

# Enrichment Workshop: Positive Reinforcement

## November 19, 2009



### I. Introductions

- name
- profession
- school where you mentor
- the best compliment you have ever received

### II. Two Mindsets<sup>1</sup>

*"..the view you adopt for yourself profoundly affects the way you lead your life."*

**Think about your student. Which statements would he/she agree with?**

1. Your intelligence is something very basic about you that you can't change very much.
2. You can learn new things, but you can't really change how intelligent you are.
3. No matter how much intelligence you have, you can always change it quite a bit.
4. You can always substantially change how intelligent you are.

**1-2 Fixed Mindset:** *believing your qualities are carved in stone*

- creates an urgency to prove yourself over and over
- only have a certain amount of intelligence, personality and moral character
- every situation is evaluated by a dichotomy: failure vs. success; smart vs. dumb; acceptance vs. rejection; winner vs. loser
- view negative circumstances as a measure of their competence and worth
- Low Effort Syndrome: A defense mechanism students can use to protect themselves from being judged when they feel inadequate.

*Example "I don't think that I will do well on this exam, so I'm not going to try at all."*

**3-4 Growth Mindset:** *believing you can cultivate your basic qualities through effort*

- everyone can change and grow through application and experience
- true potential is unknowable
- creates a passion for learning
- "what could have been" is not a comfort, but a tragedy

**Activity: Divide into 3 groups with each group assigned to a poster.**

- Read your scenario.
- Write down your expected reactions from a student with a fixed mindset and a student with a growth mindset.
- Write down how you would respond to each student.
- Present to the group.

**SCENARIO 1:** Your student has studied consistently for his/her history exam over the last two weeks and receives a C+.

**SCENARIO 2:** Your student's boyfriend/girlfriend breaks up with them because he/she says they do not have anything in common.

**SCENARIO 3:** Your student is grounded because he/she picked a fight with a younger sibling.

### III. Introducing Positive Reinforcement<sup>2</sup>

*Positive reinforcement refers to presenting a positive reaction to increase the probability that the behavior will continue in the future.*

#### **Example:**

Behavior -- Sasha closes the door quietly.

Reinforcement -- "Sasha, thank you for closing the door quietly and not disturbing the class."

#### **Why is reinforcement important?**

- Mentors should be positive role models in their students' lives.
- Students are more likely to increase behaviors when rewarded for them.
- Acting as a disciplinarian and providing negative reinforcement (discouraging behaviors by providing a negative consequence) may create a barrier in the mentoring relationship.

#### **7 Guidelines for Effective Positive Reinforcement**

##### **1. Be Specific**

- Let your student know exactly which behaviors you appreciated.
- This also shows that you are being attentive in your interactions with your student.

##### **2. Be Immediate and Consistent**

- Focus on specific student behaviors.
- Deliver immediately following the occurrence of the social or academic skill so that your student can be sure which behavior you are referring to.

##### **3. Be Appropriate**

- Focus on verbal praise that uses vocabulary on your student's level.
- While it can be used sporadically, refrain from primarily physical reinforcement (hugging).
- Your expectations for your student's behavior should match their developmental abilities.

##### **4. Be Frequent and Intense**

- Be adamant about praising your student when they are learning a new or difficult task.
- Encourage them through each step of the process until they achieve their goal.

##### **5. Be Near**

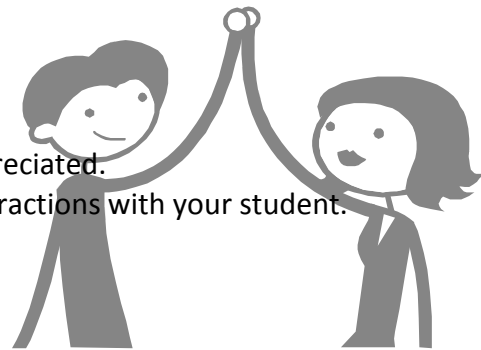
- A direct conversation can be more effective than a general comment.
- Make sure you have your student's attention when you deliver praise.
- If you witness a positive behavior from a distance, go directly to your student before you present a positive reinforcement.

##### **6. Be Diverse and Different**

- Reinforcers can be tangible (physical rewards), social (extra time with mentor) or activity based (something they aren't usually allowed to do).
- Be creative in your reinforcement.
- Make sure it is something your student appreciates and responds well to.

##### **7. Be Firm and Steady**

- Continue to reinforce behaviors until they become habit or natural for your student.



## IV. Implementing Positive Reinforcement<sup>3</sup>

1. **Select a Behavior:** *Use detailed and descriptive words to be clear about measurable behavior.*

I would like my student to:

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This has been achieved when:

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2. **Choose a Reinforcer:** *Make sure it is something that appeals to your student, is age-appropriate and is allowed by your Mentor Contact.*

 **Golden Rule: To keep your sanity and save a dime,**  
**choose inexpensive reinforcers that require little time.** 

Possible Reinforcers:

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**3. Monitor Your Student's Progress:** *Keep a mental or physical log of your student's improvement and congratulate your student upon completion of the task.*

How will you know when your student has developed this skill?

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How long do you expect this process to take?

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How will you celebrate your student's success?

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**4. Re-evaluate as Needed:** *Not all strategies will work on the first attempt, so reconsider the following choices if the desired behavior is not increasing.*

- Was the reinforcer appealing to your student?
- Is there another behavior/situation that is blocking your student's progression?
- Was the behavior a realistic expectation for your student's age and developmental level?

**Adapted From:**

<sup>1</sup> "Mindsets, A New Psychology of Success" by Carol S. Dweck, Ph.D.

<sup>2</sup> Kameenui, E. & Darch, C. (1995). Instructional classroom management: A proactive approach to Behavior management. Longman, NY

<sup>2</sup> Martin, G. & Pear, J. (1996). Behavior modification: What it is and how to do it. Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River, New Jersey.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.usu.edu/teachall/text/behavior/LRBlpdfs/Positive.pdf>