

## Gaining Self-Efficacy in Parenting Through Self-Monitoring

Shauna Snow-Capparelli

*Shauna Snow-Capparelli is an associate professor of journalism at Mount Royal University in Calgary, Alberta, and she serves on the Canadian Association of Journalists' national Ethics Advisory Committee. A former staff writer and columnist at the Los Angeles Times, she earned her undergraduate degree in communications and political science at California State University, Fullerton. Snow-Capparelli is completing her master's degree in integrated studies at Athabasca University, and is author of Mount Royal's Journalism Code of Ethics and Professional Practices. She is also the mother of two small children.*

### Abstract

Shepherding a son or daughter through the “terrible twos” is difficult for all parents. But when a child enters that rebellious period at the same time the family is coping with other major upheavals—in the author’s case, the arrival of a severely premature newborn with medical issues—parents can face even more stress. Through a formal self-management project using the techniques of self-monitoring, as well as positive self-talk, new self-instructions, and a developing arsenal of new disciplinary and distractionary tactics, the author successfully reduced the frequency with which she loses patience and yells at her son. Additional benefits of the project, which could be fairly easily replicated by others dealing with similar parenting issues, include much-increased self-efficacy and somewhat improved behaviour from the child.

**Keywords:** child behaviour, disciplining children, parenting, patience, self-efficacy, self-management, self-monitoring

### Introduction

Parenting can be one of the most stressful jobs around, and for mothers, especially, second-guessing oneself and wondering if you’ve done the “right” thing in a given situation is common. In an effort to improve my parenting, I undertook a 10-week self-management project to help me maintain patience with my son, Adam, during his entry into the “terrible twos.” Unfortunately, his transition into this difficult behavioural period coincided with a most stressful time in our household: his sister, Ruby, was born 12 weeks early, and after spending her first 11 weeks in hospital, she still faced medical obstacles due to her small size and prematurity. Thus, when Ruby came home from the

hospital still needing fairly intensive care only a week after Adam's second birthday, caring for both kids was quite overwhelming. As a result, I found that I quickly settled into a pattern of losing my patience and yelling at my son rather than finding other tactics to cope with his new defiant streak.

Adam wasn't particularly badly behaved, especially given the family upheaval around him. However, he was at a stage where he wanted to be in control, liked to say no, didn't listen to instructions or requests, and wanted more attention than was humanly possible to give. Particular behavioural issues that were centred around what I like to call the "business" of the day—routine activities such as diaper changing, teeth brushing, and eating—often stretched what could be simple, five-minute tasks into 20-minute struggles. No doubt part of this occurred because he suddenly had to share his "mamma," and he wanted my captive attention during these times. But because I now had more to accomplish in each day than hours in which to do it, not being able to get anything done quickly frustrated me, as did the battles with Adam to get these daily to-dos accomplished.

Adam's new reaches for independence also brought out struggles in my marriage, which were related to our cultural assumptions about parenting. Once our son grew to need disciplining, my husband and I realized the difference in our parenting styles: he's a hot-blooded Italian who was raised fearing his father and thinks nothing of yelling, and, in fact, thinks I could do more of it. My inclination is to be diplomatic, try to set examples, and appeal to Adam's reasoning skills. Of course, my spouse's way yields quick results, whereas appealing to a two-year-old's reasoning takes a long time to bring benefits. I think this is why, in the stressful and demanding time of dealing with my daughter's medical care (as well as additional medical issues affecting both of my husband's parents), I resorted to the quick method—frequently yelling at my son, even though it was contrary to the way I wanted to parent.

I undertook this project in an effort to manage my parenting skills and respond to Adam's disciplinary issues with more patience, without yelling at him unnecessarily, but while still maintaining my parental authority and encouraging improved behaviour. To enhance this goal, I undertook steps to head off my yelling, such as ascertaining the times when I am most prone to yell—or when Adam is most likely to act up—and promoting efforts to relax and calm myself. The project's main goal, or target behaviour, was to reduce the frequency with which I yelled at Adam as a form of discipline. To do this, however, I had to replace my yelling with alternate methods—tactics that encompassed methods of both discipline and distraction (and, yes, sometimes bribery) for Adam. While my project clearly shows measured improvement and success on the not-yelling front, I find myself not wholly satisfied with my arsenal of replacement

tactics and will continue to work on these for some time.

### **What Previous Research Says**

In undertaking my self-management project, which other parents could fairly easily adapt for their own uses, I largely followed Watson and Tharp's (2008) process of self-modification, using the essential elements of self-knowledge, planning, information gathering, and modification of plans in light of new information (p. 12). This was an extensive process that required much time and effort. But the knowledge and information gained—including an in-depth assessment of my responses and their controlling variables in an attempt to tap what Korotitsch and Nelson-Gray (1999) have termed a "cornerstone of behavior therapy" (p. 415)—were extremely important to me and more than worth the effort.

Research has held that self-monitoring (SM), the main method I used in this project, can effect change in behaviour—an occurrence known as reactivity. "In some instances, self-monitoring assignments alone have produced favorable changes in the target behavior and clinicians have utilized SM as a therapeutic technique in its own right," write Kanfer and Gaelick-Buys (1991, p. 331), citing a half-dozen studies. Moreover, the studies have indicated that the motivation behind SM, or what Kanfer and Gaelick-Buys term "the valence and importance of the behavior" (p. 332), are a strong determinant of the reactivity of SM. Indeed, the pair note that SM itself can "increase client motivation for change" (p. 331), and Watson and Tharp (2008) maintain that "[s]ometimes the very act of recording your behavior is enough to produce change if the change is something you want" (p. 103). In fact, intrinsic motivation—and mine was particularly high in this project—has also been shown to influence success by facilitating the learning process (Kanfer & Gaelick-Buys).

Meanwhile, a sense of self-efficacy (a belief in one's own skill in handling the task at hand [Bandura, 1997, as cited in Watson & Tharp, 2008])—another factor I worked on in this project—has also been found to promote positive behaviour changes. When one's self-efficacy regarding a particular task is high, "you try harder, use better problem solving, are less distracted, persist longer, and are less likely to give up in the face of failure" (Brown, 1991, as cited in Watson & Tharp, p. 44). In fact, many research studies have shown that belief in one's ability to change difficult target behaviours makes success more likely, and "the belief in your own competence—self-efficacy—is one of the strongest predictors of eventual success" (Watson & Tharp, p. 184, citing Bandura, 1986). Likewise, Kanfer (1977, as cited in Korotitsch & Nelson-Gray, 1999) suggests that self-praise—another tactic I employed in the project—used as a self-reinforcement favourably affects the future probability of the target response.

While this research deals with my own particular parenting challenges, these are universal challenges with which many parents have dealt, including some in previous formal studies. Several examples of similar research are detailed in Watson and Tharp (2008), such as “Mike” (pp. 69-70, 91), who used a structured diary in an effort to stop spanking his children, and “Adele” (pp. 25-28), a coach who rated her stress levels in an effort to stop yelling at players on her girls’ basketball team.

## Methods

Normally a college journalism instructor, I undertook this project while on maternity leave from my job but while undertaking studies in a graduate program. I am married and in my 40s: embracing parenthood at a later stage in life affords benefits, such as increased financial stability and life experience, but also comes with negative aspects, such as physical fatigue, which itself brings on reduced patience. My son, Adam, the other key player in this project, was an only child for 21 months. Because of his sister’s lengthy hospitalization, Adam was introduced to Ruby slowly, but from the start he was excited about having a sister. Adam has never seemed overly jealous of Ruby or been outwardly upset or acted out against her. But his world changed considerably when she was born, especially when she came home. For one thing, my status in the home changed. I had been back at work for 10 months before Ruby was born but was at home in the evenings and on weekends. Now, I was gone completely for five days (in the hospital after my C-section), and then in and out throughout the days and evenings for the long 11 weeks of Ruby’s hospitalization. Once Ruby came home, I had an almost unimaginable to-do list; in addition to the regular care involved with a new baby, she had several weekly doctor appointments and a regimented schedule of medicines that needed administering. Rather than simply breastfeeding her, I had to pump my milk, mix it with supplements, and then feed her by bottle— a time-consuming and exhausting process. All this left me stressed out and feeling guilty about not having enough time for Adam at the very time he was suddenly emotional and exploring control issues and boundaries, which resulted in my feeling that he needed *more* of my time, not less.

To undertake my self-improvement project, I first developed a three-pronged SM diary. This was a detailed chart that allowed me to track both Adam’s and my behaviours, record the antecedents to and consequences of those behaviours, and make observations. The first element of the chart I termed “Quality Rating of Time with Adam,” and I used it to track the amount and type of attention I was giving to him, the behaviour or activity involved, whether the interaction was positive or negative, and comments including notations of antecedents and consequences. In the chart’s second section, “Counting Instances of Yelling [and Not],” I zeroed in on my target activity: my

yelling at Adam. In an effort to track both negatives and positives, I charted all the times Adam misbehaved during the day, whether I yelled at him or not, alternative ways I dealt with his misbehaviour (or how I successfully avoided yelling), and additional comments. In the chart's third portion, "Daily Sub-goals," I tracked 10 sub-goals that I expected would help me meet my overall goals. Many of these—such as reading to Adam and getting him out of the house each day—my husband and I developed together in the hope that Adam's behaviour would be improved by avoiding boredom and expending energy. Others—such as my exercising and keeping on top of my studies—were an effort to provide calmness and reduce the chaos in my life. These three elements, which comprised an intricately detailed, structured diary, yielded daily total numbers (a quality time rating, a count of times I yelled and didn't yell, and a number of sub-goals met) that I was able to graph. I then used this graph to spot trends, improvements, and the like.

I believe that my SM procedures more than fulfilled Kanfer and Gaelick-Buys's (1991) three stages of the self-regulation process, although rather than a progression, I engaged in all three stages simultaneously. Continuously, I was in the SM stage, paying deliberate attention to my behaviour; in the self-evaluation stage, comparing the results of my SM with my own parenting standards (as well as with my observations of other parents in action); and in the self-reinforcement stage of providing not only feedback, but influencing future interactions and the way I reacted to Adam. This latter reinforcing "feedforward effect" (p. 309) met my hoped-for outcomes, as my project was aimed at controlling my behaviour over the long term.

Meanwhile, other elements that I used informally in the project included self-coaching and substituting new self-instructions (Watson & Tharp, 2008), such as telling myself to keep calm, or reminding myself that Adam wasn't trying to upset me, he was just more interested in playing than in doing what I wanted at that moment. Similarly, I engaged in self-praise, especially as the project wore on, reminding myself what a good mother I was. And, as per Watson and Tharp, I focused on a behaviour that I believed to be incompatible with my target behaviour (yelling)—that of spending quality time with Adam.

However, almost immediately after developing my original SM instrument, I found that several elements needed clarification. For instance, exactly how would I rate an interaction with Adam as positive or negative, and, further, how would I determine which interactions should even be included in the chart? I quickly developed a quality rating scale to clarify this, and I decided to chart only those interactions that I considered significant one-on-one time. These clarifications were worked out during my two-week baseline period, which I used for initial data gathering of both quantitative and qualitative information. Because it took me some time to feel confident that I was

accurately recording the same events in the same way each time they occurred, I believe that extending my baseline period from the usual one-week interval increased the reliability of my data.

The baseline period was followed by a second two-week period in which I actively tried to develop a list of alternative disciplinary and distractionary tactics (for examples, see the Results section, below) to deal with Adam's behaviour, and a third two-week period in which I focused on increasing my feelings of self-efficacy as a parent by using positive self-talk; this included making a list of the things that I was doing well. Although I had initially planned a 12-week SM project, I was seeing definite results after only six weeks, and so for Weeks 7 and 8, I stopped full charting, focusing on only a tick count of the times that Adam acted up and whether I yelled. This was my effort to try a type of maintenance period, to help assure myself that I wouldn't resume my former frequent yelling activity once my intensive SM stopped. Following this maintenance tracking, I returned to full SM for a final two-week period, which I termed the exit baseline. Overall, I was surprised with how quickly I saw positive, albeit modest, results.

Unfortunately, I was unable to follow the basic SM procedure of recording events immediately as they happen (Kanfer & Gaelick-Buys, 1991; Watson & Tharpe, 2008). It was impossible for me to stop and record during a diaper change, for instance, or while putting Adam to bed. I simply jotted down—as soon as was practical—notes on a piece of scratch paper of what the occurrence was, the quality rating, and if yelling occurred (example: "diaper, +1," or "teeth/hands, -2, yell"), and then completed my full diary when time permitted. As a result of this delayed recording, my diary likely lost considerable detail. While accuracy also may have suffered from the delay, I did strive at all times to maintain high standards of accuracy otherwise. Following Watson and Tharp's criteria for increasing the reliability of self-observations (p. 97), I paid very careful attention to my and Adam's actions, and I frequently instructed myself to record—so much so, in fact, that I never came close to forgetting.

## **Results**

My SM project yielded many positive results, including documented improvement in my main goals: staying calm and not yelling at Adam. In addition, my self-efficacy regarding my parenting improved greatly, and—in a surprise to me—my monitoring also indicated improved behaviour by my son. I also developed a list of tactics that I can use to discipline, distract, or even bribe Adam as necessary—a very useful tool that has helped me hone more successful parenting practices. These tactics include making a game out of necessary tasks, such as racing him somewhere we need to get to quickly; setting a timer when I need uninterrupted time, as he is more apt to leave me alone if he knows I'll come back to him when the timer buzzes; using the TV as a distraction,

such as allowing him to brush his teeth while he watches his favourite nighttime show before bed; giving him choices, such as whether he'd prefer to wash his face first or his hands first; distracting him when he gets into something he shouldn't by asking him to find a particular item, saying that I need his help; and counting to three (sometimes accompanied by a threat, but I found that in time, he would often fall into line just so I'd stop the counting). However, my monitoring showed that even those tactics that worked most of the time weren't always reliable; as a result, the one area in which I feel my project has not been truly successful is that I'm still left with no clear substitute for my yelling behaviour, except to continue to work on developing my patience and my arsenal of alternative distractionary and disciplinary tactics.

Nonetheless, I am heartened that the clearest, most readily apparent results were with my target behaviour: avoiding yelling at Adam. Although my first week's baseline number of times yelled was low, averaging only 0.6 times per day, I believe that the more accurate baseline number was reflected in Week 2 of my project: an average of 1.9 times yelled each day. (I suspect that increased self-awareness brought a heightened sense of reactivity in Week 1, making that number an unrealistic baseline, which is one of the reasons that I continued baseline tracking throughout Week 2.) The Week 2 baseline was followed by three consecutive weeks of strong drops in the average daily number of times yelled: from 1.9, to 1.3, to 1, to only 0.3. Although Weeks 6 and 7 rose somewhat to an average of 0.7, Weeks 8 and 9 returned to the low 0.3 average, and Week 10 remained in the same ballpark at only 0.4. Meanwhile, in each of the weeks, the average number of times I successfully avoided yelling was significantly higher than the average number of times I did yell. Seeing this graphed gave me improved self-efficacy and incentive to continue with the project. This chart, indicating the number of times I yelled and the times that I successfully avoided doing so was much simplified from my daily SM charts and showed clearer results: here, I could easily see my progress.

In perhaps the strongest indication of my success in this project, I also tracked the percentage of times I yelled at Adam when he acted up (versus the percentage of times I successfully avoided yelling). This all-important number declined considerably—*by more than 50% from my baseline to the project's completion*. While my SM data indicate that I yelled at Adam 28% of the time he misbehaved during the baseline period—and an even higher 34% of the time in Weeks 3 and 4 of monitoring—this number dropped sharply to 16% in Weeks 5 and 6, 15% in Weeks 7 and 8, and was down to 13% in Weeks 9 and 10. These numbers were very heartening and have given me strong grounds to call this project a success!

Meanwhile, my analysis also showed that Adam's behaviour was improving at the same time: the total number of times he acted up decreased fairly steadily throughout

the project, from 61 times in Weeks 1 and 2 (averaging 4.36 times a day) to 47 times in Weeks 3 and 4 (averaging 3.36 times per day) and 43 times in Weeks 5 and 6 (3.07 times per day average). It then went back up slightly to 47 times in Weeks 7 and 8 (3.36 times per day average), before dropping again to only 39 times in Weeks 9 and 10 (2.79 times per day average). I can only guess as to the reasons for this: I hope that it is because I'd met my goal of becoming calmer, and that this made Adam calmer as well. However, it could be reactivity in action, in the sense that the act of SM had made me spend more quality time with him, possibly improving his behaviour. Or, it could be that my SM was faulty and I failed to record instances of his misbehaviour accurately. Nonetheless, I saw this as an encouraging finding, and I chose to look at it positively and therefore further increase my self-efficacy and future motivation.

Where I did not find clear results, however, was in how my other numbers affected Adam's behaviour. I did not find any clear patterns in terms of the quality time I spent with him or the number of sub-goals met in a particular day and how those elements affected the number of times he acted up or the number of times I yelled. That tested my own sense of control, especially when I realized that Adam's behaviour actually improved somewhat when I gave *him* more control. So, one of my challenges was identified by Kanfer and Gaelick-Buys (p. 310), who hold that for self-regulation, you must see the behaviour as being under your control, and that although you can't *self-regulate* behaviour of another, you can self-regulate "aspects of one's own reactions" to another's behaviour. I think this is one reason that I didn't see even clearer trends: "Complaining... or outbursts of anger may be quite variable, because they depend at least partly on how provoking other people's behavior happens to be" (Watson & Tharp, 2008, p. 95).

What the data did show, loud and clear, is the amount of time that I really did spend with Adam. I had felt guilty because of the time and attention I was giving my daughter, but this project proved to me that I can be proud of my mothering of both children and that such guilt is unfounded (another self-efficacy boost). Specifically, this project, and the legacy left by my detailed diary, strongly confirmed to me that Adam's hugs, kisses, and "I love you"s are the best rewards I could ever seek, and they made my motivation all the stronger. For instance, his excited greetings whenever I returned home from an outing quickly eased any stress I might have been feeling, definitely a positive reinforcer.

## **Discussion and Conclusions**

Perhaps my major conclusion after this self-improvement project is that I *am* a good parent, and I should not feel guilty about not having enough time for Adam. While this project succeeded in lowering the amount of times I yelled at Adam, I expect the



increased self-efficacy and confidence in my parenting skills will be even more important in terms of long-lasting results. Before undertaking this extensive SM, I had often felt that my life was simply chaos, and that I was never accomplishing anything. But I wasn't acknowledging how much I actually do with Adam—even with all the other obligations on my plate. That significant accomplishment is now proudly documented, and I no longer have to ask myself where the time goes or feel guilty for not cleaning the bathrooms as often as I'd like. Hence, I would encourage other parents to take on similar SM projects for the self-affirmation aspects alone. I had thought that I was pretty good at positive self-talk before, but the degree to which my data surprised me showed that I simply wasn't giving myself enough credit. This extensive documentation gave me permission to engage in more positive self-talk and use more contingent self-praise (Kanfer & Gaelick-Buys, 1991). In addition to increased self-efficacy and improved self-instructions, I am pleased to finish this project with an expanded store of parenting repertoires such as disciplinary options (e.g., taking away a favourite toy) and changed antecedents (or defensive tactics to head off Adam's misbehaviour, such as promising to give him one-on-one time with me—perhaps doing a craft project together—if he's good during a particular time or activity).

Another result of this project has been my increased awareness of my own actions. I believe that my SM has taught me to pay closer attention and interrupt my previous chain of yelling without thinking—"disruption of automatic processes" (Kanfer & Gaelick-Buys, 1991, p. 338). But while it was easy to give myself instructions to be calm, not to yell, or to try creative tactics such as using a timer when Adam acted up, I found that I didn't have much luck in breaking the recurring chains that lead to his misbehaviour; this wasn't the goal of the project, but I'd naively hoped that I might be able to accomplish this as well. Likewise, my project didn't produce another of my desired side effects: making *not* yelling automatic. I expect this is because I didn't find a concrete, always-dependable replacement for the undesirable action. Hence, I find that particularly when I am stressed and under time pressures—or when I am overly tired—that old tendency to lose my patience and yell still comes to the forefront. However, one interesting issue raised by the project is whether the problematic behaviour is specifically yelling, or is it, more generally, anger? With that in mind, it seems that my initial, yet vague, replacement behaviour of responding to Adam in a calmer manner still seems a good target, even as finding a more specific replacement remains my one unattained goal.

As my diaries were quite extensive, I'm unable to address all the points raised therein. But several recurring themes appeared. For instance, I reassured myself that sometimes yelling *is* needed and/or seems to be the only thing that works. If Adam is about to hurt himself, or his sister, then I don't feel guilty about raising my voice. And

although there might be a better option out there that I've yet to find, he sometimes gets so excited or upset that yelling seems to be the only thing to snap him out of his frenzy. Following the project, in fact, I have taken to raising my voice quite loudly if I sense the need to begin counting to three, for instance. Technically, this is a form of yelling, but in this case, I'm choosing to do it so as to get his attention, rather than yelling as a result of a loss of patience or self-control (and the technique has been working; perhaps Adam senses my own sense of control and thus responds to this disciplinary form better). In addition, one point documented in my data was that many of Adam's acting-up instances were when he was trying to gain power. He tended to behave better if I ceded some control to him—even if that meant something as simple as letting him pick between two foods he initially turned down; letting him choose which sock or shoe to put on first; or setting a timer to limit an activity so that an external device, and not Mom, decided when time was up. And, as I expected, my diaries also show that Adam goes through phases: what works once won't necessarily work again. Meanwhile, upon reviewing my diaries, I was surprised to see that I became easier on myself as time went along. In fact, only midway through the first week of charting, I was already feeling quite good about my parenting. For instance, I wrote, "Adam is quite proud of himself, so obviously I've reinforced this (sense of accomplishment) well." And I was happy my observations showed that Adam is learning from me: for instance, I often noted him repeating my instructions and admonishments to be careful of things like hot water or scissors.

Another surprising element of this project was that the mild peer pressure of posting my graphs publicly on the BEHV 655 course Moodle board worked considerably to my advantage. This confirmed Malott's (1986) findings on the incentive "value of a perfect graph" (p. 216). In my case, public postings added incentive not to yell at Adam, because I didn't want to have to admit it when I did. And likewise, when improvement became noticeable, any contradictions to my goal were all the more disappointing because I couldn't continue to tout my success proudly. Hence, I found validity in Kanfer and Gaelick-Buys's (1991) contention that "social reinforcement for progress can add to the effectiveness" of SM (p. 334). Therefore, I would recommend that others undertaking a similar behavioural change project share their projects—and, periodically, their findings—with others so as to gain similar social reinforcement. In retrospect, I wish that I'd done this more with members of my own personal support network. Of course, because of cultural and societal differences, not everyone will agree with one's self-improvement goals; my husband, with his own vociferous Italian upbringing, did not completely agree with my goal of not yelling at our son and thus offered only limited support while I was undertaking this project. Hence, I would recommend selecting one's

social reinforcers carefully to make sure they support the chosen activity and thus will follow the project's progress with interest.

Meanwhile, although I knew that my rewards in this project would be mostly intrinsic, I did try to provide additional self-rewards for maintaining my extensive SM, another research-supported tactic (Kanfer & Gaelick-Buys, 1991; Watson & Tharp, 2008) that I would recommend others replicate. After the first week of charting, for instance, I indulged in a two-hour, guilt-free nap. Other rewards I gave myself included getting a massage after the second week and joining a weekly exercise class after the fourth week. Meanwhile, as a reward for completing the project and finding success, I have hired a regular housecleaner—and I am hoping that in addition to giving me more time for the kids, this particular reward will be a reminder to maintain my improved behaviour going forward. As Kanfer and Gaelick-Buys point out, “ultimate positive consequences from the environment would seem to be necessary to maintain the newly developed behavior in the long run” (p. 340).

I hope that other parents will be encouraged by my findings. If I could improve my parenting skills and reduce my yelling at my son, they will likely be able to do likewise. Perhaps I can be a model for others and bring them increased self-efficacy on this front. Some could also learn from my struggles in this project and could no doubt improve many elements. Perhaps the biggest obstacle I encountered, for instance, was trying to keep my data-gathering manageable. The SM instrument I developed was overly complicated and time-consuming. It took me a minimum of an hour a day—and often double that—just to record the interactions and my detailed comments. I am a detail-oriented person, and the time and effort ultimately were worthwhile to me because they yielded so much knowledge (not to mention a neat record to look back on of my interactions with my precious son). But others might be able to simplify their SM process greatly while still yielding similar positive results.

Meanwhile, to help ensure that others attain increased self-efficacy as I did, I would suggest that an important element to replicate would be building in a maintenance period. In my case, I ceased my detailed diaries in favour of simply tracking whether I yelled when Adam misbehaved. My demonstrated success during this period greatly increased my confidence going forward that I had made a lasting change, and that I would be able to counter what Kanfer and Gaelick-Buys (1991) call a “frequent observation concerning the temporary nature of the change associated with SM tasks” (p. 332). Encouragingly, the reactivity element of charting has stayed with me, as I hope it will for some time. Even now, months after completing my SM, I think twice before yelling and am immediately aware when I become stressed out or short-tempered in my dealings with Adam—it is simply more ingrained now to self-instruct and look for alternative actions such as suggesting a distraction or trying to give Adam a choice so

that he feels he has some control. Thus, the project has successfully trained me for increased self-awareness, which I hope will continue. Research shows that my increased self-efficacy should also help: “Feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with one’s behavior allow individuals to maintain many everyday behaviors in the absence of immediate external consequence” (Kanfer & Gaelick-Buys, 1991, p. 338). Meanwhile, I hope to extend the reactivity phenomenon by continuing to think about my project and target behaviour, another aspect that I would recommend to others undertaking similar self-management projects. In this sense, I agree with B. F. Skinner’s reasoning; he told Epstein (1997), “It is not enough to live your life... you also need to analyze it and make changes in it frequently and regularly” (p. 561).

## References

- Epstein, R. (1997, Fall). Skinner as self-manager. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, 30(3), 545-568.
- Kanfer, F.H., & Gaelick-Buys, L. (1991). Self-management methods. In F. H. Kanfer & A. P. Goldstein (Eds.), *Helping people change: A textbook of methods* (4th ed.) (pp. 305-360). New York: Pergamon Press.
- Korotitsch, W. J., & Nelson-Gray, R. O. (1999, December). An overview of self-monitoring research in assessment and treatment. *Psychological Assessment*, 11(4), 415-425. Retrieved September 1, 2008, from <http://0-web.ebscohost.com.aupac.lib.athabascau.ca/ehost/detail?vid=3&hid=5&sid=f4eeba4e-df6e-43f3-b816-6733756d699b%40sessionmgr9&bdata=JkF1dGhUeXBIPXVyxCxpcCx1aWQmc2l0ZT1laG9zdC1saXZl#db=pdh&AN=pas-11-4-415>
- Malott, R. W. (1986). Self-management, rule-governed behavior and everyday life. In H. W. Reese, & L. J. Parrot (Eds.), *Behavior science: Philosophical, methodological, and empirical advances* (pp. 207-228). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Watson, D. L., & Tharp, R. G. (2008). *Self-directed behaviour: Self-modification for personal adjustment*. Toronto: Nelson Education.