

SELF-MANAGEMENT

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Managing our own behavior helps us to be successful in life. We know to walk in a store and speak quietly in a movie theater. We understand that different situations require different behaviors, and we are able to monitor our behaviors and adapt to the situations, or context.

Understanding the “rules” for different situations poses challenges for individuals with ASD. Self-management interventions help individuals with ASD to understand the rules and expectations of given situations, and to regulate their behaviors accordingly. Skills can be targeted to help individuals be more successful and independent socially, behaviorally, and/or adaptively.



Self-management interventions are designed to help individuals *increase desired behaviors and/or decrease problem behaviors*. Learners are taught to:

- *Differentiate between appropriate and inappropriate behaviors*
- *Monitor and record their own behaviors*
- *Reinforce themselves for their successes.*

The interventions can be used effectively for young children through adults, across environments, and can be developed and used by a variety of caregivers or instructors.

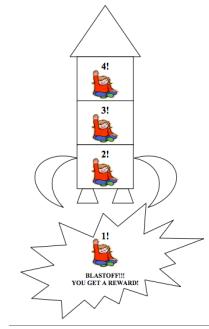
Steps for implementing a self-management system include:

1. Preparing the system
2. Teaching the individual to use the system
3. Implementing the system
4. Promoting independence for the individual

In the Step 1, preparing the system, the team working with the individual determines the target behavior to increase or decrease, and develops a description, so everyone involved has a clear understanding of what the behavior looks like and what it doesn't look like. The description for the individual with ASD is the same, but should be presented in a format that is clearly comprehensible to him.

When preparing the system, reinforcers, to motivate the individual to perform the skill, should be identified. Using a variety of reinforcers is preferable, and when possible, natural reinforcers that are always available should be incorporated into the plan, so the behavior can be maintained when other reinforcers are faded.

The next step in preparation is to develop a system to collect data and the initial criteria for the target behavior. The criteria should be based on the learner's performance before the plan is put in place and set at a level so that they will be successful. Along with this, a system to cue the learner (if needed) and record his or her behavior should be developed. Although paper and pencil systems are often used, thoughtful consideration should be given to the setting and individual using the system.



In Step 2, learners are taught how to use the system; this involves teaching the correct behavior, how to record the behaviors accurately, and to manage the chosen reinforcers. To make sure that the learner understands the expectations for the correct behavior, he or she should be able to demonstrate the skill correctly and incorrectly. Once this is in place, the learner is ready to be taught how to record his or her own behaviors, using the instructional strategies of modeling, prompting, and reinforcement.

When the individual is easily able to demonstrate the skills in the instructional setting, it is time to move to Step 3, implementing the self-management system in the actual setting(s) where they will occur. Their caregivers or teachers support learners during this step; needed materials needed may be provided and individuals are prompted and reinforced for accurately recording the appropriate target behavior and requesting or accessing their reinforcement throughout the process. As the implementation progresses, prompting should be faded to promote independent success.

For all individuals with an ASD, the goal is to promote independence. In Step 4, independence is fostered. Teachers and caregivers check on the individual intermittently to make sure they are correctly recording their behaviors and requesting or retrieving their reinforcement. Once learners are fluent using the system, and the instructors have faded their checks only one or two times a week, steps can be implemented to increase the expectations for earning the reinforcement.

In summary, interventions can be used to increase desired behaviors or decrease problem behaviors, across age levels, domains, and settings. Self-management systems help individuals become more independent by teaching them to recognize and monitor their own behaviors, and increase their opportunities for a more fulfilling life.

Resources

Busick, M., & Neitzel, J. (2010). Self-management for children and youth with autism spectrum disorders: Online training module. (Chapel Hill: National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders, FPG, Child Development Institute, UNC). In Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence (OCALI), *Autism Internet Modules*, www.autisminternetmodules.org. Columbus, OH: OCALI