Try It Yourself 3.1

Consider the following examples. Try to determine what the stimulus is and what the response is. Is the response a reflex or is it voluntary?

- You have spent 2 hours in a stuffy classroom and you yawn.
- Your mother yells at you and you turn your music up louder.
- Your mouth starts to water as you pass the door of a bakery.
- Your close your eyes while watching a horror movie.

Try It Yourself 3.2

The following are common situations which can be explained by basic classical conditioning principles. Can you identify them?

- A one year old baby, who earlier liked all people, now reacts negatively to strangers.
- After cutting yourself badly with an electric saw, you feel uneasy about using an electric knife to carve a roast beef.
- Continuing the above situation, you have forced yourself to use the electric knife several times and you have had no mishaps. Now you find your anxiety is gone.
- You are introduced to someone by a close friend, and you like the person immediately.

Try It Yourself 3.3

The processes of classical conditioning can give us greater understanding of many phenomena involving our emotions and our physical responses. Can you see how Pavlovian principles can be applied to the following situations?

- George's father died, and in the year since then, he has had an uncommonly large

number of colds and flues.

- Patricia finds that every time she feels nervous, she wants a cigarette.
- Domenic, a tea-lover, always had a cup of tea each morning when he first arrived at work. Now that he works the night shift, he finds that he has an intense desire for tea when he arrives at work just before midnight.

Do you see classical conditioning at work in your own behaviour? For example, does hot weather seem to trigger your desire for ice cream? Do you feel anxious when you visit a hospital? Do you have keepsakes with emotional significance?

Try It Yourself 3.4

Are you ever required to take multiple choice tests or examinations? In such a test, you are required to pick out the correct answer out of several possible answers, and you are given marks for each correct selection you make. In essence, you are being rewarded for the frequency of your (correct) responding. This is a valid evaluative technique, but sometimes students complain that their performance on such a test did not reflect their true knowledge and understanding of the material being tested. That is, they argue that the *frequency* of their correct selections did not take into account the *quality* of the answers they might have produced on their own, as would have been the case in a short answer test or an essay. Have you had this experience? What would you consider to be a better way of evaluating your knowledge: through the frequency of your correct choices or the quality of self-produced answers?

Note that there are situations in everyday life where the frequency of response is a useful measure (e.g., the number of times an athlete scores). How would you decide when frequency is an appropriate measure or not?

Try It Yourself 3.5

Having studied the basic principles of operant conditioning, can you apply them to these examples?

- Sven doesn't study after every class, but the closer it gets to an examination date, the more he studies. What type of schedule of reinforcement is Sven responding to?
- A mother sometimes laughs when her 4 year old son Rex performs a dance, but at other times, especially when she is busy, she doesn't respond. What type of schedule of reinforcement is Rex responding to? If his mother's reactions continue as described, will Rex continue to dance or not?
- Natalie flirts outrageously with every man she meets, unless her husband is present. How would the principles of operant conditioning explain this?
- Do you have any 'bad habits'? What is the response? What is the discriminative stimulus that cues the response? What is the reinforcer that sustains it? Can you think of a way to modify your behaviour?