Reinforcement How it Differs from Bribery



Reinforcement is a basic element of learning and is one of the main principles of Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) incorporated into all effective teaching programs. Some may ask, "Isn't reinforcement just bribing someone to do something?" Often, reinforcement gets confused with bribery, however there are distinct differences between the two.

Reinforcement Versus Bribery

REINFORCEMENT

anything that occurs **AFTER** a specific behaviour which results in that behaviour being **MORE LIKELY** to occur again in the future.

BRIBERY

anything that occurs **DURING** an unexpected behaviour to make it **MORE LIKELY** to be stopped or changed it in that moment.

Differences Between Reinforcement and Bribery

REINFORCEMENT

- The reward is planned ahead of time to increase the likelihood of expected behaviour to happen in the future.
- The reward is given dependent on the expected skill or behaviour occurring.
- Expected behaviours are intentionally reinforced to create lasting positive change.

BRIBERY

- The reward is given reactively to end unexpected behaviours in the moment.
- The reward is dependent on the unexpected behaviour ending.
- Unexpected behaviours are unintentionally reinforced and are likely to reoccur.

Reinforcement

Sally and her mom are at the grocery store.

Sally's mother tells her,
"If you listen to me and
don't ask for anything,
we will go to the park
after we're done
shopping."

Behaviour:
when they are at the store, Sally says "ok"
when mom says she can't have the sugary cereal.

Reinforcement:
Sally's mom takes her
to the nearby park
immediately after they
are done with grocery
shopping.

Bribery

Sally and her mom are at the grocery store.

Sally is told "no" when she asks for a sugary cereal.

Behaviour:
Sally begins to scream and flops to the ground.

Mom says "if you stop screaming and get up you

Bribe:

and get up, you can put the cereal in the cart." Sally gets up and stops crying and picks a box of sugary cereal.

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