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Self-Monitoring and Self-Recognition

Summary:

Self-monitoring is a systematic process of recording planned actions, setting goals for the frequency of those actions, and keeping records to track frequencies. Individuals can monitor themselves, but substantial evidence shows that it is best to share monitoring with someone else (sometimes using a buddy system). This is because the attention and response of others provides social consequences, which often improves self-management. Research also shows that it is very helpful to associate small self-generated positive consequences for competing a targeted behavior or small self-chosen negative consequences for failing to reach a goal.

Resources Needed:

- Recording device (i.e. pencil and paper, golf counter)
- Pad of paper or pre-printed form that defines targeted behaviors and track performance (written or graphed)
- Social or tangible incentives (in some cases) and negative consequences
- For some variations, a random signaling device (i.e. cassette player or kitchen timer) may be useful

Implementation Steps:

- Discuss self-monitoring process with those involved in an effort to help enhance participation levels. It is particularly important to discuss the payoffs for the participant openly and directly (self-monitoring is not effective if it feels punitive rather than helpful).
- Clearly and specifically define the desirable behaviors.
- Discuss the recording instrument and then provide the participant with recording materials (i.e. pencil and paper).
- Clearly define the duration of the recordings, such as a daily throughout the day or during a certain period of the day.
- Concurrent adult monitoring may be necessary if errors in counting (or cheating) are detected; self-monitoring is a skill that requires practice.
- Develop a simple graph (or chart) to display improvements.
- In some cases, a simple social or tangible reward or mild aversive contingency in conjunction with self-monitoring is needed to change behavior on a permanent basis. Increased verbal praise or more periodic awards of free-time can help reinforce positive or correct negative behavior.

Variations:

- If antisocial behaviors are reinforced by peers, it may be important to implement a group contingency program for all those involved or the entire group
- There is evidence that simple contracts are also effective as part of self-monitoring, but ONLY if the student or participant knows there is something to be gained. "Contracts" that are forced on young people that include only negative consequences are notoriously ineffective.
- Self-recognition is a quiet (generally) exercise where youth or adults learn to recognize their own successes in a non-egotistical manner using written assignments or small group discussions. Self-recognition exercises help individuals focus on effort (actions) as opposed to taking credit for talents or personal gifts.
 - Written assignments help individuals describe their own achievement of positive targeted actions among their peers, in school, or in their communities.

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- There is also evidence that self recognition can also be the focus of small group discussions. It is important to note that self-recognition is most appropriate upon participants learning to recognize their strengths with humility.
- Positive stories are also forms of self-recognition for students and staff. Here, positive stories about the students and the adults who love them are listened to, watched or read stories, with an emphasis on modeling positive behavior.

Rationale and Evidence Base:

There is substantial evidence that self-monitoring can increase school achievement, social competence, and health behaviors. It can also reduce alcohol and tobacco use, and antisocial behaviors. Increasing the level of recognition an individual or group receives for positive behaviors is linked to dramatic increases in achievement and decreases in problematic behaviors. However, research indicates that it is important to recognize targeted acts and not attributes. The recognition of actions can encourage continued effort, whereas recognition of attributes provides no guidance for action, may support egotism, and may create anxiety over the loss of an ascribed positive "label."

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