

Introduction

This book is intended as a guide for parents, teachers, and other professionals as they work to shape and improve the behavior of their children, students, or others. While positive consequences effectively strengthen and maintain desirable behaviors, there are times when additional consequences may be appropriate to reduce unwanted behavior. One such consequence is response cost.

The reader will learn the sequence of steps to follow in order to use response cost in an effective and responsible manner. The examples provided are culled from a body of research in applied behavior analysis and the author's own experiences. As the reader progresses through the book, he or she will probably recognize examples of response cost from his or her own life. Exercises are also placed throughout the manual to guide the reader in understanding and applying response cost in the home, work, or community environment.

The procedures and exercises are designed to be used under the supervision of a professional with a strong behavioral background, someone who can provide guidance to the reader should he or she encounter problems or need suggestions.

Why Should You Consider Response Cost?

Every person, whether it be in the role of professional, family member, or friend, is confronted with behavior he or she would like to change. Behaviors that jeopardize one's health and safety, that detract from a pleasant social or work environment, that interfere with one's learning or attending to task, or that negatively impact on the greater good, are all issues of concern. Although one can work toward changing behaviors using a positive approach, it is sometimes necessary to apply negative consequences to behavior in order to bring about more rapid change.

The elementary school-age child who frequently yells out in class and pushes other children on the playground displays behaviors that require immediate intervention. The adolescent who skips school at an increasing rate and is beginning to participate in illegal activities demands attention as quickly as possible. The adult who repeatedly violates driving regulations must experience a significant consequence in order to change this behavior. In each of these cases, one may need to impose some fine or loss of privileges

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