

NATURAL AND LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES: OVERVIEW

What are natural consequences?

Natural consequences are outcomes that happen as a result of behavior that are not planned or controlled (Pryor & Tollerud, 1999). For example, if a student cuts in front of another student in line, the natural consequence may be that the other child won't play with the "cutter" at recess. A teacher did not plan or control this consequence, but he or she may discuss and help students predict natural consequences to encourage them to see the connection between their choices and what happens to them.

What are logical consequences?

Logical consequences do not naturally occur as a result of behavior, but are intentionally planned by teachers and administrators. Logical consequences are similar to what would happen to an adult in a similar situation, therefore teaching students skill what they will need to be successful later on in life. Logical consequences need to be related, respectful, and reasonable (Nelson, 1985).

1) Related

Related means that the consequence is clearly connected to the student's behavior and its function. This requires the teacher getting to know his or her students well and becoming proficient at the process of both formal and informal functional behavioral assessment and analysis. The function of the same behavior may be different for each child, or even for the same child at different times. Therefore, it is crucial that teachers take this into consideration and do not use one consequence, such as isolating the student from others, for all inappropriate behavior. An example of a consequence that is not related would be having a student go to time out for calling another student a name. A related consequence may be to have the student spend some of their free time (recess or after school) discussing the natural consequences of the action with the teacher (e.g. hurting that person's feeling, possibly getting called a name back) and writing the offended student an apology.

2) Respectful

Consequences need to be given with empathy in a respectful voice tone. If not, the student will focus more on the emotions demonstrated by the adult and perhaps their own feelings of anger resulting from being talked to disrespectfully, and not reflecting on their choices. The student that is not treated respectfully often becomes aggressive, passive, resentful, and/or uncooperative and may try to get revenge against the teacher.

3) Reasonable

Reasonable refers to not providing consequences for a student's inappropriate behavior that is too severe. It is not reasonable to require that a student lose all their recesses for

the week for being silly in class. A more reasonable consequence may be to stay in for one recess to practice appropriate classroom behavior.

Is the philosophy of positive behavioral supports and interventions against the use of consequences?

Logical consequences are often confused with “punishment”. Punishment by definition is “the contingent presentation of a stimulus immediately following a response, which decreases the future rate and/or probability of the response” (Alberto and Troutman, 1990). Logically, teachers want the inappropriate behavior of students to decrease and have historically delivered negative consequences (e.g. verbal reprimands, writing sentences, seclusion, corporal punishment) to attempt to manage behavior which led to many ethical and legal considerations. In fact, many individuals who exhibit undesirable behavior have been subjected to contingent interventions that are dehumanizing and unethical. As a result, the term “punishment” has become associated with pain and humiliation and has become unacceptable to many leaders in the educational field. This has resulted in the development of the idea of “nonaversive” behavioral support upon which the positive behavioral support and intervention movement is based.

Talk to any classroom teacher or individual with hands on behavioral management experience and they will agree that not all inappropriate behavior can be decreased to acceptable levels by exclusively using proactive strategies and “positive” contingencies, although they do help immensely and should always be a part of any behavior management plan. It can be argued that the use of only “positive” contingencies does not mirror real life and therefore does not promote the generalization of appropriate behavior into non-school environments. The most effective behavioral management provides a balance of proactive strategies, positive contingencies, and natural and logical consequences that teach students to take responsibility for their behavioral choices and mirrors real life situations that they will be required to face as adults.

How are logical consequences different that the traditional idea of punishment?

The key difference between logical consequences and punishment goes back to the three R’s of logical consequences: related, respectful and reasonable. While the actual consequence may be the same in both situations, the way that the teacher presents it to the student and its relation to the inappropriate behavior is what determines whether it is considered punishment or a logical consequence. The following tables attempt to clarify the difference.

Table 1: Punishment vs. Logical Consequences: What's the Difference

| Logical Consequences | Punishment |
|--|---|
| Teach | Control |
| Leave the student with a feeling of control | Leaves the student feeling helpless |
| Uses thinking words | Uses fighting words |
| Provides choices within firm limits | Demands compliance |
| Are given with empathy | Is given with anger |
| Are tied to the time and place of the infraction | Is arbitrary |
| Are similar to what would happen to an adult in a comparable situation | Is arbitrary |
| Are never used to get revenge | May be used to get revenge (e.g. he had it coming!) |
| Teaches students to take responsibility for their choices | Results in the student focusing on the adult delivering the punishment rather than on their choices |

Table 2: Examples of Punishment/Logical Consequences

| Consequence | Punishment | Logical Consequence |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|
| Removal from the group or "time out" | "Go to time out until you can behave in group appropriately!" | "When you act silly in group is distracts me from teaching and others from learning. Would you like to stay with the group or go to the think time area where it is okay to make silly noises? It's your decision." |
| Stay in for recess | "If you don't stop goofing round and get your math done, no recess for you!" | "This is the time I have scheduled to do math. It is very important that you get it done so you can learn as much as you can. Recess is the scheduled time to talk to your friends. You can choose to talk now, but the only other time to finish math is at recess. It's your decision." |

Adapted from: Fay, 1996

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