

WHAT IS REINFORCEMENT AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT ?

Would you go to work if you didn't get a paycheck? Probably not. Then you shouldn't expect your child to work without a paycheck either. The paycheck is reinforcement. Reinforcement is something that happens after a behavior that will increase the behavior in the future. Reinforcement can take many forms: money, praise, laughter, tokens, etc.



For many children things such as praise, parent approval, and task completion are reinforcing. However, for children with autism these things sometimes are not reinforcing. You need to identify what is reinforcing to your child. Observe things they gravitate to on their own. You need to provide reinforcement for behaviors you want to see more of; appropriate communication, social engagement, task completion, compliance, listening, etc.



Food can serve as a reinforcer. Specific treats can be made more reinforcing by limiting them to certain times. Don't be afraid to use food as a reinforcer. You can use small amounts of food such as an m&m or a half of a chip.

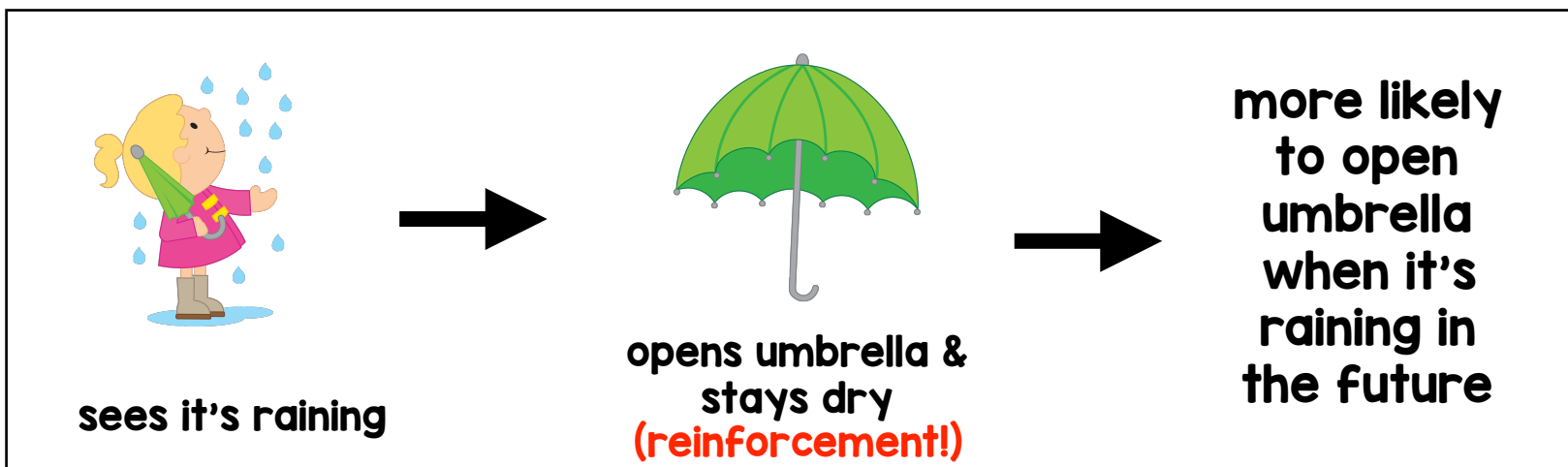
Reinforcement is the key to increasing behaviors. Think about your own behavior. When you tell a funny joke and everyone laughs - you are likely to tell that joke again. When your child asks politely and appropriately for a juice and you give him the juice right away along with praise and a smile - he is more likely to ask politely and appropriately in the future.

Visuals and token boards are great ways to show and clarify to your child that reinforcement is coming. If your child struggles to communicate, providing a visual choice board of options will help them clarify what they want to work for. Token boards can be used to reinforce waiting, being quiet, or completing an activity. You can use stars or tokens after every few minutes of appropriate behavior. Once you give all of the stars or tokens, give your child the item.

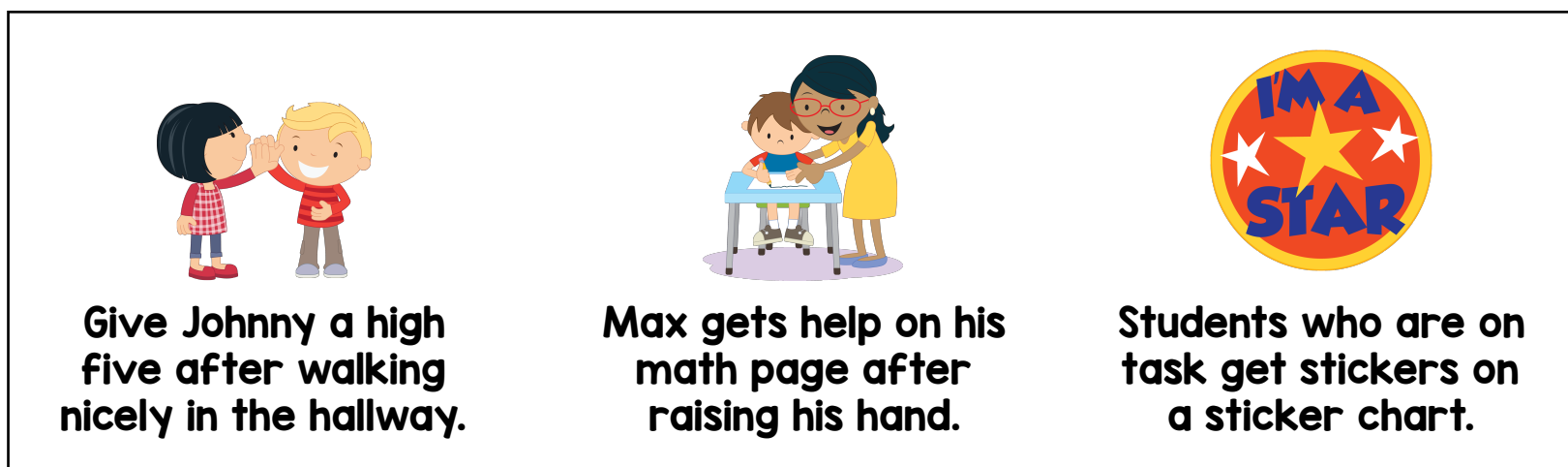


REINFORCEMENT: WHAT IT IS

Reinforcement is something that comes after a behavior that increases the chances the behavior will happen again.



Reinforcement happens all around us all day. It's why we do what we do. Students in your class are already receiving reinforcement in many different ways. We can add reinforcement to a situation to help our students engage in more positive behaviors.



For something to be reinforcement it NEEDS to come AFTER a positive behavior has already happened and it NEEDS to increase that behavior in the future. If you are not seeing positive behaviors increase, you need to look at how you are using reinforcement and see what is going on.

It could be possible that what you are using as a reinforcer (praise, sticker, iPad time) may not be a reinforcer for that student. It may just be something they like, not something they are necessarily willing to work for.

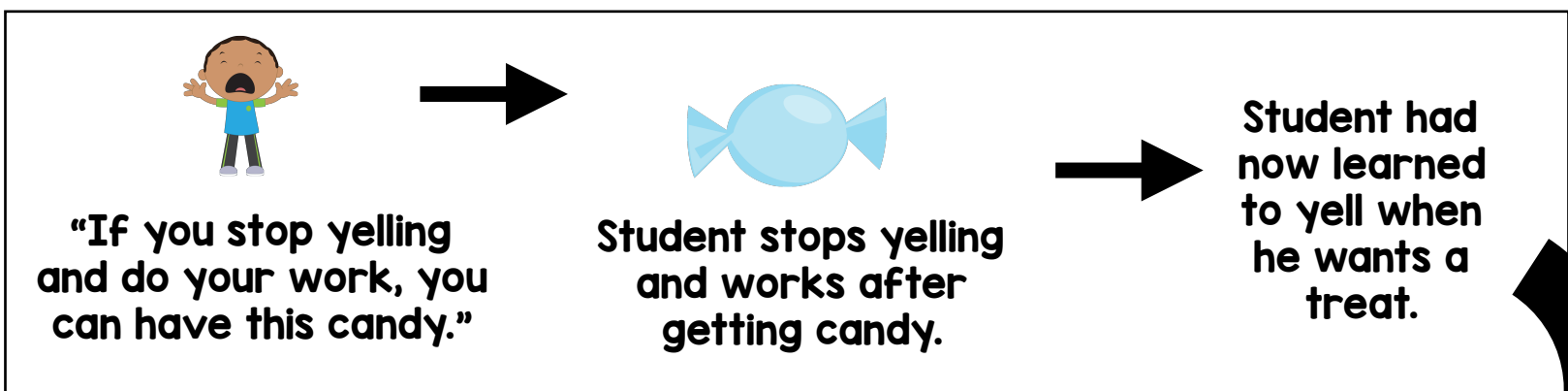
REINFORCEMENT: WHAT IT IS NOT

Reinforcement is not the same for everyone.

What's a reinforcer to you is not a reinforcer to me. Praise, good grades, stickers, peer attention may not be reinforcers for all kids. Just like you can't force yourself to want to be paid in lottery tickets instead of a regular paycheck; our students cannot force something to be reinforcing. It's up to the team to determine what things are reinforcing for each student and provide these reinforcers when you see positive behaviors.

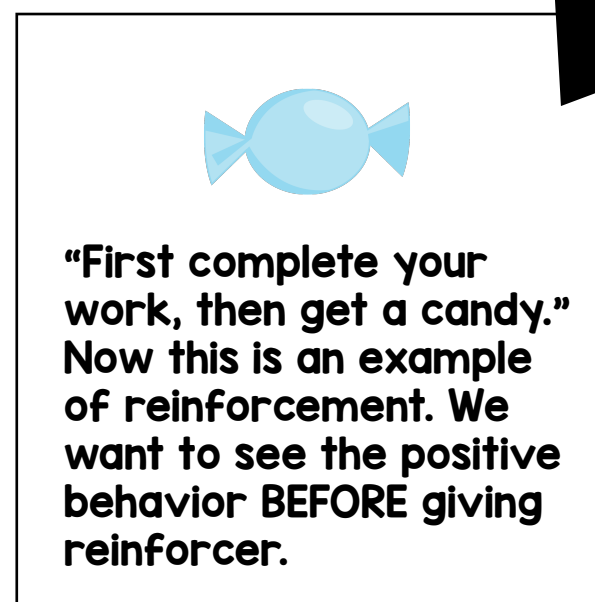
Reinforcement is not bribery.

Bribery and reinforcement often get confused. Bribery is different from reinforcement because it gives a treat BEFORE seeing a positive behavior in hopes that the positive behavior will occur. Bribery is risky because while it may work in the moment it can cause negative behaviors to continue and escalate in the future.



Reinforcement is not spoiling.

Reinforcement is not indulgent or spoiling a child. It's teaching the child the missing skills. When it comes to behavior change, you are more likely to be successful by focusing first on increasing the positive behaviors than by focusing just on decreasing the negative behaviors. Reinforcement is necessary to accomplish this.



REINFORCEMENT MENU

IN PICTURES



Instructions: Cut + paste the child's selected items from the Reinforcement Survey in each section below. When desired behaviors occur, the child may choose from these options as a reward. Switch these out as they become less reinforcing over time.

PLAY

ART/MUSIC

INTERACTIONS

FOOD