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Self-Modeling

Summary:

Self-modeling is a form of observational learning that uses oneself as the model. There are two sub classifications of self-modeling. The first is *positive self-review*, where children and youth repeatedly observe edited images of themselves exhibiting adaptive behaviors in order to fine tune newly learned or poorly maintained skills. The second is *feedforward*. Feedforward is a self-modeling technique that helps individuals learn new behaviors by recombining skills, transferring existing skills to other environments, using hidden supports for anxiety-related disabilities, and transferring role-play to real-world contexts. For both *positive self-review* and *feedforward*, positive or adaptive self-images are captured on videotape and then edited into short vignettes (2-4 minutes). Due to substantial evidence regarding its effectiveness, videotaped self-modeling is the most common modality for this work. Additional evidence shows that audio-tape, imagination, rope-play, and other forms of narrative media are linked to positive, but more modest outcomes.

Resources Needed:

- Role-play or Narrative script
- Video camera or other video-recording device
- Video tape or recordable CD

Implementation Steps:

- Identify target behavior(s).
- Discuss self-modeling process with those involved in an effort to help enhance participation levels.
- Prior to video taping, spend some time rehearsing the role-play or narrative script with those involved.
- During a regularly scheduled class or activity, the teacher (or instructor or therapist) will video tape normal classroom activities during which the target behavior might occur.
- Then, begin constructing the self-modeling video. During this step, solicit the help of the participant's close friend or peer to role play or review narrative script with participant. The aim of this step is to help the participant achieve optimal levels of the targeted behavior(s). Continue to videotape role-plays or narrative script reviews until the participant performs the targeted behavior(s) multiple times.
- Once multiple instances of optimal behavior are captured on the peer and participant video, review the teacher classroom video and edit out all maladaptive or less than optimal examples of targeted behaviors.
- Next, insert a video segment of the peer and participant engaging role play or the narrative script at the targeted level. Repeat this step, creating 3 or more 2-4 minute videos. This step is important, as seeing variations of targeted behavior will help keep the participant engaged.
- Allow the participant to review each of the edited videos often (at least 6 times over a 5 week period).

Variations:

- Imaginal self-modeling or "mental rehearsal" is an imaginal only observational learning technique that has been found to have overall positive, but modest outcomes. This self-modeling technique requires less teacher/therapist effort and does not require the use of a videoplayer. However, this form of self-modeling is less reliable, as the likelihood for rogue occurrences is high.

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- Imaginal peer modeling also has positive, but modest outcomes. The outcome variation is largely due to the lack of clarity in reports about the basis for selecting models.
- Mastery self-imagining or “psyching” oneself up to perform a new task or engage in a competitive task is often used by sports athletes. This may include envisioning winning or cheering fans. There is some evidence that this technique may be useful when combined with peer or role modeling (i.e. admired celebrity).
- Picture prompts or photo activity scheduling, is another variation of self-modeling. With picture prompts, descriptive instructions are delivered through a series of photographs of an individual engaged in targeted positive behaviors. The number of photographs depends on the targeted individual’s developmental age and experience with a particular skill or skill set. This variation is closely related to video-self modeling.

Rationale and Evidence Base:

Self-modeling is a very effective intervention that uses observational learning to help individuals (i.e. youth, young adults, and people with disabilities) reduce problems with personal adjustment, social adjustment and communication, such as conduct disorder, depression, social withdrawal, and mutism. Substantial research shows immediate moderate to dramatic changes toward targeted behaviors, which can be fairly well maintained. There is also growing evidence that self-modeling demonstrates effectiveness with physical skills, academic issues, and vocational issues. This wide application of the self-modeling technique can be attributed to the powerful effects of observational learning on early development and to the enhanced feelings of self-efficacy as participants observe themselves engaging in targeted behaviors. Reports show that self-modeling holds promise as a self-management technique because it fits well with self-monitoring, self-evaluation, and self-reinforcement.

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