

Video Guide

EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT: AGGRESSION 20 minutes, color

I. Overview of the Video

The field of emotional development is too vast for coverage in a single short video. Consequently, this video focuses on a single emotion: aggression. The **definition** of aggression used is that aggression is behavior that results in the destruction of property or produces psychological or physical injury.

II. Summary of the Video

A. **What** is the social learning theory?

The video is based on the theory of social learning which considers aggression to be behavior that is largely learned in a social context. What occurs after a behavior is very important. Social-learning theory offers a way to analyze, understand and influence aggression.

B. How do people **learn** aggressive behaviors?

According to social learning theory people learn to be aggressive by being in an environment where they see that other people get what they want by being aggressive. How is this concept of imitation or modelling shown?

C. When will aggressive behaviors be **used**?

Aggressive behavior is likely to occur in those situations that are emotionally arousing and frustrating. Research on children, however, shows that not all children behave aggressively when frustrated: only those children do who have a history of having learned to behave aggressively when frustrated.

D. How are aggressive behaviors **maintained**?

In a conflict situation between two people, the aggressive behavior of one is rewarded when the other person gives in; the person who gives in also gets rewarded when the other person stops being aggressive, for example, when the aggressor ceases to inflict pain.

The reinforcement value of attention is demonstrated in the video by a scene in a nursery school in which the teacher attends to a child who is aggressive. Often it does not matter whether adult attention is of a positive or negative nature: for young children, adult attention is often a powerful form of reinforcement that tends to encourage any behavior -good or bad - it follows. Rather than "catching children when they are good," adults usually notice children when they are misbehaving.

A sequence of aggressive behaviors in a nursery school illustrates the concepts being presented. After the sequence is shown, selected sections are replayed and analyzed in terms of the particular concepts involved. What concepts of social learning theory are shown?

E. How can aggressive behaviors be **decreased**? 3 suggestions are given.

1. Teach alternate behaviors to aggression, such as cooperation and negotiation of conflict. This method involves showing people how to cooperate and negotiate, as well as reinforcing such behaviors.
2. Ignore minor instances of aggression (sometimes called extinction).
3. Provide a mildly aversive consequence for aggressive behavior, such as a time-out period during which the aggressive child is removed for a short time from a pleasant setting.

F . Punishment

The use of punishment to control behavior is familiar. It is the easiest and most common method of getting people not to act in certain ways. Parents often train their children by punishing undesired behavior.

Although punishment can be an efficient way to control behavior, psychologists know that it has many drawbacks. Besides suppressing the punished behavior for the moment, it can also produce a number of undesirable outcomes, particularly with regard to physical punishment and aggression. Physical punishment produces emotional reactions like fear or more anger in a child. These emotional reactions are unpleasant experiences to children, and their aversive quality can become associated with us and the situation. Thus, we and the situation become something to be avoided or escaped from if possible. We often serve as models of physical aggression. We demonstrate to a child that what you do when you do not like other persons aggressive acts is to hit them.

The problems associated with physical punishment have convinced psychologists that as a general rule it should not be used. Other means of discipline are available to produce the desired effects, as the film illustrates. Frequently, ignoring minor forms of aggression is sufficient to eliminate them. Children's temper tantrum, for example, often will stop if they receive no attention for their actions.

Aggression in adults is developed and maintained in many of the same ways as is childhood aggression. Some violence is not only permitted but encouraged at certain times and in certain places. Notice how social sanctions are lifted, for example, in collective aggression (war).

Controls on aggression have to be positive. How different the world might be if governments understood this simple principle: it is necessary to make non-aggressive behavior more rewarding than aggressive behavior. Punishing aggressive behavior may stop if for the moment but usually causes pain. What does pain do? It usually only leads to more aggression, rather than less.