

Autism Initiative: Training Series

ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Chapter 3.2: Part 5 - Establishing Operations

Part 1: Review of Concepts

- In behavioral terminology *establishing operations* and *abolishing operations* are used to describe what “motivates” us to do or not to do something. Motivation is about influencing behavior in one direction (to do or not to do something).
- Establishing operations *temporarily increase* the likelihood that a behavior will occur, whereas abolishing operations *temporarily decrease* the likelihood that a behavior will occur.

Part 2: Examples and Discussion Questions

1. **Example:** Beth’s neighbor throws an all night party. She tries to drown out the loud music and laughter by putting her head under her pillow but she only manages to get 3 hours of sleep (which is significantly less than the 8 hours she usually gets). Usually she does not take naps during the day, but she is very tired and takes a two-hour nap the afternoon following the party.
 - *In this example, is Beth’s lack of sleep an establishing operation or abolishing operation?*
 - **Answer:** Establishing operation because it increases the likelihood of Beth taking a nap.
2. **Example:** Mike is invited by a colleague at work to go out to lunch. They decide to go to the all you can eat Chinese buffet and try one of everything. Needless to say, at the end of lunch Mike is quite full. When he returns to the office he finds that someone brought cake for everyone. He loves sweets and would usually take a piece without hesitation. However, he is still full from lunch and does not eat any cake.
 - *Was eating lunch at the Chinese buffet an establishing operation or an abolishing operation?*
 - **Answer:** Abolishing operation because it decreases the likelihood of Mike accepting a piece of cake.

Part 3: Small Group Activity

In small groups, have staff come up with ways to use establishing or abolishing operations in their everyday lives and then apply them to examples that might be useful to use with clients.