



Behavioural Consequences

Residents who are able to accept responsibility for their actions can benefit from carers using behavioural consequences.

Behavioural consequences are the natural and logical results of our actions, according to Maurice Balson of Monash University. Natural consequences are linked to the natural environment such as hunger, thirst, cold, warmth. Logical consequences are a product of the social interactions we have with others, i.e., we act selfishly and others do not want to be friends with us; a resident tells stories about people and others begin to cut them out of social involvement.

In applying behavioural consequences we are not forcing the person to do something they do not want to do. On the contrary, we are highlighting the choices they have available to them and the consequences should they choose certain actions in preference to others. There are certain ways of behaving in a residential facility that they will find more satisfying and we want the residents to choose those ways. We do not force them to act in a particular way.

Our role is to be a non-judgmental bystander who links action and consequence for the resident. No judgment or criticism is implied. The behavioural consequence must be delivered in a non-judgmental way that allows the resident to exercise their full freedom to choose.

In this way the resident acts out of a free choice rather than because of the power of the carer. This is more respectful of their autonomy and personhood.

Examples of behavioural consequences include the following:

- " If I don't eat I will get hungry"
- "If you talk to me about people who are not in this room I will leave and your room will not be cleaned/you will not be dressed the way you want/etc"
- "If you pinch/punch/swear at me I can't finish helping you"
- "Because you intentionally placed yourself on the floor a pillow and blanket will be brought to make you as comfortable as possible."

It is a skill to use behavioural consequences well but used well they can enhance life for many residents.

Do you ask your residents what they want help with or do you march on in and presume you know what they want you to do?

The person-centred approach is to focus on the preferences and needs of the resident, rather than on your own or those of the organisation. It is vital to take seriously the fact that people with dementia have preferences.