

Introduction

This book is written for persons who have the task of bringing about deliberate behavior changes in themselves or others. Anyone may want to accomplish a personal behavior change—to weigh less, to work more, to smoke less, or to socialize more. Many persons are charged with making behavior changes—parents in their children, teachers in their students, counselors in their clients, institutional staff in their residents, and employers in their employees. And many persons choose to support behavior changes in each other—marital partners, lovers, coworkers, colleagues, and friends.

Persons who know how to bring about deliberate behavior change in themselves, or in others, also know that, at first, the change may not be widespread enough to be truly valuable. A child with poor articulation is taught better speech by a therapist in a clinic and speaks better to the therapist there, but continues to show poor articulation elsewhere with other persons. An overweight man reduces his eating to within desired limits in his home, but he still overeats in restaurants, at parties, in friends' homes, and at movies and sporting events. A mother easily teaches her son to say "please" when asking for food at the table, and "thank you" when receiving a gift, but she is dismayed when he does not say "please" when asking for help or "thank you" when help is given.

In these cases, the persons causing the behavior change needed a more widespread effect than they have created directly. They probably expected that the changes they had made directly would be enough, so that a "concept" or "rule" had been taught, a "skill" learned, or a "habit" formed—and that the other desired behavior changes would follow naturally. In these cases, they were disappointed. They probably wondered if they had taught poorly, and, more than likely, they suspected that their student was not very bright. (The man trying to eat less probably concluded that he had no "will power.")

This book offers all such persons two lessons—a passive one and an active one.

The passive lesson is that teaching one example never automatically instills a concept, a rule, or a habit. Learning one aspect of anything never means that you will automatically know the rest of it. Doing something skillfully now never means that you will always do it well. Resisting one temptation consistently never means that you now have character, strength, and discipline. Thus, it is not the learner who is dull, learning disabled, or immature, because all learners are alike in this regard: *no one learns a generalized lesson unless a generalized lesson is taught.*

Donald M. Baer is a Roy A. Roberts Distinguished Professor of Human Development and Family Life. He is internationally known for his extensive research and theoretical contributions to the field of applied behavior analysis. The senior editor of this series is also proud to acknowledge him as his mentor and friend.

The active lesson is that there are ways to teach a generalized lesson, or at least encourage one to be learned. To approach the active lesson, we need to always think of what we teach in terms of these sequential questions:

1. What lesson or lessons are we going to teach directly?
2. Does what we want the student to learn stop with what we are going to teach directly, or does it need to be more widespread and generalized than the examples we will teach?
3. If what we want the student to learn needs to be more generalized than the examples we intend to teach, are prepared to teach, know how to teach, are willing to teach, or have time and materials enough to teach, then what are all the ways in which the lesson needs to be more generalized?
4. Considering all the ways in which we want this lesson to be generalized, what are the most likely methods for teaching so that the result is a sufficiently generalized learning?

The answers to question 4 are the major business of this book. But do not lose sight of the fact that before you can effectively use the answers to question 4, you need to answer question 3 as carefully, accurately, and thoroughly as possible. An answer to question 3, in turn, first requires answers to questions 1 and 2. The answer to question 3 usually will determine the answers to question 4; and failure to answer question 3 usually will mean that you are only throwing dice when you try to choose a method for generalizing what you are going to teach.

This discussion is introductory; it needs examples to become useful. But before those examples are considered, some background is in order.

Some Concerns

Concern 1

This book is written for persons who already know how to make systematic, deliberate behavior changes. If that is not true of you, then you are reading the wrong book. Trying for generalized behavior changes is something you need to learn very soon *after* you learn how to make behavior changes, or, if you learn concurrent lessons well, *as* you learn how to make behavior changes. But it is useless to try to learn these methods *before* you have learned how to make behavior changes. Sometimes, it may be worse than useless. As road signs in some very difficult parts of the British Commonwealth occasionally state, "You Have Been Warned!"

How do you know if you already know how to make some kinds of systematic and deliberate behavior changes? The fact that you have sometimes