

Module: Time Delay

CASE STUDY EXAMPLES

Progressive Time Delay: Zoe

Zoe is an eleven-year-old girl with autism who receives services within a self-contained classroom. There are four other children in Zoe's class; all of them have been diagnosed with ASD. Zoe's teacher, Mr. Connelly, and his assistant, Ms. Smith, are in Zoe's classroom at all times. A target skill that Mr. Connelly and Zoe's parents would like her to acquire is the ability to make requests. Mr. Connelly decides to use progressive time delay to teach this skill during mealtimes because he feels that using small, incremental delays will help Zoe be more successful at learning this skill. He also decides that lunch is an optimal time to work on requesting because Zoe is highly motivated by food which could serve as the natural reinforcer for the activity. The target skill he has identified is for Zoe to request more food at lunch by saying, "More, please."

Through his observations, Mr. Connelly has determined that Zoe is able to wait during activities (e.g., waiting in line, waiting for her turn), imitate others (e.g., clapping when others clap, repeating what people say), stay seated during individual work time (although she typically stays seated for only about five minutes at a time), increase target behaviors in response to reinforcers, and follow one-step instructions (e.g., "Get coat," "Sit in chair").

Before beginning the progressive time delay intervention, Mr. Connelly selects the cue that will signal Zoe to request food at mealtimes. He decides that instead of giving her her lunch all at once, he will provide Zoe with small portions of her favorite foods so that she will need to request more. Mr. Connelly plans to set up the environment by placing a plate of food at Zoe's place at the table and by sitting across the table from her with the additional food directly in front of him and out of Zoe's reach. Mr. Connelly also will cue Zoe to request "more" by holding up the food and saying, "Zoe, what do you want?"

Mr. Connelly then selects the controlling prompt. He decides that he will say, "More, please" if Zoe does not use the target phrase within the time interval. Because she imitates other's verbalizations well, Mr. Connelly feels that this controlling prompt will help Zoe be successful.

Before implementing progressive time delay, Mr. Connelly collects baseline data over two consecutive days. Each day he implements five trials to determine Zoe's current use of the target skill (i.e., "More, please" to request more food at lunch). On the first day, Mr. Connelly sits with Zoe at lunch, provides the cue (i.e., sitting across from her with the food out of reach), and waits for Zoe to finish eating the small portions of food that he has given her. As Zoe finishes eating what is on her plate, she reaches for the food. Mr. Connelly holds up the food and says, "Zoe, what do you want?" Mr. Connelly repeats this process each time Zoe reaches for the food instead of requesting more.

Module: Time Delay

CASE STUDY EXAMPLES

During each trial, Zoe does not use the target skill. On the following day, Mr. Connelly completes the same process to collect sufficient baseline data. Again, Zoe does not respond to Mr. Connelly's delivery of the cue during each of the five trials.

With baseline data collection complete, Mr. Connelly begins to implement progressive time delay with Zoe. To begin the teaching activity, Mr. Connelly arranges the environment so that it is ready when Zoe comes to the table. Mr. Connelly then sits down at the table as Zoe starts eating. When she finishes the portions of food that have been provided, she reaches for the food in front of Mr. Connelly who says, "Zoe, what do you want?" He immediately says, "More, please. You said, 'More, please.' Here's more food," while placing another small portion of food on Zoe's plate. Mr. Connelly continues using the 0-second delay for the remainder of lunch.

The following day, Mr. Connelly decides to increase the time interval to 1-second. Therefore, he will wait 1-second after he provides the cue (i.e., "Zoe, what do you want?" while holding up food) before delivering the controlling prompt ("More, please."). When Zoe finishes her initial plate of food, she reaches for the food and grunts. Mr. Connelly then says, "What do you want?," waits one second, and delivers the controlling prompt after Zoe does not respond. When Zoe finishes eating the food on her plate again, she reaches for the food and grunts. Mr. Connelly delivers the cue again and waits one second; however, Zoe does not respond. Therefore, Mr. Connelly delivers the controlling prompt again by saying, "More please. You said, 'More please.' Here's more food," while placing another small portion of food on Zoe's plate. Mr. Connelly continues using the 1-second delay for the remainder of lunch. During the last five trials, Zoe begins to say, "Muh" when Mr. Connelly provides the cue. Mr. Connelly immediately provides another serving of food and says, "You said, 'More, please.' Here's more food" when she vocalizes in this way.

On the third and fourth days of the intervention, Zoe is responding correctly to the cue all of the time. Because she has reached 100% correct responding, Mr. Connelly can now increase the delay. He decides to increase the delay to two seconds. He implements the teaching trials in the same manner as before except this time he inserts a 2-second delay after he provides the cue. He uses this delay for four more days until Zoe reaches 100% correct responding. As Zoe becomes more successful at using the target skill, Mr. Connelly gradually increases the delay until it reaches five to six seconds. At this point, the delay is faded out completely so that Zoe can independently request at mealtimes by saying, "More, please."

As soon as Zoe has mastered the target skill, Mr. Connelly plans to use progressive time delay during other activities to expand Zoe's requesting skills. For example, Zoe

Module: Time Delay

CASE STUDY EXAMPLES

has difficulty asking for help when getting her coat on at the end of the day, which provides another opportunity to teach Zoe to request by using time delay.