VSA Learning Guide
Module 9: Reinforcement & Training Applications

Before the module lessons:

Overview

As positive trainers, it is our job to increase the likelihood of, or reinforce, desired behaviors in desired settings. By choosing the appropriate type and value of reinforcer for a situation and distributing it using an appropriate schedule of reinforcement we can set up our learners for success.

It is possible that dogs, like humans, can be both extrinsically and intrinsically motivated. By providing dogs with choice, we can help satisfy some of their intrinsic motivations and improve performance and wellbeing.

After learning about the function of behavior, managing behavior, and training new behaviors, it is time to put it all together and help client's solve behavior 'problems'. While there aren't really behavior 'problems', only problem situations; functional assessments can help clients understand why their dog behaves the way he does and set the stage for change. However, not all clients want to learn about functional assessments, so it is the job of the trainer to help break down the solution into easy to implement steps.

Module Problem

A client calls asking for help with their dog's humping problem. Every time a guest walks in the door, the dog starts humping the guest's leg until the client pulls the dog off the guest and gives him a chew toy. The dog tends to calm down once he has the chew toy.

Answer these questions in your head before proceeding to the module lessons:

- What is the function of the humping behavior?
- What could the dog do instead of humping guests?
- How could the client prevent the humping behavior?
- What could the client teach the dog to do instead?
- How would the client know if the new plan is working?

Learning Objectives

- Explain and demonstrate the process of reinforcing desired behaviors
- Explain the application of functional assessments to clients
- Describe and apply the VSA Training Roadmap
- Implement VSA's Formula for Success with clients

Key Terms

- Primary & secondary reinforcer
- Intrinsic & extrinsic motivation
- Low & high value reinforcers
- Continuous & intermittent reinforcement
- Fixed ratio/interval
- Variable ratio/interval
- Choice
- Appetitive & aversive stimuli

Module Outline

- Lessons 1 & 2: What is Reinforcement? & Types of Reinforcement
- Lesson 3: Reinforcement Schedules
- Lesson 4: The Power of Choice
- Chapter 2: Training Applications

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After the Types of Reinforcement lesson:

Lesson Summary

Events that influence the future strength of a behavior that it immediately follows, known as consequences, drive behavior. Consequences are the outcome, the results that give the necessary feedback to the animal about the usefulness of their behavior. The "what's in it for me" from the dog's viewpoint. Consequences can make behavior either more or less probable. Behaviors that "work" are more likely to be repeated. This process of contingently providing a consequence that maintains or increases the behavior it follows is known as reinforcement.

The stimulus, event, or condition that serves to strengthen the behavior it follows is known as a reinforcer. The value of a reinforcer depends on the learner. Common reinforcers used by dog trainers are: food, toys, praise, and real-world rewards. Reinforcers that increase the probability of a behavior without the learner having any previous experience with it are called **primary reinforcers**. Primary reinforcers are automatically reinforcing from the moment of birth. They are usually associated with a physical necessity such as food, water, and warmth.

Unlike primary reinforcers, stimuli that were previously neutral but become reinforcing through their repeated pairing with a primary reinforcer are known as secondary reinforcers. Such reinforcers can also be paired with other neutral stimuli to create additional secondary reinforcers. Most reinforcers are secondary reinforcers including: an event marker, praise, and petting. An easy way to differentiate between types of reinforcers is to associate primary reinforcers with "nature" (no need to convince your learner that these are good things), and to associate secondary reinforcers with "nurture" (these need to be paired with something that is reinforcing to that particular learner in order to become reinforcing to them).

When considering types of reinforcers for training, it may be beneficial to first consider what process makes a learner move toward a goal. In psychology, **motivation** is an internal process that makes a learner move toward a goal. Like intelligence, motivation can't be directly observed but can only be inferred by noting a learner's behavior. In humans, there are two types of motivation: 1) motivation from within (autonomy, mastery, purpose), or **intrinsic motivation**, and 2) motivation from without, or **extrinsic motivation** (compensation, punishment, reward), Most dog trainers relay on extrinsic motivation. One factor to consider when evaluating extrinsic motivators is the value of that reinforcer to the learner. Reinforcers can be highly motivating, or **high value reinforcers**, or less motivating, **low value reinforcers**. It is important to match the perceived value of the reinforcer with the perceived value of difficulty the task. For example, if a dog performs a sit in the kitchen for a low-value treat, the same dog will probably be more motivated to sit in the middle of a distracting dog park for a high value treat. Putting together the dog's perceived value of reinforcers and distractions, referred to by VSA as a **distraction vs. reinforcement hierarchy**, can be helpful when verifying training. Using a distraction as a reinforcer for a desired behavior is a powerful way of motivating learners.

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Key Concept Questions

- Think of a specific task that you do not enjoy doing. Why do you do it? Are you intrinsically or extrinsically motivated? What are your primary or secondary reinforcers? What are your high and low value reinforcers?

- Write what you might include in an instructional email to your group class clients if you want to them to bring both low value and high value reinforcers to class.

- Write how you would explain the concept of reinforcement vs. distraction hierarchy to a private client in your own words.

Primary vs. Secondary Reinforcement Activity Questions

- What went well? Were you able to identify your dog's primary and secondary reinforcers?
- How many primary reinforcers did you come up with? Do you believe you should use those when training?
- Do you believe that you have enough reinforcers in your training toolkit? If not, how could you add more?

High vs. Low Value Reinforcement Activity Questions

- What went well? Were you able to identify your dog's high and low value reinforcers?
- How many different reinforcers did you come up with? Do you believe you should use those when training?
- Do you believe your dog would perform a behavior no matter the situation using the highest value reinforcer?

Reinforcement vs. Distraction Hierarchy Activity Questions

- What went well? Were you able to identify your dog's reinforcement vs. distraction hierarchy?
- Do you believe that the distraction and reinforcers in the same row would be effective? For example, if you had kibble in the reinforcement row and neighbor's cat in the distraction row, would you dog perform a behavior for a piece of kibble in the presence of the neighbor's cat?

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- Write how you would explain the concept of reinforcement vs. distraction hierarchy to a private client in your own words.

- Are there any other terms or ideas in this lesson that are new to you? Write down any unfamiliar terms and their definitions in your learning journal. Be sure to review these before module tests.

Summary Question

- What is this lesson about? What was the 'take-home' for you? Take a few minutes to write your own summary of this lesson:

Synthesis Question

- Cherish is a 8 year old red Shepherd mix. Recently adopted and without much car experience (except going to the vet), her people have asked for help getting her into and out of the car. When you ask what Cherish likes, they say that she isn't really food motivated (they tried using her kibble), but she loves getting pets and praise. They report that she just wants to please. You ask what they have tried so far to get Cherish into and out of the car, and the client immediately asks Cherish to "load up". After several cues, Cherish does not move from a stand. The client then cues Cherish to sit with several verbal 'sit' cues; and, once Cherish sits next to the client's leg, the client pulls her head toward his legs and rubs it vigorously repeating, "good girl, Cherish", in a calm tone. Cherish blinks repeatedly, puts her ears back, lifts a paw, and licks her lips. The client tells you it's a work in progress, and once his hand leaves Cherish' s head she stands, shakes off, and walks away. Propose a distraction vs. reinforcement hierarchy for Cherish. It may be helpful to consider her body language and/or conduct a functional assessment.

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After the Schedules of Reinforcement lesson:

Lesson Summary

In dog training not only is the type of reinforcer important, but also how the reinforcer is delivered is important. Similar to the timing of conditioning, the timing of reinforcement deliver can impact training. When every 'correct' behavior earns positive reinforcement, the consequence is said to be **continuous reinforcement**. This type of reinforcement produces reliable behavior quickly. When only some 'correct' behaviors earn reinforcement, the consequence is referred to as **intermittent reinforcement**. This type of reinforcement is less lily to extinguish, but can lead to frustration.

Another factor affecting schedule of reinforcement is whether they occur regularly, or **fixed**, or if there is some randomness, or **variable**. With a variable schedule, reinforcement frequency varies around a predetermined average ratio or interval, so it winds up being "roughly every three minutes" or "roughly every third step." Thus, schedules of reinforcement can be: 1) reinforcement is provided after a number of repetitions, or **fixed ratio**, 2) reinforcement is provided after a number of repetitions that varies around an average, or **variable ratio**, 3) reinforcement is provided when the behavior happens, but only after a fixed amount of time has elapsed, or **fixed interval**, and 4) the interval varies around an average length of time, or **variable interval**. The most reliable schedule of reinforcement is continuous reinforcement.

Key Concept Questions

- Describe an example of fixed ratio in your own words.

- Describe an example of variable ratio in your own words.

- Describe an example of fixed interval in your own words.

- Describe an example of variable interval in your own words.

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- Which schedule of reinforcement is most effective for you? Which schedule does your place or work employ?

- Think of a time when you were learning a new skill. What schedule of reinforcement did the instructor apply? Was this instructor one of the best you've ever experienced? Why or why not?

- Are there any other terms or ideas in this lesson that are new to you? Write down any unfamiliar terms and their definitions in your learning journal. Be sure to review these before module tests.

Summary Question

- What is this lesson about? What was the 'take-home' for you? Take a few minutes to write your own summary of this lesson:

Synthesis Question

- Recall what you learned in the Canine Cognition module about the reward system. How would you describe the reliability of using continuous reinforcement to a client who does not believe in carrying treats all the time?

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After The Power of Choice lesson:

Chapter Summary

The right, power, or opportunity to choose is not often given to dogs. **Choice**, although placed in a prominent position in the hierarchy of needs, is a freedom that dogs often lack. Humans, when given choice, tend to perform better at work. When allowed to exercise autonomy, mastery, and purpose, humans tend to produce better results. Such factors help create intrinsic motivation and lead to engagement rather than compliance. By eliminating the contingency based, if/then rewards, humans can achieve high performance through creativity.

If we apply these principles to dogs, by providing choice we can allow dogs to exercise autonomy, mastery, and purpose and exercise their intrinsic motivations. Allowing dogs to explore, discover, and make choices – along with human guidance when needed – encourages a good balance of independent and dependent learning that increases confidence. By providing choice, trainers can allow learners to feel safe and earn their trust. Without choice, learners may experience learned helplessness and no offer desired behaviors. Humans can encourage choosing in dogs by providing choice of elimination time, food, equipment, resting place, and motivators.

Key Concept Questions

- Think about a job that you've held in the past. How did your manager motivate you? Was this technique effective? Why or why not?

- Consider the story of 20 percent time. How could you implement 20 percent time with your dog?

- We've dissected extrinsic motivation and dogs. What are your dog's intrinsic motivators? How could you help him or her fulfill them? Do you believe we should harness these during training?

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- Which decisions are not on the table for your dog? In other words, which choices should you make for your dog to keep him/her safe?

How Many Choices Plan Activity Questions

- How many choices did you make today? How many choices has your dog made?
- Do you think your dog should have more choices?
- How could you increase your dog's ability to choose?
- What other knowledge or experience does it remind you of?

How Many Choices Plan Activity Questions

- What went well? Were you able to provide a choice for your dog
- What could have gone better? Do you think your dog understood the choice?
- What other knowledge or experience does it remind you of?
- What might you need to learn for better mastery, or what strategies might you use next time to get better results? Could you teach a cue or make an association with a stimulus?
- What if your solution did not work? How could you make the choice simpler for your dog?
- How could you provide more choices for your dog?

Summary Question

- What is this lesson about? What was the 'take-home' for you? Take a few minutes to write your own summary of this lesson:

Synthesis Question

- List the cognitive abilities of dogs (try to recall from memory and revisit the Canine Cognition module afterward). Write how you might provide a choice for the dog by exercising this cognitive ability. For additional brainstorming, consider how you might be able to provide choice using the different types of intelligence.

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After the Problem Solving Using Functional Assessments lesson:

Lessons Summary

To determine the function of a behavior, professional dog trainers determine the antecedent, behavior, and consequence by performing a functional assessment. Functional assessments can help clients understand why their dog is behaving in this way, and how their behavior may be influencing their dogs' behavior. While trainers like to focus on arranging antecedents (which is important!), consequences drive behavior. Consequences can pleasant or unpleasant. A pleasant stimulus, or a stimulus that evokes approach behavior, is known as an **appetitive stimulus**. An unpleasant stimulus, or a stimulus that evokes avoidance or escape behavior, is known as an **aversive stimulus**. Trainers refer to aversive stimuli as punishers, and appetitive stimuli as reinforcers. The stimulus in the antecedent and the consequence come from the environment; thus, behavior is a product of the environment. By changing the environment, the antecedent and/or the consequence, we can change behavior. The keys to performing a functional assessment are to focus on the smallest meaningful unit of behavior, and to rely on an objective analysis of the environment.

Trainers use functional assessments to help clients understand their dog's 'problem behavior', or behavior that is unacceptable to the human. Such behaviors may be unacceptable because they pose a health risk, or because they occur in an unacceptable setting. However, these 'problem behaviors' serve a function for the animal. By teaching clients how to perform functional assessments, they can begin to understand the function of 'problem behavior' and how to address it. Functional assessments help prevent labeling, circular thinking, and assigning motivations and help encourage observation, data collection, and testing hypotheses. When a client complains of 'problem behavior' get a detailed description of the behavior, find out what happens before and after the behavior, and perform a functional assessment. This can provide the client with a where and when (antecedent), what (behavior), and why (consequence) for the behavior. This helps shape a management plan to prevent that behavior, and a training plan of what they'd like the dog to do instead. As trainers, we can change the where, when and why so that the dog can change the what.

Once a functional assessment has been performed, trainers can proceed with a management plan by defining the problem, selecting a strategy, choosing a tool, implementing the plan, and evaluating the plan (by perhaps performing another functional assessment). In some cases, management may be effective by itself; however, it is important to consider the welfare of the dog and what happens if the management fails. Functional assessments can also serve as the inspiration for the training plan by helping determine the goal behavior, setting up an ideal training environment, and developing the criteria for training and proofing the behavior. In a perfect world, trainers would teach the dog a behavior that earns the exact same reinforcement as the 'problem behavior', but this is not always an option. After these plans the client now has the tools to manage in advance, teach what they want, reinforce what they like, redirect what they don't, and evaluate their progress.

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Key Concept Questions

- Write what antecedent, behavior, and consequence mean in your own words.

Antecedent means…

Behavior means….

Consequence means…

- Dogs do what works. How would you explain this concept to a client using your own example?

- Think of a behavior that your dog performs that you consider a 'problem'. Conduct a functional assessment to determine the function of this behavior.

A:

B:

C:

P:

- Think of a goal behavior you'd like to see instead of the 'problem' behavior. Conduct a functional assessment to determine the function of this future behavior.

A:

B:

C:

P:

- Create a management plan for the 'problem' behavior and a training plan for the future behavior (use the PDFs found in the course resources or write your notes below).

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Functional Assessment Practice Activity Questions

- What went well? Were you able to perform a successful functional assessment?
- What could have gone better? Did you draw a blank? Did you choose a different behavior than the instructor? Did you select a behavior for the antecedent or consequence rather than environmental stimuli?
- What might you need to learn for better mastery, or what strategies might you use next time to get better results? Could you make a list of management tools?
- How you could discuss your functional assessment with a client?

Summary Question

- What is this lesson about? What was the 'take-home' for you? Take a few minutes to write your own summary of this lesson:

Synthesis Question

- Flash the 1 year old border collie loves to chase birds, play tug, and perform tricks for a tasty meat treat. Flash's owners report that he has one problem behavior that they struggle to live with. Anytime someone cracks the front door Flash will shove it open with his nose, dash out, and chase birds. His owners are worried that he will escape the house and get hit by a car on their busy street. Perform a functional assessment to determine the function of Flash's door dashing behavior. Once you have the function, determine a management plan to prevent Flash's door dashing and a training plan to teach Flash what his owner's do want him to do: stop dashing out of the door! Consider the types of reinforcers you might use, and be sure to perform a functional assessment for the future behavior as well.

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After the Problem Solving Using Functional Assessments lesson:

Lessons Summary

Different clients have different needs when it comes to helping their dog. Some clients will want the trainer to do as much of the work as possible, whereas other clients soak up information like a sponge. At VSA, we find it helpful to determine the motivation of the client before giving advice: is the client driven by knowledge or results? Of course most clients want results, but some may want to enjoy the process to get results more than others. For clients who want to learn, they might be interested in the 'why' as well as the 'how' of training. They'll ask many questions, make suggestions, and are quick to test your suggestions. Knowledge driven clients may benefit from learning how to conduct functional assessments, testing their dog's cognitive style, and sharpening their training mechanics.

Other clients, such as the results driven clients, may want trainers to cut to the chase. These clients are not necessarily interested in why something works; they just want the dog to behave 'better'. Results-driven clients are happy for you to do all the training, come to you with every little problem, and sometimes are not very engaged during sessions. When working with these clients it may be best to provide them with immediate results and teach them the skills they need for their one issue.

Whether working with results or knowledge driven clients, it might benefit them to understand the relationship between the environment and behavior. A quick explanation of what happens in the environment before and after changes the behavior may be all that's needed. With knowledge-driven clients, trainers can provide a bit more information. When discussing antecedents, trainers can mention the importance of modifying antecedents via management and cueing. When discussing the behavior, trainers can teach the client about dog body language, observation skills, and developing a training plan. When discussing consequences, trainers can discuss how to determine the most effective reinforcer and explain the reinforcement vs. distraction hierarchy. These broad skills will help knowledge-drive clients tackle nearly every common dog behavior problem!

Like with many concepts, less is more when it comes to teaching clients about functional assessments. By helping them identify the problem behavior, determine a goal behavior, and finding immediate and long-term solutions, trainers can camouflage functional assessments, management, and training into an easily digestible concept: the VSA Training Objectives. By following the VSA Training Roadmap, trainers can stay on track and make training as easy and applicable as possible for their clients.

Key Concept Questions

- Think of a concept that someone once explained to you that was far more complicated than it needed to be. Write down how you felt before during and after the discussion.

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- Consider the knowledge-driven client. How long do you believe a discussion about functional assessments should be with this client? Write down the points you might cover during such a conversation. If you need to think of a hypothetical situation, think of problem you might see in a home in your area.

- Set a timer and practice saying what you've written. How long did it take? Repeat this exercise for the results-driven client. Write your notes below and time yourself as practice.

Communicate Training Objectives to a Client Activity Questions

- What went well? Were you able to create training objectives for Mugsy's owners?
- What could you do better next time? Could you simplify the objectives even further?
- How and when should you present these objectives to a client?

Summary Question

- What is this lesson about? What was the 'take-home' for you? Take a few minutes to write your own summary of this lesson:

Synthesis Question

- Recall the steps to the VSA Training Roadmap. When you reflect on everything you've learned so far with VSA, where could you best utilize the key takeaways from each module in the roadmap? Match the module with a step on the roadmap, and think about how you could use these takeaways in your own training process with clients.

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Before the module test:

Module Summary

According to behavioral science, a stimulus that increases the likelihood that a behavior will occur is referred to as a reinforcer. Reinforcement is the foundation on which positive training is built, so it is important to understand how to use such a powerful tool. There are several types of reinforcers. Primary reinforcers are automatically reinforcing because they operate innately, whereas secondary reinforcers are learned. Many rewards used in dog training are secondary reinforcers. Common reinforcers are food, toys, praise, and real world rewards. The value of a reinforcer is designated by the learner and can be determined by observing the learner's behavior. Reinforcer value is also dependent on the situation in which the reinforcer is presented, namely the environment and its potentially distracting stimuli. Creating a reinforcement versus distraction hierarchy can help determine which reinforcer will be most effective in a certain situation. It is our job as trainers to use reinforcers ethically: avoiding negative reinforcement and using primary reinforcers corresponding to the five freedoms. Great trainers use the very stimuli that distract the dog as reinforcers, or find creative solutions for handlers to implement with ease. In addition to the different types of reinforcers, there are also different schedules of reinforcement. Different Schedules of Reinforcement can create different results, for example in terms of how well a behavior is performed, as well as how persistent a behavior is. When teaching new behaviors, a continuous schedule of reinforcement is best.

Most trainers rely on extrinsic motivation when teaching dogs; however, dogs may also be motivated intrinsically through autonomy, mastery, and purpose. By providing choice, we may be able to satisfy some of their intrinsic motivations. Research shows that performance increases when the worker has a choice of the subject and when the work is completed. The solution to a behavioral problem may be obvious to us, but it takes a great trainer to make this obvious to the learner as well. By setting up the learner for success we can teach via errorless learning and focus on reinforcing the learner's successes rather than correcting his/her mistakes. Handlers can provide choice during elimination time, place of rest, equipment usage, direction on walks, type of reinforcer, etc.

Dogs do what works, and many times their solutions result in 'problem' behaviors, or behaviors that are unacceptable to their humans. Functional assessments help trainers determine the function of these 'problem' behaviors by identifying the antecedents and consequences that are in the environment when the behavior occurs. Every recurring behavior has a function of some sort, and is reinforced by the environment. Determining the ABC's of a "problem" behavior can help identify what management and training need to take place in order to make the leap to the goal behavior. However, not all clients want to learn why dogs do what they do – some just want results. Evaluating your client to determine their needs is an important part of being a dog trainer. Clients can become frustrated and take their business elsewhere if you are not meeting their needs. Remember, you need buy-in from the client to help the dog. While helping clients understand their dog is important, it is also important not to lose their interest or confuse them. Following the VSA Training Roadmap can help make things easy for clients. Using functional assessments, management, and training, positive trainers can provide immediate and long-term solutions to dog behavior problems including the use of real world reinforcers.

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Key Terms

Primary reinforcer – a stimulus that strengthens or increases the probability of a behavior without the learner having any previous experience with it.
Secondary reinforcer – a stimulus that was previously neutral but become reinforcing through its repeated pairing with a primary reinforcer OR another established secondary reinforcer.
Motivation – an internal process that makes a learner move toward a goal.
Intrinsic motivation – (from within) autonomy, mastery, purpose
Extrinsic motivation – (from outside) compensation, punishment, reward
High Value reinforcers –highly motivating rewards that seem to be more valuable than outside distractions. These items often increase arousal and drive dogs to perform.
Low Value reinforcers – less motivating rewards that seems to be less valuable than most distractions. These items create low arousal and usually only drive behavior in less distracting environments.
Continuous reinforcement – every 'correct' behavior earns positive reinforcement.
Intermittent reinforcement – only some 'correct' behaviors earn positive reinforcement.
Fixed ratio – reinforcement is provided after a fixed number of repetitions.
Variable ratio – reinforcement is provided after a number of repetitions that varies around an average.
Fixed internal – reinforcement is provided when the behavior happens, but only after a fixed amount of time has elapsed.
Variable interval – the interval of reinforcement varies around an average length of time.
Choice – an act or instance of choosing, selection, the right, power, or opportunity to choose.
Appetitive stimulus – a pleasant stimulus; a stimulus that evokes approach behavior.
Aversive stimulus – an unpleasant or undesired stimulus; a stimulus that evokes avoidance or escape behavior.

Module Problem & Solution

A client calls asking for help with their dog's humping problem. Every time a guest walks in the door, the dog starts humping the guest's leg until the client pulls the dog off the guest and gives him a chew toy. The dog tends to calm down once he has the chew toy.

Here are VSA's suggested answers to the questions asked at the beginning of this module. There are probably a variety of appropriate answers, so these are just a recommendation.

- What is the function of the humping behavior?

To determine the function of behavior, a functional assessment should be performed. More information is probably required to perform a detailed functional assessment; however, here is a simplified version.
Antecedent: guest walks through door
Behavior: dog humps guest's leg
Consequence: client looks at and touches the dog and provides a chew toy
According to the functional assessment, the consequence of being looked at, touched, and given a chew toy is driving the dog's humping behavior.

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- What could the dog do instead of humping guests?

Instead of humping, we could focus on giving the dog the chew toy before humping the person's leg. The dog could stand and look at the client when a guest comes through the door. The communicate this to the dog, the visual cue could be the guest coming through the door. The client will probably want the dog to perform the stand and watch behavior when guests come through the door from a few feet away and for the chew toy.

- How could the client prevent the humping behavior?

To manage the humping behavior, we'd want to consider the three factors of management: safety, enrichment, and prevention. First we should define the problem (stimulus) which is the guest coming through the door. Then we can select a management strategy by choosing to manage the dog in this case. We could manage the stimulus by asking the client to come in a different door, but the behavior is likely to generalize to this location as well. It would be more effective to either put the dog in another room, crate, or use a leash to prevent the humping behavior. The best tool would probably be to put the dog in another room, so the management tool would be a locked door. To implement the plan, we'd be sure that all individuals are on board with the plan. In order to evaluate the plan, we would ask if the plan is keeping everyone safe, if the plan is preventing the reinforcement of humping, and how we can incorporate enrichment into the plan? Sometimes humping is due to stress. We'd want to be sure to rule out stress and make an enrichment plan for the dog as well.

- What could the client teach the dog to do instead?

We'd ask the client what they want their dog to do instead. If the function of the behavior is to obtain a chew toy, then we could use this as a reinforcer for standing and looking at the client rather than humping the guest. Now that we've determined the goal behavior we can set up the training environment. Ideally, the client should start in a distraction free environment: any time the dog stands the client could mark/reinforce by giving a treat (to start) or chew toy. Then the client could increase the criteria to making eye contact. Once the dog is reliably performing the behavior the client could teach a cue (either the visual cue of a guest walking in, or another cue that is eventually transferred to a client walking in the door). Once the dog is reliably performing the behavior on cue, the client can proof the behavior, and practice the goal behavior (standing and looking) in the goal situation (actual guest coming over) using the goal reinforcer (chew toy). The client will probably need to practice with a family member going outside and immediately coming in the door before attempting with a guest.

- How would the client know if the new plan is working?

To evaluate the solution we can help the client perform a functional assessment, check for understanding, and verify their training. We can do this by testing for stimulus control or asking if we have the dog's attention, how effective is the reinforcer, if the dog understands the cue in this context, and what the next step should be?

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End of Module Practice Test

1. An event that influences the future strength of the behavior that it immediately follows.
    a) Antecedent
    b) Behavior
    c) Consequence
    d) All of the above
2. Reinforcement is the process of contingently providing a consequence that:
    a) Maintains or increases the behavior it follows
    b) Suppresses the behavior it follows
    c) Decreases the behavior it follows
    d) Negatively or positively impacts the behavior it follows
3. Types of reinforcers include (select all that apply):
    a) Food
    b) Toys
    c) Praise
    d) Rea-world rewards
4. _____ are automatically reinforcing from the moment of birth.
    a) Secondary reinforcers
    b) Primary reinforcers
    c) Punishers
    d) Clickers
5. _____ are stimuli that were previously neutral but become reinforcing through their repeated pairing with a primary reinforcer.
    a) Secondary reinforcers
    b) Primary reinforcers
    c) Punishers
    d) Kibble
6. Match the types of motivation with its descriptive factors:
    a) Intrinsic motivation
    b) Extrinsic motivation
    c) Compensation, punishment, reward
    d) Autonomy, mastery, purpose
7. Rufus readily sits for Cheerios when in the kitchen, but he will only sit on a restaurant patio when he is given a piece of grilled chicken. Which is the high value reinforcer?
    a) A Cheerio
    b) The kitchen
    c) The restaurant patio
    d) A piece of grilled chicken

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8. Dylan the puppy jumps on people, struggles to eat his kibble, tugs on his leash when on walks, and still toilets in the house. What can Dylan's parents use as an effective, and desired reinforcer when he chooses to stand instead of jump on people?
    a) Kibble
    b) Tug
    c) Toileting in the house
    d) All of the above
9. Margeaux's owners become annoyed when she pulls on leash to sniff trees. Margeaux has food allergies, mouths regularly, and growls when people reach for her toys. What stimulus should the clients use as a reinforcer for walking politely on leash toward trees?
    a) Any high value treat
    b) A chew toy
    c) Tug
    d) Sniffing trees
10. Ellie, the 2 year old Newfoundland, loves to swim; however, she gets distracted when male Newfoundlands are around. She likes chicken and learned how to swim by herself when her owners encouraged her with chicken. Ellie also enjoys tug and beef treats and will come to her owners when called when outdoors even around male Newfoundlands for beef treats. Ellie's owners want her to be able to swim and return when called around her male Newfoundland friend, Bear. What reinforcer can Ellie's owners use for a recall when swimming with Bear?
    a) Chicken
    b) Beef
    c) Tug
    d) Swimming
11. Match the schedule of reinforcement with its description:
    a) Fixed ratio
    b) Fixed interval
    c) Variable ratio
    d) Variable interval

    e) Reinforcement is provided when the behavior happens, but only after a fixed amount of time has elapsed
    f) The interval varies around an average length of time
    g) Reinforcement is provided after a number of repetitions that varies around an average
    h) Reinforcement is provided after a fixed number of repetitions
12. To produce highly reliable behavior, _____ schedules of reinforcement should be used.
    a) Variable ratio
    b) Variable interval
    c) Extinction
    d) Continuous reinforcement

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13. _____ drive behavior.
    a) Antecedents
    b) Behaviors
    c) Consequences
    d) All of the above
14. An appetitive stimulus is a stimulus that evokes approach behavior.
    a) True
    b) False
15. First and foremost, behavior is a product of the _____.
    a) Animal
    b) Environment
    c) Trainer
    d) Medication
16. Match the VSA training term with the more 'client appropriate' term.
    a) Problem behavior
    b) Goal behavior
    c) Management
    d) Training
    e) Immediate solution
    f) Problem #1
    g) Long-term solution
    h) Goal #1
17. Place the steps to the VSA Training Roadmap in the correct order:
    a) Create & Implement Management Plan
    b) Develop Training Objectives
    c) Create & Implement Training Plan
    d) Evaluate the Solution
    e) Identify the Problem
18. Match the functional assessment term with its description:
    a) Antecedent
    b) Behavior
    c) Consequence
    d) What
    e) Why
    f) Where/when
19. Place the steps to the VSA Management Plan in the correct order:
    a) Implement the Plan
    b) Define the Problem
    c) Choose a Management Tool
    d) Select a Management Strategy
    e) Evaluate the Management Plan
20. Place the steps to the VSA Training Plan in the correct order:
    a) Proof Behavior
    b) Train Behavior
    c) Determine Goal Behavior
    d) Set Up Training Environment

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21. To evaluate the solution trainer can:
    a) Perform a functional assessment
    b) Check for understanding
    c) Verify their training
    d) All of the above

End of Module Practice Test Answer Key

1. c
2. a
3. a, b, c, d
4. b
5. a
6. a:d, b:c
7. d
8. b
9. d
10. b
11. a:h, b:e, c:g, d:f
12. d
13. c
14. a
15. b
16. a:f, b:h, c:e, d:g
17. e, b, a, c, d
18. a:f, b:d. c:e
19. b, d, c, a, e
20. c, d, b, a
21. d

Additional Resources

- Plenty in Life is Free by Kathy Sdao
- https://positively.com/dog-training/methods-equipment/training-methods/choice-training/

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