

James Carter

Psy101

Prof. Fullen

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Using a token economy to prevent violence

A behavior I need to change is my want to respond to perceived threats with violence. Every time I have been sentenced to prison was due to a violent incident. I could use a token economy model to modify my behavior. The way I was raised only reinforced violence as an acceptable consequence of undesirable behavior. It would take a strong tokens to change my natural learned responses.

As a child I learned that if my behavior offended or aggravated my parents it led to violence. The lack of positive attention and reinforcement made me accept and sometimes even desire the negative attention. It taught my developing mind that violence was a means to an end. It was acceptable to hurt others if I chose to. If people threatened me, while I was growing up, I learned how to prevent that threat. I learned that if you hurt someone bad enough they would never threaten me again. I learned it was best to hurt others to prevent being hurt.

Society has attempted to show me this behavior is undesirable and its not acceptable to hurt others. This has led to lengthy prison sentences and spending my adult life incarcerated. I give myself positive tokens such as visits, phone calls, sports, or extra sleep. When I feel I handled a situation wrong I am hard on myself. I will work out to exhaustion, reflect and mediate, and deprive myself of things I enjoy.

It took a long time in isolation during this prison journey to realize I needed to change. I had to discover why I had so much rage and pain inside, and then learn how to let it go. Once I learned the sources of my undesirable character traits I began to challenge my core beliefs. This helped me to modify my thoughts and behavior. I learned with a will to change that change was possible. Now I may feel like reacting violently but its not an instinctual reaction. That allows me time to think on my actions and words, when before I would just lash out.