

Teaching Independent Nighttime Routines Through Prompt Fading and Transfer-of-Stimulus-Control Procedures: A Case Study

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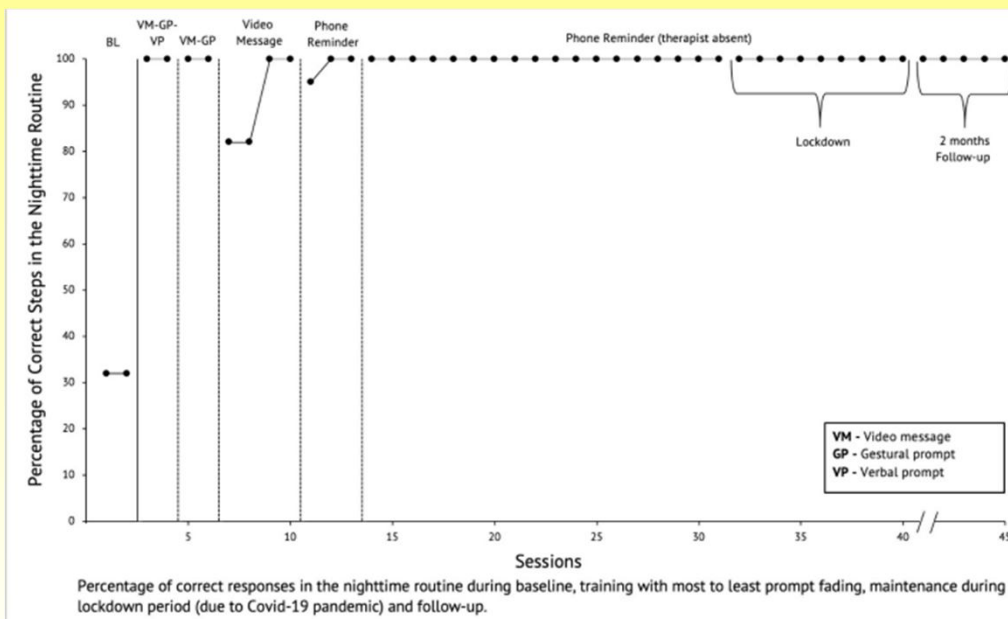
Introduction

- Achieving independence in functional living skills is an important milestone for people health, safety and dignity. Preparing for and obtaining a good night's sleep is among those.
- Age-appropriate skills have immediate benefit in the learner's daily life and are essential for independence (Partington & Mueller, 2012).
- In the teaching of dressing skills, most-to-least prompt procedures have been proven effective. (Galibiye Çetrez Işcan, et al. 2016).
- Most-to-least prompting often leads to errorless learning, beginning with more prompts and gradually fading when the appropriate response begins to occur. The antecedent stimulus change gradually, while the response stays the same. (Cooper, J., Heron, T., and Heward, W.L., 2007).
- The aim of this clinical evaluation was to teach to initiate and complete nighttime routines to an adolescent with Autism Spectrum Disorder through task analysis, most to least prompt fading and positive conditioned reinforcer.

Methods

Participant and Setting:

- 1 male student: 15 years old diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- Verbal and social skills - level 3 of the VB-MAPP
- Setting: student's home (bathroom and bedroom).
- Target Behavioral Chain: preparing himself for the night brushing his teeth, using the bidet, wearing the pajamas, managing independently his clothes, checking them and putting the dirty ones in the laundry basket.



Procedures

- **Baseline:** 2 trials. No feedback or error correction provided, only initial instruction "get ready for the night".
- **Most to least prompt fading:**
 - Phase 1: whatsapp video message "Get ready for the night!" + therapist uses gestural prompt and verbal prompt in each step of the task analysis
 - Phase 2: whatsapp video message + gestural prompt.
 - Phase 3: whatsapp video message
 - Phase 4: telephone reminder only – therapist not visible. After setting the telephone reminder and telling the student that she would go away, the therapist put herself out of visual range.
 - Phase 5: telephone reminder only – therapist absent
- **Fading Criteria:** 2 consecutive sessions with 100% of correct steps.

Results

- The teaching package consisting of task analysis, most to least prompt fading and positive conditioned reinforcer in teaching nighttime routines to an adolescent with ASD was effective.
- Data showed rapid acquisition of the nighttime routines, generalization when the participant was alone with his parents and maintenance after 2-months follow up.
- Transferring stimulus control to telephone reminder was useful to promote independence in completing all the routines involved in this program.

Discussion

- The prompt hierarchy implemented has been effective in transferring the behavior control from prompt to telephone reminder only.
- Although transferring the stimulus control of the chain to a telephone reminder has proved effective in completing the nighttime routines, the chain is under the control of a stimulus (telephone reminder) that is not present in the natural environment of the student, which evokes the beginning of the routines.
- Future studies could extend this teaching package to different behaviors in a multiple baseline design to demonstrate that the emergence of behaviors depend on the treatment (experimental control).