

No Such Thing As a Bad Kid!



Understanding and Responding
to Youth with Emotional & Behavioral
Challenges Using a Positive, Trauma-informed,
Strength-Based Approach

Charlie Appelstein, MSW

charlieap@comcast.net

www.NoBadKid.com

The Power of a Positive, Strength-Based Approach

What is it?: An emerging approach to guiding youth that is exceptionally positive and inspiring. It begins with belief that all young people have or can develop strengths and utilize past successes to mitigate problem behavior and enhance social and academic functioning. It continues with practice methods that identify and marshal these strengths for necessary changes.

The strength-based approach puts youth in touch with their unique constellation of talents (which are both performance – such as sports, music, hobbies, academics, etc. & character/personality based – such as persistence, creativity, kindness, integrity, zest, etc.)

The strength-based approach is rooted in positive psychology and provides youth with two vital psychological tools:

1. Optimism: the force that motivates kids to create positive futures for themselves.
2. Resilience: A youth's capacity to bounce back when life throws them a curveball.

“The ability to focus on our strengths lights out path.”

- Leah Waters, PhD, Author of The Strength-Switch

Strength-based practice is essentially about two words: Attitude & Actions

Educators, professionals & caregivers maximize the potential of the kids they serve when they convey an attitude to each one that says: *I believe in you. I know you will succeed this year and beyond and I am absolutely thrilled to be part of your life. Let's go!* And then, through their daily actions - show that they mean it.

“I was successful because you believed in me.”

- Ulysses S. Grant in a letter to Abraham Lincoln

Genuine believing helps kids to feel better about themselves, attacks self-doubt (“Self-doubt kills ability.” – Degas), and, most importantly, provides hope – which is humanity's fuel.

Strength-based practice is primarily about the power of positive relationships.

Research has shown that a student entering high school with a history of committing aggressive acts is not likely to commit further acts of aggression (at his/her school) if the student believes there is at least one educator at the school that thinks “I'm terrific!”

- James Garbarino, PhD

“Countless studies have found that social relationships are the best guarantee of heightened well-being and lowered stress, both an antidote for depression and a prescription for high performance.”

- Shawn Achor, The Happiness Advantage, p.14

Have you ever watched an actor in a bad mood? If you're in a bad mood, it might be prudent to fake that you're not. Actors entertain for a few hours; professionals who guide youth at-risk - save lives. Attitude is a choice. A positive attitude sends the message: I want to be here. I care about you. I believe in you and I know you will succeed. Which all leads to hope, happiness and success!

Almost two decades ago, Yale psychiatrist James Comer said, 'No significant learning happens without a significant relationship.' Today, our studies reveal that 43 percent of students in grades 5-12 lack a sense of engagement with their schools." - Rick Miller, KidsatHope.com

According to Achor, what do all happy people have in common?

Meaningful Social Connections
Strong Social Support Networks



Broken Window Theory

A smile and a warm greeting is the face's way of giving an emotional hug. (Welcome to Moe's!) Do the "little" things right (e.g. Greet warmly, maintain a neat and appealing environment, etc.) and big problems diminish. This is what we call the: *Broken Window Theory* ("How are you?" "Fantastic!" "All the better for seeing you!" "Unbelievable!" "Never been better!" "I'm living the dream, and you?" "Happy as a tick on a hairy dog!")

Unexpected positive feedback increases *intrinsic motivation*.
Volunteering increases *intuitive optimism*!

"Countless studies have found that social relationships are the best guarantee of heightened well-being and lowered stress, both an antidote for depression and a prescription for high performance." - Shawn Achor, *The Happiness Advantage*, p.14

At-risk kids often struggle to create and maintain healthy and meaningful peer relationships due to excessive egocentrism and under-developed social skills often related to adverse developmental factors (i.e. failure to socially accommodate & subordinate) and/or neurological deficits. Therefore, it is critical to help kids with adverse histories learn how to develop and sustain positive peer relationships. Duo therapy is often helpful in this regard.

"New research in psychology and neuroscience finds: "We become more successful *when* we are happier and more positive. Students primed to feel happy before taking math achievement tests far outperform their neutral peers. *It turns out our brains are literally hardwired to perform at their best not when they are negative or even neutral, but when they are positive.*"
- Shawn Achor, *The Happiness Advantage*, p. 14

Happiness is not the belief that we don't need to change; it is the realization that we can.
Achor, *The Happiness Advantage*, p.24

The Brain & Resilience

All young persons have strengths and with positive support can change the course of their lives. They have resilient brains that can be “rewired” by positive learning experiences.

Resilience is the ability to thrive in spite of risk or adversity. The term comes from physics: a resilient object bends under stress but then springs back rather than breaks. A resilient child not only springs back from adversity but can become stronger in the process. The feeling of accomplishment that comes from solving life problems is the core of resilience.

Resilience is a natural trait in all humans. Human brains are specifically wired to cope with problems. However, humans cannot survive and thrive alone – they require support and encouragement from others.

Resilience is a combination of inner strengths and external supports. All youngsters need supportive families, peers schools, and mentors to optimally sustain and develop their potential strengths.

Recent advances in resilience science find that the human brain is designed to be resilient. The brain is structured to overcome risk.

The brain is not like a computer, but more like a resilience library. It stores information bearing on survival and well-being and discards most other data. Problems can either be treated as occasions for punishment or opportunities for learning and growth.

Neuroplasticity refers to the reality that the brain is malleable and can therefore change throughout its existence. Positive, and frequently occurring experiences, can create new neural pathways that enhance functioning and produce growth.

Conversely, negative emotional experiences like rejection activate pain centers in the brain just as physical stress does. Brain scans indicate that being excluded or rejected triggers feelings of distress and a burst of activity in the area of the brain that also reacts to physical pain. Destructive or defensive reactions (fight, flight, fright) can be triggered by such negative emotional states. Thus, being able to think about problems, talk them over with others, or even write about feelings or express them creatively can be helpful.

(Much of this information was excerpted from
the paper: *The Resilient Brain*, by Brendtro & Longhurst)

The brain has three major parts with different functions:

- **The Logical Brain** (prefrontal cortex) handles language, reasoning, and emotional control so Humans can intelligently solve problems and make meaning of life events. This area of the brain does not fully develop until adulthood.
- **The Emotional Brain** (limbic brain) triggers emotions that motivate behavior. The *amygdala* scans for stimuli for cues of danger or interest, triggers emotions, and stores important events in long term memory.
- **The Survival Brain** (brain stem) reacts to danger by triggering fight or flight mechanisms. These reflexive behaviors insured survival in the wild but are not geared to the threats faced by humans in modern life.

Psychiatrist Bruce Perry (2004) has found that children traumatized by neglect and abuse overuse more primitive brain systems. Their survival brains are chronically stimulated, and they are at high risk of engaging in behaviors which hurt themselves or others.

These destructive emotional impulses can only be regulated by mature capacity in the higher brain centers. But many of these youngsters have not had the nurturance and learning experiences to fully develop brain pathways for self –control. Thus their heightened impulsivity, frustration, and motor hyperactivity combine with an underdeveloped capacity to accurately perceive situations and problem solve. This unfortunate combination severely limits the child’s ability to maximize his or her potential.

As mentioned, Brendtro writes that human brain is like a library. Individuals who have suffered trauma remember everything. It’s as if they have wings of pain, shame, and humiliation in the lower regions of their brains. And they can’t afford to add any new books! A positive, safe, strength-based culture diminishes the fear that many traumatized kids live with. It replaces the wings of pain and shame with wings of accomplishment and pride. Positive, safe environments allow these individuals to venture outside their circles of protection (survival brain) and access (utilize) the higher regions of their brains – enhancing decision making, complex thinking, creativity, success and happiness.



The (survival) brain of a traumatized individual

“Recent research shows that the *broadening effect* (how positive emotions broaden the amount of possibilities we process, making us more thoughtful, creative, and open to new ideas), is actually biological. Positive emotions flood our brains with dopamine and serotonin , chemicals that not only make us feel good, but dial up the learning centers of our brains to higher levels. Positive emotions help humans to organize new information, keep that information in the brain longer, and retrieve it faster later on. And they enable us to make and sustain more neural connections, which allows us to think more quickly and creatively, become more skilled at complex analysis and problem solving, and see and invent new ways of doing things. Brain change, once thought impossible, is now a well-known fact, one that is supported by some of the most rigorous and cutting-edge research in neuroscience.”

(Achor, P. 29)

Three Universal Truths from Kids at Hope (KidsatHope.org), an evidence based, strategic-cultural model which reverses the youth at risk” paradigm by establishing a holistic methodology that engages an entire school, youth organization and/or community:

1. Children succeed when they are surrounded by adults who believe they can succeed no exceptions.
2. Children succeed when they have meaningful and sustainable relationships with caring adults.
3. Children succeed when they can articulate their future in four domains rather than one, which is generally: Education and Career; Family; Community and Service; Hobbies and Recreation.

Help Kids At-Risk to Cultivate Friendships

Kids who grow up in dysfunctional homes and/or have cognitive-neurological conditions often have trouble making and sustaining friendships. Quite simply, many of these children are overly egocentric due to their upbringing (i.e. I need to take care of myself. I don’t trust others to do so) or neurological handicap...and, as a result, have trouble with reciprocity and maintaining friendships. Kids entering kindergarten normally begin to *socially accommodate* and *subordinate* their needs to be in charge – they give up their outsized egocentrism – and, as a result, learn to make friends. At-risk kids struggle with accommodating and subordinating. Practice friendship building with them. Pair kids together to practice the give and take of relationships. Post friendship skills on a wall and frequently refer to them.



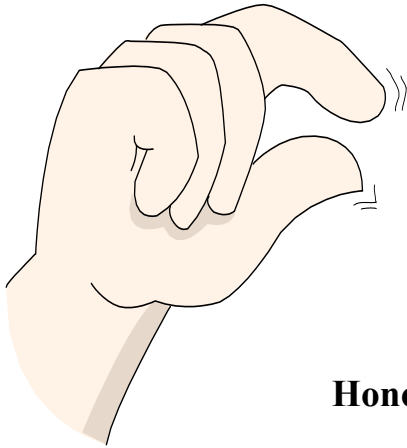
"I leaned in heavily to the two metaphors you shared with us at the conference this week (train/back on track, Jack & cars/improve every year-humans every day) with two different youths. **The analogies had an immediate impact.** I hammed it up a lot and even got a bit silly with it. I imitated your references to dripping oil, cracked axles, etc. **both responded visibly.**"

•~Juvenile Justice Court Judge

Strategic Verbal Interventions

The Millimeter Acknowledgement

Strength-based practice does not assume that ownership of guilt is somehow automatically curative



“Do you think it’s slightly possible that perhaps, maybe....”

“Could, maybe, 1% of this have something do with...”

Honoring Hellos and Goodbyes

“You can’t say hello until you have first said goodbye!”

Stages of grief: Shock & Denial, Anger, Sadness, Acceptance

Examples:

Goodbye to: Ever living with biological family

Hello to: New living and life direction

Goodbye to: Loss of idealized childhood

Hello to: What was real, the good that
can be remembered, and life ahead

Goodbye to: Cherished staff member, friend, etc.

Hello: To feeling fortunate to have had this person in my life/

Tip: Replace cognitive distortion (I.e, one ay thinking)

Example: Angry that staff member is leaving, but feeling lucky
that we got to work together for so long.

Providing Hope & Possibility Through Metaphors & Positive Predicting

Poker



“Life is like a poker game. Even if you’re dealt a bad hand, you can still win the game. Prison is full of people who blame their upbringing for why they broke the law. But for every one person in prison who blames his/her family, there are 100 folks on the outside who were raised in similar circumstances but *chose* to be good citizens.

The Melting Snowball



“See your fears and worries about (pending) issue/loss/transition as a big snowball in the middle of your chest, and understand that as each day goes by, it’s going to melt a little. It may stay forever...but it will become so small that you can build a great life around it.”

The Roadblock



“It’s not a learning disability, bipolar, Asperger’s; it’s a roadblock. All big cities have them, but people get to work on time every day. Why? They find away around it. You can to. Many successful people have roadblocks similar to yours.”



“Learning is my ticket to a great life.” You can’t get any where without a ticket!

The Train



“You’re strong and powerful...but got yourself off track. All great trains get off track. What can we do to get to get you back on the rails? You *will* journey to a good place.”

Enact Sudden Bursts of Positivity!



The 2025 Rodney

“Cars improve every year. People improve every day. Every day you wake up, you’re smarter, more experienced, more savvy than the day before. You’re the 2025 Rodney. You don’t overheat as much as the 2024 Rodney. You have better breaks, steering and a better looking design!”

From Vicki Reed, former Head of Juvenile Detention in Kentucky:

“At Christmas I attended a potluck at one of our facilities and talked to one of the youth who has been tried as an adult and is facing a long prison term once he gets transferred from juvenile to adult corrections. The superintendent asked me if I’d agree to a zoom with the youth because he wanted to ask me something. I agreed. Once he said hi, he asked, “Do you remember at Christmas when you talked about cars getting better every year and so did people?” I said yes. He then said, “I’ve thought a lot about this and I think I am getting better every year and I’d like to do something to help other kids.”

He then gave a bunch of ideas including a peer support in our facilities, volunteer visitors for youth who don’t get any visits (he has strong family support and said he’s the only kid in the facility who has parents who visit every week).....Made my day and hope it makes yours.” 😊 .

"I leaned in heavily to the two metaphors you shared with us at the conference this week (train/back on track, Jack & cars/improve every year-humans every day) with two different youths. **The analogies had an immediate impact.** I hammed it up a lot and even got a bit silly with it. I imitated your references to dripping oil, cracked axles, etc. **both responded visibly.**"

~NJ Juvenile Justice Court Judge

Changing Mindsets

“For twenty years, my research has shown that the view you adopt for yourself profoundly affects that way you lead your life.”

Carol Dweck (2006) *Mindset*

- Encourage *growth* vs. fixed mindsets.
- Encourage effort and trying...normalize failing, setbacks, and making mistakes.
- Explain that failing opens up an opportunity to learn something new. Discourage fixed self-perceptions: “*I’m smart*, I’m the best, I always do good at this,” etc.



The harder I try, the higher I fly! Be the EAGLE!
What’s a mistake? An opportunity to take!
If you don’t win, JUST GRIN! If you lose, don’t get the blues

If it’s stinkin’, change the thinkin’!

Thomas Edison's teachers said he was "too stupid to learn anything." He was fired from his first two jobs for being "non-productive." As an inventor, Edison made 1,000 unsuccessful attempts at inventing the light bulb. When a reporter asked, "How did it feel to fail 1,000 times?" Edison replied, "I didn’t fail 1,000 times. The light bulb was an invention with 1,000 steps."

"I've missed more than 9000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. 26 times I've been trusted to take the game winning shot ... and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life. That is why I succeed." - Michael Jordan

Stinkin’ Thinkin’

I’m not good

It’s good enough

I can’t make this any better.

This is hard.

I don’t understand.

Replacement Thought(s)

I’m on the right track

Is this really my best work

I can always improve. I’ll keep trying

This might take more time and effort.

What am I missing?

Activities & Self Esteem Building

To help youth feel more positive and enhance self esteem, provide tasks and activities that offer a:

Universal Opportunity for Individual & Group Success

Create and/or modify tasks and activities to maximize success opportunities & *draw out and amplify existing strengths and talents*

Tip: With hard-luck kids – At times, losing to them on purpose can provide a jolt of positivity a youth might need.

Self-Esteem Building Options:

- Games: Board, video, card, bingo, chess, backgammon, video, dice (Farkle), etc.
- Karaoke & music (concerts, kazoo bands, rap, African drumming, shows, music videos, lip-syncing, etc.)
- House records: longest dice roll without getting doubles, longest domino chain, highest stack of playing cards, etc.
- Volunteering (delivering food, mentoring a younger kid, helping in office/unit, etc.)
Volunteering increases intuitive optimism
- Sports (hiking, biking, basketball, throwball, weight-lifting, martial arts, roller-skating, soccer, etc.)
- Fitness (create fitness charts for jogging or calisthenic, aerobics, jogging/walking, yoga, meditation, rope and obstacle courses, etc.)
Richard Louv, author of *Last Child in the Woods* cites children's "disconnection from nature" as a major reason kids with mental health issues are often over-medicated. Get them outside!
- Hobbies (art, music, chess, crafts, pottery, carpentry, reading, photography, magic, technology, word search. etc.)
- Animals (pets, fish tanks, therapeutic horseback riding, therapy dogs, etc.)
- Home repair jobs (painting, landscaping, reorganizing, repairing, etc.)



P.57 "Every child has an area of strength in which he or she excels, Whether it is in academics, art, music, or sports. When educators can identify and focus on a child's strength, they afford the child the opportunity to experience success, with all the emotional implications of doing something well. This is an important starting point in mastering academic content and social relations, which in turn serve as a basis for success at school."

Every kid needs his/her own special niche!

Explore with youth their particular character strengths. Have them identify them. It's often helpful to bring up a kid's various strengths during challenging times. How these strengths can help navigate them through difficult times and situations. "You do seem to struggle with some of the subjects that aren't your strong suits – like math and science. But you're really creative, funny and kind – and those strengths are going to get you somewhere. I also like your perseverance. You don't give up on things. Another impressive strength." Model for youth how you acknowledge and use your strengths to be successful. And that you also own your weaknesses.

Character Strengths:

Honesty:

- Tells the truth
- Keeps promises
- Trustworthy

Hope:

- Optimistic
- Expects the best
- Excited about the future

Humility:

- Modest
- Puts attention on others
- Doesn't brag about accomplishments

Humor:

- Playful
- Enjoys bringing smiles/laughter to others
- Sees the funny side of things

Judgement:

- A critical thinker
- Fact-based and logical
- Open minded

Kindness:

- Caring
- Generous
- Compassionate
- Nice

Appreciation of Beauty & Excellence:

- Feels awe and wonder in nature
- Admires skills of others
- Inspired by the goodness of others

Bravery:

- Shows valor
- Accepts challenges
- Faces difficulties
- Speaks up for what's right

Creativity:

- Clever
- A problem-solver

Curiosity:

- Interested
- Open to new ideas

Fairness:

- Cares about what's right
- Treats others fairly
- Tries not to be biased against certain groups

Forgiveness:

- Gives others a second chance
- Accepts other faults
- Doesn't hold grudges

Gratitude:

- Thankful
- Shows appreciation
- Feels blessed

Perseverance:

- Hardworking
- Overcomes obstacles
- Finishes what is started

Perspective:

- Wise
- Gives good advice
- See the big picture

Prudence:

- Careful
- Plans ahead
- Thinks about consequences before acting

Self-Regulation:

- Self-controlled
- Disciplined
- Manages feelings and actions

Sense of Meaning:

- Searches for meaning
- Feels a sense of purpose
- Feels interconnected with life

Social Intelligence:

- Understands others
- Aware of own feelings and thoughts
- Shows empathy

Teamwork:

- Loyal
- A team player
- Shows responsibility to groups

Zest:

- Active
- Energetic
- Enthusiastic

Love of Learning:

- Excited to learn new things
- Masters new skills

Love:

- Warm and genuine
- Prioritizes relationships
- A good listener

Leadership:

- Encourages others
- Organizes groups
- Sets a good example

Explore with youth their particular character strengths. Have them identify them. It's often helpful to bring up a kid's various strengths during challenging times. How these strengths can help navigate them through difficult times and situations. "You do seem to struggle with some of the subjects that aren't your strong suits – like math and science. But you're really creative, funny and kind – and those strengths are going to get you somewhere. I also like your perseverance. You don't give up on things. Another impressive strength." Model for youth how you acknowledge and use your strengths to be successful. And that you also own your weaknesses.

Character Strengths:

Honesty:

- Tells the truth
- Keeps promises
- Trustworthy

Hope:

- Optimistic
- Expects the best
- Excited about the future

Humility:

- Modest
- Puts attention on others
- Doesn't brag about accomplishments

Humor:

- Playful
- Enjoys bringing smiles/laughter to others
- Sees the funny side of things

Judgement:

- A critical thinker
- Fact-based and logical
- Open minded

Kindness:

- Caring
- Generous
- Compassionate
- Nice

Appreciation of Beauty & Excellence:

- Feels awe and wonder in nature
- Admires skills of others
- Inspired by the goodness of others

Bravery:

- Shows valor
- Accepts challenges
- Faces difficulties
- Speaks up for what's right

Creativity:

- Clever
- A problem-solver

Curiosity:

- Interested
- Open to new ideas

Fairness:

- Cares about what's right
- Treats others fairly
- Tries not to be biased against certain groups

Forgiveness:

- Gives others a second chance
- Accepts other faults
- Doesn't hold grudges

Gratitude:

- Thankful
- Shows appreciation
- Feels blessed

Perseverance:

- Hardworking
- Overcomes obstacles
- Finishes what is started

Perspective:

- Wise
- Gives good advice
- See the big picture

Prudence:

- Careful
- Plans ahead
- Thinks about consequences before acting

Self-Regulation:

- Self-controlled
- Disciplined
- Manages feelings and actions

Sense of Meaning:

- Searches for meaning
- Feels a sense of purpose
- Feels interconnected with life

Social Intelligence:

- Understands others
- Aware of own feelings and thoughts
- Shows empathy

Teamwork:

- Loyal
- A team player
- Shows responsibility to groups

Zest:

- Active
- Energetic
- Enthusiastic

Love of Learning:

- Excited to learn new things
- Masters new skills

Love:

- Warm and genuine
- Prioritizes relationships
- A good listener

Leadership:

- Encourages others
- Organizes groups
- Sets a good example



Gus on Pejorative Labeling



Look, I know some of us can be quite difficult. I was a hellion my first six months, considered quite obnoxious. But it was simply defensive posturing. (Can you say defense mechanism?) Kids aren't bad. They're just screwed up. The kid who's pushing you away the most is probably the one who needs you the most.

I think every residential center would be better off if they never used words as manipulative, lazy, un-invested, controlling, and obnoxious. They're pejorative adjectives. When you label one of us in such a way, you contaminate the waters and no one wants to swim with us any more.

"Manipulative kids aren't fun to work with."

"They're a pain in the ass."

"Boy, is that kid manipulative!"

Every time we get blasted for being "manipulative" (or any other such term), our self-concept suffers. We take on that word – we internalize a sense of badness. Yet the kid you call "manipulative" might have come to your facility with a history of manipulating his way out of getting beaten. So, maybe manipulating ain't so bad. Maybe it simply needs to be understood in the context of a child's situation. Maybe people don't need to use these words anymore.

P. 24 "I had been an excellent math student, but the day she told me I was "spacey" and unfocused was the day I stopped connecting to math."

Note: Throughout this handout will be references to the manuscript:
*Helping Traumatized Children Learn produced by Massachusetts Advocates
For Children* www.massadvocates.org.

Excerpt from *The Gus Chronicles*, Appelstein, 1994

Decoding Problem Behavior

Response to problem behavior: Understand > Reframe > Squeeze

Behavior is always a message

Pejorative Label

Positive, Hope-Based Reframe

Obnoxious

Good at pushing people away

Rude, arrogant

Good at affecting people

Resistant

Cautious

Lazy, un-invested

Good at preventing further hurts, failures

Manipulative

Good at getting needs met

Just looking for attention

Good at caring about and loving yourself

Close-mouthed

Loyal to family or friends

Different, odd

Under-appreciated

Stubborn & defiant

Good at standing up for yourself

Tantrum, fit, outburst

Big message

Learning disability

Roadblocks

Life isn't what you see, it's what you perceive!

When you change the way you look at a challenging kid ...the kid changes.

Pejorative labels lead to the creation of *stereotype myths* (entrenched , negative self-perceptions) – Gladwell, *Outliers*

Dweck (Mindset): Encourage *Growth* vs. *Fixed* Mindsets

Growth: Value and encourage effort, trying, failing (trying again)

Fixed: Discourage fixed self-perceptions (e.g. I'm smart, I'm the best, etc.)

Reframing II

1. A youth who is always looking for attention:

R: I apologize to you for anyone who has ever put you down for looking for attention. I think it's great you look for attention – good or bad. It means you haven't quit on yourself. You probably haven't received enough attention in your life and you're looking for it now. Are there better ways to seek it? Sure, and we can talk about them. But I don't want you to spend another minute of your life thinking that there's something wrong with looking for attention!"

2. A youth who won't talk about his/her feelings:

R: You're a real loyal daughter. I think you hold everything in to protect your family and I think that's quite admirable. Your mom is very lucky to have a kid like you. But this isn't us against your family, we're on the same side (connecting statement –see page).

3. A youth who acts rudely:

R: You have an amazing ability to affect people! Or, "I think you're pretty good at giving to others what you've received."

4. A youth who acts provocatively:

R: I think you're pretty good at getting me to experience how you're feeling right now. Maybe you could use your words?

5. A youth who acts in a stubborn manner:

R: You're good at standing up for yourself and what you believe. Some of the greatest people in the world were quite stubborn about their causes: Martin Luther King, Mother Theresa. But the great ones all new when to give in a little.

6. A youth who seems unmotivated:

R: You're pretty good at protecting yourself. If you don't try you can't be embarrassed. But you're a bright kid and if you just take it step by step you'll probably have success.

7. A youth who frequently swears:

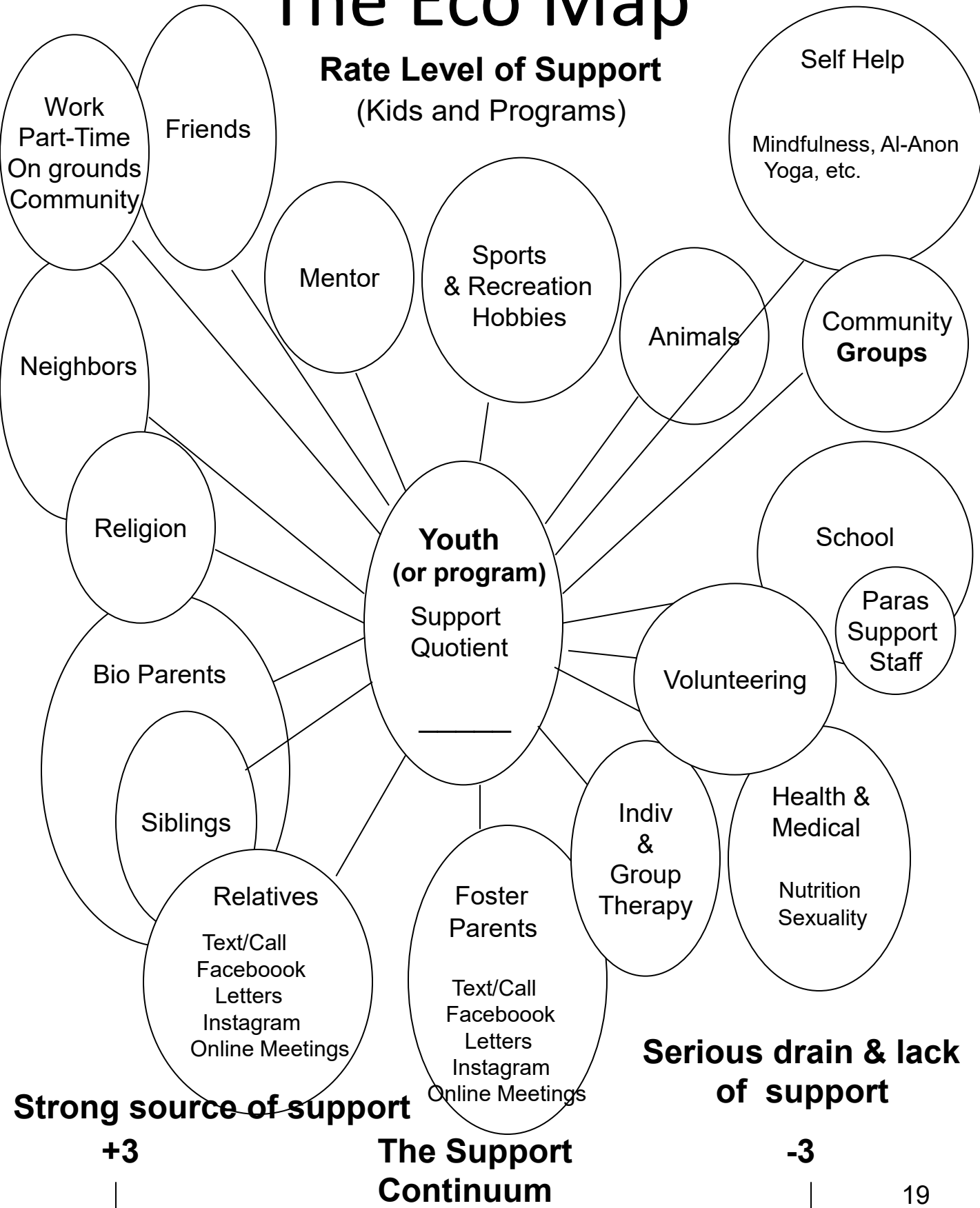
R: You're very expressive! You've got words I never heard before. Might use a few at the Patriot's game. How about saving the expressive language for times your alone with one of us, not in front of the other students. Thanks.

8. A youth who's bossy with peers:

R: You've got great leadership skills. You're a natural.

The Eco Map

Rate Level of Support
(Kids and Programs)



Cues to Use (Coping Thoughts/One-Line Raps)

The Power of Self-Talk

Encourage kids to create and practice coping thoughts - in the form of cues or one-line raps – to diminish or eradicate problem behaviors (i.e. bad habits). Cues are more successful when they rhyme, are rhythmic, humorous and repeated often. Practice makes perfect!

The brain is designed to change in response to patterned, repetitive stimulation.

Anger Control

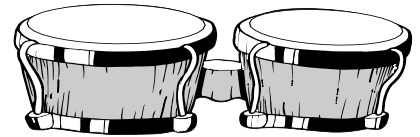
NBD...easier than 1-2-3! NO BIG DEAL! Let it go, Joe (Just stay cool no need to blow)
Let it go...So (So I can be happy or earn things, etc.) If I don't win...just grin!
When you get mad...don't do bad (or don't get sad)...just talk or walk.
Talk, walk, or squawk! Stay in control, that's the goal. I can, I will, I gotta chill.
If I lose, don't get the blues.

Social

Take turns when you talk, if you don't the kids will walk.
Give kids their space, it's their place. Stay arms lengths away...today.
Think about them thinking about me, it's as easy as 1,2,3.

Self-Harm

If you hurt number one, it's never better when you're done.



Use Bongos!

Following Through/ Being Independent/Organization

Don't quit, take it bit by bit. Inch by inch, life's a cinch. Yard by yard, life is hard.
Take it little by little and play da fiddle!
Organize and be wise. Prepare for tomorrow and avoid the sorrow!
Like a king on a thrown, I can do it (start) on my own.
Step after step, that's the prep. Take it inch by inch...it's a cinch! Sit and relax, learn to the max!
Make a list, it will assist.

Drugs and Alcohol

I can make it if I choose, time to quit the drugs and booze.
If you lose hope, don't do dope.

View more cues
at www.charliea.com

Anxiety

Don't be in a hurry to worry. Breathe in, breathe out...little by little the stress goes out
Stop and listen, cause you don't know what you're missing.
Count to ten and then do it again. Take a break for goodness sake.
Lose the stinkin' thinkin'. Rethink the situation add relaxation
I should, I must ...causes too much stress and fuss. If it's stinkin' change the thinkin'!

Encouragement/Affirmations

The harder I try, the higher I fly!
Learning is your (my) ticket to a good life.
I can make it if I choose...Only I can make me lose. If it is to be, it's up to me!

Cueing Exercise

Create a “rap (cue) or two” for some of the kids you work with:

Issue: _____

Rap: _____

Issue: _____

Rap: _____

Issue: _____

Rap: _____

_____ I

Issue: _____

Rap: _____

“The prefrontal cortex, the area of the brain primarily responsible for the development of the executive functions, has been shown to be adversely affected by trauma.” P. 31

Fortunately the brain is an amazing organism and even when it is impaired it often has the ability through environmental interventions – such as cueing - to be “rewired.” Neurologists call this characteristic of the brain: *neuroplasticity*. When a child or youth repeats a cue (coping mantra) – over and over again with a set rhythm - dramatic behavioral gains can occur. The desired behavior, in essence, becomes imbedded in the individual’s neural pathways.

Helping Kids With Anxiety Issues

- Kids need an explanation for how anxiety is triggered and maintained, and importantly how *feeling* anxious is not a reflection of the actual degree of danger or likelihood of risk in a situation. Instead anxiety results from the brain misperceiving and exaggerating the risk in a situation and making them feel they need to avoid in order to survive. This is the key to being a *worry-wise kid*, not taking worry's version of the story as an accurate reflection of the situation.
- Teach kids to challenge their anxious thoughts and understanding of situations, rather than accepting anxious thoughts as the truth. Get them to replace their unrealistic and exaggerated thought(s) and avoid stinkin' thinkin'.
- Their first reaction self-talk is typically about *the most awful thing* that could happen in a situation, commonly called the "what if's". Unrealistic expectations that often are shaped into problem self-talk such as: *I must do this* or *I should...* need to be replaced. Teach kids to "think twice" and identify *the most likely thing* that would happen in the situation, or the "what else's".
- *The importance of Cognitive Restructuring.* Guide kids into generating and evaluating the accuracy of self-talk (their internal dialogue) or appraisal of a situation. Anxious children, like adults, have anxious thoughts about the expectation of threat or harm and the inability to cope, or fears of humiliation, embarrassment or rejection by others.
- Encourages kids to generate more realistic versions of situations and their ability to cope with them.
- With a *new mindset*, children gradually face their fearful situations, breaking the challenges down into small, manageable steps.
- Overtime, kids are able to more quickly tap into non-anxious interpretations of situations, and understand that avoidance of feared situations, only makes matters worst, instead the only way to get past anxiety is to face it head on and approach situations until they become used to them.
- Because anxious thinking riles up the body, kids should be taught breathing and relaxation techniques.
- Encourage kids to re-approach their feared situations with their new skills of smart, worry-wise thinking (self talk) and calm breathing.

“We tell kids to be quiet, calm yourself, be still. We tell them all of these things they need in the classroom, but we’re not teaching them how to do it.”

Jean-Gabrielle Larochette, Coronado Elementary School

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is the ability to exist in the present moment and practicing it often looks like meditation.”

Mindfulness is a particular way of paying attention. It is the mental faculty of purposely bringing awareness to one’s experience. Mindfulness can be applied to sensory experience, thoughts, and emotions by using sustained attention and noticing our experiences without reacting.

Studies in mindfulness programs in schools have found that regular practice – even just a few minutes a day - improves self control and increases their classroom participation, respect for others, happiness, optimism, and self-acceptance levels. It can help reduce absenteeism and suspensions too. A mindfulness practice helps reduce activity in the amygdala, the brain’s emotional center responsible for fear and stress.

The other thing we know mindfulness does with the brain is it increases the activity in the prefrontal cortex. This is where we make our decisions, how we plan, our abstract thinking.”

Vivki Zakrzewski, UC Berkeley Greater Good Science Center

Exercises:

Assume comfortable position, close eyes
Take three slow, deep breaths....

Then repeat:

Breath in
Breath out
Release the Stress
And let it out!

Answer these questions:

Where are you now?	Here
What time is it where you are?	Be in the Present! Now

Become a statue. Assume a fixed .
position. You can blink and breathe.

Learn to be someone who doesn’t react. Learn to block it out.

Think about a situation that’s bothering you and let it go.

Helpful self-talk: Slow down. Stay in moment. Don’t be in a hurry to worry!

Helping Youth to Self-Regulate

- Teach kids how to self-manage/self-regulate/calm down. Not all kids know how to do this. Many lack self-regulation skills.
- Teaching kids to be aware of how their emotions escalate incrementally from calmness to frustration to anger allows them to realize they need to use a calming strategy before they become to irrational.
- Telling agitated kids to “relax” or “take a walk” won’t help a youth if they don’t know how to calm down. In fact, it might get them worse.
- When kids appear dysregulated (wiggling in their chairs, exhibit frustrated facial expressions, etc.) it might work temporarily to offer a solution: “Sit up,” “Lower your voice,” or “Stop moving around so much.” But the youth doesn’t necessarily learn how to self-regulate, and will require prompts every time he struggles.
- It will be more effective for the adult to whisper: “Do a body check.” Each body check prompt is a crucial teaching moment where kids learn to identify their regulation state and employ self-monitoring and coping skills to move toward independence.
- *Zones of Regulation* teaches kids to be aware of the zone they are in: Blue – low energy; Green – good to go; Yellow – warning zone requiring caution; Red – out of control. Helping kids to identify the zone they are in is the beginning of learning how to pay attention to what is going on in the body (and mind) so they have a chance of doing something (use the skills they have been taught) to move themselves back to feeling better.
- When kids escalate, distraction is often critical to get them to stop ruminating about the existing problem(s)

Popular Calming Strategies:

- Go for a walk
- Get a drink of water
- Coloring or scribbling
- For older kids: Reading aloud, Sudoku, or Mad Libs
- For younger ones: Books such as *Where’s Waldo*, listening to recorded books, being read to,
- Squeezing an object
- Breathing exercises, counting

Positive Predicting

When you talk about the future in positive terms, you make any desired outcome more possible. And when it's more possible, it becomes more probable!

“How should we celebrate when...”

“Twenty years from now, when you're an amazingly successful businessman and family guy...which staff member from the school (Me!) do you need to come back and find and thank for always having your back?”

“Who should we call to let them know what a great job you did...?”

James Garbarino postulates that a youth's inability to articulate one's future may be a clue to why some kids succeed while others fail.

Future oriented talk instills hope in kids who are wanting in this regard.

Hope is Humanity's Fuel!

Three Universal Truths from Kidsathope.com:

Children succeed when they are surrounded by adults who believe they can succeed no exceptions.

Children succeed when they have meaningful and sustainable relationships with caring adults.

Children succeed when they can articulate their future in four domains rather than one: Home and Family; Education and Career; Community and Service; and Hobbies and Recreation.

Ask your students future oriented questions that fall into one of the four domains:

1. Do you think you'll attend a trade school, junior college or four-year school?
2. What professions are you leaning towards?
3. Do you think you'll travel a lot when you're older? Where?
4. Big family or small? Will you help your kids with their homework?
5. Would you prefer to live in a big city or small town?
6. What kind of hobbies will you have when you're older?
7. Will you be generous, and give your time and money to those in need?

Solution-Focused Questions

A model of questions that help youth recognize and build upon inherent strengths. It's the language of hope and possibility.

Explorative Historical:

When kids make hopeless comments, there are two helpful ways to respond. 1. Explore if the youth has been in this situation before and made it through. Ask how? 2. If they haven't experienced this, ask how other kids in similar situations made it through.

"I can't do this assignment! It's too hard!"

"How many difficult assignments have you been given that made you nervous just like this one? Quite a few, right. And how many did you get done? Just about all of them, right? So what are the odds you'll get this one done? Go back to any one of the difficult assignments you received – that you did well on. How did you get it done? Did you ask for help? Break it down? So, I guess you could do that this time, eh?"

"I'll never make it when I get out of this center!"

"I hear you. You seem worried and concerned about how you'll do when you leave, right? But let me ask you something. How many kids, one year ago today, left a detention centers with worries about making it? Just like you do. And how many who did are still doing okay? And why are they doing okay? So do you think maybe you could do the same kind of things to help you succeed? Write me a letter in a year; let me know how well you're doing!"

Qualifiers:

"I hate that kid!" > "So you're saying you're really upset with him *right now*."

Past Tense:

"I'm stupid!" > "So you haven't been feeling real smart lately."

When & Will:

"Life will never be the same!" > "When it is, what will it be like?"

Scaling Questions:

"On a scale of one-to-ten, ten being that you'll make lots of friends at the new school – zero, you won't make any....what number are you at now. When it's higher in a month, how will you feel?"

Identifying In-Between Change

"What will be the first sign that you've turned the corner."

Amplifying Change Using Speculation

"You've had some great weeks. Do you think the reason you're doing so well has something to do with you figuring out that doing better gets you more of what you want?"

Or: "You're getting older and more mature...Perhaps you've outgrown some of your younger-type behaviors?"

Visit: www.bobbertolino.com

Changing Perspective Question:

"Given all the pressure you've been under, how come you're not doing worse?"

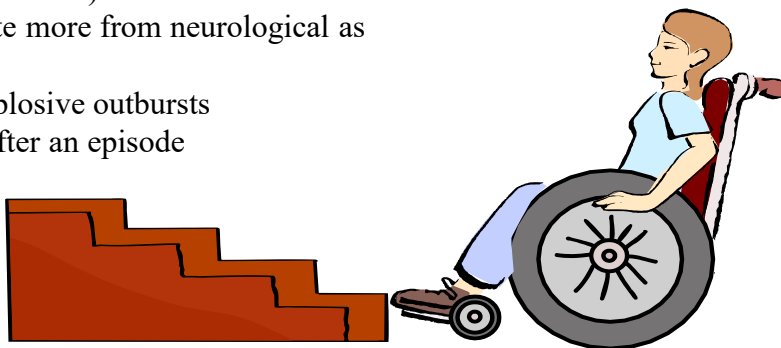
Exception questions:

"Have there been times recently when the problem did not occur?"

Helping Inflexible/Explosive Children & Youth

Characteristics of Such Kids:

- Display deficits in frustration tolerance
- Generally do not respond well to consequences and rewards (i.e. traditional motivational approaches)
- Symptoms are thought to emanate more from neurological as opposed to psychological factors
- Prone to stubborn, inflexible, explosive outbursts
- Often display genuine remorse after an episode



How to Help:

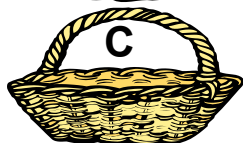
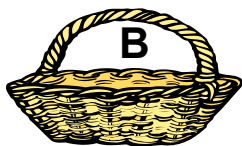
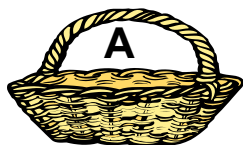
- Create *user-friendly* environments to *clear the smoke* (take the air out of the balloon)
- Determine which behaviors need to be addressed and how best to respond. Categorize behaviors and responses into one of three baskets:

A = Non-negotiable

B = Compromise & Negotiation

C = Ignore

- As kids *meltdown* and approach *vapor lock*, immediately *distract*, *empathize*, and offer aid. Help them to downshift into a calmer state (i.e. make the *cognitive shift*).



A = Non-negotiable, often a safety concern. Consequences could be issued.

B = Room for compromise & negotiation

C = Ignore

Tip: Have the “differences” talk with your kids on a regular basis. Explain to them why some kids are treated differently based on their circumstances/wiring. Use the fifty-yard dash metaphor (e.g. They’re not receiving favoritism. They are behind you in this area.) Encourage them to help the kids(s) in question.

The Differences Talk

“We are consistent. But consistent doesn’t mean we treat you the same. If one of you has asthma, you get to use an inhaler, you don’t need it. If one of you breaks a leg, we get you crutches, you don’t need them. If one of you has a learning disability – a roadblock – in math, we modify our academic expectations. We treat you for what you need. You will see kids here who don’t have to do what you do; get rewarded for doing things you don’t get rewarded for. It’s not that they’re getting favoritism – it’s what they need at the time. And in most cases it would be great if you reach out to the kid who needs a little help to get to where you are.

Every person is wired differently. Some very successful adults, like kids, have ADD, bipolar disorder, Asperger’s...a different kind of wiring. And they became successful probably because the people around them knew that they needed to be treated in a certain way – a little bit different from the others.

But, that said, we are pretty consistent: We don’t yell at you . We have great activities. We keep a really clean and neat place. We have pretty good food. We tell corny jokes. That’s consistency. It’s not treating you all the same.”

How would you assess the work you do with cognitively-inflexible kids? What changes might you make?

Humor needs to be taken seriously!

Research Shows that Laughter can Keep You Healthy

Laughter can also keep you healthy, according to the [Mayo Clinic](#). Research has found both short and long-term benefits: Laughter can increase oxygen to the heart, lungs and muscles, increase the endorphins that are released by your brain, improve your mood and reduce physical pain

[According to comedian Paul Osincup](#), a past president of the Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humor (AATH), you don't have to be a comedian to laugh more. "Humor is not a talent, it's a habit," he says. He suggests not worrying about being clever or funny, but instead to get in the habit of seeing humor in everyday situations.

Role of Humor

- Forms a bridge between adult/child world (i.e. counters resistance)
- De-mystifies individual persona/reduces power messages
- Enhances relationship building, tension reducer
- Provides effective modeling, improves self-esteem
- Enhances identity formation (e.g. niche theory)
- It's FUN! It's reflective of the environment
- Demonstrates caring

Rules:

- Try! But give up quick
- Do not view the use of humor as an *extra*; it should be an integral communication technique.
- Make no assumptions about who can or can't be humorous – for everyone is capable!
- Avoid sarcasm ("Veiled hostility")

Forms:

- Self-Deprecating
- Slapstick
- Joke Telling
- Grandiose Praise
- Humorous Games
- Musical Expression
- Poetry



Transitional Objects & Humor

Sustain "humorous" moments via:

The written word Photos Recordings Videos

A study by Stanford reported that students learn 700% more in a classroom when humor is an active part of the teaching.

Working with Families

Key Terms and Concepts

Goals of Family Centered Work:

Facilitation of family connections
Fantasy Deflation
Enhanced information gathering
Reunification
Earlier discharges
Mutual Acceptance



The Continuum of Parental Involvement*

1. Engagement
2. Participation
3. Empowerment
4. Discharge
5. Aftercare > Supportive Services

- Professionals/educators and parents form *Interlocking Partnerships*
- Professionals view parents as: *Collaborators*
- Family centered work is: *Cultural rather than Compartmental*

*Martone et. al, RTCY

The Observing Ego

“I’m REALLY ticked...I could just - it’s okay. Stay cool...ALL feelings are normal. Learn from this. I’m suffering a bad self-esteem injury, but in a little while it will heal.

Respond instead of ***React***.

Use the Force, Betty!

...I mean, Luke.”

Lack of support leads to punitive actions.

Self-talk to use in order to keep your cool:

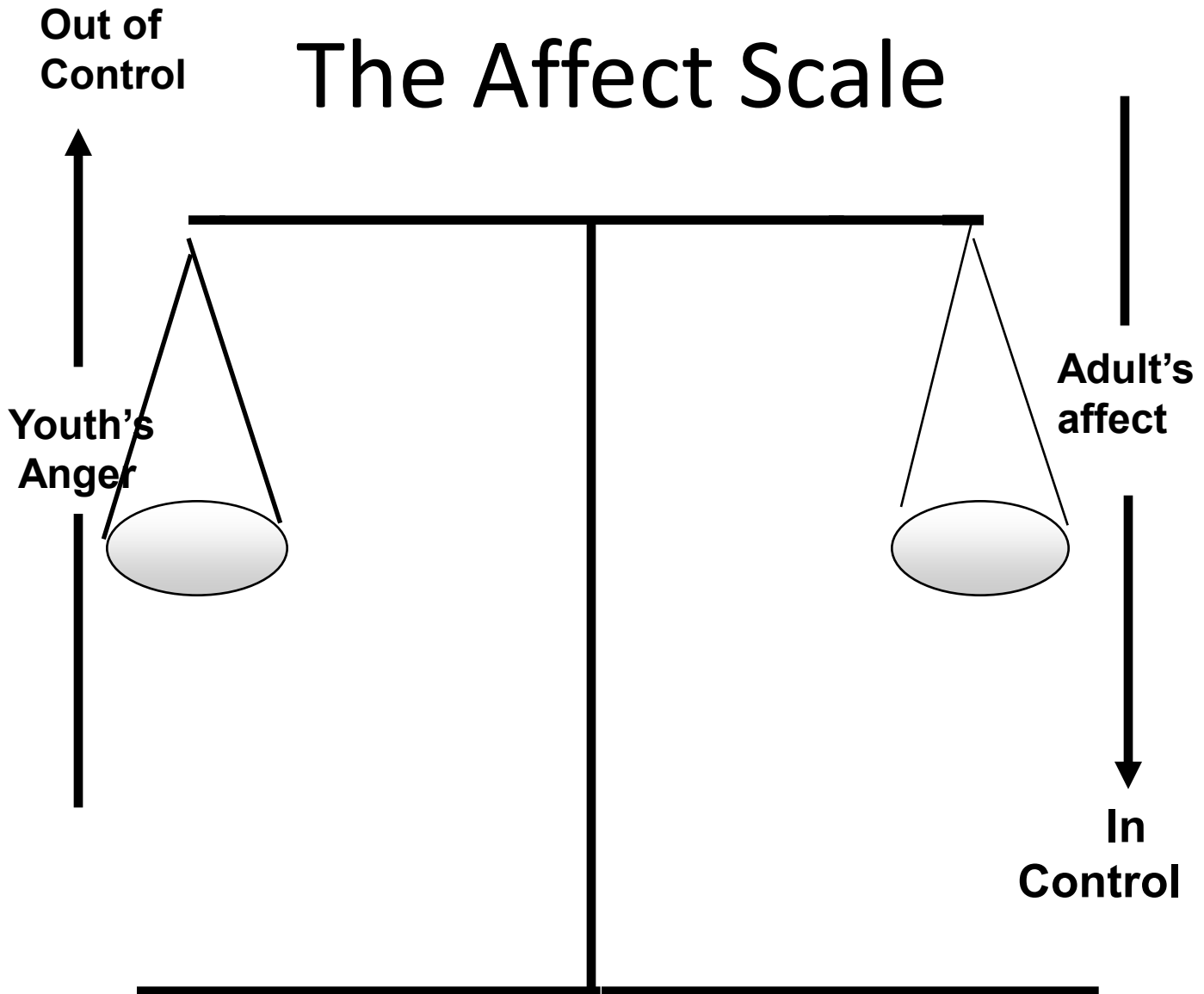
1. Think about the principle of lack of support being related to punitive actions – and don’t go there. Think:
I can do anything for 90 more minutes! Ask: You have the audacity to compare your life to theirs?
2. Visualize yourself driving home or retiring at the end of a brutal day with a BIG smile on your face *thinking I kept my cool today. I did good. I showed these kids they can trust me.*
3. Think about tomorrow: *If I respond instead of react to the end of the day, my relationships will grow stronger... and their behavior will improve..*
4. Think about a M.A.S.H. Unit: *When I’m at my worst, I need to give it my best!*
5. Think Wants & Needs: What do I WANT to do? But what do I NEED to do?
6. ***Use the Force, Luke! Don’t succumb to the Dark Side.***

Respond =
The Golden Rule

Don’t say or do anything to a youth or group that you wouldn’t want said or done to you.

Self esteem is fragile even when it’s good!



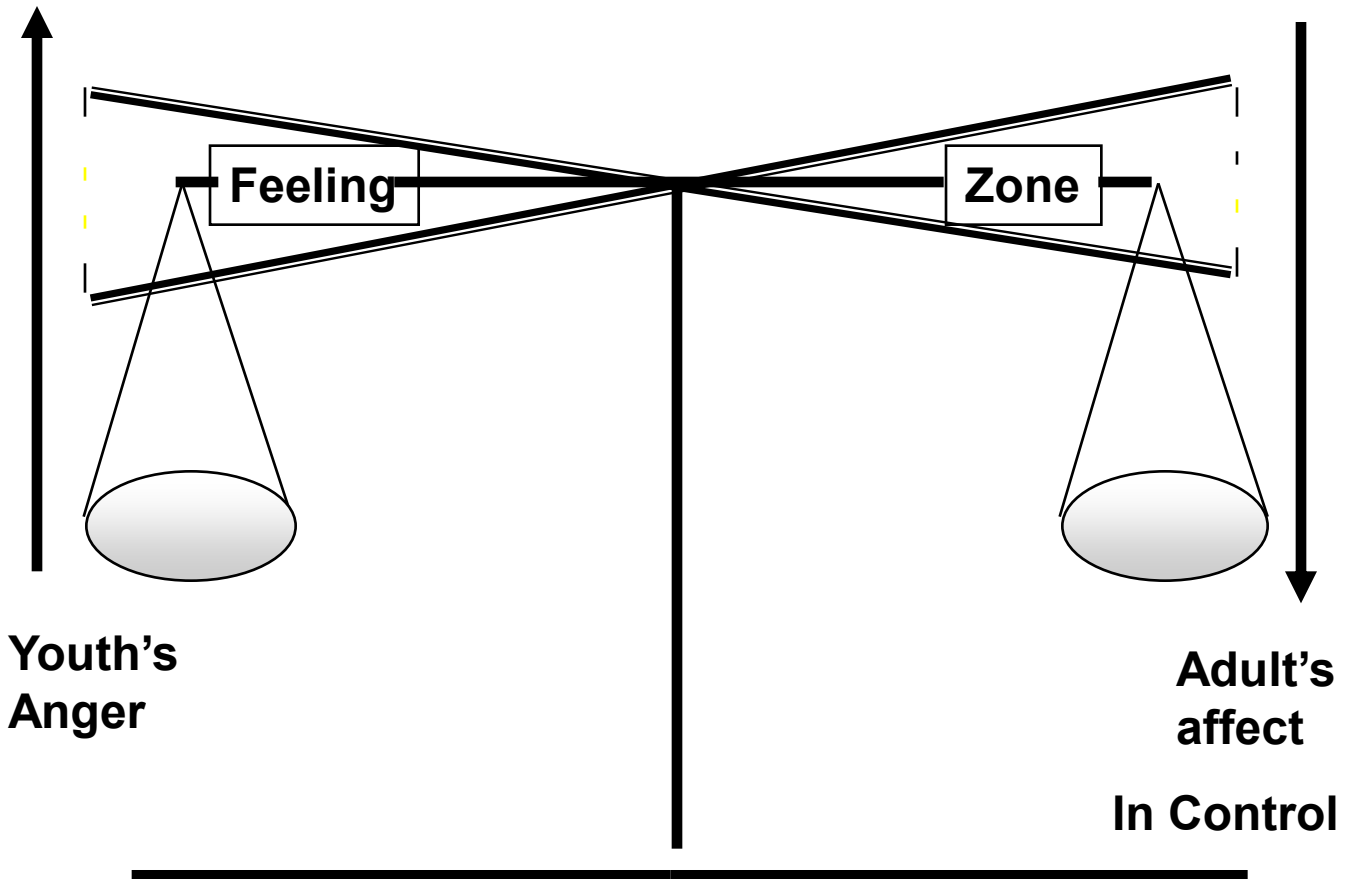


Key: Establish inverse relationship

As they get louder, you become more quiet

Loss of
Control

The Affect Scale



Inside the “feeling zone” there is room to model affect-laden content.

Said in a controlled, but somewhat expressive manner:

“John, I’m really upset about the choice you just made.”

“Mary, I’m angry about that decision...”

Key: If the youth escalates through the zone, the adult’s affect should grow more muted.

Content vs. Message



“You won’t be around next week?”

2 weeks later...

“*You*...won’t be around next week.”



Use “I” or “We” instead of “You” and start requests with “Please” and finish with “Thank you.” Proper language sends supportive messages.

Body Messages



“C’mon dude...let’s get it done, and then we can boogey. NBD brother.”

NBD = No Big Deal!

VS.

“You need to get it done now!”

Speak to youth at eye level or below. Approach them in a calm manner. Be careful about your pace, posture, tone, facial expression, hand movements and body position.



Pre-Talk Considerations

Number One Goal: Engage!

Listen, empathize, paraphrase, offer help, apologize, repeat, offer hope...HOOK 'EM in!

- Don't be defensive. Anticipate negative comments – don't take them personally...

"It's an injury and it will heal."

- Expect *displacement* (i.e. anger directed at you that is meant for someone else.)
- Assess your relationship and feelings toward the youth(s). Think PIE (i.e. everyone deserves an equal slice)

"The kid who is pushing you away the most, is probably the one who needs you the most" (The Gus Chronicles I, Appelstein)

- Practice the talk in your head. Longer discussions generally have a beginning, middle, and end phase.

Remember: What is the most important factor an adult should be thinking about right before he/she sets a limit with a youth and/or group? *The sanctity of the relationship(s).*

Other considerations: _____

Core Verbal Interventions

Non-Judgmental Exploration & Supportive Interventions:

“What’s up?” “You seem really upset!” “This stinks!” “How can I help?” “I’d feel the same way.”

Repeating or Paraphrasing w/qualifiers:

Youth: “I hate doing this chore!”

Worker: “You’re saying that you’re pretty upset about doing this chore *right now*.” (Use qualifiers: yet, at the moment, right now, etc.)

Youth: I can’t stand living here. You guys suck.

Parent: *Right now*, you seem pretty upset about living here and dealing with us? It’s not easy.

Feelings Update:

“How do you feel about that?” It is critical for kids to identify their feelings during times of stress: *Name it to tame it!*

Sandwich Approach:

“You made a bad decision to slam the door and swear at us. But I’m *really pleased* about how you settled down and are talking to me now. These aren’t easy times, are they? Maybe you can think about apologizing to the group at some point. You really do have the ability to make better choices when you get upset. I’ve seen you do it, right? We’re all making mistakes lately. We’re human.”

Praise and Encouragement:

“Way to go!” “That was fantastico!” “I like the way you completed this chore, breaking it down into steps.” (Try and praise the specific action(s) versus the youth) “You’ve done this before and can do it again.” “You have the ability to work this out, don’t you?” “Take it slowly. You can do it.”

Humor:

To a fifteen-year-old-year-old: “You’re acting just like a teenager!”

Apologizing:

“I’m sorry for raising my voice to you.”

Reasoning Responses:

“What if every staff member let the kids....“

Connecting Statements:

“It’s not me against you. I’m on your side. I don’t like having to...?”

•Empowering Interventions:

•"What could you have done differently?" "What do you think we should do?"

Explorative (Control):

"How about we focus on what you can control?"

Explorative Responses (psychological):

"You don't usually get this upset. Could something else be bothering you?"

Explorative Responses (historical):

When kids make hopeless comments. There are two helpful ways to respond. One, explore if the kid or group have ever been in a similar situation and worked it out. (See below)

Two, if this is a first-time situation, bring up others who have been through it and succeeded...worked it out well.

"Have you ever completed such a difficult assignment? How'd you do it?"

"Have you ever got this angry and not lost your cool? Kept in control? Of course you have. What did you think and do to not blow it? Maybe you can remember those strategies – what you've done in the past – next time you feel yourself getting agitated."

"How many other kids in America, one year ago, were in your same shoes. Great kids going through a difficult divorce? And were very down like you are. Well, how many of those kids are feeling pretty good today? Have adjusted to the divorce and are back on track? And why are they back on track? So, maybe you can be one of those kids in the future if you use the same kind of strategies."

Explorative (reflective):

"Is that behavior working for you?"

Plan Making:

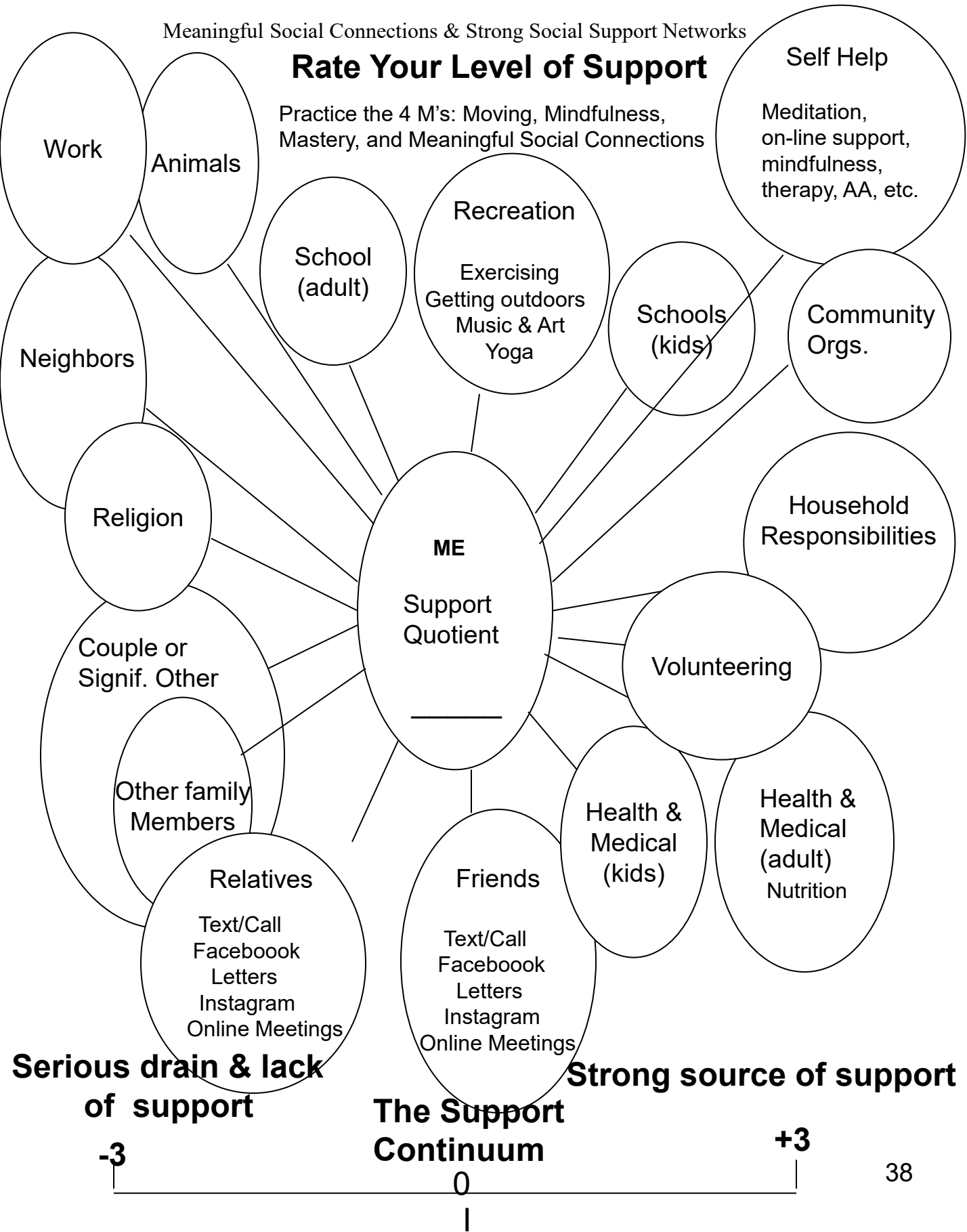
"Can we make a plan to handle this situation better next time?"

What do all happy people have in common?

Meaningful Social Connections & Strong Social Support Networks

Rate Your Level of Support

Practice the 4 M's: Moving, Mindfulness, Mastery, and Meaningful Social Connections

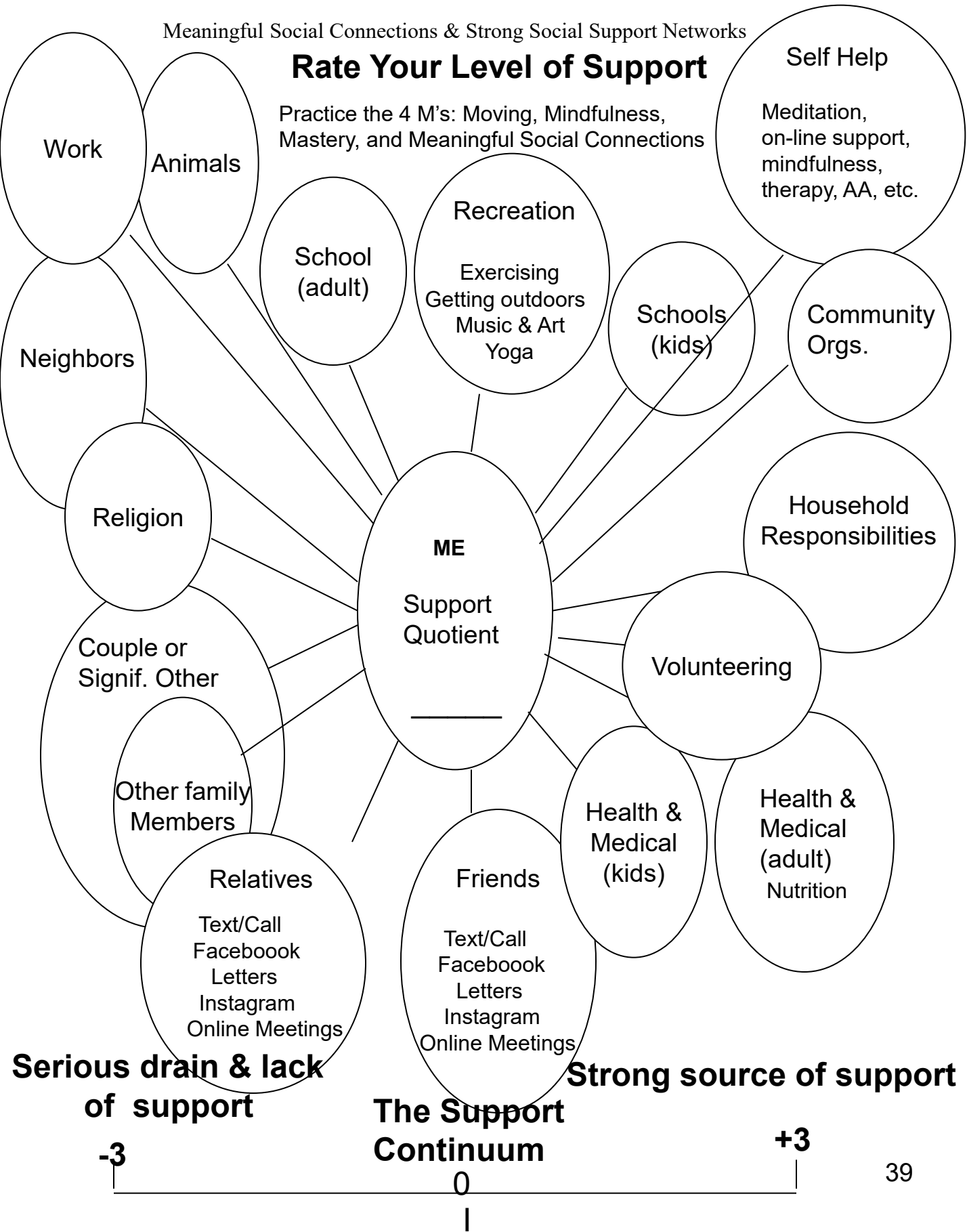


What do all happy people have in common?

Meaningful Social Connections & Strong Social Support Networks

Rate Your Level of Support

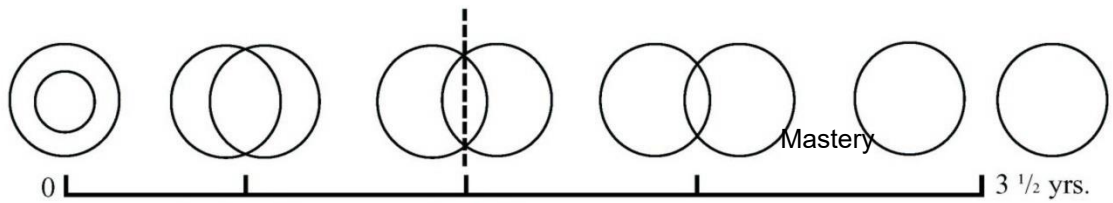
Practice the 4 M's: Moving, Mindfulness, Mastery, and Meaningful Social Connections



THE HOLDING ENVIRONMENT

"A Total Environment Provision"

TASK: "good enough parenting"



Object
Permanency

Sociopathic

Borderline
"Terrible Twos"
Separation-Individuation

Mastery

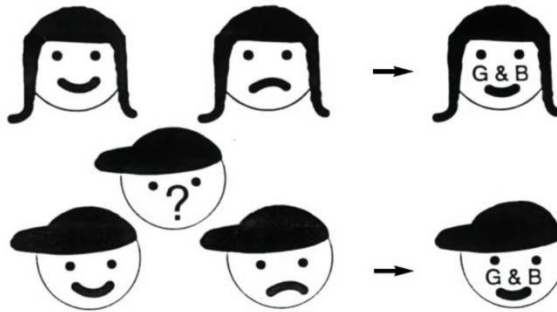
3 1/2 yrs.

OBJECT
CONSTANCY
cohesive self
sense of self

5 yrs.

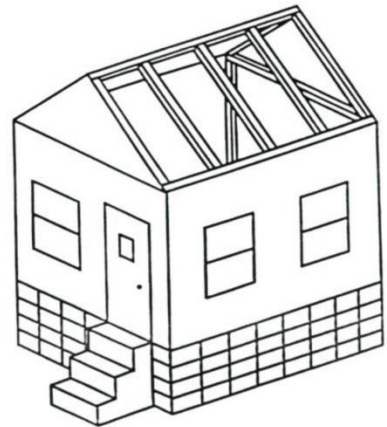
SPLITTING MECHANISM
Good mother/Bad mother

TASK:
merge the good
and bad introjects



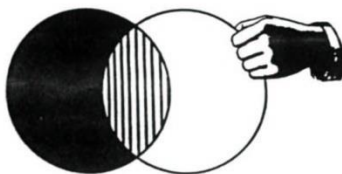
Social Accommodation
Social Subordination

Foundation



GOAL:
Filling in the emptiness

Effect of Separation



FILLERS VS. TALKERS
DEFICITS VS. CONFLICT



13-17 years old = Second Phase of Separation-Individuation
In other words: "I'm moving on. I'm separating from my parents. I'm thinking about:

- Who I am?
- Where I'm going?
- What I'll be?
- Where do I fit in?
- Changes in my body?
- Sexuality?

Splitting

Individuals whose developmental needs get skewed, primarily during the terrible two's period, tend to do a lot of *splitting*. In other words, they try to get the adults in their lives at odds with one another.

Splitting is a normal developmental occurrence that rears its head during the terrible twos, when a child is beginning to separate and individuate and doesn't want to be told what to do. When the emerging two year old hears "No" for the first time, it causes stress, prompting the child to split: "When mom's being good to me, that must be the good mom. When she's saying 'No,' that's the bad mom." If parents remain balanced (i.e. set reasonable limits but stay warm and loving) during the "splitting" (terrible two) period, the child emerges with a good sense of self and understands that mom (and dad) can be both good or bad, but is one cohesive person, and I am too.

Children and youth who tend to seriously split the important adults in their lives, often do so because it brings them back to the developmental stage they still need to master. If the adult caregivers refrain from splitting and stay balanced in their approach to such youth, treatment progresses.

Splitting is a stress reaction. When one feels stress, in the haste to relieve it, polarization occurs: Whatever is causing the stress is bad, and the individual is good (i.e. a split occurs)

The stress of working in an under-supported home or child care setting coupled with the developmental need for some at-risk children and youth to provoke disharmony among the staff members, often results in programs having a great deal of inter-personal and departmental splitting. Therefore, it is essential for professionals to avoid splitting at all costs:

Splitting stops a kid – and a school or program – from moving forward.

Student: My mother said you guys are too punitive.

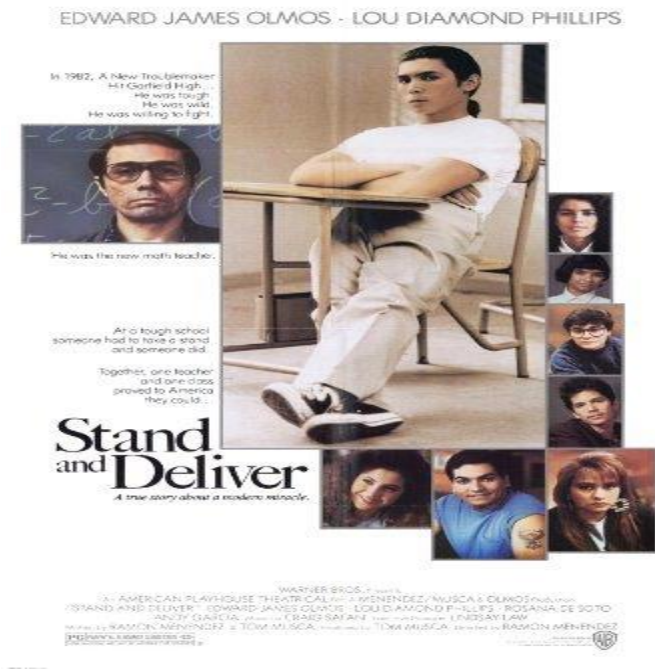
Teacher: I like your mom. She cares a lot about you. I'll give her a call to make sure we're on the same page.

Tip: Whenever you feel yourself being drawn into a "split" think:

"I'm not as good as I think and they're not as bad. Stress and a number of other factors is causing me to polarize (i.e. See things in black-and-white terms) Stop it. Find the middle ground. Communicate more. Don't be played like a puppet. Stay professional.

Every home, school or agency that guides at-risk kids and families should hang the following symbol throughout its setting:





Stand and Deliver

Your thoughts about this scene?

Whom do you support?

Whom do you disagree with?

Other thoughts?

Behavior Management: Understanding, Prevention, and Principles

View misbehavior as a message: “*Something is wrong. I need help.*” Try to *respond* instead of *react* to difficult behaviors. In other words, don’t say or do anything to a kid or group that you wouldn’t want said or done to yourself. Practice the *Golden Rule*

Use your observing ego (e.g. “It’s an injury and it will heal. Respond instead of React”)

Practice *pattern identification*. Note if a kid or group act out in a predictable manner (i.e. at the same time each day, over the same issues, etc.). Once a pattern is identified, investigate your (or the setting’s) role in contributing to the problem(s). What can you change, modify or practice? What new skills does the kid or group need to practice? How can you make the environment more *user-friendly*? Next, seek out the kid’s input. Really (and gently) explore possible reasons for the behavior(s). Mutually develop a plan to help in this area.

Constantly *practice* and *reinforce* the desired behaviors.

Behavior experts suggest that kids should hear four positive comments for every one negative. Catch them doing it right. Positive reinforcement is far more effective than discipline in promoting positive behavioral changes.

Use *consequences* instead of punishment. A consequence is *related* to an inappropriate behavior, a punishment is not. Consequences reinforce the values, such a safety & respect, of your setting/society. Consequences don’t teach – adults do.

Talk with kids about why discipline is necessary (reinforces values). Seek their input and suggestions. Offer choices regarding the nature of their discipline (e.g. Let a kid decide where he wants to take a break, or a task that will make up for the poor choice he/she made)

In general, the sooner a consequence follows a misbehavior the more effective it will be. Try and avoid delayed consequences except for serious behaviors.

Remember the most important factor, other than safety, when issuing consequences, is the *sanctity of the adult-youth relationship*.

Issue consequences that have a *high probability* of being accepted. Be careful about using traditional motivational approaches with non-motivational youth (A,B,C Baskets).

Establish a limit setting progression. In other words, everyone should know exactly what happens if a kid refuses to accept a limit.

Use *best possible* interventions but advocate for resources to enhance the learning climate as it relates to the emotional well-being of all concerned.

As mentioned, whenever possible, and for certainly for more serious behaviors, try and let the kid decide the appropriate consequence(s). Base decisions on *frequency* and *severity*. Practice progressive discipline.

Relationship-Based Limit Setting

Limit setting progresses in five clearly defined stages:

First:	Supportive
Second:	Logical Consequences
Third:	Physical Intervention
Fourth:	Processing
Five:	Reintegration

First Stage: Supportive Interventions include but are not limited to:

Verbal prompts, reminders, warnings (e.g. have youth recite the rule that might be compromised or broken. Better yet: Have the youth recite the rule and why the group established it.

Redirection, distraction, divide & conquering

Appropriate verbal dialogue (e.g. Compromise, negotiate, reframe, support and help, explore historically)

Hydraulically squeeze (i.e. Find a benign place for the youth (or group) to do the same behavior. Example: A teen who swears is allowed to swear one-on-one with an adult in a private location).

Humor (but not sarcasm).

Non-verbal interventions (e.g. Hand signals, lights out, circulating around the room, rhythmic clapping, standing on a table, lying on the floor, etc.)

“Love the object” If a youth is playing inappropriately with an object – take an interest in it. Follow-up later.

Use the power of a group

Channel (e.g. Have an energetic kid do something physical, have the entire group do some exercises, yoga, etc.)

Hold an impromptu meeting

Vicarious reinforcement (Praise another youth for the behavior you want the youth in question to display.)

Selectively ignore

In general, if two or three supportive interventions don't work in a relatively short time period, a logical consequence should follow if circumstances dictate.

Consequence options: Redoing, breaks, directed chats, proximity manipulation, restoration, grounding, suspensions, selective ignoring.

Most important factor to consider before setting a limit: Sanctity of the Relationship!

Strength-Based Tools Checklist

Unflinching Positive Attitude Examples: Greets students warmly and memorably, consistently displays a positive demeanor; talks optimistically about their future, <i>smiles at and call students by their name</i> etc. (from a student poll)																			
Reframing(decoding problem behavior) Understand>Reframe>Squeeze Example: (To a student who cheats) "I'm glad you wanted to get a good score. But you're smart enough to do it the right way."																			
Inspirational Metaphors: Poker, Melting Snowball, Roadblock, Train, Car ("We get better every Day.") Eagle Examples: "The harder you try, the higher you fly! Be the eagle!" "We're getting off track. I might need to...if...back on track, Jack"																			
Solution-Focused Questions: Explorative Historical, Repeating w/Qualifiers, When & Will, Scaling Questions, Identifying In-Between Change, Amplifying Change Using Speculation, Exception Questions, Changing Perspective Questions Examples: "I can't do this!" "You can't do it yet, Michael." "Have you ever been in this position before? How did you handle it?"																			
Provide Multiple Opportunities for Individual & Group Success & Trumpet Successes Examples: Dice roll doubles game, post cards home to celebrate achievement, losing on purpose, more games of chance, etc.																			
Create a "User-Friendly" Environment for Cognitively Inflexible Young People. Use the A,B,C, baskets Examples: Adjusting expectations, regarding behavior and output for for students with neurological challenges																			
Respect & Explore Cultural Diversity Examples: Posting photos of famous people from different cultures, bringing in culturally diverse food items.																			
The Millimeter Acknowledgement Examples: "Is it slightly possible that perhaps what you're telling me could, perhaps, maybe be a little less correct than what really happened? Just a little less correct?"																			
Honoring Hellos & Goodbyes Examples: Strong focus on greeting students and saying goodbye, properly preparing students for transitions, helping them deal with interpersonal losses (of staff and family members, etc.) Focus: Angry about loss/happy to have had this person in my life.																			
Gave Unexpected Praise to a student or group																			
Used Seeing is Believing vs. Believing is Seeing (Standard Behavior Man.) Examples: Do something fun with the students not because they earned it – but need it. Have lunch with a struggling student																			

Used relationship-based limit setting. Consequences instead of punishment.																
Practiced self-management strategies with the kids (e.g. wants and needs)																
One-Line Raps																
Repetitive Quizzing (The Stretch)																
Externalizing & Naming Positive and Negative Behaviors																
Humor (But Not Sarcasm)																
Incentive Plans that Reward/Celebrate Improvement. Creative Use of the Medium of Exchange (e.g. Billy Dollar)																
The Observing Ego (Respond instead of React): "It's an injury and it will heal." Lack of Support Leads to Punitive Actions																
Affect Scale																
Content/Message (When making requests, use "Please & Thank you. I, We vs. "You")																
Non-Threatening Non-Verbal Interventions Examples: Speak to students at eye level, 2 arms-length away, w/positive or neutral facial expression																
Core Verbal Techniques: Support & Help, Repeating and/or Para -- phrasing, Feelings Exploration, Sandwich Approach, Praise & Encouragement, Humor, Apologizing, Reasoning, Explorative (Psychological, Historical, Reflective, Plan Making)																
Being Family-Friendly Examples: Call or write notes home with good news; talk with students about – and tap - their parents' strengths –ask a parent for a recipe or gardening tip																