



Reinforcer Pathology and Behavior

Course Syllabus

Course Description

The purpose of this professional development course is to understand the maladaptive decision-making process where individuals excessively favor short-term, high rewards over long-term benefits. In reinforcer pathology, individuals may display behaviors associated with immediate gratification, which can lead to addictive and maladaptive behaviors. This course will introduce behavioral economics and the study of reinforcement by examining how factors like delay discounting and reward magnitude affect choices. Additionally, this course will provide research on ways to reduce or mitigate reinforcer pathology which can be applied to various environments, such as school, work, or home.

This course enhances classroom teaching effectiveness and supports improved student outcomes by introducing new knowledge in behavioral economics and reinforcer pathology, including the psychological and neurobiological mechanisms of decision-making, impulsivity, and strategies to promote long-term, goal-directed behavior in educational and other real-world settings.

Course Objectives

At the end of this course you should be able to:

1. Explain the core principles of behavioral economics.
2. Explain the core principles of reinforcer pathology.
3. Examine foundational research on behavioral economics and reinforcer pathology.
4. Describe different areas of research that use behavioral economics and reinforcer pathology.
5. Differentiate between impulsive and self-controlled behaviors.
6. Examine neurobiological mechanisms in addiction.
7. Examine the effects of alternative reinforcers and its effect on substance use.
8. Examine research that focuses on reducing reinforcer pathology.

Modules

- Module 1: Introduction to Behavioral Economics, Quiz 1
- Module 2: Introduction to Reinforcer Pathology, Quiz 2
- Module 3: Research on Behavioral Economics and Reinforcer Pathology, Quiz 3
- Module 4: Expanding Reinforcer Pathology to Eating, Sex, and Addiction, Quiz 4
- Module 5: Impulsive versus Self-Controlled Behaviors, Quiz 5
- Module 6: Neurological Mechanisms of Addiction, Quiz 6
- Module 7: Alternative Reinforcers and Drug-Seeking Behavior, Quiz 7
- Module 8: Reducing Reinforcer Pathology, Quiz 8

Grading:



Each quiz must be passed at an 80% or higher (three attempts allowed).

Format

This is a self-paced, asynchronous (no required live meetings) course. Throughout the PD course, you will find it helpful to take notes along the way to assist with the quizzes. Within each module, you will find reflection assessments that are not graded but will help in your journey through the course. There is an interactive forum in the course to help you connect with peers and instructors, share ideas, and collaborate on best practices throughout your learning journey.