



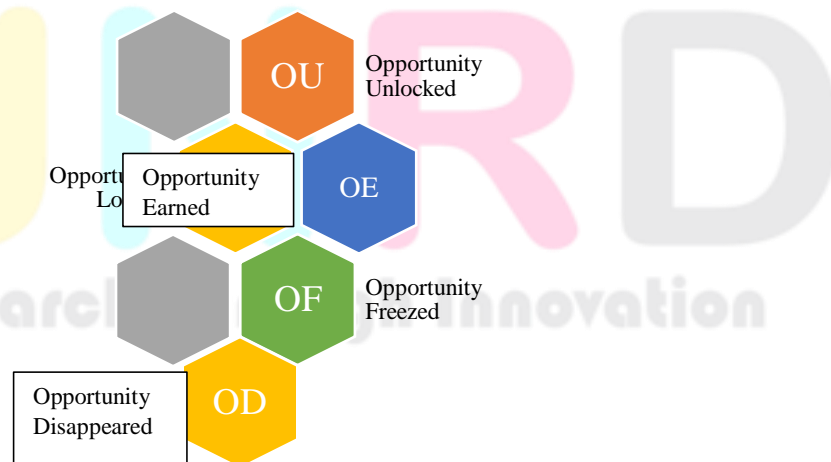
Enhancing children's interaction with family through the game of goodness 'opportunity unlocked (OU Strategy)'

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Abstract

This paper presents the outcomes of a researcher's endeavour to cultivate positive habits among children within the familial setting through an innovative game-based approach termed "Opportunity Unlocked (OU) Strategy." Spanning one year, this study involved engaging children in the game and meticulously recording observations. Results indicate a profound and enduring influence on children's behaviour, marked by sustained enthusiasm for participation in the game. Consequently, the strategy contributes to fostering a nurturing environment for family interaction, shaping children's daily conduct, and facilitating effective parenting practices.

OU is an acronym for Opportunity Unlocked. OU strategy is an activity/ game to make children responsible, and sensible and develop in them the urge to do good willingly. This strategy is child-centric, as the rules, duration, number of opportunities earned and the reward would be spelt out by them under the guidance of the elder. An elder can be Mother, Father, Grandmother, Grandfather or any other close family member at home.



Aim of OU Strategy (The Game of Goodness)

- Aim of the OU strategy is to modify children's behavior in the absence of force, anger and any physical punishment.
- Increase healthy family interaction with children

The objective of OU Strategy (The Game of Goodness)

- Make the child responsible enough willingly
- Keeping children engaged in acts of goodness
- Quality engagement with parents/ elder
- Game to shape children's personality
- Create a healthy and conducive environment for growth

Operational Definition of the Concepts

Opportunity: The concept of opportunity within the OU strategy allows for flexibility and adaptability to accommodate the unique circumstances and preferences of each child and family unit. Opportunities are tied to specific behaviours or actions that align with the values and objectives of the OU strategy, such as acts of kindness, responsibility, or helpfulness.

Unlocked: "Unlocked" in the OU strategy refers to the activation or availability of opportunities for children to earn through the demonstration of responsible, sensible, and altruistic behaviour, as determined by the established guidelines and parameters of the game.

Strategy: "Strategy" in the OU strategy encompasses the collaborative efforts of both children and family members to cultivate positive character traits, foster responsible behaviour, and strengthen familial bonds through purposeful planning, mutual understanding, and collective support.

Rule of OU Strategy (The Game of Goodness)

- One act of goodness -one opportunity unlocked (OU)
- One act of disappointment - one opportunity locked (OL)
- One unsuccessful attempt towards the act of goodness –(OF)
- One unsuccessful attempt towards the act of goodness not completed, even after given a chance – opportunity disappeared (OD)
- Unlocked opportunities in numbers are called opportunities earned- (OE)
- One unsuccessful attempt towards the act of goodness completed, after being given a chance -OU
- To get maximum OE each day, the participant will demonstrate a new and unique set of good behaviour.
- Any good act/behaviour learnt should be continued, it should not be a day-specific task to get the opportunity unlocked and just to earn the opportunity.
- For the same good act/behaviour new opportunity will be unlocked for 7 days, so every 8th day the participants will add a new good act/behaviour.

Abbreviations used in the game:

OU- opportunity unlocked

OL- opportunity locked

OF-opportunity freeze

OD – opportunity disappeared

OE- opportunity earned

Steps of OU Strategy (The Game of Goodness)

- Sit with your child/children.
- Tell them we are going to play a game, and to make the game interesting, involve them in drafting the rules of the game together under the guidance of an elder.

- As it is a live game, it can go anywhere the child visits, it can be at his/her visit to an extended family member's house, outing, family dinners etc. based on the discussion of the rules of the game, Opportunity earned can be decided to maximum and minimum number. For example, twenty opportunities for demonstrating exceptionally good behaviour and zero for demonstrating disappointing behaviour or in the worst and other cases loss of earned opportunities.
- Make a list of good behaviour (children will make the list with the help of a parent or any adult (grandparent), e.g. helping and respecting elders at home, sitting to study on his/her own, competing each day's study to the following day (like yesterday I learned two lessons today I will complete three lessons, yesterday I have done two sums in math today I will complete three sums), attend all learning classes on time, it is important to make them clear that one has to compete with one own-self in good deeds.
- Make a list of disappointing behaviours (for example getting up late in the morning, don't brushing, scattering your bookshelf, bag, or wardrobe, throwing a worn dress on the bed, keeping a used towel on the bed, not keeping your toilet clean after use, mishandle ones' belongings, fight with siblings, keep complaining about each other all day long, yelling unnecessarily, disrespect elder at home (including maid), use abusive language while with friends/siblings, use of gadgets without parents or elder's permission/ consent, calling out bad names for each other(siblings), don't read any book, watch cartoons, spend more time watching TV, or any other gadget (Tablet, laptop, mobile phones etc.), leaving mess bed, leaving bedroom untidy, tearing books and text-books apart.
- Enquire children about the duration of the game (whether they want to play it for three days, a week, a month or a maximum of 40 days). In the beginning, it is preferable to play the game for a shorter period.
- It is important for the child to take very active participation in listing rules (which are nothing but two lists, one list of good behaviours required to live a successful, peaceful day, and another list is a list of bad behaviours from which children are expected to abstain themselves)
- Each night post-dinner, there **will be HOT SEAT TIME** (get together with the elder with whom they are playing the game).
- During **HOT SEAT TIME**, the elder will first spell out the list of good behaviours the child has performed, for each good behaviours, he tells the total number of opportunities he has unlocked and earned in return.
- Then, an elder encourages the child to think of any other good behaviour, which he must have performed but went unnoticed by that elder (e.g. when he was playing in the garden he helped any child, or any child who slipped and she/he instead of laughing, picked him/her up, etc.
- Now time to unlock the opportunity, the elder lists the bad behaviour throughout the day, which was as listed by him/her followed by encouraging the child to think of mistakes which were made by him/her. Depending on the severity and how genuine the confession was listed by the child, the decision of locking the opportunity will be on an elder. (preferably forgive and celebrate that the child bravely admitted, accepted knowing the consequence of opportunity being locked). Before sending the child off to bed, wish luck for the next day and appreciate and congratulate on getting opportunities earned and completing the day successfully.

- Avoid threatening the child repeatedly about locking his/her earned opportunity (means locking his/her unlocked opportunity). Make sure that you don't discuss and keep reminding the child about rules again and again throughout the day (as doing this, will make the child obstinate and withdraw from the game). Make the child feel that he is playing a live game.
- After every two days, introduce twists and turns in the game; for example, during Hot Seat, each participant was asked to narrate one good act which they observed in other participants, as it was sudden, and the researcher saw hesitation among participants to narrate act of goodness among other participants, the researcher added another twist, by mentioning that if you narrate act of goodness of another participant in the entire day you will receive one OU, and if you are unable to recollect then your opportunity will be freeze for another 24 hours. If unable to complete then the opportunity will be disappeared.
- One of the important rules of the game is to continue the good act, for example, if the participant has learnt to give a foot massage to their parent before they sleep, they should continue each day, it's a different thing that a parent denies but you should continue to serve parents/ elders at home.

It is observed that the kind of interaction and communication between parent/ responsible elders, caretakers, guardians and children at home are either informative, declarative, commanding or authoritarian, whereas it should be interactive, engaging and communicative where both the parties feel heard and understood. OU strategy was designed keeping the child's best interest, quality interaction-nurturing environment, and positive attitude in mind, the strategy helps in imbibing moral values and paves the way towards self-discipline amongst children.

I have experienced playing this game for more than one year with 6-year-old, 10-year-old and 13-year-old children and the result is remarkable. Children respond well to a game played with them at home especially if the game is played with close family members. Their willingness to win the game provides intrinsic motivation to stay consistent and focused. It is important to discuss the rules of the game clearly and make sure they agree to all the rules stated, if necessary, they can recapitulate the rules orally before beginning. The game leaves long long-lasting impact on children's behaviour, and they show continuous excitement to be in the game hence increasing the family quality interaction environment, shaping the child's personality and assisting in good parenting.

By empowering children to actively participate in the formulation and implementation of strategies aimed at achieving shared goals, the OU strategy not only promotes responsibility, adaptability, and empathy but also cultivates a sense of belonging and unity within the family unit.

Through its emphasis on open communication, shared decision-making, and mutual encouragement, the OU strategy provides a framework for navigating challenges, resolving conflicts, and nurturing positive relationships among family members. By adopting a long-term perspective and remaining adaptable to changing circumstances, the strategy enables families to foster a culture of kindness, respect, and cooperation that supports the holistic development of each member over time.

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