



Behavioral Interventions and Strategies Series:

Toothing

When to use: To improve the quality of interactions between students, discourage focusing on negative behaviors, and encourage focusing on positive behaviors.

Why use: Classrooms are often set up to prevent negative behaviors rather than focusing on teaching positive behaviors. Rule systems typically identify negative behaviors and associated negative consequences. When rules and expectations focus on negative behaviors, students often engage in tattling on negative behaviors of other students. Toothing is a positive intervention that can be added to existing classroom systems to enhance students' awareness of positive behaviors of other students and provides incentive to engage in positive behaviors themselves. Toothing can be particularly helpful in classrooms that experience high rates of student turnover and classrooms with students who are at risk for isolation or peer rejection due to persistent negative behaviors.

Materials Needed: Index cards (3x5) or slips of paper to record Tootles, shoe box or container for turning in Tootles, Toothing Progress Chart to indicate cumulative number of Tootles and progress toward reward, anything needed to provide classroom reward

Preparation:

- Collect baseline data for behaviors (number of tattles, number of negative verbalizations, aggressive behaviors)
- Determine parameters for Tootle Time: what time of day students should observe behavior (all day or during a specific time period), when Tootles will be recorded and turned in
- Gather materials and determine classroom rewards

Introduction:

- Introduce Toothing to the class by telling them they will begin playing a game that will let them name or “shout out” a classmate who has been kind or helpful
- Explain the difference between tattling (when someone does something wrong) and Toothing (when someone does something good, kind, or helpful)
- Review Toothing criteria with the class
 - Behavior must be of another classmate
 - Kind or helpful behavior must be towards another student
 - Behavior must occur at school
- Provide examples of Toothing (helping others clean, sharing, using kind words, and helping with assignments) and have students give examples. Praise appropriate Tootles and provide corrective feedback for comments that don't meet Toothing criteria.
- Demonstrate how to record Tootles—Who, Did What, For Whom—and how to turn them in
- Give each student an index card and ask them to write down a Tootle. Collect the cards, read the Tootles aloud, praise appropriate Tootles and provide corrective feedback for inappropriate or vague Tootles.
- Display the Toothing Progress Chart, tell the class what their Toothing goal is (e.g., 100 Tootles), and explain what reward the class will earn when they reach their goal (extra recess, movie time, dance party, game time)

References

Rathvon, N. (2008). *Effective school interventions, Second Edition: Evidence-based strategies for improving student outcomes* (pp. 83-84). New York: The Guilford Press.



Implementation:

- At the beginning of the day or designated time period give all students an index card. Place the Tootle box on your desk with a stack of blank cards
- Remind students to watch for kind and helpful behaviors from other students, complete a Tootle when they observe positive behaviors, turn in the Tootle, and get another card
- At the end of the day or designated time period, count the Tootles and record the number of Tootles that meet Toothing criteria on the Toothing Progress Chart. Tell students how many Tootles they gave the day before and how close they are to reaching their Toothing goal.
- When students meet the Toothing goal, praise the students for meeting their goal, provide the reward as soon as possible, and set a new goal (e.g. 125). Give the students a day off from Toothing.
- Continue Toothing daily and provide praise for Tootles
- Evaluate progress by collecting data on the behavior baseline data was collected for and compare the frequency of the behavior before Toothing and after Toothing began

Variations:

- Set a time for students verbally provide Tootles instead of writing them down and turning them in. Keep track of the number of appropriate Tootles given and record Tootles on the Toothing Progress Chart.
- Post Tootles on a classroom board after they are read aloud and counted

Considerations:

- Only count Tootles that meet Toothing criteria
- Praise appropriate Tootles and provide corrective feedback for Tootles that do not meet criteria
- Designate a time to turn in Tootles if turning them in as soon as they are completed is too disruptive or distracting
- Limit number of Tootles students can fill out if Toothing or competitiveness seems to take precedence over instruction
- Tootles can be given as a whole class or within smaller groups
- Randomly draw Tootles every now and then and give individual rewards to the Tootle-er and Tootle-ee
- If students are Toothing less than usual, set a goal for Tootles for the day and provide the class with a small reward if they meet the goal

