

FDLRS Record

Newsletter for the University of Florida FDLRS-MDC program in Jacksonville

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Intrinsic Motivation: Increasing Classroom Engagement

by Brett A. Walden, MPH

An article from Edutopia discusses the neuroscience of motivation and the importance of using intrinsic motivation to increase effort on classroom activities_(Willis, 2019.) When someone is said to be *intrinsically motivated*, they are functioning or performing for their own internal satisfaction, rather than something that is external like rewards, etc. This concept is not only associated with enhanced engagement and perseverance in an activity, but also with greater use of meta-cognitive strategies and deeper processing of information (Larson, 2011.) It is a lofty goal to help students achieve high levels of motivation. After providing loads of scheduled and spontaneous reinforcement to get them going, we must plan a time to fade and take a step back. In doing so, we hope the student has learned to motivate themselves and become their own cheerleader.



As the school year comes to an end, student motivation is no less on our minds as it was the first day of school. This article will review some practical ways that we, as educators, parents, or support personnel can continue to find exciting, engaging activities to keep student morale and participation up until the last bell rings...and if we're lucky, a bit into the summer!

Create a classroom or home environment that fosters support and growth. Allow your students to develop relationships that are meaningful to them and free of judgement. If



Florida Diagnostic & Learning
— RESOURCES SYSTEM —

OUR SERVICES

Who we Serve:

- Individuals between the ages of 3 & 22 who have not graduated high school.
- Who are struggling in school and have complicated medical, behavioral, developmental, &/or social histories
- And who reside in Baker, Clay, Duval, Flagler, Nassau, & St. Johns counties

Services for Families:

- Comprehensive, multidisciplinary assessment, which may include psychoeducational, emotional-behavioral, &/or developmental pediatric evaluations
- Feedback sessions and a report detailing our findings
- Assistance in planning for your child's educational and psychological needs
- Trainings for parents covering a variety of topics

Services for the Community:

- Training/consultations for educators, students, & other professionals
- Educational consultation and support services: This can include collaboration with school personnel to facilitate school placement & provision of services

your students feel comfortable and safe around those whom they spend the better part of their day (and lives with), they will want to work hard to preserve that space in a positive way.

Encourage and model courageous conversations about what it means to have a preference. When we teach children how to develop healthy preferences, they can learn to work to maintain those things which are most valuable to them...their goals and dreams. Teach your students that it is okay to be the only person who likes their sandwich with pickles (silly, I know, but you have to start somewhere).



Design a choice board of activities that allows students the opportunity to pick areas of interest and create a self-driven environment. Choice boards can have words, pictures, symbols, pretty much anything that is meaningful to and understandable by those meant to use it.

Allow students to develop a system for feedback on tasks. This considers how the student best receives feedback in a manner that is most likely to promote self-reflection and growth over self-doubt. We know there are times when you will have to give unfortunate news but taking time to understand how to best deliver this information to your student will promote their learning and hopefully lessen the arguing or headache.

If you have questions, please reach out to your local Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resource System (FDLRS or FDLRS-MDC). We are available for trainings, consultations, and additional resources.

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How to Encourage Positive Self-Talk for Children and Adolescents

By Tamima Aman, B.S.

When children experience challenging situations, they may be more likely to express strong feelings, self-doubt, fear, and may even engage in negative self-talk. Negative self-talk is an inner dialogue that limits what people believe about themselves and their abilities. When kids engage in negative self-talk, they may feel like there is something wrong with them. Negative self-talk can bring people down and make them feel unworthy. For that reason, it is important to increase awareness of negative self-talk and develop positive self-talk.

How to recognize negative self-talk:

Negative self-talk involves self-defeating statements that can affect how a person views themselves. This includes thoughts that are all-or-nothing statements, filtering, and jumping to conclusions.

Examples of negative self-talk:

“I can’t do it.”

“I’m not good enough.”

“I’m so dumb.”

“No one likes me.”

“I never get anything done.”

“I should give up. I’ll never be able to do it.”

What is positive self-talk?

Positive self-talk is an inner dialogue a person uses to encourage and motivate themselves. Positive self-talk is a skill that can be learned with practice and repetition. When children and teens engage in positive self-talk, they are learning positive ways of expressing their frustration, anger, anxiety, and self-doubt. Teaching kids that it is okay to have different thoughts and emotions when going through challenging situations will help them move forward positively and constructively. It is also helpful to teach kids how to reframe negative self-talk so they can challenge their irrational beliefs with a more rational one. Building positive self-talk is a coping skill that can be used in various situations.

Continued on next page.

FDLRS Staff

David O. Childers Jr., M.D.
Chief of Neurodevelopmental Pediatrics
& Executive Director of CARD

Jeannie M. Potthast, M.B.A.
Assistant Director - CARD

Karen Mullin
Office Manager

Brett Walden, MPH
Clinician

Johanna Lopez, Ed.S., NCSP
School Psychologist

Chanel Baldwin, M.Ed.
Clinician

Bernardo Cuadra, B.A., CWCM
Clinician

Amy Lane
Clinician

Arnette Green
Executive Assistant

Tyler Rounds, B.S.
Administrative Assistant

Anthony R. Rhodes, M.S.
IT Expert

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FDLRS-MDC serves
Baker, Clay, Duval,
Flagler, Nassau, &
St. Johns County.



How can you encourage kids to engage in positive self-talk?

Understand the difference between positive self-talk and negative self-talk

Look for red flags of negative self-talk

How to help your kids develop positive self-talk:

Talk to kids and find out what is that is bothering them

Reassure them that it is okay to have the emotions they are experiencing

Help them reframe their negative thinking

How kids benefit from utilizing positive self-talk:

Builds better self-esteem: learning to manage one's thinking can influence how a person feels about selves and their abilities.

Increases resilience; kids can bounce back from negative experiences and handle adversity with resilience.

Lower anxiety: positive thinking can prevent or control anxious thoughts

Lower levels of depression: positive thinking can help kids reframe how they view themselves, others, and the world.

How to empower your kids to use positive self-talk:

Modeling: Model positive self-talk by utilizing it on your own

Visual affirmation: Utilizing boards or

posters to create affirmations that they can see daily

Discuss the benefits of positive self-talk

Teach kids to recognize negative self-talk and how to reframe them

Help your child come up with positive phrases

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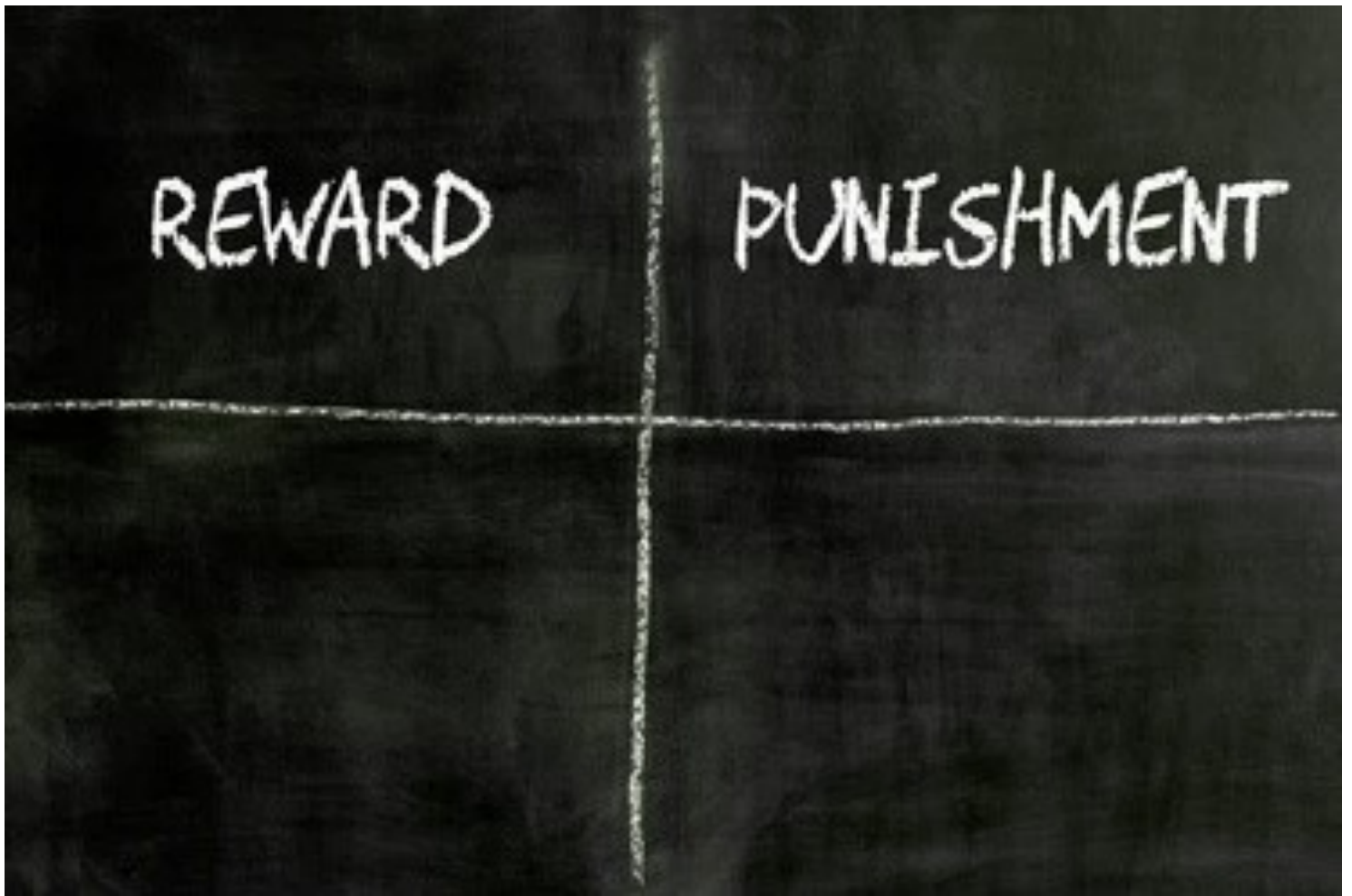
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Rewards and Positive Opposites Over Punishment

By Diego Castillo, B.S.

Rewards

Rewards are needed to teach desired behaviors. We learn by being rewarded for our behaviors, whether those behaviors are helpful or unhelpful. Let's take praise for example. Most children, adolescents, and adults thrive on praise. When a person is praised for a behavior, they are more likely to repeat that behavior. If a person is praised for a specific shirt they wear, they are more likely to wear that shirt. If a person is praised for cleaning their dishes, they are more likely to clean their dishes in the future, and so on.

If a person is praised for working hard,

they are more likely to continue working hard. In contrast, if they are punished when they do not work hard, that punishment does not teach them to work hard. It teaches them to work hard when someone is around who might punish them.

Punishment

Punishment is far less effective than rewards for teaching desired behaviors. Punishment often does not teach someone to perform a desired behavior; it often just teaches them how to avoid that punishment. This is why we have phrases like, "it's legal as long as you don't get caught," "who's gonna

know,” and “don’t ask for permission, ask for forgiveness.” All of those phrases embody the idea that a person may still perform a behavior despite knowing that it is punishable.

A speeding ticket is a punishment. Many people speed while driving even though speeding is illegal and dangerous. Despite this, people still speed. The punishment of speeding tickets does not teach people not to speed; it teaches people to avoid getting caught speeding. In contrast, people may be less likely to speed if they were rewarded for driving within the speed limit. Hypothetically, if a person’s driving speed was monitored, and they received \$20.00 every day they drove within the speed limit (or the equivalent to \$20.00 for their income bracket), it is more likely that person would consistently drive within the speed limit. People desire rewards far more than they fear punishments.

Let’s look at cats now. Many people spray their cats with water as punishment for an undesirable behavior, like scratching a couch. When a person sprays a cat with water because the cat scratches their couch, the cat is not learning to stop scratching the couch. Instead, the cat is learning to scratch the couch when the person is not around so the cat avoids being sprayed. As soon as that person is not around, the cat will scratch the couch again. In contrast, the cat would be more likely to not scratch the couch if the person rewarded the cat for being on the couch appropriately.

Eventually, the cat will start to learn that being on the couch without scratching it results in the reward of a treat. As a result, the cat will stop scratching the couch, and the person can gradually give the cat a treat less often until treats are no longer necessary.

Positive Opposites

The speeding driver and scratching cat situations are both examples of *positive opposites*. Positive opposites are rewards, instructions, or demands for behavior that are the opposite of an undesirable behavior. Rewarding a driver with money for driving within the speed limit encourages them to continue driving within the speed limit, which negates the need for speeding tickets as punishment. Rewarding a cat with a treat for not scratching the couch encourages the cat to continue not scratching the couch, which negates the need for the spray bottle as punishment.

So, what does this look like for children, adolescents, and adults? Positive opposites work for people of all ages because people desire rewards more than they fear punishments. An example for a child could be using a positive opposite and reward when the child is shouting. This could look like telling the shouting child, “please speak quieter,” and then rewarding them with praise when they speak quieter with something like, “thank you for speaking quieter, good job.” This positive opposite is far more helpful than “stop shouting” because

“please speak quieter” tells the child *what* to do instead of just what *not* to do. An example for an adolescent could be using a positive opposite and reward when the adolescent is hitting their sibling. This could look like saying, “please keep your hands to yourself” instead of “stop hitting your sibling,” and then rewarding them when they stop hitting their sibling with something like, “good job, thank you for keeping your hands to yourself.”

Using rewards and positive opposites has greater long-term effects than punishment. However, they are much harder to do, and they take practice. It is much easier to punish a behavior than it is to reward a positive opposite, especially when we are emotionally drained or irritated. It also takes times to see results with rewards and positive opposites.

That being said, if a behavior is risky, dangerous, or otherwise unacceptable, an immediate response may be needed. Usually, the best response is to remove the individual from the situation. Even better, preventing the dangerous or unacceptable behavior in the first place eliminates the need for punishment.

At the end of the day, using punishment is more hardwired into us than using rewards, so it is a learning process. Give yourself time, and give yourself grace, while you learn to implement rewards and positive opposites over punishments. You may find a significant improvement in your relationships, whether they be with animals, children, adolescents, or adults.

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Retro Diner Hour



Upcoming Dates:

Meets the 2nd Wednesday
of Each month.
Beginning at
5:00 PM

Adults

with autism spectrum disorder
will have the opportunity to engage in facilitated
social conversations via Zoom. This event will temporarily take the place
of the Breakfast Club Meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Register online at: <https://ufhjax.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJEvceCrrzwvG92WVODDJV4-ue4HG3r-67G>

For more information please contact bernardo.cuadra@jax.ufl.edu

Preventing Summer Slide

by Johanna Lopez, Ed.S., NCSP, School Psychologist

School's out for summer! Many students look forward to a break from their rigorous academic year. However, the "lazy days of summer" can have a negative impact on children's academic skills. The "summer slide" as it's often called, refers to the academic learning loss that typically occurs during the summer break. As a result of the "summer slide," many schools spend a few weeks at the beginning of the academic year to bring the students back to speed. Because learning is a continuous process, disruptions such as summer vacation, can impede the child's academic growth.

Research by Harris Copper indicates that during the summer months, students lose about one month on a grade level equivalent scale (Copper, 1996). Mathematical skills were also seen to have the most effect in comparison to reading. Terry and Davies state that computation and spelling are the most effected during the summer break since factual and procedural knowledge are more susceptible to decline than conceptual knowledge (1998). Research shows that 52% of students lost an average of 39% of their overall academic gains during the summer months (Rosa, S.D.L, 2020). Those students who are already facing academic struggles during the school year are also more susceptible to summer

learning loss. At best, students show little or no academic growth. At worst, students lose an average between 1-3 months of material learned.

But, there are ways to combat the summer slide and ensure learning still occurs or at the very least does not decline during the summer months.

Ways to incorporate academic skills in summer activities:

- Incorporate learning into everyday tasks such as creating a schedule, buying groceries, reading a map.
- Enroll your student in, or connect with a summer program
- Engage participation in enriching activities such as visiting a museum, planting a garden or exploring topics of interest for your student.

Reading:

- Model and encourage reading
- Have your student read daily for at least 30 minutes
- Incorporate different reading materials such as books, magazines, comic books, cook books.
- Visit the local library, where you can access resources such as books, e-books, audiobooks, and videos for free. Often the library has various literary events throughout

the summer months that promote literacy. Also, librarians can assist in finding independent reading level appropriate texts.

- Encourage the use of new vocabulary words.
- Build a Summer Reading List
 - Create a reading list for your student to read independently or books you can read together. Create visual tracker to keep track of the books read and incorporate a reward system for finishing books, chapter or pages.

Writing:

- Have your student keep a journal to document summer experiences
- This can include record keeping during a trip, observations while exploring the backyard, etc.
- Write a letter or postcard. If you are traveling, encourage child to write letters/postcards to relatives or friends back home.

Math

- Have your student create a budget for summer activities
- Baking/ Cooking allows for the use of mathematical skills
- Have your student create a grocery list

Game Night

- Organize a game night using brain strengthening games like:
- Scrabble (8+)
- Boosts vocabulary and spelling

- Cranium Junior (7+)
- Teaches vocabulary, creativity and problem-solving skills
- Zingo (Ages 3-6)
- Uses listening and memory skills
- Chutes & Ladders (Ages 3-6)
- Helps kids to count to 100.
- Uno (Ages 5+)
- Teaches kids to recognize patterns, which is a foundational skill for math
- Bananagrams (Ages 5+)
- Boosts vocabulary, spelling, and reading
- Monopoly Junior (Ages 5-8)
- Teaches kids simple ideas about finance, like how to make change, save, and budget
- Battleship (Ages 8+)
- Practice problem-solving, deduction, reasoning, and planning skills

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Fun in the Sun: Water Safety

by Chanél Baldwin, M.Ed.

It's blazing outside and what better way to keep cool with family and friends and stay active? Water play! Our area has various locations for inclusive water play at local splash pads, neighborhood pools, and the beaches for no cost. Staying active is great for families. Water play allows families to be interactive and stay cool. It is so important to be prepared and cautious during all water activities. Here are some tips to consider when including water play with your summer activities.

1. No child left behind

It may be tempting but never leave children unsupervised.

2. Vigilance during gatherings with a lot of adults.

It is best practice to take turns supervising.

3. Do not depend on pool floats or water wings

It is important to remember that floats can be helpful and fun; they are not life-saving devices.

4. Staying near the lifeguard

When at the beach or lake, try to be close by the guard station. Children should only enter the water with an adult to avoid being overtaken by the depth of water or waves.

5. Prepare the pool for kids

If you have a pool, take extra



precautions such as a pool alarm, secured fence or barricade.

6. Swim Lessons

Remember no matter how many lessons your kids have had, being in water can challenge their skills and become overwhelming at a moment's notice. Always stay nearby.

7. Learn CPR.

Being able to perform CPR properly saves lives.

8. Be attentive.

If you are feeling overwhelmed by an upcoming trip that includes water remember that preparation and attentiveness are key to keeping everyone safe while they are having fun. Relax, do not multitask. Focus on making fun summer memories with the family.

Helpful Links:

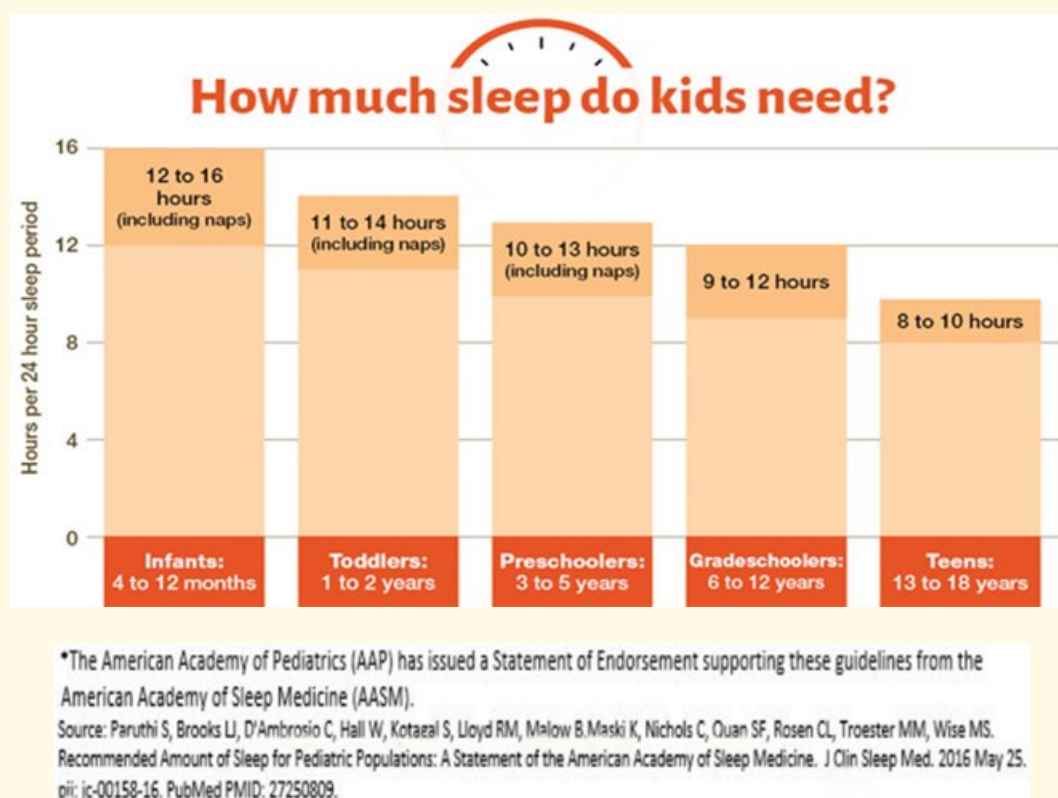
Splash pads, swim lessons or free activities please visit: <https://jax4kids.com>

Water safety tips and CPR certification please visit: <https://www.redcross.org/>

Back to School: Sleep Routine

by Brett A. Walden, MPH

Almost all students have started back to school and we, as parents, know the challenges of getting our children back on schedule. Getting enough sleep is critical for a child to be successful in school. Lack of sleep causes lack of focus and learning challenges due to mental exhaustion. According to Healthychildren.org, the optimal amount of sleep for most young children is 9-12 hours per night and adolescents should get roughly 8-10 hours of sleep.



We are going to discuss some easy strategies to get your kiddo back on a good sleep schedule.

1. Set a consistent bedtime for your child and stick to it every night.
2. Create a calming bedtime routine to help the child settle the mind. For example, bath time, reading with them, and tucking them into bed.
3. No electronics for at least two hours before bedtime.

4. Aim to have the home settling down as well so it creates a quiet environment.
5. Create a bedtime checklist for the child to know what needs to happen before bed.

The goal is to try to find strategies that work for you and your family. Think about things that your child enjoys and add them to the nighttime routine. For example, cartoon characters enjoy bedtime too so let's use them.

If you have questions or if you would like some support materials to help you create a visual bedtime routine, please reach out to your local Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resource System (FDLRS or FDLRS-MDC). We are also available for trainings, consultations, and additional resources.

Resources:

Healthy sleep habits: How many hours does your child need? HealthyChildren.org. (n.d.). Retrieved August 16, 2022, from <https://tinyurl.com/49w25mt7>

