

Extinction

Distinction

What is extinction?

Extinction is when reinforcement for a previously reinforced behavior is no longer provided, resulting in a decrease in the frequency of that behavior.¹ In other words, the challenging behavior no longer works or pays off.

Examples:

- No longer having access to a drug when you are addicted to that drug.
- No one paying attention when you scream, if your screaming used to lead to attention.
- Being required to complete a task before leaving a room when you have previously ran out of the room to escape completing the task.
- Someone yelling for an item no longer receives the item after yelling.

Pros/Cons

Pros



- The target challenging behavior will decrease over time.
- The challenging behavior is no longer reinforced.
- It can be very practical and natural in certain situations, such as using a child window lock to prevent a child from rolling down the window in winter.

Cons



- People may not be prepared for the extinction burst that may follow. This is the old adage “it will get worse before it gets better.”
- Extinction may have adverse side effects such as escalation of other challenging behaviors.
- It can be difficult to implement for certain functions such as automatic sensory reinforcement.

Things to Consider:

An extinction burst occurs when the frequency of the target challenging behavior temporarily increases in an effort to receive reinforcement.



- Behavior is complex and may have multiple functions that reinforce it. It is important to ensure you have identified the right function(s) for extinction to be successful. Conducting a thorough functional behavior assessment is essential.
- Always make sure to teach and reinforce a new replacement skill that serves the same function in combination with extinction.
- Remember to prepare support staff for the extinction burst, that it will only be temporary, and the behavior will decrease.
- Make sure that the extinction procedure you are using is an ethical one.

What is PBS?

PBS is an approach for teaching new skills to replace challenging behaviors and redesigning the environment to enhance quality of life. PBS operates from a person-centered values base, allowing the participant to guide team decisions about their lives. This approach is positive, proactive and focuses on preventing challenging behaviors before they occur.

Purpose of the Positive Behavior Support (PBS) project

The purpose of the PBS project is to build the state's workforce and community capacity to support individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities, traumatic brain injuries and co-existing disorders relating to the prevention and treatment of challenging behaviors and improving quality of life. Through training and consultation, we promote supportive, motivating and inclusive environments for individuals with complex needs. Our project is currently restructuring in order to provide agencies with supports to help them implement PBS with fidelity. Stay tuned for more information on the changes or visit our website for the latest updates.



To learn more about the PBS project, register for a training or subscribe to our quarterly Support Report newsletter, please visit pbs.cedwvu.org. Questions? Topic suggestions? Phone: **855-558-4296** Email: pbs@hsc.wvu.edu

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