

Human Behavior and Industrial Safety

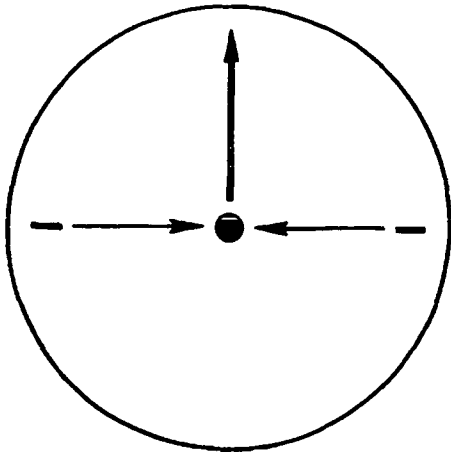


FIG 6-3 – Avoidance-avoidance conflict individual is repelled by two equally negative goals

ing goes, “Caught between the devil and the deep blue sea”

Two kinds of behavior generally result from such a conflict—vascillation and flight

In vascillation, the individual approaches one goal, retreats, approaches the other, retreats, and so on. As he approaches a goal, the unpleasant portions of the goal increase, so he withdraws. In the example above, the worker may stall off his doing the job requiring wearing the equipment, until the quitting bell sounds. And then, of course, it is too late for that day, and he can agonize over the decision the next morning.

Another resultant from the avoidance-avoidance conflict is flight. The athlete may leave the field, the worker may quit his job. This of course has serious consequences in lost prestige or lost income.

A more common type of fleeing, therefore, is in a figurative sense—like daydreaming, fantasy, etc. The worker faced with an unpleasant task may repress the reality by daydreaming.

The avoidance-avoidance conflict is not as easy to resolve as the approach-approach, nor is it as difficult as the next conflict type discussed.

Approach-avoidance

The “approach-avoidance” conflict is the most difficult to resolve. The individual is both attracted and repelled by the same goal.

(Fig 6-4) The worker who is striving for top production may be forced to take unnecessary risks to achieve that goal. The only way out of such a conflict is the erasing or weakening

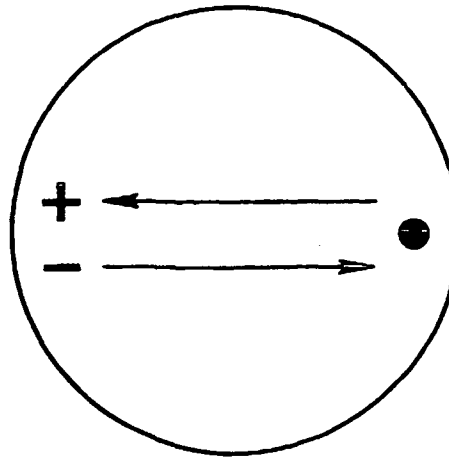


FIG 6-4 – Approach-avoidance conflict goal has both positive and negative valence. This is the most difficult to resolve.

one of the signs, thereby altering the individual’s internal motivational system.

The approach-avoidance conflict is further complicated by the notion of a goal gradient for positive and negative goals, as pictured in Fig 6-5. Other things being equal, the closer one is to a goal the “stronger” it is. Negative goals, however, are stronger than positive ones the closer one is to the goal. Conversely, positive goals appear stronger than negative ones the farther away one is from the goal. So as the individual approaches an approach-avoidance goal, the negative or repelling aspects of the goal appear stronger. This may lead to retreat which will result in vascillation and indecision. The approach-avoidance situation is common.

Reaction to frustration

In most cases, the conflicts described will lead to frustration. This frustration may often lead to positive, constructive resolution of the situation. For example, the individual who is facing the conflict of top production, but at increased risk, may develop a new system for processing the product at a faster and safer rate.