

What Is It?

Extinction procedures gradually reduce or eliminate a challenging behavior maintained by escape or attention by removing the reinforcement that is known to maintain challenging behavior.

When to Use It

- Use extinction procedures for low-intensity behaviors. Extinction procedures should only be used with behaviors that can be tolerated and do not pose safety concerns.
- For attention-maintained behaviors, consider whether the student's teacher and peers can ignore the problem behavior. If it is not possible to ignore the problem behavior consistently and across all occurrences, extinction procedures should not be used.
- For escape-maintained behaviors, the teacher must be able to ensure the challenging behavior does not provide an escape from or delay in completing the undesired task.
- It is common for extinction procedures to produce an initial, sudden increase in the frequency or duration of the problem behavior. This is called an extinction burst. If it is unlikely that the teacher and peers will be able to ignore problem behavior during this extinction burst, extinction procedures should not be used.
- ***Always*** use this strategy with other interventions. Extinction procedures do not teach a replacement behavior, can be difficult to implement alone, and are more effective when combined with antecedent and teaching strategies.

Steps to Implementation / How to Do It

After identifying the function of the behavior:

	<p>1. Plan to withhold reinforcement when the challenging behavior occurs. This may involve ignoring the occurrence of the challenging behavior if the function is attention. If peer attention maintains the behavior, the teacher must design a strategy for eliminating peer attention. If the function is escape, the teacher must ensure that the task/activity is continually presented to the student and the student is not allowed to escape the request or instruction.</p>
	<p>2. Determine if extinction procedures should be used with other interventions to focus on increasing alternative or replacement behaviors.</p>
	<p>3. Collect data to determine if the challenging behavior is decreasing.</p>
	<p>4. The challenging behavior may increase in frequency and intensity when extinction procedures are initially implemented; this is called an extinction burst. It is important to continue to withhold reinforcement. The teacher should know what to do if the behavior gets worse before it gets better.</p>

Example

Parker frequently disrupts class by calling out and making inappropriate comments in Mrs. Patterson's social studies class. After conducting a functional behavior assessment, the intervention team determines that the function of this behavior is to gain peer attention. While completing the behavior intervention plan, the team decides to use extinction procedures as well as other interventions to decrease the disruptive behavior and increase his engagement in class activities. Before implementing these procedures, Mrs. Patterson talks to her class about remaining on task during instruction and any student shout-outs. She chooses to have this conversation with her class while Parker completes his daily check-in with the intervention specialist away from the classroom. Mrs. Patterson also implements reinforcement procedures for her class: she gives tokens to students that remain on-task during instruction and ignore shout-outs. She also praises students who demonstrate the appropriate behavior during instruction.

When Parker returns to class, Mrs. Patterson implements extinction procedures for the remainder of the instructional block. She and the rest of Parker's peers "eliminate reinforcement" for his disruptive behavior by ignoring every occurrence of his disruptive behavior. Each day, she continues to implement extinction procedures. She notices a sudden increase in the frequency and intensity of his comments in class and consults the intervention team. The team assures her that these sudden increases or bursts are common when using this strategy. They remind her to continue to use extinction procedures and the other interventions outlined in his behavior intervention plan to support Parker, noting that "giving in" at this point might actually make Parker's disruption worse. After several weeks, the Parker's disruptive behavior decreases, and his engagement in classroom activities improves. Mrs. Patterson continues to reinforce appropriate behavior with praise, and she delivers reinforcers that include time spent with his peers. The team continues to monitor Parker's progress, making data-informed modifications as needed.

How to Increase Effectiveness

- Use extinction procedures with non-contingent reinforcement to decrease extinction bursts. See the non-contingent reinforcement guide for more information.
- Ignore all occurrences of the problem behavior. If a student occasionally receives reinforcement for the challenging behavior (e.g., peers occasionally laugh at an inappropriate comment), extinction procedures may not be effective.

Resources

Janney, D. M., Umbreit, J. Ferro, J. B., Liaupsin, C. J., & Lane, K. L. (2012). The effect of the extinction procedure in function-based intervention. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, *15*, 113-123.