



DEFINING ASSENT & SHAPING PARTICIPATION

From the CEU "The Myth of Assent? Assent as Behavior, Escape Contingencies, and Shaping Participation"
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RAD N BAD RULE

Assent is behavior, so define it and treat it as data. The better question is why the environment is producing escape.

HOW TO USE THIS: Treat assent as data. Define it for each learner, then ask why the environment is producing escape.

1. OPERATIONALLY DEFINE, FOR THIS LEARNER

	Observable behaviors
Assent (participating)	e.g., approaches materials, smiles, responds within 5 seconds
Withdrawal of assent	e.g., turns away, pushes materials, says 'no' or 'break'
Escape-maintained problem behavior	e.g., elopement, aggression

2. WHY IS THE ENVIRONMENT PRODUCING ESCAPE?

- ☐ Is the task too hard? (skill deficit)
- ☐ Is reinforcement too thin or not preferred?
- ☐ Are there aversive conditions (noise, long demands, a new staff member)?
- ☐ What's the history: has escape been reinforced before?

3. SHAPE FUNCTIONAL REFUSAL

- ☐ Teach 'break,' 'not yet,' 'help,' and 'different activity'
- ☐ Honor and reinforce each request, especially early on
- ☐ Prompt the request before problem behavior begins

4. MAKE PARTICIPATION REINFORCING

- ☐ Dense reinforcement for participation at first
- ☐ Short demands, plenty of choices, and preferred materials embedded
- ☐ Gradually increase demands and delay as tolerance builds
- ☐ Never use forced compliance; don't allow unlimited avoidance of necessary skills without a plan

5. TRACK IT

- ☐ Frequency of functional requests vs. problem behavior
- ☐ Percentage of session time with assent behaviors
- ☐ Review weekly; adjust the environment, not just the learner

THE RECEIPTS · REFERENCES

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