

# OPERANT CONDITIONING- TOKEN ECONOMY



**COURSE: CLINICAL ASSESSMENT AND INTERVENTION**

**Paper VII (PGDCP; SEM II); Unit V**

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# BEHAVIOR THERAPY

Behavior therapy is the systematic application of principles of learning to the analysis and treatment of disorders of behavior. The rationale adopted by practioner of behavior therapy is that neurotic behavior and other types of disorders are predominantly acquired and therefore should be subject to established laws of learning. Knowledge regarding the learning process concerns not only the acquisition of new behavior patterns but the reduction or elimination of existing behavior patterns.

Acc. To Reber (1987): Behavior therapy is that type of psychotherapy that seeks to change maladaptive or abnormal behavior patterns by the use of extension and inhibitory process and positive and negative reinforces in classical and operant conditioning situation.

Thus behavior theorists seeks principles of learning, the process by which these behaviors change in response to the environment.

Many learned behaviors are constructive and adaptive. They help people to cope with daily challenges and to lead happy, productive lives. However, abnormal and undesirable behaviors also can be learned.

behaviorists has pointed **three principles of conditioning** through which a behavior can be learned:

- classical conditioning,
- operant conditioning(or instrumental) conditioning, and
- modeling.

**In behavior therapy abnormal behaviors are modified by means of conditioning.**

# Treatments based on Operant conditioning

Therapists who rely on operant conditioning consistently **provide rewards for appropriate behavior and withhold rewards for inappropriate behavior.** This technique has been **employed frequently, and often successfully, with people experiencing psychosis.** When these patients talk coherently and behave normally, they are rewarded with food, privileges, attention, or something else they value. Conversely, they receive no rewards when they speak bizarrely or display other psychotic behaviors.

In addition, parents, teachers, and therapists have successfully used operant conditioning techniques to change problem in children, such as repeated tantrums, and to teach skills to individuals with mental retardation. Rewards have included meals, recreation time, hugs, and statements of approval.

# TOKEN ECONOMY

Token economies are behavior modification programs sometimes used in psychiatric wards in hospitals. They are also used in classrooms and institutions for the mentally retarded. Token economies are based on operant procedures, and rewards are given for desired behavior and not for undesired behavior. Since it is difficult to give actual rewards for each desired behavior, tokens are commonly given to patients instead, hence the name of the programs. When significant numbers of tokens are collected, patients can exchange them for designated rewards such as ten tokens for a pack of cigarettes or five for extra desert. Undesirable behavior, such as psychotic talk or failure to show up for therapy appointments, may either be ignored have a consequence such as being docked tokens.

In applied settings, a wide range of tokens have been used

- a. Coins
- b. Points
- c. Checkmarks
- d. Images

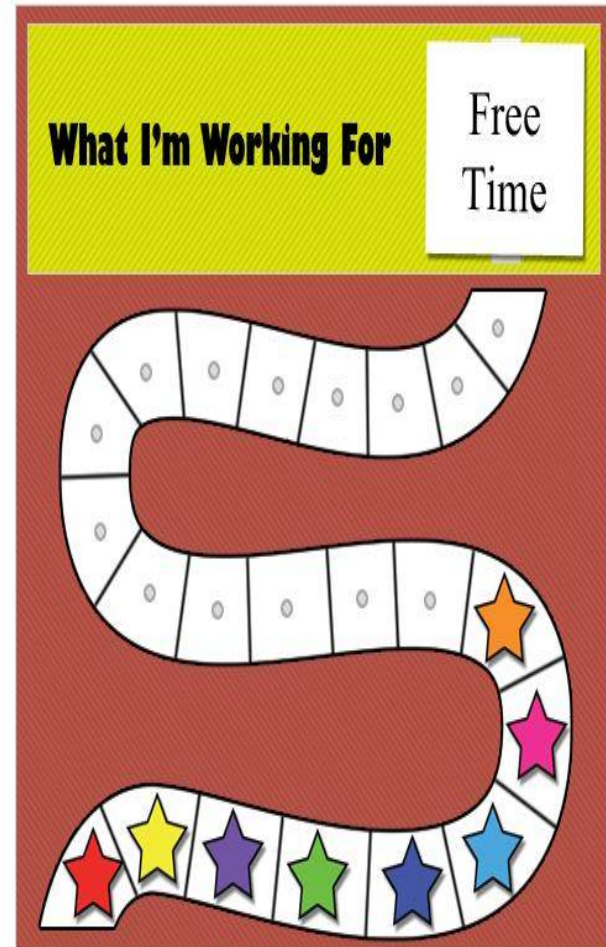
These symbols and objects are completely worthless outside of the patient clinician relationship, but they can be exchanged for other things.

# Token Economies

A Guest Post on Structured  
Positive Reinforcements  
By Leanne Page, BCBA



## “What I’m Working For” Token Economy



**The purpose of using tokens rather than reinforcers is that they bridge the delay between the occurrence of the desired behavior and the ultimate reinforcement. Thus, as the patient makes his bed, sweeps the floor, or takes on a job responsibility, he immediately, receives the requisite tokens. In some problems each time a token is given a social reinforcement accompanies. The patient is complimented on doing a fine job.**

**The goals of a token program are to develop behaviors that will lead to social reinforcement from others, to enhance the skills necessary for the individual to take a responsible social role in the institution and eventually, to live successfully outside the institution. Basically, the individual learns that he can control his own environment in such a way that he will elicit positive reinforcement from others ( Krasner, 1971)**

**Token programs have also been used effectively in working with mental retardates, delinquents, and disturbed school children.**

## REFERENCES

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**Thank you for your Attention**