WHY VIDEO MODELING WORKS

An early learner or someone that had difficulties with observational learning can have a number of issues that are impeding their success. Each student may have a problem with one or more of these issues but any one issue for a specific student can make it more difficult for the student to learn the task. Many special needs students fail to learn a skill because of some combination of these issues.

- **Representing a viewed behavior:** Most of us can view a behavior and remember it enough to mimic the behavior. We take the process of mentally representing the viewed behavior for granted but it is actually a very complex process for the brain. Poor observational learners may have representational issues. Video modeling minimizes the representational issue by putting the observed behavior (the model) simultaneous with or shortly behind the execution. This can not only help the student learn to perform the behavior, but can also help boot strap the representational processes.
- **Remembering a viewed behavior:** Most of us can remember a viewed behavior for a little while and we get better by seeing it again. There are electro-chemical processes in the brain that keep information active long enough to do something else with the information like trying to mimic the behavior. There are also processes that allow us to recall information. Poor observational learners may have problems with the processes that keep information active and that recall information. Video modeling minimizes how long the student needs to keep information active by with the model and the performance almost simultaneous. This helps learning the task, and also helps keeping information active and recalling information.
- **Consistency of model:** Learning a behavior is easier if the model is consistent. Unfortunately we have a hard time exactly reproducing our behavior much less if multiple people are trying to model and teach a behavior. The video guarantees the model is consistent making learning the task generally easier and quicker.
- **Orientation of model:** It is easier for us to mimic a behavior if our view of the model is in our perspective. It is relatively easy to video from personal perspective where as it is frequently difficult for the teacher to model in the same perspective of the student.
- **Perception of threat from model:** Some students, especially some with autism, do not like to watch people modeling a behavior but will watch a video of the same on a computer or TV. As teachers we work to not be threatening to our students but for some of our students they sense our frustration or disappointment when the student is not accomplishing the skill after significant effort. The video gives the learner a non-judgmental model on which to focus , while the teacher works from behind the student minimizing the student's perception of judgment and threat.
- **Clear model:** When a teacher is trying to teach a skill and help the student be successful, the teacher is modeling, then facilitating and also doing other things. It is clear in the teacher's mind when they are doing each, but it may not clear to the student what is the model. The modeling is supposed to be consistent but the facilitation should change. The separation between what is providing the model versus who is providing the facilitation makes the video model very clear. According to research, the best way to teach a skill is video modeling and the second best way is with two people... one modeling and one facilitating. Due to logistics, we usually barely get a one-on-one ratio with our students much less than a two teachers for one student.
- **Focus on critical Information:** In the natural environment the model may be a small part of the visual information for a student. With a video we can zoom in to maximize critical information to focus the student on what is most important to learning the skill.
- **Minimizing Extraneous Information:** There is all sorts of visual information in the natural

environment like patterns in floors, carpets, walls, and so on to distract the student or give them something else that they may prefer to watch. With video we can control background information much easier than teaching the skill by modeling in the natural environment.