

Parent & Practitioner Guide to Reinforcement



Reinforcement is...

Reinforcement is a fundamental practice that is almost always used with other evidence-based practices, such as prompting, time delay, and naturalistic interventions, to name a few. Two forms of reinforcement are: positive and negative reinforcement. *Positive reinforcement* is when we toddler gets or experiences something he or she likes right after using a skill or behavior. *Negative reinforcement* is when we take away an object or activity that the toddler does not like (e.g., staying at the table at dinner) when the toddler does the skill or behavior.

EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE (EBP): **Reinforcement**

This information guide was designed as a supplemental resource to help answer basic questions about this EBP and provide you tips for implementation.

For more information, visit:
www.asdtoddler.fpg.unc.edu.

Updated 10/2014

Why Use Reinforcement?

Reinforcement is a natural part of many interactions between parents and toddlers. Thinking through a plan for using reinforcement consistently helps to maximize the positive effect of the practice on the toddler's use of a specific skill or behavior.

Where Can You Use Reinforcement?

Reinforcement can be implemented in any home or center-based setting where a toddler spends time and is working on the development of communication and social skills. This may also include other community settings where the child and family spend time (e.g., library, pool, grocery store).

Who Can Use Reinforcement?

Anyone can use reinforcement. Parents, other family members (e.g., siblings, grandparents), early interventionists (teachers and therapists), childcare providers, and community members (e.g. clergy, librarians) can all use reinforcement.

Tips for Implementing Reinforcement

Have you...?

- ☐ Identified a target behavior
- ☐ Collected baseline data
- ☐ Identified the context for intervention, including
 - settings
 - high interest routines and activities, and
 - other rewards
- ☐ Identified who will be involved: *Where? When? & How?*
- ☐ Identified training needs and provided training on reinforcement
- ☐ Identified ongoing needs for training, coaching and support



Plan

Did you...?

Positive Reinforcement

- ☐ Identify specific activities, toys, interactions, and so on that are really reinforcing for the toddler
- ☐ Make sure that those reinforcers are not available too often other than when the toddler is expected to use the skill or behavior

Negative Reinforcement

- ☐ Identify specific activities and situations that are mildly aversive to the toddler
- ☐ Use the positive or negative reinforcers based on your plan for when you will consistently give them or take them away



Implement

How's it going? Check to make sure you have...

- ☐ Identified a practical, and doable data collection system
- ☐ Identified who will collect data: *Where? When? & How Often?*
- ☐ Determined where you will keep the data and how you will share it
- ☐ Collected data to monitor progress toward target behaviors
- ☐ Planned ways for the interventionists to analyze data to determine next steps (e.g., team meetings, one-to-one consultations, email exchange of information)



Monitor