

Behavior-Specific Modification Strategies

Part 1

Behavior modification strategies you can use to quickly change habits and behaviors

What's that?

**When are
we going?**

**Why is the
sky blue?**



How come?

By Cara Day, M.A., C.E.C.

DAYCHILD.ORG

Behavior-Specific Modification Strategies

Dedicated to Mackenzie Day

Behavior-Specific Modification Strategies

Behavior-specific Modification Strategies come in handy when your child develops a habit or behavior that does not work for him or her and/or the members of your family. This is for that behavior that makes you cry in frustration, "Why is my child doing this?"

Here are some examples of behaviors with which you might use a Behavior-specific modification strategy.

Examples of Behaviors Responsive to Behavior-specific Modification Strategies

Whining
Crying excessively
Crying at transitions
Asking too many questions
Complaining
Fidgeting, or another mannerism
Nail biting
Talking back
Speaking rudely
Not staying in bed
Being messy
Being bossy
Not taking care of belongings, being destructive
Or, any other behavior choice that is not working for your child and/or your family



"The choice chart is for everyday. This is for something that needs special attention!"

If you've watched the Choice Chart videos at Daychild or on our YouTube channel, you may be wondering how these strategies are different than what happens with the Choice Chart. The Choice Chart is a comprehensive daily behavior management system.

A behavior-specific modification strategy is separate from The Choice Chart. With a behavior-specific modification strategy, your child does not receive a redirection, a penalty, or an isolation period.

These strategies work to eliminate the specific behavior being addressed very quickly, which means you only use it for a few days or weeks, and then The Choice Chart continues as your daily behavior management system.

Happy Kids Choice Chart for the month of October

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Annelise	🍎	😊	🍌	🍌	🍌	🍌	🍌	🍌
Mackenzie	🍌	/	😊	🍌	😊	/	😊	
Thomas	/	🍌	/	🍌	😊	/	😊	
Addison	🍌	/	/	🍌	/	/	😊	
	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Annelise								
Mackenzie								
Thomas								
Addison								
	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Annelise								

The Choice Chart video series and e-book are available at Daychild.org

Behavior-Specific Modification Strategies

Ok, putting The Choice Chart system aside, let's get into how to actually implement a behavior-specific modification strategy, whether you've already implemented The Choice Chart or not.

You can use a behavior-specific modification strategy when the behavior is either:

- Too pervasive or
- Too mild

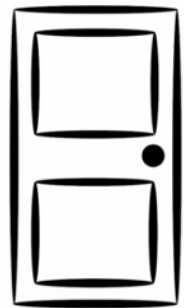
If it's too pervasive, this means the behavior is happening with a very high frequency, which means your child would be in their room all day every day if it was addressed by The Choice Chart!

If it's too mild, this means it could be a very subtle thing that wouldn't necessarily earn your child a penalty, but is still something that needs to be addressed.

An example of something that might be too mild for the choice chart, could be not sitting long enough at the dinner table, or trying all the foods. It wouldn't necessarily be something you would want to give your child a penalty for, yet it's a behavior you're wanting to shape or improve in some way.

An example of something that is too pervasive, meaning it feels like it is happening all day, could be a child who is asking too many questions. When you're four years old, asking a lot of questions is age-appropriate.

The statistic is that the average four year old asks nearly 400 questions And that is considered normal! But when you are 10 years old, it's no longer normal, it's just a bad habit.



What's that?

When are we going?

Why is the sky blue?



How come?

Behavior-Specific Modification Strategies

I used this example because it happened with my daughter, Mackenzie, when she was 10 years old.

She was asking an inordinate amount of questions every day, throughout the entire day, and it was becoming unbearably annoying to all of us.

Despite my attempts to gently coach her to ask less questions, or to try to think things through and figure out the answers before asking, or to press her pause button before asking a question to see if it was really necessary, she would just ask questions, with no filter between thought and speech.

This may seem like kind of benign thing, but it created a lot of strife for all of us.

Over the span of a five- to ten- minute period, she sounded something like this...



"She'd better not ask me what we're having for dinner!"

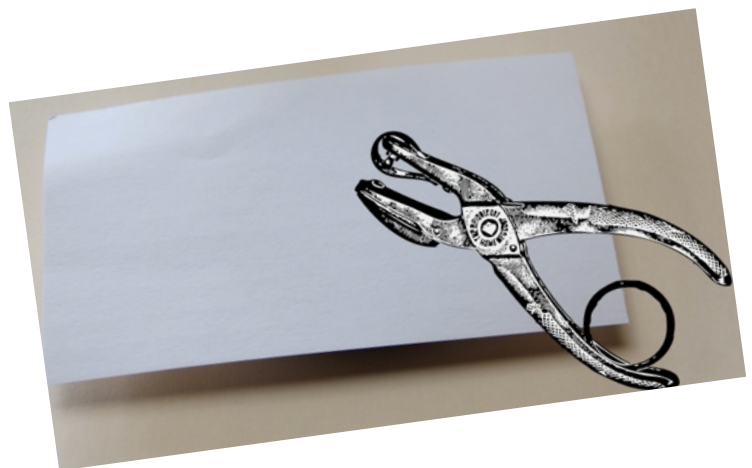
"What's for breakfast? Can I have some? What are we doing? When are we going? Who's going? What car are we taking? What's that for? What are you doing? Can I do that? Can I have something to eat? What can I eat? Can I eat it in here? Do you want some? What are you stirring? Why are you stirring it? Who's coming? When are we leaving? What car are we taking? Can I sit in the front? What should I wear? Can I wear this instead? Why can't I wear it? Where are my shoes? Can you help me find my shoes?..."

Most of the answers to the questions were either obvious or just not necessary for her to know. Her level of questioning left no space for discovery, not to mention the fact that she was not being observant of even simple things around her.

This made it clear that her behavior was just a habit she had gotten into. I created a quick, easy-to-use behavior-specific modification strategy that reduced the behavior by about 50 percent on the first day, and had eliminated the behavior by the 4th day.

I started by having a pre-meeting with Mackenzie. The pre-meeting is the key to success with behavior-specific modification strategies. All five steps of the Pre-Meeting will be described in detail, later on in this video.

The strategy I used with Mackenzie was to give her an index card and a hole-puncher. Every time she asked a question, she had to punch one hole in the card. She was given only twenty questions per day, so this meant she would need to choose her questions wisely.



Behavior-Specific Modification Strategies

I decided to let her be in charge of the card, so she could have complete ownership of every question she asked. I also wanted her to hear the clicking sound of the puncher, sound of puncher clicking through an index card because adding an auditory component to a behavior modification techniques makes it more powerful.

The first day, Mackenzie was out of questions by 8:15 in the morning! It was a real eye-opener for her to realize just how many questions she was asking. This was a powerful moment.

For the rest of the day, she either just had to think things through for herself, or simply not ask, even if she couldn't figure it out. She wasn't allowed to ask other people, either. It was 20 questions total, for the whole day. simple graphic of the index card with 20 hole punches in it

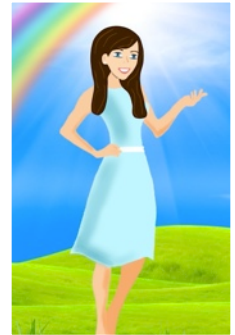


I picked this number not because she would be limited to that number in the future, but because it was a number that was easy to conceptualize, since she was only 10, and that would really force her to think about whether or not she wanted to ask a question.

Her creative energy was kicked into high gear that day. After her questions were used up, she started saying things like, "Hmmm...I'm wondering what time we are leaving."

If you notice, that is not a question, it's a declarative statement.

If we wanted, we could have rewarded her creativity by saying, "4 o'clock" but mostly we chose to just smile at her. We all had a lot of fun with it, even Mackenzie. On the second day, her 20 allotted questions lasted until noon. And on



Something tells me it's going to be blissfully quiet around here today!



"Oh, yeah, it was a ton of fun, Mom!"

the third day, until the early evening. On the fourth day, she didn't really need the card anymore.

She was demonstrating a great deal more self-control and none of us were annoyed by the amount of or the type of questions she was asking. Victory!



Behavior-Specific Modification Strategies

The punch card is a great strategy that works for nearly every behavior on the list of common behaviors I mentioned in the beginning of this video.

Sample Behaviors Responsive to Behavior-specific Modification Strategies

Whining
Crying excessively
Crying at transitions
Asking too many questions
Complaining
Fidgeting, or another mannerism
Nail biting
Talking back
Speaking rudely
Not staying in bed
Being messy
Being bossy
Not taking care of belongings, being destructive
Or, any other behavior choice that is not working for your child and/or your family

It's effective with children aged 4 all the way through to adulthood and is one of the simplest strategies to use. It's truly can be for anyone, child or adult, who is trying to stop a specific habitual behavior that is no longer working for them.

And, you can use this same strategy again and again for different behaviors as they come up through the years. The same is true for the other 4 strategies which are covered in Parts 3 and 4 of the Behavior-Specific Modification Strategies series.

To have great success with a behavior-specific modification strategy, you will want to have a pre-meeting. How to have a pre-meeting is shared in Part 2 of Behavior-Specific Modification Strategies and is available to members at Daychild.

Daychild.org

Some other videos, e-books, and articles available at Daychild:

Videos and e-books:

The Choice Chart Behavior Management System: Parts 1 - 6

The Multiplier and Divider Rules: Tools for Self-Regulation and Basic Manners

Rapid Behavior-Shapers: Parts 1 - 4

E-books:

The Chit-Chat: A communication tool

Winning Ways to Speak

I Am a Happy Kid

Integrity Lessons, 1- 10: Character Development for All Ages

Resources:

Ten Ways to Trick Yourself into Exercising Everyday

How to Anchor Two People

Ten Reasons Your Stepchild Doesn't Like You, And 10 Winning Ways to Respond

There are many Free and Member videos, e-books, and resources available at Daychild.org. Annual membership is introductory-priced at Super Cheap! Sign-up now and you will enjoy your annual rate--indefinitely! Your membership helps us make more videos, e-books, and resources for you, and we appreciate YOU!