THE "YIN AND YANG" OF BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT (a.k.a. "child rearing")

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The following outline offers an overview of an approach for the education and behavior management of hard to handle students. However, the strategies described below should not be perceived as an assembly of "behavior modification" techniques from which one or two favored "interventions" will be selected for daily use. Rather, these techniques are presented as a unified system in which the "sum is greater than its parts". That is, when these strategies are coordinated into a total package, a style of interaction emerges that has great utility and efficiency in promoting a child's development. Though these techniques are aimed at altering behavior, the over-riding theoretical framework has been distilled from research on children's social and moral development, not behavior modification theories, per se.

The theme that pervades throughout this outline is that children learn from the ***consequences*** of their actions. The fact is that there are always consequences of actions by virtue of the fact that the child's behavior happens in a context in which some form of a reaction is going to occur. So, whether we acknowledge it or not, consequences are happening and children are learning something from them. The question is what are they learning? The emphasis of the following outline is on developing a style and system of interacting with children that conveys some important messages: (i) they are good and capable kids; (ii) they are responsible members of the group; (iii) they are responsible for their own actions; and (iv) you can think for yourself and be *creative*. It is important to understand that children gain progressively greater levels of *self* -- self esteem, self control, self awareness, self reliance, and self organization -- by learning in an environment that is rational, credible, predictable, and holds them accountable for their actions. Ultimately, it is the development of these "self" themes that results in a contented and creative child.

Rationale for using planned consequences (a.k.a. rewards and punishment)

(i) *Sensory organization*. Small carefully timed consequences offer the child meaningful feedback of when they are attending to appropriate details of a task. This form of feedback serves to magnify the sensory input

that organizes and directs the child's behavior.

(ii) *Organization and understanding of real time*. The use of planned consequences offer the child meaningful structure with which they can better understand and control time (i.e., "do this activity *now*, and you will get the reward *later*"). As a result, the child has a better grasp of how to organize and control their behavior in a sustained manner.

(iii) *Motivation*. The use of planned consequences can greatly influence the child's motivation to labor through a difficult task or situation. Similarly, children that have particular difficulties attending to tasks (i.e., children diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD)), will utilize the best attention that they are capable of *when motivated*.

(iv) *Having fun!* Clearly, we aim to develop curricula that are inherently interesting and enjoyable for the child. This is particularly evident in the popularity of "developmentally based" curricula programs. However, children that are "developmentally delayed" will often have to confront challenges that are difficult or unpleasant (i.e., a difficult therapy session) despite our best efforts. By definition, we are trying to challenge the children to overcome their disabilities. The inclusion of some special rewards can make these otherwise difficult activities fun.

(v) *Feeling good about yourself*. The inclusion of rewards can offer a tangible and steady flow of positive feedback to the child that systematically emphasizes their success. The inclusion of appropriate negative consequences develops the child's ability to learn how to avoid inappropriate behavior and all of the negative feelings that they experience from these behaviors. The net effect is that the child's sense of self -- self esteem, self control, self awareness, self reliance, and self organization -- are all elevated.

(vi) *Parents and teachers being better organized*. The use of a systematic system consequences can greatly assist the adult working with a child in organizing his or her feedback. You are better organized, and as a result they are better organized (and everyone feels far less stressed!).

Use of positive consequences for appropriate behavior

Attention & Praise as immediate rewards

(i) Obviously, adult attention and praise are the bedrocks of positive reinforcement. Also obvious, is that the great majority of individuals teaching "challenging" children go to great lengths to create a supportive classroom environment that is sensitive to the childrens' needs for positive verbal feedback. Nonetheless, it is useful to discuss and refine subtle forms of attention that may influence a child's behavior. The first order of business is to define what is meant by "attention and praise". *Praise* is obvious to all; any positive statement. However, *attention* can be surprisingly less obvious and harder to define. *Attention*, includes all verbal interactions, eye contact, body posture, and physical proximity. It is useful to define and discriminate the different types of _Verbal interactions_: including positive (i.e., praise or encouragement), negative (i.e., reprimands or preventative words such as "no", "stop", "don't", etc.), informational (i.e., giving directions or instruction), and conversational (i.e., "chatting" about the days events) statements. _Eye contact_: includes eye to eye gaze, looking at the child or in their direction, or looking at any objects that they may be acting on. _Body posture_: refers to how physically tense or relaxed your posture appears, the direction that your body is facing, and the speed of your movement (ranging from fast to slow). _Physical proximity_: includes how close you are to the child, and whether you are moving toward or away from them.

(ii) With the above definitions in mind, *monitor yourself* for when you are using praise or the different forms of attention. With greater aware of these subtle forms of attention, it become easier to modulate subtle forms of feedback that will influence the child's behavior.

(iii) Use the child's behavior as the trigger for modulating your attention to them. When (s)he is acting appropriately draw from the set of positive attentional consequences such as praise, or "chatting", make eye to eye contact or look at the child or their work, have a relaxed posture facing toward the child, move in a slower manner, and/or walk toward the child and stand or sit near them (unless the child is in the mood for private time -- then stand away). The reverse of this, when the child is acting inappropriately, will be discussed further below.

(iv) It is easier to offer praise spontaneously for a tangible job well done. However, an important and effective use of praise and the other forms of attention is to offer it when the child is sitting quietly or occupying his or herself in an appropriate manner. It is often easy to ignore a child when they are quiet, or many adults will intentionally not pay attention to a child if they are being good because they don't want to disturb their good behavior. However, the best way to encourage continually better behavior is to pay attention to the child when (s)he is being particularly quiet and attending to activities appropriately. Again, monitor how often you attend to the child when (s)he is sitting quietly or not engaging in inappropriate behavior.

Use of "touch" as an immediate reward

(i) Pleasant physical contact between student and teacher is a great reward. Unfortunately, school personnel are often given the clear message that it is inappropriate to have *any* physical contact with a child. Obviously, there needs to be sharp boundaries drawn around what constitutes appropriate physical contact. However, to say that *no* physical contact should be condoned results in the lose of a very effective form of positive feedback (as well as a lose of humanity).

(ii) Three types of physical rewards would be useful; a firm and short "hug" with one arm around the shoulders, a short rub or pat on the back, or a firm "squeeze" of your hand on the child's forearm.

(iii) Although I am exclaiming that hugs are good and should be used, be discriminating in the use of physical rewards. They should be used to punctuate your excitement with a job particularly well done.

Use of edible rewards: small and immediate rewards

(i) Having some very special treats that the child can earn may be quite helpful. Pick a small number of very favorite foods to use as rewards and **only** use them as rewards, keeping them out of the child's reach except when they have earned them. If it is difficult to eliminate the availability of certain treats throughout the day, those treats should not be used as rewards.

(ii) Each reward should be very small -- the size of *one* coco puff, for example. Also, the reward should be a type of food that is swallowed quickly so that the child doesn't get distracted by chewing the food. Crunchy foods are desirable, chewy ones are not.

(iii) Typically small treats should be used in limited settings for moment-by-moment successes in maintaining appropriate compliance to *particularly difficult tasks*. If the child can engage in an activity appropriately without the use of rewards, then don't use them. Conversely, the use of edible rewards is appropriate if the child is particularly challenged by a task or activity (i.e., a difficult language session, sitting independently for prolonged periods of time).

(iv) These small treats should only be used for brief periods, up to 15 or 20-minutes per session, maybe two or three times each day. The pace at which you give a reward will depend on the child's current level of performance in the task (see "*Timing (schedules) of positive consequences*" below).

(v) The use of edible rewards should not turn into a debate over good nutrition. If people are uncomfortable with "junk foods" as a reward, don't use them. There are multitudes of nutritionally sound foods that can be used. Also, don't get hung-up over calories. If used properly, the child should only be receiving a very small amount of edible rewards (remember, they are given one coco puff at a time). As implied above, there are many no/low fat treats that could be used.

Use of edible rewards: larger and deferred snack rewards for sustained effort

(i) Use larger snacks -- the size of a dessert -- offered after particularly "high risk" activities or periods.

(ii) As with the smaller edible rewards, make the snacks available *only* if Joey has earned them. For some children, this may involve eliminating their usual snacks as "unconditional", although the child would have numerous opportunities to earn them. The key is to make them contingent upon good behavior.

Naturally occurring rewards for sustained effort

(i) "Naturally" occurring rewards are those activities that are part of the daily or weekly schedule. These activities could be part of a planned schedule organized by teachers or parents, or they could be under the control of outside agents (i.e., network TV schedules). Many naturally occurring rewards exist through the course of the day. The strategy is to make these rewarding activities available to the child as a consequence of their appropriate completion of responsibilities, compliance to appropriate demands, and avoidance of inappropriate behavior during the time immediately preceding each activity/reward. By making these activities available only after work is done, will clearly convey the message that the child is responsible for their own actions - no work, no play.

(ii) What a particular child will view as rewarding will vary widely across development and children, and must be identified and tailored for each specific situation. However, activities such as free play opportunities, favorite activities that are scheduled through the day (i.e., arts and crafts activities), recess, time spent 1-to-1 with a favorite adult, access to favorite TV/videos, serve as examples.

(iii) Example: A child has been playing with a large set of Leggos and has managed to get 30 pieces scattered around the floor. The classroom teacher announces to the class that it is nearing time to go outside for recess and everyone should start cleaning up. The "naturally occurring reward" is going out for recess, while the "work" that must be done is picking up all of the Leggos independently and quickly. The child doesn't go outside until the Leggos are cleaned up and put away.

(iv) Example: You have a student enrolled in your class that is typically quite active and aggressive. Your morning schedule includes a period of "academic readiness", followed by a second period during which children have the opportunity to paint (a favorite activity for the active/aggressive child). The child finds the academic activities hard to do, and (s)he often exhibits inappropriate behaviors during this time. The "naturally occurring reward" is painting, while the "work" is sitting appropriately during the academic period and showing no aggression.

Artificially occurring rewards for sustained effort

(i) "Artificially" occurring rewards are activities that the child enjoys engaging in, but only occur if set up and organized by an adult -- they are not readily available on a routine basis. As with the naturally occurring rewards, these activities are made available to the child as a consequence of their appropriate completion of responsibilities, compliance to appropriate demands, and avoidance of inappropriate behavior during the preceding periods of time. These activities often involve more effort to set up and are more "special" in nature, hence they would be made available less often than naturally occurring reward. Again, this conveys to the child that they are accountable for their own actions.

(ii) These activities also must be defined and tailored as a function of the individual child. Common examples include special projects such as arts and crafts or woodwork activities (i.e., filing and hammering), an unplanned walk around the school or visit to another classroom, additional outdoor play, computer time and games, running-jumping-throwing activities in the gym, access to a favorite videotape, a trip to the library or video store to check out/rent a special videotape, special trips including a car ride around the

block, and/or going to favorite restaurants or stores (i.e., the local pet store). Many of these activities would require added man-power, as well as administrative support (i.e., getting access to a video player and TV). However, coordinating access to these types of activities will greatly motivate children to behave more appropriately.

(iii) It is quite useful to present the child with some type of a list or "choice board" of the available rewards/activities for them to choose from. This will increase the likelihood that the activity is indeed rewarding, as well as giving the child an added "boost" of having autonomy over what they choose to do.

Use of earned token systems: deferred and abstract reward

(i) As a child becomes more stable and sustained in their appropriate behavior, or when starting to work with an older or more sophisticated child, we want to emphasize progressively more deferred and abstract forms of feedback. A "token system", like a monetary system, involves giving a child some type of token or voucher, that can be redeemed at some later time for tangible rewards. By receiving the tokens, the child continues to get regular and timely feedback for their appropriate behavior. However, they are also developing their tolerance to work toward some later consequence. As a result, the child has a tangible way of understanding and internalizing abstract concepts of *time, patience, anticipation, worth, budgeting,* and *planning*.

(ii) "Tokens" (stickers, happy faces, stars, check marks, pennies, etc.) can be given at the end of each activity for good behavior and effort. These tokens can then be exchanged later in the day for small rewards or access to fun activities similar to those discussed above (see *"artificially occurring rewards"*).

(iii) It is necessary to establish a "gold standard" so that the children (and adults) know what the token is worth, both in terms of the type of behavior that is needed to earn a token and what the token can be redeemed for. Start by establishing that each classroom activity is worth 1 "star". Four factors must then be established to determine the relative worth of a star: (a) What is the total number of stars that could be earned in a day (i.e., 8 activities occur through the day, so 8 stars could potentially be earned)? (b) What is the maximum amount of rewards that you feel is appropriate for the child to have access to (i.e., they may have rewards two times each day)? (c) Estimate how often you think the child initially may be able to earn a star (i.e., I predict that Billy will be able to earn 4 out of 8 stars given his current behavior). (d) Determine the *relative* desirability of the available rewards (i.e., access to videos is worth more than extra recess time, but recess is worth more than an extra dessert). With these factors defined, you can determine how many star each reward is worth.

(iv) Examples of rewards (and their cost):

TV/Video -- 30-min (5 stars)

Computer time -- 30-min (5 stars)

Significant games (i.e., Game Boy) (4 stars)

Recess time (4 stars)

Music with headphones -- 30-min (3 stars)

Ice cream or potato chips with lunch (3 stars)

(v) Establish the types of appropriate behavior that are expected to earn stars:

walking quietly

staying in seat

complete work well and on time

work & play well with others

talk nicely and be polite - show respect to one another

raise hand

no whining

no throwing papers, books or other objects

(vi) Each child participating in the token system should have a weekly chart on the wall or in some other conspicuous location documenting their earnings. Or, you could give the child a "bank book" in which stars are entered. Yet another method is to use pennies or poker chips, rather than stars or stickers. Then have the child keep their earned pennies in a small bank.

(vii) Awarding stars for each activity should be done at the end of each activity before you move on to the next.

(viii) *Cash-in of tokens for rewards:* The number and duration of appropriate cash-in periods varies from situation to situation. Cash-in opportunities can vary in frequency from several time each day, to once per week. Determine the number cash-in periods by estimating how often you think the children need to receive the tangible rewards (i.e., how patient can the child be?).

(ix) *Acknowledging "special" individuals:* If the entire class is participating in the token system, you could offer special acknowledgement (and bonus rewards) to the "student of the week" (i.e., the child who gained the most stars during the week). Similarly, you could offer special commendations to the "most improved student" (i.e., the child who had the greatest increase in earned stars from the preceding week). These commendations and bonus' could be given out in a brief, but meaningful, ceremony at the end of each week.

Secondary token systems: rewarding the whole class

(i) A separate token system could be implemented that encourages the class to "pull together" as a group. Identify periods of the day that are "at-risk" for the class as a whole to have problems. For example, group behavior on the playground, lining up properly to leave the room, transitioning from one location to another appropriately (i.e., staying in line, walking nicely, keeping hands where they belong, etc.), behavior in different locations in the school (i.e., cafeteria, specialists rooms, library, etc.).

(ii) For each instance that the *entire group* behaviors appropriately during the "at-risk" activities, reward them with a star on the "classroom chart". However, the entire class is penalized by not receiving the star, even if only one child acts inappropriately. It is truly "all for one and one for all". This type of system fosters each individual's care for the success of the group and motivates meaningful group cooperation. Moreover, this system challenges the children to learn how to give appropriate feedback among their peers to maintain group success, and creates opportunities to develop tolerance for one another's shortcomings.

(iii) Offer the class a substantial reward (i.e., a feature length video) that they may earn with a very large number of whole-class tokens (i.e., 50 stars). The "cost" of this reward should be estimated so that the class is likely to "cash in" approximately once per month. This whole-class token system should operate independently from the childrens' individual star charts.

Timing (schedules) of positive consequences

Only ask the child to give you a behavior that is in their repertoire

(i) If a child can only sit still for 2-minutes before becoming fidgety or hard to manage, then they need to be rewarded for good sitting before 1-minute and 59-seconds elapse. That is, you must reward the child within the time frame of what (s)he is capable of. In practice, this means err in the direction of giving too much positive reinforcement, rather than too infrequent.

(ii) Gradually, as the child gets a lot of reward for appropriate behavior, you can stretch the length of time between rewards. The child will not always require the artificial use of rewards to control behavior or promote their education. For example, to facilitate a reduced emphasis on rewards, systematically require that (s)he produce a greater number of responses, or conduct his or herself appropriately for longer periods of time, to receive a reward. The net result is that you systematically eliminate the use of rewards for tasks/activities that he gradually masters, while you begin the use of rewards for newer and more sophisticated tasks. Over time use of a specific reward system will be modified to being a real world form of positive feedback that you would use with anyone (i.e., pride in one's work, high regard from those around, grades, a pay check at the end of the week, etc.).

Frequency and predictability in giving rewards

(i) When starting to focus on a new, more difficult behavior, be frequent and predictable in giving the rewards.

(ii) As the child begins to show the desired behavior more regularly, decrease the frequency and become more unpredictable about when a reward is coming. The best way to make a good behavior last is to be varied in how and when you make it available. One effective way to do this is to give the child several unannounced "bonus" rewards (i.e., extra free time) for their good work.

Defining "inappropriate" behavior

(i) When most people are asked to list what a child's "inappropriate" behaviors are, they readily identify the obviously disruptive behavior such as aggressiveness, yelling, dangerous behaviors, and the like. Conversely, it is far less common for people to think of delayed or immature behaviors -- inattention to task, immature play or social skills, poor speech and language, delays in dressing skills or toileting behavior, for example -- as "inappropriate" behaviors requiring the use of behavior modification. Rather, those types of developmental limitations are attributed to the child's disability. Indeed, most people perceive the need for "behavior modification" as a last resort for handling "bad" behavior. It is, of course, true to say that developmentally immature behaviors are not bad behaviors, if *bad* means disobedient, naughty, evil, immoral, or wicked behavior. However, it is of great importance to clarify what is meant by "inappropriate" behavior as it relates to utilizing behavior management strategies. By "inappropriate", we mean *any-and-all behaviors that impede developmentally appropriate growth*. By this definition, behavior management strategies (i.e., the use of positive and negative consequences) may be just as relevant to behaviors such as being able to dress one's self, as they are to aggressiveness. The point is, don't limit your thinking about defining or listing inappropriate behaviors to "bad" behavior. Rather, maintain a very broad definition of "inappropriate behavior" when evaluating a child's behavioral profile. Descriptions of difficult behaviors should include subtle attentional difficulties, learning style concerns, cognitive difficulties, immaturity of daily living skills, limitations in play and social behavior, in addition to the more conventionally acknowledged difficulties such as aggression or non-compliance.

(ii) Though we encourage extremely broad definitions in listing the range of all inappropriate behavior, it is also extremely important to be quite *narrow* and precise in describing each behavior individually. Each behavior should be defined in terms such as settings in which they occur, frequency, intensity, social context, and/or any other specific attributes that would aid in our ability to characterize the behavior. Where there are often several different adults involved with developmentally compromised children, we all must share a precise understanding of what the specific behaviors are that we are focusing on.

Prioritizing inappropriate behavior

(i) As you define the inappropriate behaviors that a child may show, prioritize which of these behaviors are

most disruptive or hard to manage. It will likely be impossible to eliminate all inappropriate behavior at once, so go after the most troubling first. As the incidence of higher priority behaviors diminish, add new behaviors to the list of those being targeted.

(ii) Behaviors that should customarily be given highest priority for elimination first are: *aggression, active resistance and non-compliance to demands, and/or excessive noise/activity*. As the child gains progressively greater levels of self-control over these three classes of behaviors, they will become more self-reliant in controlling more subtle forms of inappropriate behavior. This is particularly true of non-compliance; if a child is willing to attempt most demands/requests made of them, they are far better equipped to take on the challenges inherent in their disabilities.

(iii) As the more overtly difficult behaviors begin to diminish, actively look for two other specific types of inappropriate "behaviors": *passive non-compliance* (i.e., the child quietly and passively ignores what is said to him), and *inattention* to task. These much more subtle forms of behavior are often easily overlooked, or not viewed as "inappropriate", per se. When these behaviors *are* noticed, unwitting assumptions are often implied in uncertain questions about the child. It is common for personnel working with a child to say, "I don't know if he understands what I said", following an episode of passive non-compliance. Similarly, many are quick to state that a child has an "attention deficit disorder" if the child does not pay attention in the same manner as most other children or is routinely off-task. The unwitting assumptions that pervade through these types of statements are: (a) that the child is *not competent*, or (b) the child is *not capable* of exercising control over these behaviors -- "they can't help it", is the unspoken credo. Assumptions of incompetence/incapacity have subtle, but damaging influences on teaching and therapeutic personnel. One such damaging by-product is that those working with the child will greatly hesitate from using behavior management strategies -- particularly forms of negative consequences -- believing that it is "unfair" to "punish" a child for something that "they can't help". However, these two classes of behaviors can be greatly improved upon with the types of strategies described in this outline, and should be given prominent and aggressive attention. This is easy to do if you view these classes of behaviors as: (a) *sensory problems* that require different forms of feedback compared to other children; and (b) you assume the child is *competent* -- meaning that they are capable of learning from the consequences of their actions.

(iv) As progress is made in eliminating overtly disruptive behavior, increasing compliance to directions, and attaining more prolonged attention to task, continue to refine the list of targeted inappropriate behaviors to include those that are developmentally delayed relative to same-age peers. Higher priorities should be given to behaviors that impede independence, such as toileting or dressing skills, competence in following multi-step directions, and/or behaviors associated with socializing with others. Again, behavior management strategies have as much utility with these types of behaviors as they do with the more overtly difficult behaviors.

Use of negative consequences for inappropriate behavior

Ignoring minor inappropriate behavior (the opposite of "attention and praise")

(i) If the child is showing a difficult behavior that seems to be simply trying to get attention, DO NOT give it to him. Often being scolded or engaging in a lengthy discussion about the merits of the behavior is worth the cost because the child is getting your attention. Usually, these interactions do little to prevent inappropriate behavior, in fact, silence is usually more effective. So, don't get caught in the trap of talking negatively or relying on lengthy discussions as a method of negative feedback.

(ii) Great care must be taken in defining those behaviors that are to be ignored. It is essential that the behavior be "ignore-able". For example, it is not possible to ignore loud vocalizations or aggressive behavior. Hence, those types of behaviors must be followed by more direct strategies as described below. Conversely, behaviors that are lower on the priority list (or are not on the list) -- quieter inappropriate vocalization, undesirable, but tolerable levels of activity, fidgetiness, or silliness -- should be ignored. Still other behaviors may or may not be ignored as a function of how often they occur. For example, if a child bangs his fist against the wall only once, ignore it. Conversely, if he bangs repeatedly, use one of the strategies described below. The *frequency* of many behaviors will determine if it can be successfully ignored.

(iii) By "ignoring", I mean act as though the child isn't in the room. This includes no verbal interaction, no eye contact or looking in the child's direction, suddenly turning your body and/or walking away.

(iv) If some interaction is necessary to continue an activity, use only short/curt informational phrases, while maintaining an aloof and detached posture (i.e., slightly turned away), and a minimum amount of eye contact.

(v) Take care to notice when the "ignored" behavior ends, and quickly modulate your attention back to the child in a positive manner to reward him for getting back on task. As stated above, use the child's behavior as a trigger to determine the availability and type of attention that you offer.

Removal of rewards for inappropriate behavior

(i) Losing access to rewards (i.e., naturally or artificially occurring rewards, and/or tokens) would commonly be appropriate for behaviors such as excessive activity levels, loud or aggressive behavior, socially inappropriate behavior, and/or non-compliance to demands. Remember, no work (i.e., no compliance to demands) means no fun (i.e., no outside play, no snacks, no arts and crafts, no videos, etc.).

Assertive/physical "cuing" of the chin

(i) The first, and clearest indication that a child is not appropriately attending to a task, is when they turn their head away from where they are supposed to be looking. If a child is allowed to visually "roam" away from an important activity, there is little hope that they will appropriately process the information. Hence, if the task is such that the child must be looking at what they are doing, or when they should be making eye contact with you, their head orientation must assertively/physically be "cued" back in the appropriate direction.

(ii) To cue the child to move their head back to the appropriate orientation, place one hand firmly *under their chin* and firmly, ***but slowly*** move their chin ***no more than 1-inch*** back in the direction that they are supposed to be looking. Do not attempt to move the child's head fully back into position. Rather, you are giving them a firm signal or cue of where they are supposed to be looking. As you initiate the physical cue, curtly state to the child "where are you supposed to by looking", then remove your hand from their chin.

(iii) The physical contact should be quite brief, only a few seconds. If the child continues to look away, re-initiate the assertive/physical cue following the same routine, and releasing quickly, then repeat if necessary. This type of a cue should be perceived by the child as a firm/assertive annoyance -- *not* a physical repositioning of the head.

(iv) ***WARNING!!!*** Do not try to move the child's head any further than about *1-inch*, and do not maintain physical contact for more than *2 to 3-seconds*, or you run the risk of injury. When done correctly, this can be a very effective strategy for discouraging the child from getting visually off-task.

Assertive/physical "hands down!"

(i) When a child is using their hands inappropriately -- excessively mouthing their hands or objects, touching objects, themselves, or other people inappropriately, raising a hand to strike someone or something, -- assertively grasp the child by the forearm and forcefully put their arm down by their side. As you assertively place the arm down, in a low, but sharp tone exclaim "hands down!".

(ii) This strategy is particularly useful if you can grasp their arm just as the child begins the behavior. This is easier than it sounds, if you are dealing with a child who is chronically using their hands inappropriately. For example, if the child repeatedly grabs at others, start to subtly watch for it. As you see their hand move toward another person (or toward you), grab their forearm and curtly state, "hands down!".

(iii) Two important points need to be understood regarding the use of this technique (as well as all of the physical interventions described below): (a) its intended to be firm, sudden, and startling; and (b) the duration of this handling should be extremely brief (only moments in duration).

Assertive/physical "re-posturing"

(i) An annoying and potentially very disruptive type of behavior shown by a number of children involves "slumping" in a variety of ways. For example, children will slump out or under their chair or on top of a table, lay on the ground, or on to other people sitting next to them. Aside from being an annoyance, this type of behavior is at best socially unacceptable and completely removing the child from the task at hand. At worst, this can be extremely dangerous (i.e., when the child decides to drop to the ground as you are trying to cross a street).

(ii) If a child begins to demonstrate some form of slumping, abruptly an assertively grasp them by the shoulders and reposition them to an appropriate posture.

(iii) While executing the re-posturing make no eye contact and say nothing. The strength and abruptness of your grasp should not only be sufficient enough to move the child's body, but it should also convey a controlling and assertive message of disapproval. The moment after the child has been re-positioned, curtly state "you have to sit (stand) up".

(iv) If in the next moments you perceive they are starting to slump again, immediately re-posture them again, repeating the demand for them to sit up.

(v) Conversely, if in the next moments you perceive that they are regaining an appropriate posture, offer a quick hug or pat on the back along with verbal praise and encouragement (i.e., "good job, you can do it!"). This type of immediate positive feedback will help the child return to the task and signal to them that a potential confrontation is over.

(vi) As with the "hands down!" strategy, this technique should be: (a) firm, sudden, and startling; and (b) as brief as possible (i.e., release them immediately after you have told the child to sit up -- only moments in duration).

Very brief (3-second) physical redirection, escort, and/or containment

(i) *Physical redirection:* When a child inappropriately gets out of their seat , (s)he should be physically "redirected" back in the chair. This should be done by placing each of your hands on the child's shoulders and assertively/abruptly place them back in the chair.

(ii) *Physical escort:* If the child inappropriately wanders away from the task at hand, or does not comply with a demand to walk to a specific location, "escorted" them back to where they are supposed to be. This is done by standing just behind the child, grasping them immediately above the elbow with one hand and placing your other hand between their shoulder blades, then "escort" the child in an assertive and brisk manner to where they are supposed to be.

(iii) *Physical containment:* Many children regularly will run away from adult supervision. This may include running around the classroom, darting out of the room or building, or running off in public, for example. The dangers associated with this type of behavior is self-evident. Although some children may run off in a very unpredictable fashion, many children will do so under more predictable circumstances. When in a situation that the child is at-risk for darting, anticipate that it will occur. Define the distance that the child may move away from the supervising adult as "one arm's length". If the child moves away any further distance, grasp the child's arm just below the arm-pit and firmly pull them immediately to your side. Firmly "contain" the child at your side for approximately 3-seconds. During this containment, make no eye contact and say nothing. Then after 3-seconds rhetorically ask, "why am I holding your arm...I'm holding your arm because you can't run here". Then release the child, but prepare to grab them again.

(iv) Again, these techniques should be: (a) firm, sudden, and startling; and (b) extremely brief (only moments in duration).

"Over-correction" procedure (also known as "Total Physical Assistance").

(i) When a child either refuses to do something asked of them, or is taking an excessively long time to comply with a demand (i.e., malingering), "walk" them through the activity with very firm/brisk hand-over-hand "help". Then, *repeating the entire action 3 or 4 times.* For example, if a child refuses to put their coat on and prepare to leave, place the coat on the child, putting their arms through the sleeves in an assertive and gruff manner. Once on, quickly remove the coat and repeat the process 3 or 4 times. After the last repetition, remove the coat and give it to the child, stating "please put your coat on by yourself now, or I will help you again. The message conveyed to the child is that either you must do what you ask, or you will be given unpleasant assistance.

"Restrictive" time-out

(i) "Time-out" is probably one of the most commonly used, and misunderstood, forms of negative consequences employed with inappropriate behavior. Indeed, most people are unaware of its full name -- "time out from the opportunity for reward". As implied in its full name, time-out is supposed to be a period of time in which the child is unable to access any form of rewarding consequences. However, the common uses of time-out -- sitting on a chair away from the group -- invariably fail in that they don't eliminate "the opportunity for reward". The following example illustrates this point.

A child is unwilling to participate in an activity and is exhibiting disruptive behavior. As a result, the teacher has the child sit in "time-out" -- a chair in the corner of the room. However, as the teacher walks away from the time-out chair, the child stands up and walks away. The teacher calls out to the child to return to the chair, but the child refuses and runs to the play area. The teacher walks to the child and escorts him back to time-out. Once back in the chair, the child waits until the teacher is far enough away for him to make a "clean get away" back to the toys, and the cycle continues.

Implicit in this scenario is that the child -- who we are trying to punish -- is receiving at least four different rewards as a consequence of his disruptive behavior (a) removal from an activity that he didn't want to participate in, (b) attention from the teacher (remember, negative attention is usually better than none at all), (c) access to the play area, and (d) *control* over the teacher and situation. The net effect is that the child's inappropriate behavior is being highly rewarded.

(ii) There *are* children who will both comply with the demand to sit in the time-out chair, and will consequently reduce inappropriate behavior. However, these are *not* the children that we are experiencing significant problems from. By definition, a child who is willing to voluntarily sit still on a chair as a punishment, is a pretty cooperative child. For those children, this type of time-out is effective and should be used. But, what about the child who won't comply and sit still?

(iii) Generally, it is recommended to use a combination of the strategies described above in lieu of time-out. However, *restrictive* time-out is recommended if the other strategies have not been effective in reducing the targeted behaviors. By "restrictive", we mean that the child is physically restrained in the chair so that they cannot get out; typically employing a Rifton Chair or an infant high chair (for older children it is necessary to use a restrictive room, rather than a chair). The rationale (and requirement) for using a restrictive chair is that the child now has absolutely "no opportunity for reward". Rather, (s)he can truly be ignored, has only minimum ability to move about in the chair (this is quite negative for an active child), has no autonomy, nor influence over the situation.

(iv) When the child shows continued difficult behaviors, place them in restrictive chair for a very brief period, typically ranging from 15-seconds to 1-minute (see "*the importance of brevity, frequency, and certainty of negative consequences*" below to emphasize the need for a very brief time-out period). At the end of this brief period and while the child is still secured in the chair, rhetorically ask them, "why are you in time out?", then repeat your request of what you would like them to do.

Restitution (a.k.a. "righting the wrong")

(i) There are a variety of situations in which a child can make a mess or "trash" the surroundings -- knocking things over, throwing objects around the room, clearing off desk tops, shelves, and other inappropriate disruptions to the environment. In short, they must clean it up.

(ii) These types of disruptive behaviors often occur as a result of being confronted by an adult (i.e., non-compliance to demands) or after a punishment has already been rendered (i.e., "trashing" his or her bedroom while in time-out). It is important that the child discover that these behaviors will result in more prolonged aggravation *for them*, including the requirement of cleaning up what they have disturbed before they may move on to more desired alternative activities.

(iii) Given that the child who is engaging in these disruptive behaviors is already hard to handle, they are quite unlikely to clean up just because you told them to. Hence, you need to use other strategies as described above to "encourage" the child to clean up (i.e., assertive/physical redirection/escort, temporary loss of naturally occurring rewards, over-corrections, etc.). In other words, *make them* clean up.

More prolonged (30-seconds to 5-minutes) physical restraint

(i) Some children may become so upset and/or aggressive that they may pose a danger to themselves or others around them. In these potentially dangerous situations, it is necessary (and legally required) to physically restrain the child long enough for them to begin calming. As with the other forms of negative consequences, physical restraint should be as short as possible; just long enough for the child to understand that you will not allow them to harm anyone.

(ii) We are specifically not giving a description of the mechanics of physical restraint in that it cannot be summarized briefly. Indeed, the use of physical restraint should be actively avoided until personnel have been properly trained and certified in an appropriate protocol. Virtually all states' agencies of Mental Health and/or Mental Retardation offer training courses in the appropriate use of physical restraint. If you are involved with a student who is at-risk for severe tantruming, aggressiveness, and/or self-injurious behaviors, training in the safe and effective use of physical restraint should be treated as a requirement.

Verbal exchange around inappropriate behavior

When to talk and what to say

(i) As indicated above, as the child begins to show an undesirable behaviors, respond with one of the methods described above, but *say nothing* to them as you initiate the response. *After* you have rendered the negative consequence, ask the child why it occurred in a rhetorical manner. For example, once you have assertively "walked" the child back to their chair after (s)he has drifted away, ask "why did I have to help you back to your chair?". A moment after you pose the question, answer it for them (i.e., "because you have to finish your work"). Another example would be, if you have to remove a child from a regular education class (due to loud vocalizations), briskly walk the child back to their classroom by the arm, but say nothing as you walk (and making no eye contact). Once back in his classroom ask, "why did you have to leave class?", then state, "because you can't stay if you are going to be loud". After this type of short and curt verbal explanation, turn your attention back to next activity at hand.

(ii) Once a child begins to show an inappropriate behavior, (s)he is probably not listening. Hence, any discussion or negotiation will rarely bear fruit. Whereas, once you have rendered the feedback as a consequence of the inappropriate behavior, the child is more likely to hear what is expected. Hence, have all discussion about why the negative consequence happened after the fact, whereas before the fact say nothing, simply act.

(iii) It is also important to seek out opportunities to have a true discussion with a child regarding their behavior. However, these discussions should be at some time later in the day when you can sit and have a peaceful "heart to heart" conversation. During this time its important to explain to the child how their behavior both makes you feel and what impact it has on others. This is also a good time to discuss the child's feels about their behavior and what alternatives (s)he may have that would be more positive and productive. Parenthetically, you can have this type of "discussion" with a non-verbal child. It may sound more like a lecture than a discussion, but much of the important information and feelings can still be conveyed.

Vocal tones and facial expressions carry "the message": actively modulate your affect

(i) There is a growing body of evidence which reveals that infants as young as 4-months of age perceive, and differentially react, to variations in tonal qualities in the voice and facial expressions. For example, 4-month old infants will more readily smile to the labile fluctuations of "motherese" and frown or fret to a monotonous flat tone. Similarly at this age, infants will more readily smile and vocalize to an animated face, but become upset when force to look at a "still-face" (a face devoid of reactions). The point is, that very young children are quite perceptive about affective cues. Indeed, under many circumstances young children are more responsive to *how* the message is delivered, rather than to the words in the message themselves.

(ii) As this relates to the use of positive and negative feedback as a function of the child's behavior, be sure to vary the vocal/facial cues in close synchrony with the varying types of information being conveyed. This may sound obvious. However, we commonly observe adults giving "mixed messages" to children about their behavior -- the words say one thing, the actions, tones, and expressions say something entirely different. Indeed, many adults seem to feel it necessary to always maintain a "positive attitude" toward the child regardless of their behavior or what is being discussed. The following example illustrates this point.

In the wake of one child inappropriately snatching a toy away from another, the adult pleasantly said to the toy thief, *"it isn't nice to take toys away from your friends. Why don't we figure out how we can share that toy or find something else to do. Do you want to give the toy back?"* The thief-child's answer was tacitly stated as he turned and walked away, stolen toy in tow. The adult then turned to the victim-child and said, *"well, that's nice of you to share the toy with your friend. Why don't we find another one for you".*

Many of the words were right, but the actions and affect was not. The words spoken to the thief were appropriately corrective in nature. However, the tones in the voice were soothing and relaxed. The facial expressions were pleasantly animated, including a nice smile and a lot of eye contact. The problem is that the projected affect (as well as the lack of actions) was utterly contradictory to the words. Even more distressing was the fact that the affect directed to the victim was identical to that projected to the thief. If you only listened to the tones and watched the facial expressions, you would be completely unable to discriminated whether this person was talking to the victim or the perpetrator. By contrast, a more precise and appropriate message should have been conveyed to the thief through short, curt phrases, and frowns (as well as some corrective physical measures like abruptly snatching the stolen toy out of the perpetrators hands).

Timing of response to inappropriate behavior

Nip behaviors in the bud quickly

(i) In short, the single most important variable in the success or failure of behavior management programs centers around the timing of appropriate consequences in relation to the prior behavior. Clearly, the sooner in the unfolding of an inappropriate behavior that you can render a meaningful consequence the faster and more lasting will be the return to desired behavior.

(ii) When Joey demonstrates an unacceptable behavior, respond with one of the methods described above quickly, like within 5-seconds of the initiation of the targeted behavior. This may sound strict, but in most cases if a child does not respond appropriately within a few seconds, they are probably not going to respond at all. Moreover, responding early in the unfolding of a difficult behavior will minimize the problem. In other words, "nip it in the bud" before the behavior gets carried away. A quick response is also in Joey's best interest in that it will give him a clear idea of what behaviors are unacceptable. The longer a behavior is tolerated without an *effective* consequence, the more unclear the boundary of acceptability is to the child. So, you are not being kind by acting slowly, you are acting in an unclear manner. The kindest thing you can do for Joey is to respond quickly so he understands clearly what is expected of him.

(iii) Clearly, it is unreasonable to believe that a parent or teacher will be able to show an immediate response to inappropriate behavior in every instance, particularly when you have other children to concern yourself with. So, there should be a clear acknowledgement that not all behaviors can be responded to quickly. The trick is to have a quick response as often as is possible and reasonable. However, remember that the faster you are able to respond to these behaviors now, the more time you will save later. If, in fact, these procedures promote greater independence and attention to task, the less demanding of time Joey will be due to inappropriate behavior later.

(iv) A secondary by-product of routinely using a quick and effective response is that *you* stay calmer.

The importance of brevity and frequency of negative consequences

(i) Just as it is important to initiate a negative consequence quickly, it is equally important to terminate the negative consequence quickly. The quicker you can redirect the child back to the task at hand, the less likely they, and you, are to engage in a "power struggle". When a negative consequence is used in a prolonged manner, the child is more likely to focus their attention on the consequence itself, rather than on the behavior that elicited the consequence. Conversely, if the negative feedback is quite brief, it is clearer and easier for the child to evaluate what the needed corrective measures are that they must make. Additionally, by quickly returning to the task at hand, you are creating an opportunity for the child to earn some type of positive consequences. It is largely through earning the rewards that the child learns appropriate, prosocial, and more mature behavior. Whereas, the negative consequences only reveal the boundaries of unacceptable behavior. Bear in mind that the negative consequences are purely being used as *information* to learn from, not *retribution* to "get even" with. Hence, the emphasis is on quickly "putting the problem behind you".

(ii) Rather than relying on a prolonged negative consequence, emphasize the *frequent* use of extremely brief negative consequences. Virtually all learning theories link repetition rate with speed of learning. The more frequently you render the negative consequence, the faster the child will learn to avoid it, and the

greater will be their opportunities to develop appropriate corrective measures. A child who has been given 10 time-outs for 30-seconds each, has had 10-times more learning opportunities, than if (s)he was given 1 time-out for 5-minutes. The former situation is far more likely to yield the desirable reductions in inappropriate behavior then is the latter, even though the total length of punishment is exactly the same in both.

The crucial importance of the "certainty" of meaningfully negative consequences in context with predictable positive consequences: lessons of contrast

(i) Indeed, its not the severity of punishment that will give the desired results, its the *certainty* of it. The net effect of rendering truly negative consequences in a fast, timely, and frequent manner, is that the child quickly comes to realize the certainty that these consequences will occur if they behave inappropriately.

(ii) There are several extremely valuable by-products of this certainty. First, as the child becomes more certain of how you will react (both positively and negatively), the more predictable you and the environment become. Simply stated, children behave better and feel more secure in a predictable environment. Second, as the child becomes more certain of how you will react, the more *credible* you become. Consider the dictionary definition of "credibility" -- "to be believable, dependable, honorable, reliable, and trustworthy". In short, a child is going to be more trusting in, and learn about the concept of *trust* from, a person that they view as credible. Third, as the child becomes more certain that you will render a meaningful consequence, the faster they come to *anticipate* what the negative consequences will be if they engage in an inappropriate behavior. Indeed, it is the development of this *anticipation of what will occur*, that promotes the child's "inner voice" to inhibit their own behavior. In other words, they begin to develop *self-awareness, self-control* and *self-reliance*.

(iii) The child's certainty in predicting how you will respond to their behavior is greatly accelerated and magnified by the *contrast* between your use of positive *and* negative consequences in concert with one another. By experiencing *both* types of feedback, the child has far more sensitive and detailed information to learn from concerning their impact on their environment, in comparison to only having one or the other form of feedback. With this greater amount of sensitive and detailed information, the child is more able to develop a sense of *self-organization*.

(iv) By knowing that you will render a negative consequence as a function of their inappropriate behavior, the child has a contrast with which to evaluate the positive and unconditional feedback given. As a result, the child will view the positive feedback as legitimately valuable. The net effect of receiving legitimate

valuable feedback from a person who is viewed as credible, is that the child will perceive their own behavior as meritorious -- the basis upon which *self-esteem* will be built.

Development of appropriate behavior

Seeking out confrontation: reasonable demands, reasonable expectations

(i) Many parents and teachers develop strategies that will minimize confrontations with a child that is at risk for significant behavior management concerns. Clearly, its appropriate to avoid unnecessary confrontations by avoiding unnecessary or unreasonable demands. However, avoiding potential confrontations around *reasonable* demands (i.e., not putting the demands on the child, not following through with negative consequences if refused), will deprive the child of the opportunity to learn (through consequences) what more appropriate behavior is expected. Indeed, with steadily greater demands being placed on the child -- provided they include appropriate consequences for appropriate and/or inappropriate behavior -- (s)he will become more tolerant to demands that aren't to his or her liking.

(ii) REMEMBER: parents, teachers, siblings, and classmates have rights too. Walking around on "egg shells" so as not to disrupt the child's behavior unwittingly undermines the rights of the other family and school members. The emphasis should be on the child conforming to family and classroom standards, not the reverse.

"But...confrontation and negative consequences are more of a punishment to me than it is to my child?!!"

(i) Many people report that enforcing rules with the types of negative consequences described above is "more of a punishment to the adult than it is to the child." The fact is that these types of strategies do require time and energy, and can be very unpleasant for the adult. However, the types of behavior that the child is engaging in is already taking time and energy, *AND* it is making your whole life miserable!!! Given the alternative of living with the behavior as it currently is, you are all better off invest the energy into change

the behavior.

(ii) Make the momentary experience of rendering the negative consequence very demanding and unpleasant for the child. As a result, they will be far less likely to engage in these behaviors the next time. So, even if this type of activity is unpleasant for you at the moment, view it as an investment in your collective futures; making the child as "miserable" as you feel will result in having fewer of these episodes. In the end you will be expending far less time, energy, and aggravation because the child will be learning self-control, and you will all be having more fun together.

Punishment and Reward: The Yin and Yang of Child Rearing

The central role of punishment is to inform. Punishment is information, it is *not* retribution. When you punish a child, it is telling him or her where and when *a limit is set*. That is its **sole** function. Rewards, too, inform. But contrary to punishment (which informs about limits), rewards inform about *a direction* that behavior should be ever growing toward. Also, don't confuse rewards with care/affection/love, these are unconditional, reward and punishment are totally conditional.

The Eight Principles of Effective Punishment:

1. Be vigilant (have a low threshold or "hair trigger")

2. Be specific (target the specific unwanted behavior)

3. Be quick (don't let momentum build -- the longer you wait the more difficult it gets)

4. Be kind (use minimal *effective* force)

5. Be brief (don't dwell on the feedback, get on with what you are doing)

6. Be predictable (that is not the same as consistent -- over-consistency is boring)

7. Be informative (*follow* punishment with an explanation, but *do not debate*)

8. Be credible (say what you mean, mean what you say, do what you say you're going to do)

Punishment can hold the line on undesirable behavior, but to promote positive and constructive behavior you require the active use of rewards, modeling, affection, and encouragement.

The Eight Principles of Effective Positive Reinforcement (Rewards):

1. Be vigilant (have a low threshold or "hair trigger")

2. Be specific (target the specific desired behavior)

3. Be quick (quick/immediate feedback tells the child what they are doing right)

4. Be kind (use rewards commensurate with the behavior)

5. Be brief (don't dwell on the feedback, get on with what you are doing)

6. Be unpredictable (don't always reward, and don't always reward the same thing)

7. Be informative (explain why)

8. Be credible (say what you mean, mean what you say, do what you say you're going to do)

Make sure you are rewarding the child for just being good -- for not engaging in objectionable behavior. Often it is harder to reward a child than it is to punish because the objectionable behavior is more noticeable or because parents/teachers don't want to "rock the boat". Remember to look for the good behavior, not just the difficult. And, reward *far more often* then you punish.