



Natural and Planned Consequences

Consequences are outcomes – negative or positive - of a person’s action. With any of our actions or behaviours there are consequences. Some people are bothered about these consequences and some are not – even when they are negative.

We are focusing on 2 types of consequences – natural and planned. To help you get a handle of what each type means, we will define them and give both a positive and negative example.

Natural consequences occur naturally via nature or society, hence the name. They are not controlled or manipulated by anyone. When you plant a flower in your garden and take care of it, it grows. That is a positive example of natural consequences. When you put your finger in an electric socket, you get a shock. That is an example of negative natural consequences.

When natural consequences are immediate they are very effective. If a person touches a hot pot, he/she will get burned and is not likely to do that again. Many times, however, natural consequences are not immediate or are too dangerous to allow. Running into the street without looking does not always have immediate consequences. Either does not wearing a seat belt when driving. Both actions, though, could have dire natural consequences that no one wants. Therefore, the natural consequences aren’t what a person should use to support an individual. This is when it would be necessary to plan out the consequence that will promote the desired behavior – in this instance not running into the street without looking or wearing a seatbelt.

So some people need help to understand the natural consequences of their actions because either the risk is too high to allow the natural consequence to unfold or the person simply doesn’t understand the impact of their actions. This is when a natural consequence switches to a **‘Planned consequence’**. By explaining the consequences and exploring the alternative options this empowers the person to make a choice and is not demanding compliance.

Planned consequences can be devised in a simple visual format (if appropriate) and should be a way of reminding the person of the consequences to their behaviour and actions.

Golden Rules for implementing Logical Consequences

Am I bothered?

If the person is not bothered about the consequence that is implemented, it won't have an impact for learning, for example, if the consequence of a behaviour is to call the police (and the person is not bothered about this) then the consequence will have little or no effect.

Link it to the behaviour

There needs to be a link to the behaviour. For example, there will be no teaching for a person if they are told that they cannot go swimming because they smashed a window. A consequence for this could be to pay back the costs for the damage or to repair the window.

Need to follow through

Must follow through with the consequence. Beware of carrying out any consequences in the heat of the moment. Quality of judgement will be down for you as a staff member and you may issue a consequence that you later regret!

Remember timing

(See Crisis Cycle). Avoid placing a 'demand' at the 'escalation' stage. This could be a trigger. Planned consequences should be implemented when a person is at a baseline state. The only switch to this is if there is a critical or emergency situation when the consequence has been planned for implementation as an emergency procedure.

Baseline teaching

Ideally, consequences should be addressed to all concerned and not just to one person. This could be done in meetings or to base groups at regular intervals as a reminder for everyone. Any consequence must be discussed and agreed when the person is calm. It is a primary prevention strategy.

Avoid power struggles:

Planned consequences are a way for a person to repair the harm that has been done. It should be a natural consequence linked to the behaviour. It should not be carried out as a power struggle between two people or punisher.

Be consistent

If a consequence to a behaviour has been implemented as part of a planned approach then all staff should be consistent with this approach. Hoping through a consistent undesirable or desirable outcome that a person will learn