Teaching Compliance Using Discrete Trials

Compliance or Noncompliance

Issue: Students with autism often require external motivation to comply with requests made of them. They may not have developed a response pattern of complying; thus, they actually may not have the “skill” of compliance.

Intervention: Reinforce compliance and ignore noncompliance.

Advantages
- Reduction of problem behaviors can be maintained over time if reinforcers are used intermittently.
- This is proactive, positive programming that is based on construction of new skills.
- Compliance can be generalized across settings and people.
- This provides a situation in which the student knows reinforcement is available.

Cautions
- The reduction of problem behaviors is limited by how quickly alternative behaviors are learned.
- Reinforcements are to be faded, but they must be maintained long enough for targeted behaviors to not reappear.
- The effectiveness depends on several factors each day: mood of the student, setting events, and the student’s current desire for the reinforcer.

Begin Getting Compliance
- Reinforcers that will motivate the student to comply with requests should be identified.
- This strategy should begin with daily compliance trials.
- A certain number of daily requests that the student has a high probability of complying with should be made. Initially, these trials should be presented at the same time and in the same place each day.
- Each time the student complies, reinforce.
- Easy requests should get 100% compliance before more difficult or problem areas are addressed.

Purpose of Trials
- One purpose of the trials is to establish reinforcement for compliance.
- Another purpose of trials is to practice a compliant response pattern.

Competing Behaviors
- The minor compulsions are brought into the daily compliance trials by adding 10% each time 100% compliance has been achieved.
Behaviors that interfere with learning are determined and then brought under stimulus control for instruction.

**Parts of a Trial**
- Discriminative stimulus (Sd) is what happens to make a response most likely to occur. It signals to a student that the reinforcement is available. In this case, it is the command.
- The response is what a student does after the Sd. Not doing anything or doing something incorrect is still a response.
- Reinforcement is what happens to make the response more likely to occur again. It increases the likelihood of reoccurrences of the behavior.

**Compliance Trial Stages**
- **Independent Stage**
  1. Give a command to attend if needed
  2. Give Sd
  3. Wait 3-5 seconds for response
     - Reinforce if correct response, return to step one or two, give new Sd
     - Or
     - Do nothing or shake head “no” if incorrect or no response, go to Step 4.
  - **Modeled Stage**
    1. Give same Sd as before while modeling the correct response
    2. Wait 3-5 seconds for response
        - Reinforce if correct response, return to step one or two, give new Sd
        - Or
        - Do nothing or shake head “no” if incorrect or no response, go to Step 6
  - **Assisted Stage**
    1. Give same Sd as before while motoring student through the correct response
    2. Reinforce and return to step one or two

**Tips and Hints**
Generally, it is best to return to the independent stage after the student has complied to the directive and has been given reinforcement at any level. Sometimes, you may want to provide more modeled or assisted trials consecutively when you are teaching a new skill so that the student has frequent reinforcement.

Behavioral momentum may be used to increase compliance to a directive that the student is able to follow but seems to have chosen not to. Do this by providing several easy trials in rapid succession until the student is responding. These should be commands the student understands and usually follows. Then add in the command the student refused. Remember, compliance is a skill that often requires direct instruction.
**Generalization**

- Begin to conduct trials in different locations at different times of the day
- Change the wording of the command slightly
- Have a different person issue the command
- Conduct compliance trials with small groups

**References**
