

## **SUMMARY OF RESEARCHED BASED INTERVENTIONS THAT CAN INCREASE SELF-CONTROL**

**The primary goal of self-control training is to teach children to look past the small immediate reinforcement and to wait for the larger delayed reinforcement.**

### **Delay Fading**

This method of increasing self-control involves gradually increasing the amount of wait time before the delivery of reinforcement.

Procedure:

- Identify a small reinforcer and a large reinforcer for a specific student or group based on a student's likes and dislikes. Using a preference assessment or reinforcement checklist may be helpful.
- Present the child with a small immediate reinforcer and a large immediate reinforcer. Upon completion of the desired task (listening for 5 minutes, answering three math problems, etc.) allow the child to select their reinforcer.
- Once the child is consistently selecting the large reinforcer begin to delay the delivery of that reinforcer in five or ten second increments. You will know you are increasing the wait time too quickly if the child goes back to selecting the small immediate reinforcer.
- Continue to increase the wait time for the large reinforcer until you reach your predetermined goal.
- Always pair the delivery of reinforcement with behavior specific praise.

### **Alternative Activity**

Providing a student or group with an alternative activity while they wait for reinforcement can increase wait time and self-control.

Procedure:

- Identify reinforcing items or activities for a student or group based on likes/dislikes/preference assessments/etc.
- Explain the behavior (assignment, conduct, response, etc.) the student or group needs to engage in to acquire the reinforcement.
- Provide the student or group with an alternative activity they can engage in upon completion of the desired behavior. Gradually increase the wait

time between the completion of the desired behavior and the delivery of the reinforcement.

- Pair the delivery of the reinforcement with behavior specific praise.

### **Self Talk – Rule Reminders**

Teaching students to repeat simple rules while waiting for reinforcement can increase self-control.

Procedures:

- After identifying reinforcing items or activities for a student or a group, explain what behavior they are expected to complete in order to gain access to the reinforcement.
- Teach the student or group a simple phrase they can repeat while they wait to receive reinforcement ("It's good if I wait.", "If I wait, I get \_\_\_.", "When I wait, I get what I want." "Having patience is good.") Visual cues reminding students of the rule may be needed.
- Gradually increase the wait time between the completion of the desired behavior and access to the reinforcement.
- Pair the delivery of the reinforcement with behavior specific praise.

### **Countdown Timer**

For individuals who do better with visual input, using a timer can help increase self-control. This technique can be used to increase the length of time a student sustains a desired behavior or waits patiently for a reinforcer.

Procedures:

- Identify reinforcing items or activities for a student or group based on likes/dislikes/ preference assessment/etc.
- Explain the expected behavior the student is to engage in so they can access the reinforcement. Determine the amount of time that will be put on the timer and inform the student.
- Set the timer and place it in a location that is easily visible for the student.
- If the student asks when they will receive the reinforcement point to the timer without providing any verbalizations.
- Gradually increase the amount of wait time.
- Pair the delivery of the reinforcement with behavior specific praise.

## **Token Economy with or without Response Cost**

This is the most widely evaluated intervention for the treatment of individuals with ADHD in the classroom setting. It involves the presentation of tokens or points paired with verbal praise contingent on the presence or absence of target behaviors. Response cost involves the removal of tokens or points contingent on inappropriate behavior. Token economies can be designed for individual students or an entire class.

Procedures:

- Identify reinforcing items or activities for the student or group.
- Discuss the desirable and inappropriate behaviors to be targeted with the student or group. Include modeling if necessary.
- Clearly define specific behavior that will result in a fine or tokens being removed.
- Establish a way to communicate the reinforcement or fine with the student. Place a chart in the room or student's folder to record tokens/points. Gradually transfer the responsibility of recording tokens earned or removed to the student.
- Set frequent times throughout the day when tokens are recorded and/or removed. Provide a way for students to earn a significant number of tokens throughout the day. Make sure the tokens outweigh the fines.
- Set up a system where students can use their tokens to purchase desired items or activities. Begin by allowing students to purchase items more frequently (twice per day). Gradually increase the number of tokens and the length of time between purchases. Eventually fade the token economy completely.
- Pair the delivery of tokens with behavior specific verbal praise.

**Special Note:** *It is important the self-control or waiting behavior be generalized across many settings, people, and activities.*

Contact Lyn Becker with questions.