

Group Contingencies

This module is called Group Contingencies. I hope the word contingency is not foreign to you at this point, at the very end of stage one. Which is an awesome place to be. We're still talking about positive reinforcement and just really finding ways to reinforce the good behavior. Contingency means that getting that reinforcement, getting the reward is contingent upon doing the desired behaviors. A group contingency is what it sounds like. It's working as a group to earn that reward.

So this module is especially for any families that have more than one child. If you have one kiddo at home still listen, still join us, and maybe you'll get some other ideas from it that will work for you. If you are going from man to man defense to zone, you have more than one kiddo, you're on your own, you're outnumbered kids to grownups, whatever it may be this is definitely the way to go. It's also a good idea to just really build up that teamwork and collaboration within your kiddos.

We're talking about group contingencies. We'll look at the definition and the types, how to do it, and just some tips and tricks to have fun with this and make it work for your family. What is a group contingency? It's a reward system for a group. There are three different types. You can use whatever type you want, you can do it however you want. Be flexible, be creative, and again make it fun for your family.

The first type is interdependent. All members of the group must meet all requirements. This is what we think of the most commonly honestly, is that every child needs to meet those target behaviors, and then all of us together get to have the reward. Everyone has to meet the goal.

Independent is everybody for himself. Each member for himself. It's the same system and the same rewards, but you earn it on your own.

So with interdependent you might say, everyone needs to make their bed, and brush their teeth, and then you can watch cartoons this morning. You have two or three kids that means they all have to make their bed and brush their teeth.

Independent, okay make your bed and brush your teeth, then you can have cartoons. Well kid number one might do that quickly and easily and get to start the cartoons earlier. While the others, same reward, same system, but haven't done it yet. They're still back hopefully making their beds and brushing their teeth, and then once they finally finish then they can have the reward.

So interdependent everybody has to do it all, everyone must be done with the target behaviors, with the goal before their reward. Independent is every man for himself, but it's still a group system, it's still all the same reward. It's not everybody having their own individual sticker chart kind of thing, it's everybody together.

Dependent is one member can earn it for the whole group. Everyone gets the reward for one person's behavior. This can be really to bring up someone who's straggling, someone who's struggling. Maybe you want siblings to help encourage them, and set a good role model, support them, or it could be that you change which kid is the one that is responsible for the reward every day. Maybe you don't even tell

them who you're watching that day to see if they all get the treat after dinner, or whatever it may be as the reward.

Interdependent is the most common, kind of the easiest, because it's just a blanket. Everybody do the things, everybody gets the reward. Independent everybody for themselves, but it's within the same system, the same structure, the same reward. Dependent it's really only one person's behavior that the whole group gets the reinforcement.

This is using positive peer pressure. Peer pressure is real. We're trying to lasso that in and use it in our favor, use it to benefit us as parents with multiple kiddos. So siblings can monitor each other's behavior, they can support each other, they can really help keep everyone on the right track, and then when they earn that reward or reinforcer it's together. It's an experience they're doing together, they're having together, they're getting together.

You, as the parent, need to model how to celebrate each small win toward the big reward. So if making your bed and brushing your teeth, yes you made your bed now we just have to brush teeth. Celebrating every little step, giving that behavior specific praise, which you've learned about before, making a big deal out of meeting those small target behaviors towards that terminal reinforcer, towards that big reward is a really good thing. And teaching your kiddos how to support all those baby steps along the way for each other is a great way to build their relationships, to build up that communication between each other, and get them to praise each other and notice when each other are doing good things, doing the desired behaviors.

So your steps. These should all come very familiar at this point. Number one is identify target behaviors. We had a whole module on target behaviors, because it's so important to be specific, to be concise, to be to the point. No more than three prioritize. Hopefully whatever you prioritize today won't even matter a couple weeks from now, because we're going to get it under control. So whatever is the issues today, those are your target behaviors.

You might have three target behaviors, and one only applies to kid one, and one only applies to kid two, but as a family we're all working on all of these things. Even though you know in your head that kid number one is doing pretty good at following directions, and kid number two is doing pretty good at managing their anger, but now our goals are going to be following directions and managing your anger. These sorts of things.

Remember making good choices, being a good sibling, these broad things leave the door wide open for misconstruing the meaning for you not even knowing when to reward, for kids not being sure what they're supposed to do. I like to cheat a little bit and use these broad terms, making good choices, but then in that moment reminding them what that target behavior is. Okay remember you get a reward for making good choices. What does that look like at the dinner table? That means feet on the floor, or no feet on the table, or taking bites of your food, using a quiet voice. Then in that moment defining what those target behaviors are really clearly.

Using those in generalities without breaking it down is not super helpful for anyone, but having those specific target behaviors reminds your kiddo what to do instead of them just going, okay I can't burp at the table. What am I supposed to do to make my brother laugh, or that sort of thing. Give them some options.

If I were to walk into your house and you have this awesome group contingency system going on and I asked your kiddos, so what do you have to do? Could they tell me? Could they give examples? Maybe even non-examples of what the targets are. What is your goal? What do you have to do to earn that iPad time? What does that mean? What does that look like? Really can they identify that on their own?

Make sure they can answer that. What are you supposed to do to earn this reward? Or what did you do to earn this reward when they get it? Making sure that it's clear that that contingency is obvious. We're not just randomly giving them rewards. That's nice, but make sure they know why. If it is based on behavior and they earned it, make sure they know that they earned it, and they can be proud of that goal that they met, and that behavior that they mastered.

Your step number two is choose a reinforcer. Again, this should sound familiar as you did a module earlier about finding good, powerful reinforcers. So you could let your kiddos decide as a group. This could be part of the learning process. It might look like making a list. Give them some choices within your budget, financial budgets, but also time budgets. We're not going to spend hours and hours on a reward. They're already having to collaborate and to work together and communicate to choose one reward. They might decide to vote, they might decide to take turns. Involve your kiddos in this. Make sure the reward is powerful enough, be creative, and always go back to those preference assessment ideas for finding good reinforcers.

Your next step is to set up your system. This again, should look very familiar to you, and if not go back and look at your token economy info, look at your token economy tip sheet, go back over that module, that lesson. What is your system going to look like? Is it just everybody do something and we immediately get a reward? That's more like the [inaudible 00:08:40] principle. Or is it going to be, we do these target behaviors repeatedly, we get stickers, we get points, we use a phone app, a marble jar, a puff ball jar, whatever until we meet our goal?

Remember with your time period this should not take three weeks to earn the goal, because who's really going to hang in there for that long? Make it achievable, especially at first. Build up that buy in just like any other token economy. Make it achievable at first, and then raise the bar gradually. Make it a little bit harder, a little bit harder, a little bit harder. We fade it out eventually that we don't need it anymore. Create your system. You can include your kiddos in the creation of the system. You don't have to make this and be the authoritarian. What do they want to do? Let them be creative and put together a system.

Then your step number four is give the rewards, give the praise, give the points, the tokens, the stickers, whatever it is. Catch them being good. If you set specific target behaviors you need to be ready to find those target behaviors happening. If you're looking specifically at morning routines, getting out the door earlier, then in the mornings you better be on your A game with your behavior specific praise, with your modeling, with giving out points, prizes, whatever you're giving.

Model praise for your siblings to copy, and then also be sure to model how to redirect politely instead of calling your sibling names, because they didn't earn their points today. How can we help them get the points that we can all earn the reward? How do we show each other how to do the expected behavior? How do we help each other?

That brings us to our pitfall to avoid. There is one big problem that can come up in this system, but that we can avoid it. That is bossy britches. If you have a child with leadership skills, who is a born leader as I been known to say about one of my own children, if they're bossy we know which kiddos are more likely to boss around their siblings. You might have already been thinking this. Like this would not work in my family, because kid number one would just be bossing kid number two around all the time. Well we can still make it work if this is something you're interested in.

Part of the reward, one of the target behaviors could be talking nicely to your sibling, redirecting them politely, or asking a parent for help instead of you involving yourself and being a parent. Watch closely for this. If you are thinking, well it could happen, maybe not, then be ready when you first start out. Be ready to watch for it, and jump in, and model how to do it politely. So your kiddo starts being bossy instead of you being like, stop being so bossy, what are you doing and getting mad at them. Jump in and say, here's how we're going to do this. You need to go make your bed, I'll help you, let's do it together instead of, go make your bed right now to your sibling.

So be ready to model how to do it nicely and appropriately, and reward them for not being bossy. What does that mean? That's not a good target behavior is it? Not being bossy. What's the replacement for that is talking nicely, using kind words, helping instead of bossing, asking parents for help, whatever is appropriate for your family.

Then if you need to, if it's not working, if one kiddo is being bossy or rude to another, that's not what we're going for. Change your system. So if you have it interdependent, meaning everybody has to do all the things to get the reward, then you might go to independent where it's every man for himself to get the same reward, or just give extra rewards for building up your siblings. You can throw in extra points, stickers, tokens, whatever as you feel like you are the boss of the system. So if you see your kiddos building each other up nicely, redirecting politely, and helping each other out well give them extra rewards, give them extra tokens towards that big reward for sure. It can happen, but we can avoid it and we can actually use this to help get that bossy behavior under control across the board.

Some of the benefits. It's easier. You don't need to come up with a separate reinforcement plan for every kid. It's easier to have a blanket system together, and it helps you to kind of work together as a family. For your kids to work together, to play together, to communicate better. They have to communicate with each other in order to get their reward that they want. They can't each do their own thing. We want to build up their relationships, we want them to like each other, we want them to get along, but how do we do that?

This is kind of a systematic way where that needs to happen. You're not forcing it, you're not making it unnatural and unpleasant, but if you want to reach a common goal you've got to work together to get that common goal of a good reward, a good reinforcer.

It also helps to have a system. This is true across all these modules we've done about positive reinforcement in a system to help you be on the same page as your spouse, as your significant other, as any other caregivers. If you have that system then we all know what the target behaviors are, and we all know how to earn the rewards. Having the group contingency helps us as parents to back off a little and let the kiddos manage it themselves to an extent. Let them redirect each other, let them help each other, let them praise each other, and work together to earn that reward.

Tips and tricks. How do we make this effective and easy? Because the last thing we want to do is make more work for you as parents. So make sure it's a good reinforcer. If it's not something they're interested in, why should they work hard for it. Review those target behaviors regularly. If you have them to the point and succinct this should be easy. Make it a fun game. Make it fun, make it exciting. This is not something to come down hard on your kiddos because they didn't earn the rewards or the points. It's a time to build them up and praise, and model praise, and model how to be excited about things for your kiddos to then copy.

Look at for bossy pants. We've talked about that. Be aware that that can happen, and nip it in the bud. Nip it in the bud, not by being angry, and mean, and punishing to the kid that's being bossy, but modeling for them how to do it correctly and then giving them praise and reinforcement for doing it correctly. That could be one of the target behaviors. Is here's how to help your sibling.

Use this as a time for modeling appropriate helping behaviors just in general, and then just make sure you keep it upbeat and supportive as a group. If it turns negative where one kiddo is not pulling their weight and the other is mad at them kind of thing, then change it up, get flexible, and model how to handle it appropriately.

You could make it a competition. You can have different groups, you can have more than one group. You could include parents as part of the group. So mom and kid number one, and dad and kid number two are now competing each other to who gets the most chores done. Who is getting ready first in the morning, they get the points. You know? A team, and include the parents.

So it's not just kids against kids, it's all of us working together. We change up the team next week. It's mom and kid two, and dad and kid one, I think that's the opposite of what I just said. Whatever type or system that you use the parents can be in the interdependent, where everybody has to do all the things to get the reward. Well yeah, if I expect you to make your bed and brush your teeth, I better have already made my bed and brushed my teeth too in order to get whatever the reward is. Include parents, be a part of this, be part of the team. Make it fun, make it a game.

Then use visual cues as reminders. This should sound familiar from task analysis module. Also the guest Q&A where Tamika Meadows from I Love ABA, she talked a lot about this, and I really enjoyed that, but use visual cues. So you could make a list, or use pictures of what those target behaviors are so that you're not nagging, but also to teach your kids to not nag each other.

You could have a hand sign. Kids like making up stuff like this. You know, a secret hand sign, a secret handshake that we do. That could be a praise thing. When you do great we're going to do our secret handshake, or when you need a reminder to go do something we might point with our thumb in the other direction, or something. Make something up as a reminder of, hey go finish that so we can earn our reward. So using visuals and taking out as much of this talking. We don't want to lecture. Nobody wants that. You don't want to do it, your kids don't want to listen to it, so using those visuals and we'll learn more about that as we learn about prompting in the next stage of your parenting with ABA success journey.

You can make it fun. That should sound a lot like your [inaudible 00:17:42] module. Using visual cues, that should sound a lot like your task analysis module. Set up a system, this sounds like a token economy. Have target behaviors. We learned about target behaviors. This is just taking all of these

things that you've learned and put it into a different application, a different mold of how to use it to make it work for your family.

Make it work for you. I think I say this every module. We are not making more work for you, we don't want to make it harder on your kiddos. Make it work for you, so be flexible, change it up, give more reinforcement in the beginning, give more reinforcement on certain behaviors that are harder for certain kids. You know what each child needs to work on, and so if somebody does something that's really hard for them, it's really hard to hold your temper when your sibling is messing with you, that's hard. So you know what? You get five points for that instead of just one for following directions. That was awesome, great job. Be flexible within your system, and making sure that the amount of effort the kiddo has to put in matches the amount of rewards you're giving them.

Everybody can have their own goal or target behavior. Make it work for your kids. If everybody needs to work on following directions, then everybody needs to work on following directions, but some might be good at that but have a hard time instead with the interpersonal stuff. With being patient with your sibling, and talking nicely to siblings, or they might struggle with getting ready independently, or something else. Whatever your kiddo needs to work on, but it's still all within the same system.

If it gets too competitive, if it gets too bossy, if it gets mean or negative then just stop. Stop what you are doing. Either re-do your system, go back to square one. You might need a better reinforcer, you might need to better define your target behaviors and then model them for your kiddos, you might need to trash the plan completely and start over with something else. Do not let any of this stuff be a burden. These are positive behavior supports. They should be supporting positive behaviors. We're looking at the good stuff and building them up.

If that's not happening for some reason, then just change it up. Change it up, back to square one. Okay, that didn't work guys. We tried it, I still think that we can keep the same system, but we need a better reward, we need you to get your rewards faster, and let's practice these target behaviors. That didn't work, because you were rude to each other. So the new target behavior is simply being nice to each other. What are nice things you can say? Then you go, here's examples of nice things, here's examples of rude things, and having a little lesson over it. All right, starting now you get your points to earn this different reward, this better reward by being nice to each other.

Use it when you need it. Just like everything else. We don't always need a system, but when we need it a system makes life a lot easier. It builds up those desired behaviors, and then there's not as much room for the bad stuff anymore. Just make it work for you. Make it fun, make it a game, and really increase the positive reinforcement across the board for all members of the group, for everyone in the family.