

Programming for Generalization and Maintenance

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WHAT'S COVERED

This lesson will explore programming for generalization and maintenance by defining and discussing the following:

1. Programming for Generalization and Maintenance
2. Promoting Generalization and Maintenance
 - a. Thin Reinforcement Schedules
 - b. Use Naturally Occurring Reinforcement and Stimuli
 - c. Practice Skills in Natural Settings and with Different People
 - d. Vary Instructions or SPs
 - e. Provide Reinforcement for Generalized Skills When They Occur

1. Programming for Generalization and Maintenance

Regardless of whether you've taught a new behavior or decreased an inappropriate behavior, it is important that these behavior changes

- continue over time
- occur in all relevant environments
- spread to other related behaviors

In order for our patients to use their skills, they must maintain what they have learned over time (maintenance) AND they must be able to demonstrate their skills with different people, in different places, and with different materials (generalization).

Your BCBA will design specific procedures for both maintenance and generalization of skills. Individuals who are typically developing usually generalize skills naturally without assistance, but for atypically developing individuals, generalization and maintenance often don't occur on their own, and specific procedures are often needed.



Generalization and maintenance are the goals of ABA!

2. Promoting Generalization and Maintenance

In this course, you learned about behavior management and reviewed an example and components of a plan used to decrease behavior that may be considered challenging. Just as important are the skills that you will teach in your role as a behavior therapist. Fortunately, your BCBA will also give you written teaching protocols for the skills you will teach.

➞ **EXAMPLE** If you are teaching someone to brush their teeth, there will be a written protocol on how they want you to teach that skill. There will most likely be step by step directions on how you approach this including what type of acquisition approach they want you to take (such as chaining or shaping).

Other elements of skill acquisition programs may include the types of reinforcers to be used, the conditions under which to conduct the teaching session, etc.

To promote generalization and maintenance, we want to

- thin reinforcement schedules
- use naturally occurring reinforcement and stimuli
- practice skills in natural settings and with different people
- vary instructions or SDs
- provide reinforcement for generalized skills when they occur

2a. Thin Reinforcement Schedules

You should thin reinforcement schedules, gradually decreasing the frequency of reinforcement for skills to a more “naturally occurring” rate of reinforcement for mastered and maintenance targets.

➞ **EXAMPLE** At first, Sanji receives a reinforcer after each math problem he completes. After he can complete several math problems, the reinforcement schedule changes so that he receives reinforcement after every five problems, then every seven problems, then after completing each worksheet, etc.

Video Transcription

[PHONE DINGS] All right. Aden, you got a point for using kind words.

All right. So based on [INAUDIBLE].

2b. Use Naturally Occurring Reinforcement and Stimuli

To promote generalization and maintenance, you should also use naturally occurring reinforcement and stimuli.

➞ **EXAMPLE** When teaching Carla how to open bottles, the behavior technician uses a clear bottle with a

reinforcer inside, such as crackers.

Video Transcription

All right guys. So Kaylan was working for show and tell so I need you to be respectful and have your iPads down so we can look at Kaylan. And then we can all do our point rank. So turn around. All right, Kaylan, go!

I have my drawing pad.

Tell us--

I can write some letters.

Show us.

A, B, C, E, F, G.

Say, look.

Look.

Look everyone.

Look everyone.

2c. Practice Skills in Natural Settings and with Different People

It is also important to practice skills in natural settings and with different people.

➦ **EXAMPLE** The behavior technician has Georganna practice brushing her teeth in the bathroom, responding to greetings at the park with peers, and using a spoon while eating.

Video Transcription

So if I was making a drawing and I drew a really cool dragon, what could you say that would be a compliment?

Woah, that is so cool!

Yeah! That's perfect, actually. What if I was playing baseball and I made a really hard catch where I jumped up in the air and I caught the ball.

Nice!

Yeah! Perfect. OK, so let's practice. So let's pretend I've just made something really cool with the Legos.

OK.

OK. Hey, Jackson, check it out!

Woah, that is so cool. How did you do that?

Oh, I used my imagination. [INTERPOSING VOICES] I'm so glad you like it. That was really perfect, that was great.

OK. So we're going to practice this some more, and then whenever you see somebody doing something that you think is really cool, or maybe they've made something that you like, you can give them a compliment, OK?

OK.

All right, good job.

Yes! Good job, Caitlin.

Oh, I think she's going to do it!

Yep! Well done, Caitlin!

I still have one more!

2d. Vary Instructions or SPs

Another way to promote generalization and maintenance is to vary instructions or discriminative stimuli.

➡ **EXAMPLE** The behavior technician says “Touch fish,” “Where’s the fish?”, and “Do you see any fish?”, when teaching the patient to identify fish.

2e. Provide Reinforcement for Generalized Skills When They Occur

Finally, you should provide reinforcement for generalized skills when they occur, especially when they occur spontaneously without prompting.

➡ **EXAMPLE** The behavior technician has been teaching Ra’Chel to tact grapes. While at the grocery store, Ra’Chel sees grapes and says, “Grapes.”

Video Transcription

Hey, Jackie. Who is that?

It's teacher!

Yeah! Who's this? Who's this?

It's Daddy.

Yay!



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned about **programming for generalization and maintenance**, noting that for individuals who are atypically developing, generalization and maintenance often don't occur on their own, and specific procedures are often needed. To promote generalization and maintenance, we want to thin reinforcement schedules, use naturally occurring reinforcement and stimuli, practice skills in natural settings and with different people, vary instructions, or S^D s, and provide reinforcement for generalized skills when they occur, especially when they occur spontaneously without prompting.