



Two Column Assessment And Intervention Technique: Target Behaviors To Increase & Decrease



“a favorite intervention tool” – by Lynn Clark, PhD

Your assessment and intervention of a child's problem behavior or emotional disturbance continues in successive parent counseling interviews. In each parent interview, do more precisely identify and describe the target behaviors to be increased and decreased. Also, ask the parent to continue counting and reporting the frequency of those behaviors as the behaviors change over time.

1. Make A Target Behavior Sheet. With the parent's input, make a Target Behavior Sheet, on simple tablet paper, listing behaviors to be increased or decreased. Write the title “Target Behavior Sheet,” the child's name, and a date on the sheet. In successive appointments with the parent, make revised or updated Target Behavior Sheets.

It is generally best for the counselor or clinician to write down the target behaviors with the parent viewing, commenting on, and helping refine the brief list. The parent gets a copy of the Target Behavior Sheet to take home and to bring back to the next appointment. Of course, the parent decides which behaviors are target behaviors to increase or decrease.

2. Get A Complete Description Of The ABC's Of A Particular Target Behavior That Has Occurred. Use the A (the Antecedent Events), B (the Behavior), and C (the consequences for the child of his behavior) Technique. The steps are B, C, and then A. Ask, “*Think of a recent example when your daughter did that behavior. Describe what she did. And then what did you do? What happened next? Describe what happened before she displayed the behavior.*” By asking the parent “**to play back her parent-child interaction**” with you, you are teaching her to pay closer and closer attention to her future parent-child interactions. She will learn that you will continue asking her to describe these interactions in future appointments. You will get more detailed and useful descriptions in successive appointments.

3. Compare The Parent's Description Of Parent-Child Interactions With SOS Book Or with DVD Parent-Child Interactions. You and the parent may have already analyzed some or all of the SOS Video Scenes. As the parent describes his own parent-child interactions, look for the Three SOS Rules or Four SOS Errors that the parent seemed to follow, as well as, the many other SOS methods that the parent followed or did not follow. By working with you, analyzing the SOS Video Scenes, studying the SOS book, and analyzing his own parent-child interactions, the parent will learn how to recognize when he is doing it right and when he is doing it wrong, when managing the behavior of his child. He will learn to do it right more often in the future. He will learn how to improve his parenting skills.

4. Develop A Behavior Intervention Plan For Two Target Behaviors. When first starting with a parent, begin with a couple of easier-to-change target behaviors. Note that the *SOS Help For Parents* book lists 46 problem behaviors and 23 SOS intervention methods on pages 233 to 242. Page 40 lists 33 target behaviors appropriate for time-out. However, encourage the parent to use time-out sparingly and to recognize that time-out is only one of 23 methods which can be used to manage problem behaviors.

The most effective way to improve behavior is to “*catch your child being good*” and to reward that behavior (Child Rearing Rule 1). In my opinion, the second most important way to improve a behavior is to “*stop rewarding that bad behavior*” (Child Rearing Rule Two). Withhold the reward (the social reward, activity reward, or material reward) that your child's bad behavior is attempting to force from you.

The following page further describes your Target Behavior Sheet, how to select target behaviors, and how to select interventions.

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Intervention Tool



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Meet with a parent, caregiver, or teacher of a particular child. On a sheet of tablet paper make two columns. In the Right Column you and the parent list several negative target behaviors to decrease. In the Left Column list the corresponding “alternative good behaviors” to increase. List a couple of additional positive behaviors to increase. Make two copies of the sheet and give one to your parent to take home. Plan to clarify, rewrite, and make copies of the sheet during successive appointments.

Left Column
Use SOS Rule #1
Positive Reinforcement

Right Column
Use SOS Rule #2
Extinction, or SOS Rule
#3 Correction

Target behavior Sheet For Johnny

Positive Target Behaviors
+ Positive Behaviors To Increase
“Start” Behaviors

Eating appropriately
Dry nights
Asking politely
Talking with normal voice

Negative Target Behaviors
– Negative Behaviors To Decrease
“Stop” Behaviors

Throwing food
Bed wetting
Demanding
Whining

Target Behavior Sheet For _____ *Make your own two lists on simple tablet paper.*

Positive Target Behaviors
+ Positive Behaviors To Increase
“Start” Behaviors

Negative Target Behaviors
– Negative Behaviors To Decrease
“Stop” Behaviors

Which interventions do you select for Right Column behaviors and Left Column behaviors? Usually, for Right Column behaviors you select interventions from SOS Rule #2 (Don’t “accidentally” reward bad behavior) and from SOS Rule #3 (Correct some bad behavior - but use mild correction only). For Left Column behaviors you select interventions from SOS Rule #1 (Reward good behavior - and do it quickly and often). Review the *Menu of Interventions for 46 Problem Behaviors* beginning on SOS p. 233. You and child’s caretaker jointly decide on which behaviors to begin interventions. Begin with easier to improve behaviors rather than harder to improve behaviors.

For video clips & useful resources see <www.sosprograms.com>. Also, see *SOS Help For Parents* book.

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