



VIDEO – SHELDON CONDITIONS PENNY IN THE BIG BANG THEORY

Activity type Idea

This video is suggested in the Student Digital Book and consists of Penny being awarded chocolates for what Sheldon considers 'appropriate behaviour'.

It is an excellent example of behaviour management and provides the basis for a useful discussion.

Some questions that could form the basis of a class discussion are given in the additional notes.

It is also interesting to show a video of little Albert being conditioned and compare the ethics of the two procedures. For example <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9hBfnXACsOI>

Practical use

Class discussion

Additional notes

1. Would it be ethical for a psychologist to act in the way that Sheldon does?
They may focus on consent, for example.
2. Where are similar methods been used in the real world?
They may think about reward systems in schools – which of these are operant?
Prisons and, in the past, hospitals have also used the approach.
3. Parents often use this technique to shape their children's behaviour, e.g. star charts for potty training or making their bed. Is this fair? What other behaviours may they have learned in this way?
4. Is there a role for cognitive processes in Penny's training? Do you think she could choose not to go along with it? When might the conditioning stop being effective?
5. How important is the nature of the rewards? Do you think Sheldon chose chocolate for a reason?

SCHOOLS AND THE LEARNING APPROACH

handout number

4.3

Activity type Application

This handout is a set of short activities that require students to consider the familiar environment of schools and how schools have applied the ideas of learning

theory to change pupil's behaviour. The main objective is to get students to think about how the reinforcers, rewards, etc., work around them.

Practical use

Individual or paired class activity

Additional notes

1. a) The writing of lines was designed as a punishment. Operant conditioning suggests that if the undesirable behaviour (not doing homework) is followed by an unpleasant consequence (the boredom of doing lines perhaps even coupled with missing break/play time) then the likelihood of that behaviour being repeated will be reduced.
b) The awarding of a gold star for good work is also based on operant conditioning but this time the gold star acts as a positive reinforcer. This positive consequence following the desirable behaviour is thought to increase the likelihood of the desirable behaviour (hard work or good homework) being repeated.
2. This is something they may or may not be aware of – of course someone may just as well end up with an unhappy association with purple then. Also many children have managed through education without this sort of association.
3. They may want to talk about why they perceive that the current system doesn't work. Of course this will be a personal opinion based on what motivates them. They may also think about WHAT it rewards – is it what is important to the school or the pupils? They may want to discuss more tangible rewards and may even know of schools where vouchers, etc., are awarded. Are all good behaviours recognised?
4. This is a chance to ensure that students understand this often misunderstood concept. The alarm is a pretty annoying noise and the students will change their behaviour in order to be relieved of the aversive alarm. As they realise that their being quiet leads to the noise being turned off they act more quickly.



SUPERNANNY WEBQUEST

handout number

4.4

Activity type Flipped

This handout guides students to explore the behavioural approach as it is used to change unwanted behaviours in children. They may already be familiar with Jo Frost Supernanny but are unlikely to be aware of the specific ways in which she uses behaviourism in her work.

The website clips are ever changing as a new series is produced (so be warned if you have a favourite!) but they will only need to go through a few to find examples which consolidate their understanding of key concepts and terms in the approach. The examples might include

the use of a naughty step/chair (punishment), star charts (rewards) and how parents reflect on changes in behaviour and become encouraged to continue their efforts to discipline based on the fact that it provides relief from unpleasant situations (negative reinforcement).

The activity is designed to be done at home so that the students can come ready to discuss in more depth.

Practical use

Homework activity to be brought in for discussion

Additional notes

Some suggested answers:

1. The examples will depend on the clips watched but are likely to provide a range of examples for the class when discussed.

2. a) Fear of/distaste for a food and **Classical Conditioning**.

When a child first tries broccoli there is initially no adverse response.

Broccoli (NS) → No Response

But then a child hears a sibling express distaste at sight of broccoli 'EUUUWWW!'

Broccoli + Euuuwwww! (UCS + NS) → Distaste or even fear of broccoli

After conditioning

Broccoli (CS) → Distaste

- b) One that may be explained by **Operant Conditioning**.

Hair pulling behaviour may be **reinforced** by not only the satisfying squeal of a sibling but also by attention (even though negative) from a parent who may be forced to put down their mobile phone etc.! If this happens a number of times with the same 'satisfactory' **consequence** then the hair pulling is likely to be **repeated**.

3. Ethical discussion may include consideration of whether we have the right to change behaviours? The long term effect of rewards on children – are they ever going to be motivated to do something that does not gain immediate rewards? Whether there is a different view where behaviours are potentially dangerous, e.g. taking a car seat belt off.