

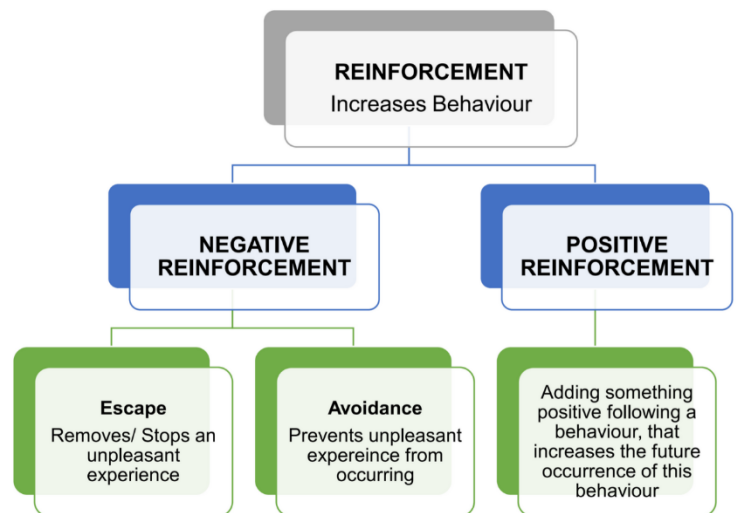
## Functions of behaviour

When children are engaging in a specific type of behaviour, they are doing so to fulfil a function. These behaviours can be learnt through a process known as 'Operant Conditioning', where a behaviour can be *positively reinforced*, by adding something following the behaviour, or *negatively reinforced*, by removing something following the behaviour. This reinforcement will then make the behaviour *more likely* to reoccur. This differs from punishment, which refers to something that makes behaviour *less likely* to reoccur.

When children naturally learn the consequences of behaviour through reinforcement, they may choose to engage in this behaviour again to get the same results. This means it can be beneficial to identify the function they are trying to fulfil through a behaviour in order to better understand why it is occurring.

The following are some examples of what functions are being sought out behind a behaviour:

- **Attention**
- **Escape**
- **Access to tangible**
- **Automatic**



### Attention

Previously, an individual may have engaged in a specific behaviour that has resulted in attention. This means attention is functioning as a *positive reinforcer*, increasing the likelihood of behaviour that has previously resulted in attention. This can come from a parent, teacher, siblings or peers. Therefore, an individual may engage in a specific type of behaviour in order to receive attention from those in the environment.

#### Example

A child has learnt that **crying** can result in **attention from their parents**, so will repeat this behaviour to receive this attention

## **Escape**

In the past, the individual may have engaged in a behaviour that has resulted in the removal of a task or stimuli, and therefore this removal acts as a *negative reinforcer*. This increases the likelihood that the individual will engage in this behaviour to escape/avoid work. This means an individual may engage in a specific type of behaviour in order to get out of doing something they don't want to do.

### *Example*

A child has learnt that **screaming** can result in **homework being removed**, so will repeat this behaviour to avoid homework

## **Access to tangible**

Previously, an individual may have engaged in a behaviour that has resulted in receiving an item or activity, and therefore acts as a *positive reinforcer*. This increases the likelihood that the individual will engage in this behaviour in order to have access to it. This means an individual may engage in a specific type of behaviour in order to get a preferred item or activity.

### *Example*

A child has learnt that **snatching** a toy from someone else will result in them **gaining the toy**, so will repeat this behaviour to get the item

## **Automatic**

In the past, after engaging in a specific type of behaviour, the individual may have felt some type of internal sensation, acting as a *positive reinforcer*. This function does not require any other people to be present, meaning this behaviour may occur when the individual is alone. This means an individual may be engaging in a specific type of behaviour in order to feel an internal sensation.

### *Example*

A child has learnt that **hand flapping** will result in **sensory regulation**, so will repeat this behaviour to feel this positive internal sensation