

# VEGIES FIRST



Understanding the importance of consequences is positively powerful, writes TARNYA DAVIS.

WHY we do what we do, and how we do it, is both complex and simple as ABC. A is for antecedent, or what happens before a behaviour, B is for behaviour (of course) and C is for consequence, or what happens after a behaviour. An antecedent is what starts us off, like training, or a sign telling us what to do, but it's the consequences that keep us doing something. Consequences can be reinforcements that increase the likelihood of us doing something, both positive (like praise) and negative (like going to the dentist to avoid tooth decay) or they can decrease behaviours, such as a punishment (packing up the X-box, just saying).

When we really understand the importance of consequences and the power of positive reinforcement (which works as well as negative reinforcement), we can use it to positively reinforce what we want to do.

As kids, we had to eat our vegies to get dessert, so dessert became the reinforcer for the behaviour of eating vegies. We also accidentally learnt that vegies tasted OK and we grew into adults who didn't need cake to eat their greens. Using the same idea, by listing our daily tasks and then doing the least favourite thing first, we can find each completion reinforced by the next task that was better than the previous. When we want to exercise, we can move our attention away from the discomfort and focus on the positive reinforcer of the satisfaction of participating, increasing the chance you'll exercise again and perhaps allowing you to accidentally discover that exercise feels good.

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