- Introduce one item at a time to see if child is interested
- If interested, allow access for certain amount of time (30 seconds-1 min, set timer)

# Single Stimulus Preference Assessment

Single Stimulus Preference Assessment

# Questions and Answers

# Resources

[A Family's Guide to Reinforcement](#)

ODU T/TAC

<https://vcuautismcenter.org/te/parents.cfm>

VCU Autism Center for Excellence- section for Parents

[Youtube.com](#) -a great source to see how preference assessments are performed