PRACTICE WHAT YOU PREACH:
USING PRINCIPLES OF ABA TO INCREASE STAFF MOTIVATION

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OVERVIEW OF WORKSHOP

- Reinforcement
- Professionalism
- Corrective Feedback
- Motivation & real work place issues

ARE YOUR STAFF HAPPY?

- Ask them!
- Are they planning on staying?
- What is reinforcing for them: money (of course! But what else)? Student progress? Responsibilities? Sense of community?
- Provide many staff training opportunities & reinforce their efforts & learning
HOW TO GET STAFF TO DO WHAT YOU WANT

• BE CLEAR: with expectations of work output, responsibilities, roles, goals, communication, professionalism

• NOTICE OFTEN: inspect what you expect

REINFORCEMENT

• Definition:

  • What is it
  • What it isn’t

• There’s a difference between nice/positive things & reinforcement

REINFORCEMENT IN PRACTICE

• Pair yourself as something positive: notice what people are doing well

• You may need to look hard for this, but find it, it is worth the effort

• You must mean what you say

• If you can’t find anything nice to say, change what you’re looking for - they’ve at least shown up for work, right!!
HOW & WHEN TO NOTICE

How:
- Public or private?
- Vocally? In writing?

When:
- In situ? After an observation?

EXAMPLES OF PUBLIC PRAISE

WOW sheets:
- In writing
- Anyone can write on them
- Person or classroom specific
- ONLY POSITIVE THINGS

EXAMPLES OF PUBLIC PRAISE

Tally sheets for specific behaviors:
- One sheet per behavior
- Can be per staff and/or per classroom
- Predetermined goal & reward
- Behaviors may include:
  - taking data correctly
  - praising their student
  - reinforcing appropriate behaviors
  - appropriate implementation of a skill/activity
**EXAMPLES OF PUBLIC PRAISE**

Staff praise board:

- Written feedback to staff, anonymous or not
- On a board- in staff lounge, in classroom, hallway
- Can include all staff persons: office staff, support staff, management and so on
- At the end of week, month, quarter, year; all comments are put in a hat & the winner gets a...gift-card? Write up in school newspaper?

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**SCHEDULE OF REINFORCEMENT**

- When shaping a new behavior, remember to reinforce frequently
- As a behavior is established, begin to thin this schedule to ensure it is not reliant on this feedback
- Most importantly: intermittent feedback is key in maintaining a behavior BUT do not thin this schedule too much, as we all need to be noticed & reinforced

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**THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN USING REINFORCEMENT**

- What functions as a reinforcer changes from person to person and from minute to minute
- Satiation occurs, so we must check in frequently to see what will work
- By definition, reinforcement increases the likelihood of that behavior occurring again; this is different than positive statements
**THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN USING REINFORCEMENT**

- Fostering an environment rich in noticing of positive things is beneficial to ourselves, our staff and more importantly, our students.

- Be specific: sometimes using a general “good job” is what is warranted, but sometimes—especially when shaping up a new behavior, a “great job using less prompts in the bathroom routine” is what is needed.

**THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN USING REINFORCEMENT CONTINUED...**

The short list:

- We **must** mean what we say
- Be clear
- Notice frequently (and let others know that you have noticed)
- Model this for our staff so that they can see its value & implement with their student(s)

**PROFESSIONALISM**

Doing the right thing
WHAT IS IT?
- A code of conduct
- A way of appearing and behaving
- A way of interacting

PROFESSIONALISM
- What does it mean to you?
- To your students?
- To parents of your students?
- To your supervisors?
- To a school visitor?

ELEMENTS OF PROFESSIONALISM
- A professional demeanor
  - Appearance
    - Attire, energy level, friendliness
  - Positive attitude
  - Work-appropriate language
  - Work-appropriate conversation
  - Work-related behaviors
  - A respectful style of interacting with others
ELEMENTS OF PROFESSIONALISM
- A professional attitude
  - Pleasantness
  - Positivity
- Refraining from sarcasm
- Refraining from gossip
- Approachability
- A lack of defensiveness
- A solution-orientation to problems

ELEMENTS OF PROFESSIONALISM
- How do we interact with each other?

SOME ELEMENTS OF INTERACTION
- Acknowledgement
- Appreciation
- Listening well
- Empathy
- Effective Communication
- Enthusiasm
- Hopefulness
WHY LEARN THESE SKILLS?
- Professional environments are better to work in
- Professionalism guards against burnout
- BUT MOST IMPORTANTLY:
  It benefits the students!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

RELEVANCE TO BURNOUT
- Dimensions of burnout
  - Emotional exhaustion
  - Depersonalization
  - Personal Accomplishment

HOW ELSE CAN WE GUARD AGAINST BURNOUT?
- We can create environments that foster cooperation.
- We can act toward others as we would like to be behaved toward.
PROFESSIONAL KINDNESS: AN OPERATIONAL DEFINITION

1. Take time to listen.
2. Give praise when earned.
3. Forgive someone who hurt you.
4. Apologize for something you have done wrong.
5. Do a favor for someone in need.

CONTINUED........

7. Compromise.
8. Negotiate.
10. Problem-solve.

HANDLING RECEIVING FEEDBACK

Differentiate between types of critical feedback
- Valid
- Unjustified
- Vague or just a difference of opinion
WHAT IS VALID CRITICAL FEEDBACK?

- Questions you can ask..............
  - Do I hear the same feedback from more than one person?
  - Does the critic know a lot about the subject?
  - Are the critic's standards known and reasonable?

ACCEPTING FEEDBACK PROFESSIONALLY

- Calmly acknowledge that there is truth in the feedback
  - Listen to your critic!
- Admit the truth; accept that you make mistakes and/or that your behavior can be improved

VERBAL INDICATORS OF A PROFESSIONAL RESPONSE

- Asking for clarity/rephrasing
- Allowing the person to deliver their message
- Refraining from excuses
- Refraining from “counter-attack”
- Clear communication about a plan to address the issue
NON-VERBAL INDICATORS OF A PROFESSIONAL RESPONSE
- Maintain good eye contact
- Appropriate tone and volume of voice
- Appropriate facial expression
- Appropriate body posture

THE KEY TO BENEFITING FROM FEEDBACK
- BE A GOOD LISTENER
  - The biggest impediment to benefiting from feedback is not hearing it well or fully.
  - It is hard to listen to corrective feedback.
  - Defensiveness will interfere with your ability to listen, and therefore to change in a way that will benefit the learners.

ARE YOU A GOOD LISTENER?
- Can you put your perspective on hold?
- Can you inhibit your view?
- Can you keep your thoughts from interfering?
- Can you re-phrase what someone has said?
LISTENING WELL

- What strategies can we use to listen effectively?
  - Relaxation training (deep breaths, count to 10)
  - Concentrate on listening for now; you may follow-up at a later point when you have had time to reflect
  - Try to become more practiced at receiving feedback and at listening effectively to feedback

SOLICIT FEEDBACK

- Don’t just wait for feedback to happen
  - Get used to frequent feedback
  - Create an environment conducive to feedback
- Actively request feedback from others
  - Ask for specific feedback
  - Ask for examples
  - Ask for new directions/solutions/skills to improve performance

GIVING FEEDBACK WELL

- Constructive feedback is aimed at promoting improvement or development of the person to whom you are providing the feedback.
FEEDBACK
- Relieves stress, as people are clearer on expectations and evaluations
- Improves job performance
- Promotes personal and professional development

SOMETHING TO CONSIDER----------A PREREQUISITE
- “The right to criticize must be earned, even if the advice is constructive in nature. Before you are entitled to tinker with another person’s self-esteem, you are obligated to first demonstrate your respect for him or her as a person. When a relationship of confidence has been carefully constructed, you will have earned the right to discuss a potentially threatening topic. Your motives will have been thereby clarified.”
- Dr. James Dobson

WHAT ARE THE STEPS?
- Giving feedback effectively
  - Ensure you have good data
    - What does this mean?
  - Be immediate
  - Be specific
  - Set realistic goals
WHY ARE YOU PROVIDING FEEDBACK NOW?
* To continually build skills
* To correct an error
* To motivate

BE IMMEDIATE
* Don’t keep quiet when you see a job well done!!
  * Give positive feedback as close as possible to the actual event

CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK
* Immediacy is also important, but you must consider your timing
  * Be short
  * Be specific
  * Focus on positives as well
  * Consider stress in timing, but do not avoid
CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK
- Corrective feedback is a special challenge
  - It is uncomfortable
  - Feelings are involved
  - Sensitivity is essential

BE SPECIFIC
- Your job is to ensure that you deliver your message effectively
- You are redirecting someone back to the goal or expectation
- This is not an opportunity for prolonged discussion

SET REALISTIC GOALS
- GOOD GOALS SHOULD BE
  - specific
  - realistic
  - measurable
  - linked to deadlines
  - preferably written
CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK
- Always describe positive aspects of what was observed
- There should be a balance of positive and corrective feedback

CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK: DESCRIBE EFFECTIVELY
- Describe what you saw on observation
  - Do not describe an emotional reaction
- Support with data from observation
  - Be concrete; do not be vague
  - Do not present hearsay
- BE OBJECTIVE
- USE CONCRETE TERMS

CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK: SPECIFY THE GOAL
- Request a change in behavior
  - Request a small change
  - Specify actions you want to stop
  - Specify actions you want to see initiated
- Specify what behavior you are willing to change to make the agreement work
  - Supports
  - Training
CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK: AFFIRM

- Affirm the other’s ability to make a change
- Affirm your ability to change as needed
- End on a positive note

A CAUTION........

- Corrective feedback should be given as privately as possible

AN ADDITIONAL ACTION: THANK PEOPLE

- Thank people for engaging with you in the process of feedback.
- It is not easy to engage in the process; effort should be acknowledged
HANDLING RECURRING PROBLEMS
- Raise the issue, review the history
- Describe the specifics of pattern persistence
- Request a change in behavior
- Agree on an action plan
- Follow up

RAISE THE ISSUE
- Identify the area of concern
- Avoid negative terms
- Frame cooperatively
  - “I need your help with.....”
  - “I am concerned about”

DESCRIBE THE SPECIFICS
- Encourage the person to share their perceptions
  - Summarize what they share to ensure accuracy of your receipt of their information
    - “so you see it as”
    - “from your perspective.....”
REQUEST A CHANGE IN BEHAVIOR

- Together discuss ways to eliminate the problem
- Actively seek other person’s ideas
- Make suggestions of your own

AGREE ON AN ACTION PLAN

- Summarize discussion and confirm commitments. Show enthusiasm for the plan, be positive.
- Give the person the opportunity to make final suggestions.
- Set a time and place for evaluation.
- Close on a friendly, upbeat note.

FOLLOW UP

- Consider a written record of the discussions
- Evaluate your handling of discussion and what you would change in the future
- Set up a system for follow up (meetings, observations)
- Actively assist the other person to make the changes agreed upon
FEEDBACK SUMMARY

1. Create an environment that fosters feedback
2. Recruit feedback about your own performance frequently
3. Give feedback often
   - Give much positive feedback
   - Couple corrective feedback with positive feedback
   - Be objective and action-oriented in addressing issues that require change
   - Recognize that change must also include supervisor behavior

LET'S SUMMARIZE

- What do we need to do to ensure that corrective feedback is delivered well and received well?
- How do we say it?
- When do we say it?
- What else do we need to be saying and doing?

CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK

- Start slowly...
- Now that you have paired yourself with honest positive feedback, it is time to start focusing on behaviors that need to change
- In choosing what to focus on: pick the one thing that will be the easiest to change while having the biggest positive impact for the student(s)
CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK: BEFORE YOU START

- Let staff know that this is a part of their training before it starts, during the hiring process is preferred
- Stress that the function of the feedback is not personal, it is to ensure that the student(s) are receiving the best possible teaching (this should become your mantra)

CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK: THE “HOW TO”

- Start interspersing corrective feedback with positive feedback: 3 “glows” for every “grow”
- The sandwich theory really works well here
- Say it with a smile & lots of “we all do these things, this is why it is nice to have a second set of eyes” (if you mean this)

GLOWS & GROWS

- Glows: things that were done well - in specific detail
- Grows: things that are opportunities for improvement - again in specific detail
- It is very important that as “grow” skills are improved, this is noticed and becomes a “glow”
- This ratio should always remain heavier on the glows than grows (3:1)
**CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK: THE “WHEN TO”**

- In-situ: giving feedback immediately, as the behavior is occurring, is preferred

- After a session, an observation, a class, the school day

- Prior to the next time the teacher/therapist is with the student(s) is key

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**CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK: THE “WHEN TO”**

- The best practice here is to ask what the person prefers, as appropriate: being “called out” in front of co-workers/students can be very challenging for people

- Regardless of how/when you are going to give corrective feedback, be sure to let staff know ahead of time during the hiring process, if possible

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**THINGS TO REMEMBER ABOUT CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK**

- The delivery is very very important

- This feedback does not have to be difficult to give or to receive

- We must remember that we are all learners: adults & children, disabilities or not
**ACTIVITY: GIVING CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK**

- Partner up: one person is the supervisor & the other is the staff person being trained
- Create a behavior to “correct” scenario
- How would you present this feedback? When?
- Do it!

**PICKING YOUR BATTLES**

- You can’t fix everything at the same time
- Is this the hill you’re willing to die on?
- Will this matter in 5 minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, years?

**SYSTEMS ISSUES**

- Create a culture of feedback
- Evaluate staff happiness
- Never stop questioning what could be better
CREATE A CULTURE OF FEEDBACK
- Give and receive feedback OFTEN
  - Constantly
  - Part of daily happenings
- Solicit feedback
  - Ask people how they feel about your interactions with them, support of them, etc.
  - Solicit feedback directionally
  - 360 feedback

EVALUATE STAFF HAPPINESS
- Never assume
- People appreciate being asked
- Provide choices about whatever you can

NEVER STOP QUESTIONING WHAT COULD BE BETTER
- Policy of continual assessment
- Policy of continual betterment