



Required Relaxation



Definition

Required relaxation specifies that a student spend a fixed period of time in relaxation when an upsetting behavior occurs. This procedure does not entail forced physical guidance. If forced physical guidance is used, then by definition the intervention becomes “enforced relaxation”—a Level IV procedure.

Things to Do

- ✓ Define the behavior.
- ✓ Teach relaxation techniques.
- ✓ Explain the required relaxation procedure.
- ✓ Implement the procedure.
- ✓ Monitor student performance.

✓ Define the behavior.

Define student's out-of-control or agitated behavior in observable and measurable terms. For example, this is too vague . . .

Connor is out of control when he gets upset.

Instead . . .

Connor is out of control when he throws objects.

. . . is a behavior that you can see and count.

 Observable & Measurable

- Easily observed
- Countable
- Beginning/end
- Repeatable

Likewise . . .

Julia is agitated when she's disruptive.

. . . is better stated . . .

Julia is agitated when she starts to yell.

✓ Teach relaxation techniques.

Teach relaxation techniques at a calm and nondemanding time. These techniques involve tension-easing skills, such as slow breathing, counting to 10, imagining a tranquil scene, or muscle tensing and easing. Provide opportunity for the student to practice these skills in a removed location, such as a separate or screened desk, on a cot, or in a separate room.

✓ Explain the required relaxation procedure.

Explain what behaviors will result in required relaxation. Clearly state the steps of this procedure. Indicate that required relaxation is to help the student and is not a punishment. Invite the individual to ask questions for clarification.

✓ Implement the procedure.

Announce Starting Date

Announce to the class that you will be starting the relaxation technique at a specific date.

Demonstrate the Technique

It's best to try the relaxation technique a few times before using it with a student who is agitated. Call these practice runs and select several students in the classroom to try the technique under nonstressful circumstances. Let students model the technique while others observe. Then reverse the process. Reinforce and praise students when they try the technique.

Praise the Student

After an agitated student completes a request to use a relaxation technique, be sure to praise the individual. Describe what the student did right with the procedure. Explain how it is helpful to relax rather than get excited or out of control.

Use Alternative Procedures for Noncompliant Students

When a student is "worked up" and upset, compliance to use the relaxation technique may drop. If so, get close to the student, make eye contact, talk in a low voice, and inform the student that asking them to do the relaxation technique is required not optional. It may help to minimally guide the student through the technique. However, force with resistance should not be used. If this occurs, break off the contact and wait a few minutes, ignoring the student if possible. Give the student a second chance after he has partially calmed down. If he completes the relaxation steps, praise the student. If he does not complete the steps, then a privilege withdrawal or a call to the parents may be needed.



Monitor student performance.

Record each incident of required relaxation. Identify the target behavior, who implemented the procedure, the date, student's name, and a comment section. Then graph the data. Regularly review the data to evaluate the effectiveness of the program and make adjustments as needed.

Examples

Example 1

Lionel is having difficulty with students teasing him and calling him names. In the past, he would try to hit these students. Recently his instructor taught him the "Turtle Relaxation Technique." Now Lionel leaves the situation and goes to a screened classroom area to lie down.

He rolls into a ball while breathing slowly. Quietly he says to himself that he is a little turtle who has learned to cope by drawing into his protective shell (knees drawn up into his chest, slow breathing, and thinking about little turtle). When finished, Lionel tells the instructor he's ready and returns to the classroom.

Example 2

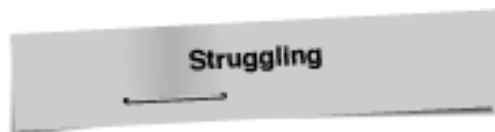
Tess is a high school student who nearly panics at the thought of having to go to school. When she is in class, anything can set her off. A simple look or a remark can make her panic or agitated. So she learned a series of relaxation steps to use

in her homeroom. Tess asks the teacher if she can leave for a few minutes. Then she goes to the counselor's office and slowly tenses and eases her muscles, thinks about pleasant experiences, and breathes slowly. When Tess finishes, she returns to class and continues her work.

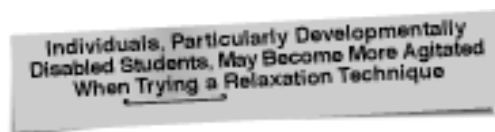
Variations of the Technique

- 👉 Muscle relaxation (Jacobsonian exercises) is a variation of the technique in which a student is taught a series of tensing and easing muscle groups from their toes to their facial muscles.
- 👉 Visual imagery (picturing tranquil scenes) associated with muscle tensing is a technique that can enhance relaxation. Picturing tranquil scenes may help students to not think about the tension-evoking incident that upset them.
- 👉 The Turtle Technique, another variation, requires students to act like a turtle and pull themselves into a shell by relaxing.

Potential Problems and Solutions



Avoid forcing a student to try the relaxation technique. If a student is forcefully prompted to try and relax, lie down, or go to the space set aside for required relaxation, then the intervention level changes and it becomes "Enforced Relaxation."



Rarely, a student will become more agitated when they try a relaxation technique. They may (perseverate???) on the upsetting incident or overly stress the muscle or breathing exercises.

Getting Ready

- 👉 Designate a location where the student can use relaxation procedures. This place can range from a secluded desk or cot to a separate room.
- 👉 Explain the required relaxation procedures to parents of the student participating in the program.
- 👉 Prepare instruction to teach methods of relaxing.

Materials and Supplies

A location to perform the required relaxation technique.

**References**

Robin, A., Schneider, M., & Dolnick, M. (1976). The turtle technique: An extended case study of self-control in the classroom. *Psychology in the School, 13*, 449-453.