

Research-Based Practice: Extinction

References:

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Description: Extinction is used to reduce or eliminate unwanted behavior by withdrawing or terminating the positive reinforcement that maintains the behavior. There may be an “extinction burst” (increase in the unwanted behavior) when this procedure is first applied, because the student will attempt to obtain the reinforcement that was typically given following the behavior. Keep in mind that the reinforcement that is maintaining the unwanted behavior can certainly be things that many would consider “punishment.” For example, yelling at a student may be positively reinforcing the unwanted behavior. A consequence is only considered punishment if it decreases the likelihood that the behavior will occur again in the future. Extinction is often used with differential reinforcement to increase appropriate behaviors while discouraging the use of inappropriate behaviors.