

2-Minute Tip Sheet

Understand the Impact of your behavior!

Maybe you're feeling stuck in a parenting behavior rut, thinking "Why do I keep doing and saying the same stuff over and over, even though it clearly doesn't seem to change my kid's behavior?" You can understand what is happening by understanding the *context* and the *consequence* of your and your teen's interactions. These refer to the situations that arise and the behavior that knowingly or unknowingly encourages (augments) or discourages (minimizes) that behavior again.

This skill comes from Chapter 13 of Dr. Z's book, [Parenting a Troubled Teen](#).

Setup: Think of a recent moment in which you are trying to understand what your effect on your teen was. Now consider the following:

Context: What was the general overview of the setting?

Ex: Sean (parents) and Sylvia (teen) are discussing plans for the weekend

Antecedent: What happened just before your parenting behavior?

Ex: Sean suggests going to a movie together. Sylvia screams, "But I told you I want to hang out with my boyfriend!" Sean feels angry about being screamed at and thinks, "*This is outrageous. She's so disrespectful!*"

Parenting behavior: What was your behavior that is being considered?

Ex: Sean yells back at Sylvia, "That's it! You're grounded for a month! No TV, no hanging out with friends. You come directly home from school every day, no exceptions!"

Consequence: What happened immediately following that behavior?

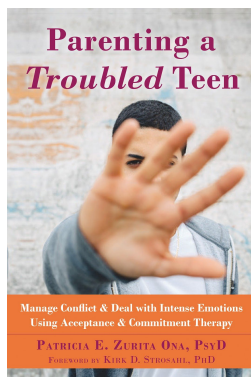
Ex: Sean feels a rush of energy. Sylvia feels upset and yells, “I hate you when you're like this! You're the worst father ever! I don't care what you think I should do, I won't do it anyway.”

Based on the consequences, we can understand the parenting behavior through this chart:

| | Positive | Negative |
|--|---|---|
| Augmenter/Reinforcer (increases behavior) | Adding something your teen likes | Removing something your teen doesn't like |
| Minimizer/Punisher (decreases behavior) | Adding something your teen doesn't like | Removing something your teen likes |

In this example, we can understand that Sean's yelling was, for him, a *positive augmenter* because of the feeling of energy that came with yelling and making it more likely that he might yell in the future. For Sylvia, her father's yelling served as a *positive minimizer*, making it less likely that she will speak calmly and consider going to the movies with her father in the future. In this example, Sean and Sylvia might end up stuck in a cycle of screaming at each other and deteriorating their relationship.

Understanding these concepts and your role in your teen's behavior means that you can work together to create a plan of providing augmenters for behavior you'd like to see more often, and coming up with minimizers for behavior that you'd like to decrease. Remember, providing these augmenters and minimizers in agreement with your teen, and on a consistent basis will provide the best likelihood of changing behavior! For more tips on how to create an effective behavior plan, go to Chapter 13 of *Parenting a Troubled Teen*.



Want more?

These ideas, and strategies can be found in more detail in Dr. Zurita Ona's book, *Parenting a Troubled Teen*.

*** Tip Sheets are not psychological advice, and use does not constitute or imply a professional relationship with Patricia Zurita Ona, PsyD. The ideas, procedures, and suggestions contained here are not intended as a substitute for consulting with a professional.*