

Lesson Plan

Objective: To teach **social problem solving** and **assertiveness** skills.

Setting and Materials

Instruction takes place in a classroom. A video recorder is used to videotape role plays.

Content Taught

Assertiveness Training

- Assertiveness training was included to provide an opportunity for individuals who have experienced faulty social learning to remediate some of these deficits by decreasing inhibition of assertive responding.
- The goals of assertiveness training were discussed as an opportunity to build new interpersonal skills to cope better with stressful situations, especially those associated with aggressive responding.
- Training focused on substituting aggressive behavior with assertive behavior.
- Components of assertive behavior included voice intensity (loud v. soft), latency of response (impulsive v. appropriate), duration of response (focused v. lengthy), eye contact (focused v. unfocused), and listening ability (listening to other person v. talking constantly).
- Examples of anger-provoking situations were elicited from the group to allow the teachers to model assertive versus aggressive responses.

Social Problem-Solving Training

- Intervention is based on the social problem-solving treatment manual contained in Nezu et al (1989) and included systematic training in five problem-solving processes:
 1. problem orientation
 2. problem definition and formulation
 3. generation of alternative solutions
 4. decision making
 5. solution implementation and verification

Teaching Procedure

Both types of training were conducted in five weekly 1-hour sessions.

Assertiveness Training

1. Session 1 included an overall orientation to this treatment approach, including definitions and modeled examples of assertive, underassertive, and aggressive behavior.
2. During sessions 2 through 5, treatment continued to focus on eliciting personally relevant situations from each group member as a means of role-playing, modeling, and coaching students' practice of assertive behavior.

3. Role-plays utilized videotape feedback and social reinforcement as a means of role-playing, modeling, and coaching students' practice of assertive behavior. Role-plays utilized videotape feedback and social reinforcement as additional learning strategies. Students were encouraged to practice these skills in situations that occurred outside of the classes. Such experiences were discussed and reviewed at the beginning of each session.

Social Problem-Solving Training

1. Session 1 included an overall orientation to this approach and focused on training in problem orientation by teaching participants to: (a) label emotions as a "signal" to the presence of a problem, (b) inhibit the tendency to respond automatically, and (c) develop a rational set toward the existence of problems.
2. Training and practice in the four remaining steps occurred during sessions 2 through 5, with an emphasis on maintaining a rational orientation throughout. In an attempt to maximize therapeutic gain for each student, as well as to encourage compliance, teachers attempted to ensure that the treatment protocol was made relevant to the problems specific to each participant's life.
3. Students are encouraged to use these skills outside of the sessions; such experiences also were reviewed and discussed at subsequent sessions.

Method of Evaluation

Problem-Solving Task (PST).

- This behavioral measure was designed for this study with specific regard to a population of individuals with mental retardation. It consists of five interpersonal problematic situations commonly experienced by such persons (e.g., making new friends, conflict resolution with another person) that are read to the student. To control for individual preferences, the goal for each problem is provided (e.g., "Your goal is to make a new friend").
- The student is required to respond verbally to a series of four questions concerning the student's means of problem resolution (e.g., "what is the actual problem?" "think of as many ideas to solve the problem as you can" "what are the positive and negative consequences of each idea?" "which idea do you think will solve the problem?").
- All responses are audio taped and later scored by two independent raters for the quality of each response along a 5-point scale (1=low quality; 5=high quality). Depending on the specific question, response quality is defined by the effectiveness, accuracy, and/or relevance of the answer. For example, regarding the question of choosing a solution, a high quality response would be one that articulated an effective solution to the problem (i.e., one that has a high likelihood of solving the problem while maximizing the probability of additional positive effects and minimizing the likelihood of additional problems from occurring), whereas a low quality response would involve a solution that had a low probability of resolving the test problem. Lack of any response by the student was scored as 0.

Role-Play Test of anger arousing situations (RPT).

The RPT (Benson et al., 1986) used in this study consisted of five potentially anger-arousing situations (e.g., being teased, receiving criticism) that are enacted within a role-play, videotaped situation with a confederate. Raters are trained to code students' responses to these situations independently along a 7-point scale of appropriateness (1=very inappropriate; 7=very appropriate) according to the guidelines outlined by Benson et al. (1986).

Lesson Plan based on: Arian, P., Nezu, C.M., & Nezu, A.M. (1991). Assertiveness and problem-solving training for mildly mentally retarded persons with dual diagnoses. Research in Developmental Disabilities, 12, 387-399.