

Featured Tier I Behavioral Intervention Positive Attention

What Is It?

Positive attention is an empirically supported behavioral intervention that involves verbal (e.g., praise) or non-verbal (e.g. head nod) attention with the goal of increasing the frequency or duration of a desired behavior (Boggs & Eyenberg, 2009).

Why Do It?

Positive reinforcement has consistently been shown to be among the most effective behavioral interventions, with the largest effect size of 1.17. In comparison, peer tutoring, also an effective intervention, had an effect size of .59 and stimulant medication had an effect size of .58 (Lipsey & Wilson, 1993)

Which Students Should I Use It With?

All students! This is an effective, universal (Tier 1) behavioral intervention that should be used with all students to promote positive behaviors in both the classroom and school-wide setting.

How to Do It?

- Positive attention should be given immediately after the desired target in order to be most effective.
- Praise should be specific. For example, "That is a very good follow up question" would be a better praise statement than, "Great job."
- Positive attention is often used in conjunction with ignoring of undesired behavior. It is important to deliver a greater number of positive statements than ignoring behavior in order to make ignoring behavior effective. (Boggs & Eyberg, 2009).
- In order to change a behavior, positive attention to ignoring or negative statements should be given in a 3 to 1 ratio. Students cannot be expected to know what behaviors they should be doing based on a teacher's statements telling them what not to do. Telling students not to talk out in class is less effective than "catching" students raising their hand, It would be more effective to say, "Thanks for raising your hand" immediately after a student who usually talks out during class raises their hand because this would be specific.

Positive attention is *not*:

- About making general positive statements. For example, "You guys did a great job today," is not an effective praise statement because it is not specific or in reference. More effective would be "It is great how you brought up these issues today." "You shared a very important point regarding ...". Positive attention, such as praise, should be given to each student for a specific behavior that you want to increase.
- Sarcasm. Making a statement such as, "Thanks for finally joining class," in order to point out a student who has slept through class is not effective praise. Sarcasm can create a victim. Instead it could be a non-verbal praise such as giving that student eye contact, a smile, or even a thumbs up! You might also want to do a private discussion with that student after class to let them know how much you appreciated their attention.

References

- Boggs, S. R. & Eyberg, S. M. (2009). Positive attention. In W. T. O'Donohue & J. E. Fischer (Eds.), *General Principles and Empirically Supported Techniques of Cognitive Behavior Therapy*, (pp. 494-499)..
- Lipsey, M. E. & Wilson, D. B. (1993). The efficacy of psychological, educational, and behavioral treatment: Confirmation from meta-analysis. *American Psychologist*, 48, 1181-1209.

Read more about it on Intervention Central:

<http://www.interventioncentral.org/behavioral-interventions/motivation/teacher-praise-efficient-tool-motivate-students>

MAPS District created video: <http://youtu.be/pKfMBqu8rSg>