

Orienting to the Environment to Reduce Stereotypic Behaviors

Objective: To teach students to increase orienting responses (pay attention) to their environment to reduce the frequency of stereotypic behaviors

Setting and Materials

Setting: Instruction will take place in the community (e.g., park, neighborhood, mall)

Materials: A digital sports watch with a chime or beep feature that can be preset to sound at specific intervals to prompt orienting responses during instruction.

Content Taught

1. Orienting to stimuli in the environment (e.g., person mowing the grass, a truck, item in a store window)
2. Commenting on stimuli in the environment

Teaching Procedures

1. Train the skills during a two hour session (a walk in a community setting) using least to most prompting
 - a) verbally (“look around”)
 - b) physically (after 3 seconds [i.e., touching the student’s shoulder])
2. Immediately following the orienting prompt, ask the student to “tell me what you see”
 - a) If no comment, gesture to a specific element in the environment and ask the student again
 - b) If still no comment, gesture to a specific element, label it, and ask student to repeat the label
 - c) Socially reinforce correct responses (i.e., positive comment)
3. Provide students with a digital sports watch with a countdown mode that provides a chime or beep at a preset interval, set for 30 seconds. (The watch will sound at 30 seconds and automatically reset for another 30 seconds.)
4. When the watch sounds, prompt the student to “look around” and then to “tell me what you see” and socially reinforce correct responses

5. Fade the verbal prompts until the student oriented and commented with the watch prompt alone on 3 successful 30 second intervals
6. Increase the interval countdown on the watch to 1 minute
7. After the initial training session, instruction will occur during 10 minute sessions in the community, using the watch as an auditory prompt and providing social reinforcement for correct responses
8. Gradually fade the auditory prompt of the watch by increasing the interval length by one minute increases until no auditory prompts are required
 - a) For students in the study, after the training session, 12 to 20 intervention sessions (10 minute sessions) were completed before no auditory cue was provided for orienting and commenting
9. Provide no consequences for demonstration of stereotypic behaviors throughout instruction, only social reinforce orienting and commenting

Evaluation

Collect data on student performance by recording the number of “verbal orienting” responses to environmental stimuli during a 10 minute instructional session

1. Verbal orienting is defined as a verbalization associated with a specific element in the environment
2. Prompted statements occur within 10 seconds of a cue to comment (watch beep)
3. Unprompted (the goal skill) occur more than 10 seconds after a cue to comment, or without any cue to comment

Data may also be collected on the frequency of stereotypic behaviors using a variety of methods:

1. Count of the number of stereotypic behaviors during a 10 minute instructional session, or
2. Record the occurrence of a stereotypic behavior during each 10 second interval within the 10 minute instructional setting for more frequent or lengthy stereotypic behaviors

Lesson Plan Based on:

Frea, W. D., (1997). Reducing stereotypic behavior by teaching orienting responses to environmental stimuli. *Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps*, 22, 28-35.

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