

B. F. Skinner

Quotes

*Men, Education, Behavior, People, Teacher, Doe, Consequence, Way,
Punishment, May, Thinking, Views, Different, Years, World, Children, Book,
Practice, Facts, Real*

A failure is not always a mistake, it may simply be the best one can do under the circumstances. The real mistake is to stop trying.

~B. F. Skinner

A person who has been punished is not thereby simply less inclined to behave in a given way; at best, he learns how to avoid punishment.

~B. F. Skinner

Give me a child and I'll shape him into anything.

~B. F. Skinner

The major difference between rats and people is that rats learn from experience.

~B. F. Skinner

Education is what survives when what has been learned has been forgotten.

~B. F. Skinner

Behavior is determined by its consequences.

~B. F. Skinner

That's all teaching is; arranging contingencies which bring changes in behavior.

~B. F. Skinner

Behavior is shaped and maintained by its consequences

~B. F. Skinner

The way positive reinforcement is carried out is more important than the amount.

~B. F. Skinner

It is not a question of starting. The start has been made. It's a question

of what's to be done from now on.

~B. F. Skinner

What is love except another name for the use of positive reinforcement? Or vice versa.

~B. F. Skinner

We are only just beginning to understand the power of love because we are just beginning to understand the weakness of force and aggression.

~B. F. Skinner

We shouldn't teach great books; we should teach a love of reading. Knowing the contents of a few works of literature is a trivial achievement. Being inclined to go on reading is a great achievement.

~B. F. Skinner

I did not direct my life. I didn't design it. I never made decisions. Things always came up and made them for me. That's what life is.

~B. F. Skinner

Do not intervene between a person and the consequences of their own behavior.

~B. F. Skinner

A fourth-grade reader may be a sixth-grade mathematician. The grade is an administrative device which does violence to the nature of the developmental process.

~B. F. Skinner

A self is a repertoire of behavior appropriate to a given set of contingencies.

~B. F. Skinner

No one asks how to motivate a baby. A baby naturally explores everything it can get at, unless restraining forces have already been at work. And this tendency doesn't die out, it's wiped out.

~B. F. Skinner

It is a surprising fact that those who object most violently to the manipulation of behaviour nevertheless make the most vigorous effort to manipulate minds.

~B. F. Skinner

Society attacks early, when the individual is helpless.

~B. F. Skinner

Some of us learn control, more or less by accident. The rest of us go all our lives not even understanding how it is possible, and blaming our failure on being born the wrong way.

~B. F. Skinner

At this very moment enormous numbers of intelligent men and women of goodwill are trying to build a better world. But problems are born faster than they can be solved.

~B. F. Skinner

An important fact about verbal behavior is that speaker and listener may reside within the same skin.

~B. F. Skinner

We shouldn't teach great books; we should teach a love of reading.

~B. F. Skinner

I've often said that my rats have taught me much more than I've taught them.

~B. F. Skinner

The real problem is not whether machines think but whether men do.

~B. F. Skinner

Was putting a man on the moon actually easier than improving education in our public schools?

~B. F. Skinner

Teachers must learn how to teach ... they need only to be taught more effective ways of teaching.

~B. F. Skinner

Chaos breeds geniuses. It offers a man something to be a genius about.

~B. F. Skinner

The consequences of an act affect the probability of its occurring again.

~B. F. Skinner

The problem of far greater importance remains to be solved. Rather than build a world in which we shall all live well, we must stop building one in which it will be impossible to live at all.

~B. F. Skinner

The juvenile delinquent does not feel his disturbed personality. The intelligent man does not feel his intelligence or the introvert his introversion.

~B. F. Skinner

The only geniuses produced by the chaos of society are those who do something about it. Chaos breeds geniuses. It offers a man something to be a genius about.

~B. F. Skinner

Science is a willingness to accept facts even when they are opposed to wishes.

~B. F. Skinner

I will be dead in a few months. But it hasn't given me the slightest anxiety or worry. I always knew I was going to die.

~B. F. Skinner

The one fact that I would cry from every housetop is this: the Good Life is waiting for us - here and now.

~B. F. Skinner

A person's genetic endowment, a product of the evolution of the species, is said to explain part of the workings of his mind and his personal history the rest.

~B. F. Skinner

If freedom is a requisite for human happiness, then all that's necessary is to provide the illusion of freedom.

~B. F. Skinner

Men build society and society builds men.

~B. F. Skinner

It is a mistake to suppose that the whole issue is how to free man. The issue is to improve the way in which he is controlled.

~B. F. Skinner

Twenty-five hundred years ago it might have been said that man understood himself as well as any other part of the world. Today he is the thing he understands least.

~B. F. Skinner

I may say that the only differences I expect to see revealed between

the behavior of the rat and man (aside from enormous differences of complexity) lie in the field of verbal behavior.

~B. F. Skinner

Somehow people get the idea I think we should be given gumdrops whenever we do anything of value.

~B. F. Skinner

Problem-solving typically involves the construction of discriminative stimuli

~B. F. Skinner

It has always been the task of formal education to set up behavior which would prove useful or enjoyable later in a student's life.

~B. F. Skinner

Science, not religion, has taught me my most useful values, among them intellectual honesty. It is better to go without answers than to accept those that merely resolve puzzlement.

~B. F. Skinner

Old age is rather like another country. You will enjoy it more if you have prepared yourself before you go.

~B. F. Skinner

Except when physically restrained, a person is least free or dignified when he is under threat of punishment, and unfortunately most people often are.

~B. F. Skinner

The real question is not whether machines think but whether men do. The mystery which surrounds a thinking machine already surrounds a thinking man.

~B. F. Skinner

A piece of music is an experience to be taken by itself.

~B. F. Skinner

To say that... behaviors have different 'meanings' is only another way of saying that they are controlled by different variables.

~B. F. Skinner

Indeed one of the ultimate advantages of an education is simply coming to the end of it.

~B. F. Skinner

We admire people to the extent that we cannot explain what they do, and the word 'admire' then means 'marvel at.'

~B. F. Skinner

If you're old, don't try to change yourself, change your environment.

~B. F. Skinner

A vast technology has been developed to prevent, reduce, or terminate exhausting labor and physical damage. It is now dedicated to the production of the most trivial conveniences and comfort.

~B. F. Skinner

To require a citizen to sign a loyalty oath is to destroy some of the loyalty he could otherwise claim, since any subsequent loyal behavior may then be attributed to the oath.

~B. F. Skinner

A disappointment is not generally an oversight. It might just be the best one can do the situation being what it is. The genuine error is to quit attempting.

~B. F. Skinner

But restraint is the only one sort of control, and absence of restraint

isn't freedom. It's not control that's lacking when one feels 'free', but the objectionable control of force.

~B. F. Skinner

Does a poet create, originate, initiate the thing called a poem, or is his behavior merely the product of his genetic and environmental histories?

~B. F. Skinner

I don't believe in God, so I'm not afraid of dying.

~B. F. Skinner

The speaker does not feel the grammatical rules he is said to apply in composing sentences, and men spoke grammatically for thousands of years before anyone knew there were rules.

~B. F. Skinner

The mob rushes in where individuals fear to tread.

~B. F. Skinner

We do not choose survival as a value, it chooses us.

~B. F. Skinner

A permissive government is a government that leaves control to other sources.

~B. F. Skinner

A first principle not formally recognized by scientific methodologists: when you run into something interesting, drop everything else and study it.

~B. F. Skinner

The extent to which human aggression exemplifies innate tendencies is not clear.

~B. F. Skinner

If the world is to save any part of its resources for the future, it must reduce not only consumption but the number of consumers.

~B. F. Skinner

Let men be happy, informed, skillful, well behaved, and productive.

~B. F. Skinner

Going out of style isn't a natural process, but a manipulated change which destroys the beauty of last year's dress in order to make it worthless.

~B. F. Skinner

We have not yet seen what man can make of man.

~B. F. Skinner

When we say that a man controls himself, we must specify who is controlling whom.

~B. F. Skinner

Overcrowding can be corrected only by inducing people not to crowd, and the environment will continue to deteriorate until polluting practices are abandoned.

~B. F. Skinner

A scientist may not be sure of the answer, but he's often sure he can find one. And that's a condition which is clearly not enjoyed by philosophy.

~B. F. Skinner

Those who have had anything useful to say have said it far too often, and those who have had nothing to say have been no more reticent.

~B. F. Skinner

Something doing every minute' may be a gesture of despair-or the height of a battle against boredom.

~B. F. Skinner

...not everyone is willing to defend a position of 'not knowing.' There is no virtue in ignorance for its own sake.

~B. F. Skinner

The world's a poor standard. any society which is free of hunger and violence looks bright against that background.

~B. F. Skinner

Many social practices essential to the welfare of the species involve the control of one person by another, and no one can suppress them who has any concern for human achievements

~B. F. Skinner

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