# **Running the “Accepting NO” Program**

**Objective:** This is a program to teach a student to accept being told no as a replacement for problem behavior. It is most often taught to students who exhibit problem behavior when they are told they can’t have something that they want.

**Candidates for this Program:** Following a functional assessment, this protocol is used with students whose problem behavior has been determined to have a function of a history of obtaining preferred items following problem behavior.

## **PRACTICE SESSIONS TO LEARN TO “ACCEPT NO”**

## **“ACCEPTING NO” TRIALS**

1. Run many practice sessions each day to teach the learner to accept NO. As you say NO, bring up a reinforcer or offer another activity by saying “but you can have or do this reinforcer instead”.
2. If the student does not engage in problem behavior, deliver the reinforcer. If the student **does** engage in problem behavior, put the reinforcer away and withdraw the other offer and do not attend to the problem behavior.
3. Instead re-direct the student to a neutral activity using prompts/guided practice as needed.
4. In the event that you had to redirect to a neutral activity, make sure student complies with at least 2-3 tasks without problem behavior before you deliver reinforcement. At this point DO NOT deliver the reinforcer that was denied when the problem behavior occurred and make sure reinforcement is less that if the student would have accepted the alternative.
5. Avoid running too many trials in which you deny the reinforcer in a row. In other words, make sure you intersperse trials in which you do in fact deliver the reinforcer requested.
6. For some students, it may be necessary to sequence steps carefully so that you “Set them up for success”. Some of the considerations include the value of the reinforcer being denied, value of the reinforcer being offered as the alternative, number of trials in the day in which reinforcers are denied, and percent of trials in which an alternative is offered. Here is an example of a sequence that will make it more likely for the student to learn to accept “no” while avoiding too many episodes of problem behavior occurring:

Step 1: Deny less reinforcing items while offering a more reinforcing item

Step 2: Deny a reinforcing item while offering a reinforcer that is somewhat equal in value.

Step 3: Deny a reinforcing item while offering a less reinforcing item

Step 4: Deny reinforcing items and offer an alternative for only 80% of the trials

Step 5: Deny reinforcing items and offer an alternative for only 50% of the trials

Step 6: Deny reinforcing items and offer an alternative for only 30% of the trials

***Keep in mind that the above is only an example. The exact sequence will vary based on individual student’s needs.***

## **DATA COLLECTION:**

Data collection involves keeping track of when each step in the sequence is mastered as well as trial by trial data of the reinforcing situation, the alternative offered, and whether problem behavior occurred or not for each trial. In some cases it may be helpful to track specific topographies of problem behavior that occur (see example below).

Example of Skill Tracking Sheet:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Step | Target | Date Introduced | Date Mastered  |
| Step 1:  | Deny less reinforcing items while offering a more reinforcing item  |  |  |
| Step 2: | Deny a reinforcing item while offering a reinforcer that is somewhat equal in value. |  |  |
| Step 3:  | Deny a reinforcing item while offering a less reinforcing item |  |  |
| Step 4:  | Deny reinforcing items and offer an alternative for only 80% of the trials |  |  |
| Step 5:  | Deny reinforcing items and offer an alternative for only 50% of the trials |  |  |
| Step 6:  | Deny reinforcing items and offer an alternative for only 30% of the trials |  |  |

# **Example of “Accepting No” data sheet:**

***“Accepting NO” Data Sheet***

*Name: Sam Date: 9/5/03 Time: 9:30 to 10:00*

|  |
| --- |
| *BEHAVIOR KEY:* Designate an abbreviation for the problem behavior in the box(e.g. Kicking=K, Hitting=H)C=Chinning S=Screaming HH-Head Hits P= Punching others F=Flopping |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *Trial* | *Reinforcing Situation* | *Alternative Reinforcer Offered* | *Problem Behavior* | *Initials* |
| 1 | Wants swing | Skittle | C,S | D.S. |
| 2 | Wants movie | Book | C,F | D.S. |
| 3 | Wants soda | Juice | None | D.S. |
| 4 | Wants Hug | Tickle | HH,F | D.S. |

## **Data Based Decision Making:**

* Graph percent of trials in which student successfully accepts being denied the reinforcer without incidents of problem behavior.
* For students in which a skill sequence is necessary (as in example above), make sure you include a phase change line on your graph each time a new step is introduced.
* Criteria for mastery is based on student being successful for 100% (can vary slightly based on individual student) of the trials for “X” number of consecutive days (as determined by team) across people and environments. In other words, the program should be implemented until the problem behavior is no longer occurring during naturally occurring opportunities.
* When a skill sequence is used, criteria should be met for each step as step.

## **WHEN THE BEHAVIOR OCCURS DURING DAILY ROUTINES (Naturally occurring opportunities):**

1. When the student mands for the activity/item, tell him “No” as you say no, bring up a reinforcer or offer another activity by saying “but you can have or do this (reinforcer) instead”.
2. If the student does not engage in problem, deliver the reinforcer. If the student **does** engage in problem behavior, put the reinforcer away and withdraw the other offer and do not attend to the problem behavior.
3. Instead re-direct the student to a neutral activity using prompts/guided practice as needed.
4. In the event that you had to redirect to a neutral activity, make sure student complies with at least 2-3 tasks without problem behavior before you deliver reinforcement. At this point DO NOT deliver the reinforcer that was denied when the problem behavior occurred and make sure reinforcement is less that if the student would have accepted the alternative.