

Behavior Momentum

Definitions

- Technical Definition: The use of a series of high-probability requests to increase compliance with lower-probability requests (Ray, Skinner & Watson, 1999).

Definitions

- Friendly Definition: Building up momentum by asking the child to follow a chain of directions that they are likely to do because they are easy or fun. Once momentum is built, a demand that the child is less likely to follow is then made. The momentum will often carry them through the demand that wouldn't likely be followed otherwise.

WHO?

- Who is the technique effective for:
 - Young children through adult employees

WHAT?

- What is the technique effective for?
 - Increasing compliance
 - Escape maintained behavior

WHEN?

- When should the technique be used?
 - Before a difficult task
 - To regain attention
 - To increase motivation

Considerations

- Pros of the technique
 - Avoids the power struggle and cycle of escape maintained behavior
 - Continues to pair you and the new demand with reinforcement

Considerations

- Cons of the technique
 - The technique itself could become reinforcing to undesirable behavior when used reactively.

How to do Behavior Momentum

- Create a list of both high probability and low probability requests
- Present 3-5 high probability requests in quick succession, providing reinforcement after each one if they are done correctly.
- Present a challenging request within 5 seconds of the last easy request. Provide reinforcement if earned, or complete a pre-planned error correction procedure.

How to do Behavior Momentum

- Continue to sequence, changing the number of high-probability requests placed to keep the ratio of reinforcement variable.
- Collect data on the low-probability requests.
- Gradually decrease the number of high-probability requests until the low-probability request can be given without the occurrence of undesired behavior.
- Gradually fade the strength of the reinforcement provided after the low-probability request.

Application

- Classroom: Avoid starting the day with less preferred activities. Instead, start each day with more preferred activities such as reading a high interest story followed by less preferred activities.
- Small Group: Use this technique when the energy of the group becomes sluggish to regain attention.
- 1:1 Session: Use this technique just before an activity that has a history of resulting in undesired behavior.

Common Errors

- Using the same sequence of high-probability behaviors each time the technique is used.
- Not placing a clear demand to begin with - asking instead of telling, giving a long string of verbal information to ask the child to perform a task.
- Not individualizing the high-probability request to the child.

Video Examples

- <https://youtu.be/t0EiySBIOy8>
- <https://youtu.be/eryaiphLtiM>
- https://youtu.be/0n71B_J60sk

Resources

- Behavior Momentum Story by Ashley Kosarich
https://www.sbbh.pitt.edu/sites/default/files/behavioral_momentum_.pdf
- Behavior Momentum in the Treatment of Noncompliance (1988) https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1286105/pdf/jaba00096-0011.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3r9mcDj_CwQiwoMkrkYUNq2yz1f1bXhaUIQIMVUimDMjNnofcWy3fktcQ