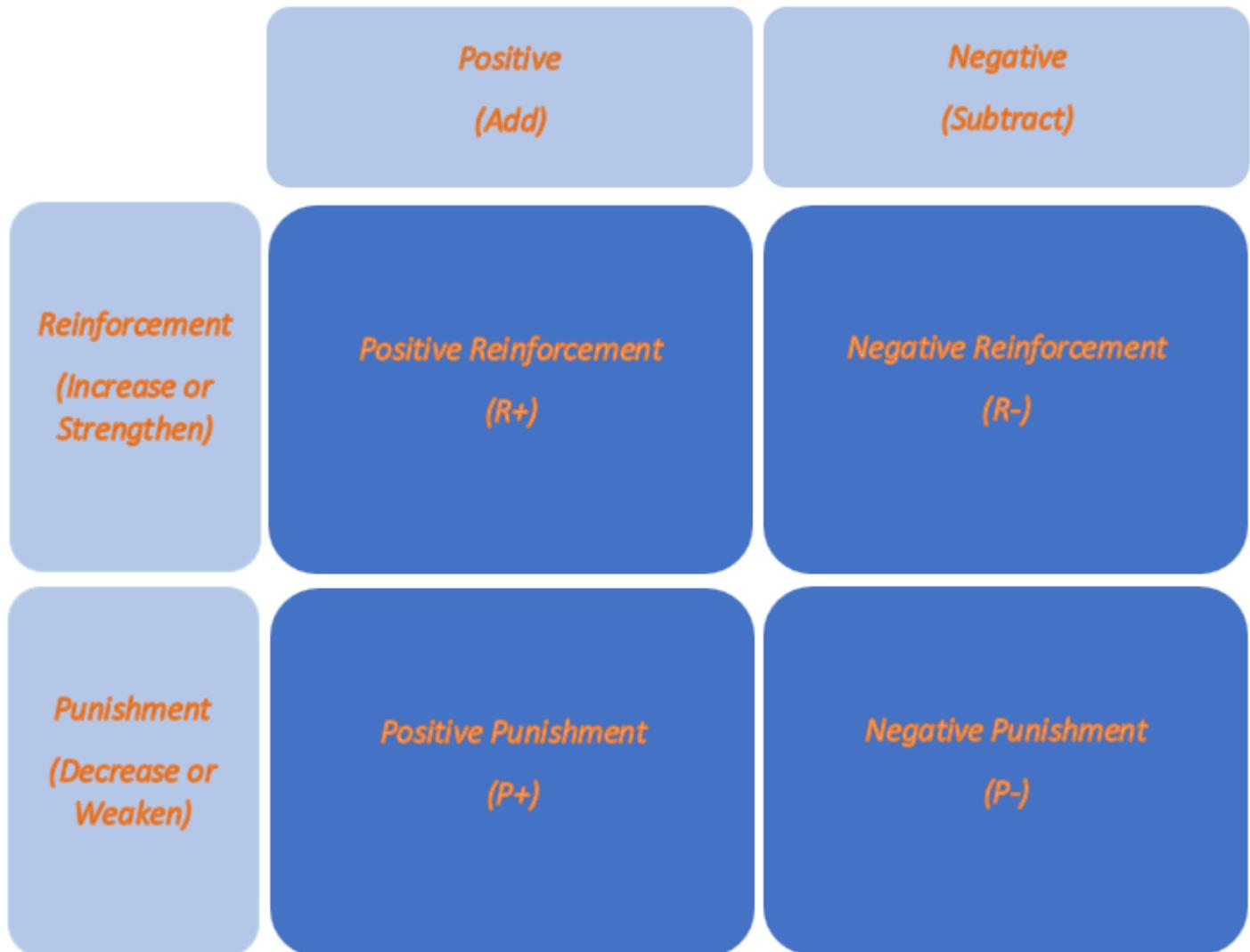


**Operant Conditioning:** what we frequently think of when we talk about training the dog.

Behaviorists explain the consequences available for operant conditioning by using a four quadrants model.

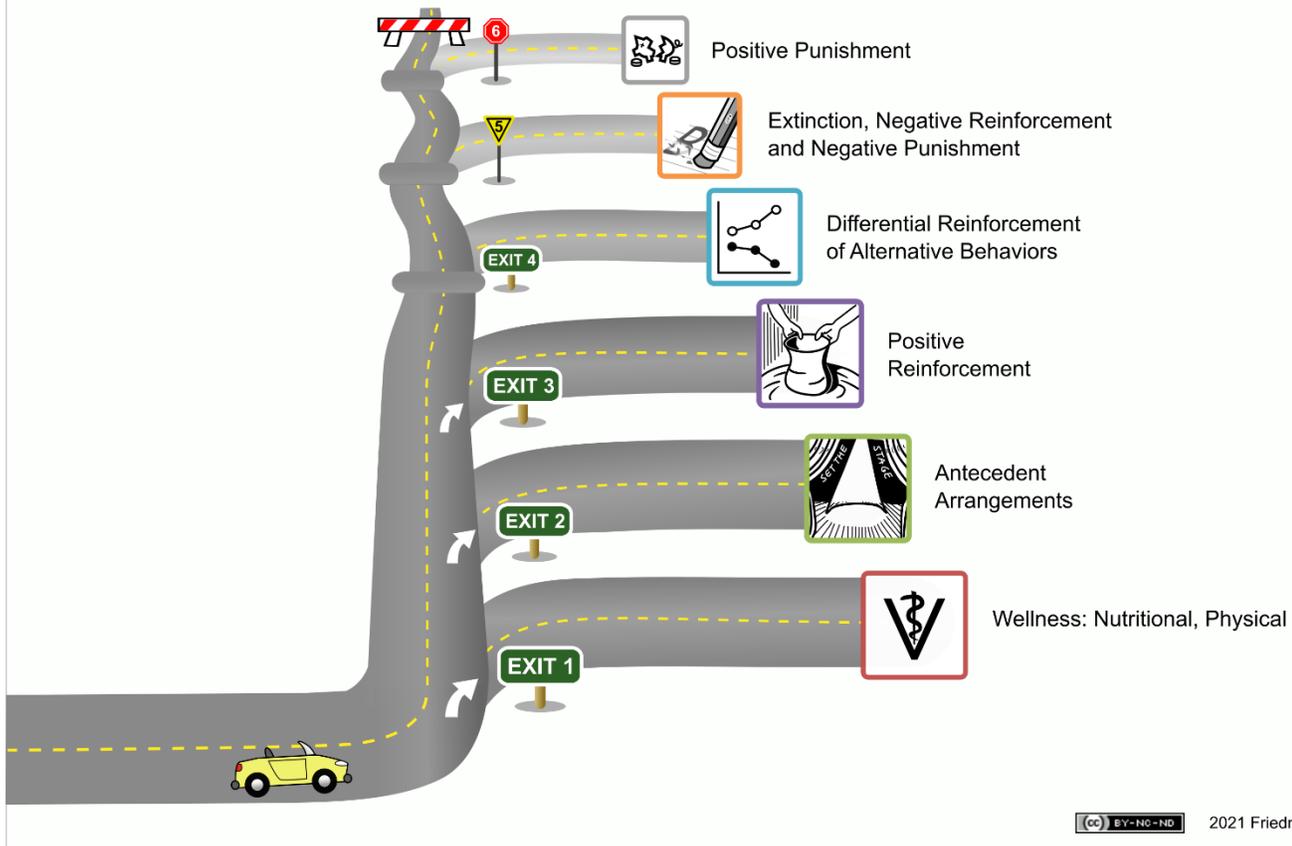


**Defining and interpreting the labels used for the four quadrants:**

- Negative = Subtract or Take Away
- Positive = Add or Deliver
- Punishment = As a result of the consequence the target behavior decreases or weakens
- Reinforcement = As a result the consequence the target behavior increases or strengthens

Important Note: the learner, in this case your pet, determines what serves the function of punishment and what serves the function of reinforcement. If the trainer (you) thinks a strategy that punishes behavior is at play and the behavior does not decrease, then that strategy is not a punishment for that learner. Likewise, if the trainer (you) thinks a strategy that reinforces behavior is at play and the behavior does not increase, then that strategy is not a reinforcement for that learner.

## Hierarchy of Behavior-Change Procedures Most Positive, Least Intrusive Effective Intervention



Above is a diagram provided by Dr. Susan G. Friedman PhD that describes a general approach that I follow when evaluating how I want to help a pet owner achieve their goals in changing their dogs' behavior.

1. Wellness means I first ask questions such as: might this dog be doing the misbehavior because they are in pain?; might this dog be doing the misbehavior because they are emaciated?; might this dog be doing the misbehavior because they are arthritic?
2. Antecedent Arrangements means looking at the environment, physical forms of management and setting events. For example: problem behavior: puppy chews the rug; antecedent arrangement: use a gate to prevent the puppy access to the room with the rug, or remove the rug from the room.
3. Once I have ruled out or made accommodations for items 1 and 2, now I can begin to implement a training exercise. Using Positive Reinforcement means that I am going to make every effort to set my puppy up to be successful to achieve the goal behavior. Note: the goal behavior for this training session may be just a small portion of my final goal defined in my training plan. Shaping best practices encourages the trainer to set intermediate goals that are a small sliver of the final product. Using R+



means I am going to provide the dog with something they want when they have performed the session's goal behavior.

4. In an ideal world I will not need to use an option beyond item 3. Note the speedbump that displays for item 4. In the real world with a dog that is not a robot and is an emotional learner, a learner that we spend a lot of time with, sometimes when we are not our best selves, things happen that can challenge us. What do you do when you invite a guest into your home and your puppy wants to jump on the visitor? Can you ask your dog to go relax on a mat or to perform a fun and well-rehearsed trick and reinforce these behaviors? This would be an example of asking for an alternate behavior that is incompatible with jumping on your guest.
5. Item 5 includes other choices you may take after negotiating a second speedbump. Extinction is sometimes the result of frustration. I strive to keep frustration at a minimum when teaching any dog. Negative Reinforcement means that something icky is happening to a pet, so that removal of that something icky strengthens the goal behavior. I strive to reduce anything icky that my pet may perceive in my training. Negative Punishment, the removal of something the dog is seeking in an effort to decrease the behavior being performed, is a strategy I will sometimes use. The perceived need to use negative punishment to meet a goal means that I have not done my best job with previously available options of setting the environment up and use of positive reinforcement for behavior I do want. In my own practice working with pet owners in the real world, I do sometimes put Negative Punishment on an exit separate from and prior to Extinction and Negative Reinforcement.
6. Item 6 is where you don't want to go unless you have consulted other positive reinforcement and force-free trainers and you all agree you really have tried "everything" and the gain from the use of Positive Punishment exceeds the risk.

The problems and risks with the use of Positive Punishment are many. They include any undesired behaviors and emotions created by association of adding something icky for the pet to the training that may spill over to other things in the environment, including the trainer (you), other people in the environment (your friends and family), the location, the time of day, etc. If an aversive is applied the timing must be precise, or you risk punishing behavior you did not intend. The level must be adequate to stop the behavior yet not excessive to the degree that the pet is no longer learning and is instead traumatized. Once you've applied positive punishment, you can't undo its affect on the pet and potentially on your relationship with your pet.

\*I subscribe to developing training exercises and plans that follow the Humane Hierarchy and that are Effective and Least Intrusive Minimally Aversive (LIMA).