

Pairing

Reinforcement

Positive Reinforcement: The presentation of something immediately following a response/skill, which *increases* the likelihood that the response/skill will occur again (Alberto & Troutman, 2003).

Example: Giving a child a gummy worm because she put on her coat independently.

Reinforcer: Something presented after a skill/behaviour that increases the likelihood the skill/behaviour will occur again (Alberto & Troutman, 2003).

Example: The gummy worm is the reinforcer when the child gets dressed independently.

Pairing

Pairing: A technique used in Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) to help form and maintain rapport with a child by combining (i.e. pairing) the learning environment and the parent with *already* established reinforcers (items that are rewarding) (Evenstad, Flynn-Privett, & Gudding, n.d.).

Set aside time everyday to sit down with your child and “pair” with them. During pairing, allow your child free access to items or activities that your child loves, but ensure these reinforcing items are *only* available to the child through you. Put away these toys when you are not playing and pairing with the child. When you begin pairing, bring the toys out and give them to the child. The child will learn that you have access to all of his/her favourite things and you will give the child access without requiring anything in return. Pairing activities should be led by the child’s motivation.



Why Is Pairing Important?

Building Rapport & Instructional Control

Pairing will help you build and increase rapport with your child. Rapport building is essentially building a positive relationship with your child. Pairing also assists in establishing instructional control, meaning the child listens to and complies with your instructions. Pairing will help you develop your leadership control (Mrs. P's Specialties, n.d.) and having this instructional control is what motivates your child to listen to you and do what you ask (Meadows, 2015).

Pairing Procedure

Pairing Procedure:

(Evenstad, Flynn-Privett, & Gudding, n.d.)

1. Collect multiple strong reinforcers that you know your child enjoys
2. Provide the child with access to these reinforcers (through you), without placing any demands
3. Have fun playing! Be silly and fun! Follow the child's lead.
4. Comment on the child's play
(E.g. "There goes the car! So fast!")

Tip

Do not ask the child questions or place demands at this stage (E.g. "What colour car is that?" / "Where will the car go?"). Although these questions are intended to engage the child in play, refrain from asking them. From your child's perspective, answering these questions may seem like a lot of work, even though it may not seem so to you.

Ways to Pair with Your Child

Pairing Parent with Reinforcement

You give your child reinforcing toys (E.g. trampoline, piano toy) by making these items only accessible through you (you give the items to the child). The child will learn that you are a reinforcing person, and with lots of practice and repetition, you will become a reinforcer.

Pairing a Place with Reinforcement

You can also pair a table or a place with reinforcement, so the child will learn that sitting at the table/going to that room or place can be very reinforcing!

Pairing a Table

This might be helpful for a child that doesn't like to sit at the table at dinner time. Before you bring out any food, you can pair the table with reinforcement so the child enjoys sitting at the kitchen table. This can help make dinnertime easier when you're asking the child to sit at the table for an extended period of time.

You can bring highly reinforcing items/toys to the table and your child can only access these exiting toys/activities while sitting at the table with you. Overtime, the child will learn that the table is also a reinforcing place!

Pairing a Place/Room

This might be helpful for a child that doesn't like to go into the car, or go to a particular place, like a waiting room. You can also pair a particular room (E.g. kitchen or waiting room) with reinforcement (E.g. favourite food, iPad, toys, or games). The child will only receive access to their highest preferred reinforcers while in that room or place. Over time, the child will learn that the room or place is where fun activities happen, and where they receive their favourite items.

References

Alberto, A.A., & Troutman, A.C. (2003). *Applied behavior analysis for teachers*. (6th ed.). NJ: Merrill Prentice Hall.

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Meadows, T. (2015). Instructional control: Who's the boss? Retrieved from <http://www.iloveaba.com/2013/01/instructional-control-whos-boss.html>

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