

Hello class. So remember, when we're talking about learning in a psychological sense, we're referring to the internal as well as the external process that result in changes in a person's behavior. And there are two parts of learning under psychology as well. We have associative learning, which is learning different kinds of behaviors in response to the environment and the things going on around us, as well as cognitive learning, which is the internal mental process of thinking and understanding and constructing all these ideas and knowledge into things that we can use.

Now, another area to consider is the role that other people can have on our learning itself. This is when we talk about social learning. Social learning is a sort of way of bridging the gap between these two ideas. We're talking about external people influencing our internal processes.

And specifically, we're going to talk about today observational learning. Now, observational learning is learning by watching others and the consequences of their actions, as well as imitating them later and showing that we did in fact learn from that person and what they did. So as an example, I want you to imagine a classroom full of young students. And they're all taking a test.

Now, one student during this test starts talking. And the teacher comes over and gives this student a smack with their ruler. All of the other students within the classroom don't need to receive a similar smack by the teacher to understand they shouldn't talk. They learn by observing the student and the consequences of that student's actions to know you shouldn't talk during a test.

So let's go over some of the things that went into this learning. Now, the most important element of the observational learning process, the thing that you absolutely need is a model. A model is someone or something that provides an example of the kind of behavior that the person is learning.

Now, in the example, the model is the student that speaks up during the test. But models can be living things as well as being fictional people, like characters in stories or fables, where we can learn from their behaviors to do the correct thing. Or they can be verbal instructions of behavior. So we're creating a model within our minds based on the things that we're being told. And these are things like a code of conduct that you might receive for a class in the very beginning.

Now, learners generally tend to respond to models that are more similar to them, because they're more able to actually do what the model is doing. So if I look at an Olympic swimmer, let's say, as an example, I'm less likely to see them as being a model that's related to me, because frankly I'm not that athletic, right?

Now, there are four other elements on what makes an effective model- and this is a kind of process-- for how observational learning occurs. So the first thing that we need is we need to pay attention to the model. We need to actually watch.

So if the model is interesting, we're more likely to actually see what they're doing and to remember what they're doing in some way. And this is why when we see a teacher as a model, sometimes they can be a little boring and so we don't learn as much from them. So attention is the first and really one of the most key aspects of observational learning.

Second, we need to be able to remember. We need to be able to store the information in our memory that we see so we can use it later, because a person doesn't necessarily have to perform the action immediately after they see their model to actually have learned it. This is what we refer to as latent learning.

Latent learning is learning that occurs but isn't performed until a later time. So you might learn how to do a math problem. But you won't display it until the teacher calls on you and offers you a reward or a good grade to actually do the thing. So we don't have to automatically perform actions on response to say that we've learned them.

Third, we need to be able to reproduce the action. We need to actually perform it at some time to show that we actually learned it. So to say that we learn it but we don't have to display it later doesn't say that we never have to display it to have learned it. Eventually we're going to forget it, right? So we actually have to reproduce the action.

And generally, this is what we refer to as imitation, imitation of the model. Which is to say, we perform an action in a similar way to what was observed within the model themselves. So we're trying to approximate exactly what they did to show that we know how to do the same sort of thing to receive the same consequences.

And finally we have motivation, which is a need or want to perform the action. So we might remember what we learned. And we might reproduce it later. But the reason why we actually reproduce it is because we're motivated in some way.

And this is generally going into the reward and punishment idea, which can encourage the performance of a behavior themselves. Also, the reward and punishment of the model themselves can affect our motivation as well. So for example, in our example, the boy was smacked when he talked during the test. So the other people are less likely to perform the action of talking during a test, because they saw the consequences of the model's behavior. So you can see that affects the motivation and the overall process of observational learning.