

# Keys to Learning: Using PBS to Teach Students with Autism to Participate in Meaningful and Effective Ways

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# Purpose

Designed to shift your focus from insisting on compliance to developing your learners' participation across instructional conditions.

# Session Outcomes

Participants will be able to identify

- strategies to facilitate learning for students with Autism and all students across a variety of instructional conditions
- key components related to teaching participating skills



# Participation

## *Definition*

The learner performs **consistently** across ALL **instructional** conditions

The learner **continues** to perform even though he is exposed to **non-preferred**, difficult, and/or **novel** tasks



# Classes of Human Behavior

- Vocal/Sign
- Motor
- Written

# NonCompliance

## *Definition*

Failure to act in accordance  
with a wish or command

*New Oxford American  
Dictionary 2007*



# Noncompliance or...

- Many individuals with autism are described as noncompliant if they fail to follow instructions or conform to rules
- Most of the behavior our students display is likely due to skill deficits in the areas of communication, social skills, self-management, academics, etc.
- Need to ask yourself if it is a “*failure* to comply” or a “*refusal* to comply”



# Compliance

- Compliance: Learner may be engaging in instructional conditions to avoid/escape consequences (i.e., **negative reinforcement**)
- The student is “compliant” because it prevents or gets him/her away from something unpreferred.

A Focus on Insisting on Compliance  
May Lead Us to Draw False  
Assumptions

Assume Learner is  
Misbehaving!



# False assumptions

**Episode:** Learner does not complete tasks in a timely manner. Oftentimes, she simply stares out the window.

- “She is noncompliant!”
  - “MUST not let her get away with such behavior.”
  - “MUST not let her escape following my directions.”
  - “MUST insist on compliance.”


# False Assumptions

- **CAUTION:** May lead to **coercive** practices which will likely associate instructors with **aversive** stimuli.



# Aversive Practices

- Withholding Reinforcement (Extinction ONLY)
- Punishment
  - Applying
  - Withdrawing



# Side Effects of Aversive Practices

- *Does NOT **Explicitly** Develop Alternative Behaviors*
- **Condition** Instructor and Instructional Stimuli as **Aversives** (*promotes escape/avoidance*)
- Counter **Control** (*often injurious*)



# B.F. Skinner's Notions

The organism is **always** right!

Learner is a **product** of his/her  
environment!



# *PBS Assumptions*

- Instructors MUST develop **alternative** learner behaviors
- Instructors MUST learn how **to set the occasion** for the alternative behaviors and reinforce **immediately**



# Developing Participation vs. Insisting on Compliance

- Which one would take the least amount of effort for an instructor?

# **STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING PARTICIPATION SKILLS**



# Participation - Concepts

- Participation: Learner receives **positive reinforcement** for engaging in behaviors related to instructional conditions
- Learning becomes reinforcing in its own right – often leads to other reinforcers
- Teaches students new skills or supports what they have already learned



# Type of Participation

## Teacher Directed Instructional Condition

- Circumstances where the instructor is providing direct instruction or direction to the learner

## Semi Directed Instructional Condition

- Circumstances where the learner knows how to do the assigned task and performs mostly independently, asking for help when needed



# Types of Participation (Cont)

## Peer Directed Instructional Condition

- Circumstances where peers are present and there is a need for some level of social responsiveness and cooperation

## Non Directed

- Circumstances where the learner has the choice to do whatever he/she wants or when no direct instruction is present



# Definition: *Teacher-directed (T-d)*

- Teacher **presents a lesson or sets the learner up to responds** successfully;
- T sets the occasion for each learner response (e.g., instruct or prompt/fade);
- Teacher reinforces the learner for responding

# Definition: *Peer-directed (P-d)*

- Teacher **announces free-time or presents an assignment** (i.e., Peers set the occasion for responding);
- **Peer** reinforces responding;
- T reinforces responding **among peers** often or less often



# Participation - Concepts

- These conditions or circumstances are present throughout our entire lives across environments and people!
- They are not static events, we move in and out of them all day long.
- Think about some of these conditions or circumstances in your own life...be ready to share with the group.



# Participation Conditions

- Teacher-directed
- Peer-directed
- Non-directed
- Semi-directed



# Participation - Concepts

- There must be locations in the classroom and time in the schedule to teach participation and other critical skills across all four instructional conditions
- Participation is also taught across people, places, and instructional materials to promote generalization of skills.



# Naïve vs. Competent

## Naive Learner

- A learner who typically spends very little time in the *proximity* of adults, does not *communicate* well, seldom follows directions, and does not enjoy *interacting* with others

## Competent Learner

- A **competent learner** is a learner who can act effectively under **novel circumstances---can easily generalize skills**



# A competent learner...

- Demonstrates skills required to be successful in situations not explicitly taught
- **Participates consistently** across ALL instructional conditions
- **Continues** to perform even though he is exposed to **nonpreferred, difficult, and/or novel tasks**



# Preparing naïve learners to participate

- A **playful context** provides the instructor with many opportunities to establish a valuable relationship with the learner, that is, s/he can acquire a lot of positive reinforcing value in a playful context.
- As the **instructor's reinforcing value** is increased, s/he will be better able to develop new repertoires
- The learner is **more likely to participate** in the instructional conditions.

# Naïve Learners

- We want the naïve learner to like to participate in instructional conditions with adults making requirements.
- Eventually, learners will be expected to participate in more formal [work] instructional conditions.



# Naïve Learners

- Earlier instruction should rely on **conditioning** learning as a highly reinforcing set of conditions for naïve learners.
  - As a result, the instructors will NOT have to rely on **coercive** practices to motivate the learners to participate in instructional conditions.
- Task Demand (define what it is)



# Key PBS Contingencies to Develop Participation Across Instructional Conditions

- Teacher-directed
- Peer-directed
- Non-directed
- Semi-directed

# PBS Contingencies for T-d

- Conditioning T as Reinforcing Stimulus (**S<sup>n</sup> pair S<sup>r+</sup>**)
- Change negative value of aversive stimuli (**S<sup>p-</sup> withhold S<sup>p-</sup>**)
- Shaping (reinforce successive approx...)  
**(B-C)**
- Prompt/fade/reinforce  
**(A-B-C)**
- Direct Instruction (model-lead-test-SR+)  
**(A-B-C)**



# Teacher-Directed Participation

## *Shaping Game*

1. Select a partner
2. Decide what behavior to develop
3. Reinforce successive approximation immediately
4. Withhold reinforcer for stable approximations

# CLM Tips for T-d

- 1. Must practice reinforcing successive approximations*
- 2. Avoid prompt-dependency*
- 3. Use validated curricula*
- 4. Condition neutral stimuli as reinforcers (isolate  $S_{r+}$  features)*
- 5. Maintain value of reinforcers*

# PBS Contingencies for P-d

- Condition peers to be valuable  
**(S<sup>n</sup> pair S<sup>r+</sup>)**
  - Pair them with reinforcing events
- Direct Instruction **(A-B-C)**
  - Model -Lead-Test-SR+
  - Prime/Prompt/Fade/Reinforce

# Peer-Directed Participation



Condition peers to be valuable

Direct Instruction

# CLM Tips for P-d

- 1. Teach waiting during Table Games*
- 2. Set peers up to pass out goodies;*
- 3. Take turns with T first*
- 4. Teach peers to ask questions*

*“Plan for tomorrow to be a successful beginning for you and your learner(s)!”*

**Thank You!**