

*MANIPULATION OF POTENTIAL PUNISHMENT
PARAMETERS IN THE TREATMENT OF SELF-INJURY¹*

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The self-injurious behavior (SIB) of a blind, profoundly retarded male was observed within a field setting as multiple forms of punishment were applied. The effects of hair-tug punishment were first systematically examined, then hair-tug and electric shock punishment were administered in varying ratios (of punishment deliveries per SIB response) supplemented by continuous restraint contingencies and made contingent on recurrent antecedents of SIB cycles. Treatments were applied over six months of consecutive daily sessions ranging from 30 min to 8 hr duration. Posttreatment followup observations were taken 12, 24, and 34 months after treatment. Partial suppression was produced as a direct function of hair-tug punishment in the initial phase. A generally progressive decrement was produced on already lowered SIB rates with the succeeding components of the treatment package. Extended periods of total SIB suppression occurred as punishment was rendered contingent on antecedent components of each SIB response cycle. Followup observations of nearly 3 yr duration indicated total suppression generalized over all settings in which the subject functioned. The findings were related to the contrasting limits prevailing in most reports of punishment-based SIB suppression.

DESCRIPTORS: self-injurious behavior, punishment, aversive stimulation, suppression, retardates, shock, extinction, generalization, timeout, stimulus control

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