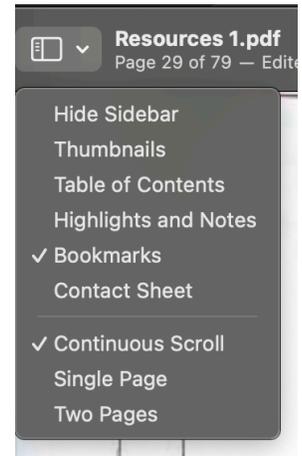# INDEX FOR RESOURCES 1

To find any of the below resources, click this button in the toolbar of the document and choose Thumbnails. They will open in the sidebar and each page is numbered.

Apple Orchard School

Coop Expectations
in preparation for entering school

Toilet trained:
1) Able to tell us when they need to go
2) Able to pull up and down their own pants
3) Able to wipe themselves

Self-help Skills:
1) Able to push, roll up their own sleeves
2) Able to push their feet into their shoe or boot
3) Able to push their hand into a mitten (punch) thumb in the thumb place

Language skills:
1) Able to express their needs ex. "I need a drink." "I want a turn."
2) Able to acknowledge when spoken to
3) Able to respond to their name
4) Able to answer a question asked of them
5) Ask a question rather than make a statement - "May I have a drink" rather than, "I'm thirsty" or, "May I have a jacket?" rather than, "I'm cold."

Following Class Expectations:
1) Know the boundaries and stay with the group
2) Be aware of their body in space
3) Learn how to position themselves so they do not lie down across another child's space
4) Use the space in front of them

Learning to Share:
1) Sharing materials - "May I have a turn?"
2) Share their time - transition to the next activity - five minute warning for transitions
3) Share their plan - "We can fill the bucket together." "We can both be the driver."

Calming Techniques:
1) "Let's take a breath"
2) "Do you need a hug?"
3)."Look what other friends are doing."

Apple Orchard School

Class I Expectations coming from the Coop Class

Toilet trained:
1) Be able to tell us when they need to go
2) Be able to pull up and down their own pants
3) Be able to wipe themselves

Classroom Expectations:
1) Be able to sit in a chair
2) Be able to sit at a table
3) Be able to sit and listen to a story or Circle activity for at least five minutes
4) Be receptive of teachers' directions and guidelines

Independent Skills:
1) Be able to feed themselves
2) Have an awareness of how to put on their own gear and want to do it themselves
3) Be able to sit unassisted
4) Be able to carry their own backpack
5) Be aware of the busyness on the farm
6) Have the stamina to walk from adventure site to adventure site

Social/ Emotional Skills:
1) Be able to communicate with peers and teachers
2) Be able to play with others
3) Have the desire to become autonomous and an independent thinker

Apple Orchard School

Class II Expectations

These are curriculum suggestions for exposure and goals to work toward during Class I, in preparation for Class II

CLASSROOM COMMUNITY

- *Why should I participate in clean up?*
- *What is a group plan? Why do I follow it?*

ONE-STEP ROUTINES

- *Can I stow away my own belongings? Can I be responsible for my own water bottle? etc.*

CIRCLE TIME PARTICIPATION

- *How should my actions (body & voice) inside and outside the classroom differ?*
- *Build up endurance/ attention span throughout year*

PROPER SCISSOR & WRITING UTENSIL GRIP

- *How do I hold scissors? What does a pincer grip look/ feel like?*

LITERACY

- *Familiarity with At Least First Letter in their Name (EoY Goal: Identify name)*
- *Read Alouds: Can I make predictions? Sequence a familiar story? Comprehension?*

MATHEMATICAL THINKING

Sorting and organizing materials... building towards patterning

- *How can items be sorted? What are similarities and differences?*

SCIENTIFIC THINKING

- *What does questioning, predicting, experimenting, and drawing conclusions sound like?*

Other things that are great to expose Class I children to...

- Sensory play!
- Discover and share about self (**myself**, my family, my community)
- Conversational practice: I speak, you listen; you speak, I listen (question of the day, turn & talk)

Apple Orchard School

Class III Expectations

Curriculum suggestions for exposure and goals
to work toward in Class II in preparation for Class III

Able to recognize their printed name

Able to use scissors correctly

Able to identify and describe 2D shapes (square, circle, triangle, rectangle)

Able to recognize, name, and count numbers 0-10

Able to use objects to model addition (putting together) and subtraction (taking apart) up to five

Able to identify and describe positions of objects (above, below, beside, inside)

Able to identify some letters of the alphabet (uppercase)

Able to use an age-appropriate pencil grip

Able to recognize and name the colors of the rainbow

Knows simple rhyming words

Able to attend for Morning Meeting and Circle

Able to be responsible for their belongings

Able to prepare themselves for the outside

Teach the 5 Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Competencies

Brenda Iasevoli

March 11, 2022

Social and emotional learning (SEL) equips young people with the tools they need for success in school and for leading healthy, purposeful lives.

"We know social and emotional competence can impact attendance, academic performance, and graduation rates," says Melissa Schlinger, vice president of programs and practice at CASEL. "Prioritizing SEL is critically important if we want to promote health and well-being as well as a compassionate, more just society."

Research has shown that the effects of high-quality SEL can last for at least six months and up to 18 years. To get these benefits, students need opportunities to practice SEL skills throughout the school day, in academic work and personal interactions, in and outside of the classroom. Start with an understanding of the 5 SEL competencies developed by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). Then, try the activities below with your class.

A Look at CASEL's SEL Competencies

The five social-emotional learning competencies developed by CASEL are crucial to students' learning and growth. The chart below, known as the "CASEL wheel," provides a quick breakdown.

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Self-Awareness: Recognizing one's emotions and their effect on behavior

Self-Management: Regulating emotions, thoughts, and behaviors to achieve goals

Responsible Decision-Making: Making good choices and evaluating consequences

Relationship Skills: Developing positive relationships; resolving conflicts constructively

Social Awareness: Empathizing with others and understanding their perspectives, including those from diverse backgrounds

Teach CASEL's SEL Competencies

Now let's dig a little deeper into each of the CASEL core competencies. We've also included activities that will help students develop each one. For more ways to develop these competencies in your students, check out our archive of SEL resources and articles. And to ensure you are meeting the needs of all learners in your classroom, you should also explore approaches to inclusive SEL for students with disabilities and English language learners.

Competency 1: Self-Awareness

Students who are self-aware understand themselves, their emotions, their cultural identity, and have a healthy sense of their own capabilities.

Develop Self-Awareness: One way for students to develop self-awareness is to reflect on an experience (losing a game, arguing with a friend, struggling with a math problem) and how it made them feel. Once they've identified their feelings, they can start to deal with them. Educators and caregivers can model this process. They might share their own experience and how they're working through their feelings about it. For example, on a particularly taxing day, a teacher might say, "It feels like everyone is talking loudly today and all at once. I'm going to stop and take a deep breath."

Students of all ages can benefit from identifying their emotions, but they may not always have the words. An emotion wheel highlighting a range of emotions—from angry to apathetic, to jealous or joyful—can help. Support students who are learning English with a game to familiarize them with the words on the wheel. Have students look up the unfamiliar words. Then have them act out an emotion or draw a picture of it, challenging classmates to guess which emotion is being conveyed.

Use the wheel to do check-ins throughout the day. Students can choose the emotion that best describes how they feel, then reflect on why they're feeling that way in a journal entry or with a classmate. When students identify a negative emotion, they should have a range of strategies (outlined in the "self-management" section below) for dealing with it.

Competency 2: Self-Management

How students regulate emotion is self-management. Good self-managers know how to behave in various situations. They also know how to set goals and work toward them.

Develop Self-Management: Create a calming space in the classroom for students to step away, take a breath and relax when they are anxious or angry, or just need time to themselves. Post a list of self-management techniques in the space that you have practiced with students, such as

taking deep belly breaths, counting to 10, drawing a picture of how they feel, or engaging in positive self-talk.

When you see students using self-management strategies like taking a breath or simply removing themselves from a stressful situation, acknowledge them for it. You might say something like, "I noticed how excited you were to share your ideas during our class discussion, and how you took a deep breath and waited your turn. How did that feel?"

Another part of self-management is setting goals. Have students brainstorm a list of the things they do well. Ask: How does it feel to be good at _____? What steps did you take to get good at _____? Did you begin by setting a goal? Next, have students identify two things they'd like to become better at. One should be a personal goal, and the other academic. Have them write the steps that they will take to achieve each goal. Our free graphic organizers include a cluster map that you can provide to students for brainstorming and a step-by-step chart for writing the steps they will take to achieve their goals. Model this process for younger students by setting whole-class goals.

Competency 3: Responsible Decision-Making

Students who make responsible decisions can analyze a situation, understand its ethical implications, and evaluate the consequences: How will other people react to my decision to do x? These students try to understand a problem from every angle and don't make impulsive decisions.

Develop Responsible Decision-Making: Adults can support kids in making responsible decisions, but the goal is to have students make decisions and deal with the consequences on their own. Let's say one student hurts another's feelings. Start a discussion by asking: Why did you make that choice? Was that the best choice? How did your choice make others feel? What could you have done differently? How can you make things right?

When a student makes a poor choice, it's better to reflect on the choice than to punish them by taking away recess or giving them a time out. The discussion allows them to understand what happened. Students need time to analyze the situation and figure out how to repair the damage. This way, they internalize the lesson, rather than repeat the same mistake or simply stew in their anger.

Competency 4: Relationship Skills

Will students succeed in school, and later, in the workforce? Will they become leaders? Will they have a sense of fulfillment? The answers to these questions lie in students' ability to build positive relationships. Students who can communicate clearly, work well with others, and settle conflicts, are forging a path to future success.

Develop Relationship Skills: Students need to work in pairs, small groups, and large groups. This gives them ample opportunity to learn how to settle disagreements and work toward a common goal. They'll learn how to share opinions, while being respectful of other perspectives. They may even get a chance to lead a project.

Before having students do group work, there should be a discussion of problems that could arise: What if some students are contributing more than others? What if someone is disruptive, or not participating at all? What roles— notetaker, timekeeper, group leader, or speaker—do we need to fulfill as part of this group?
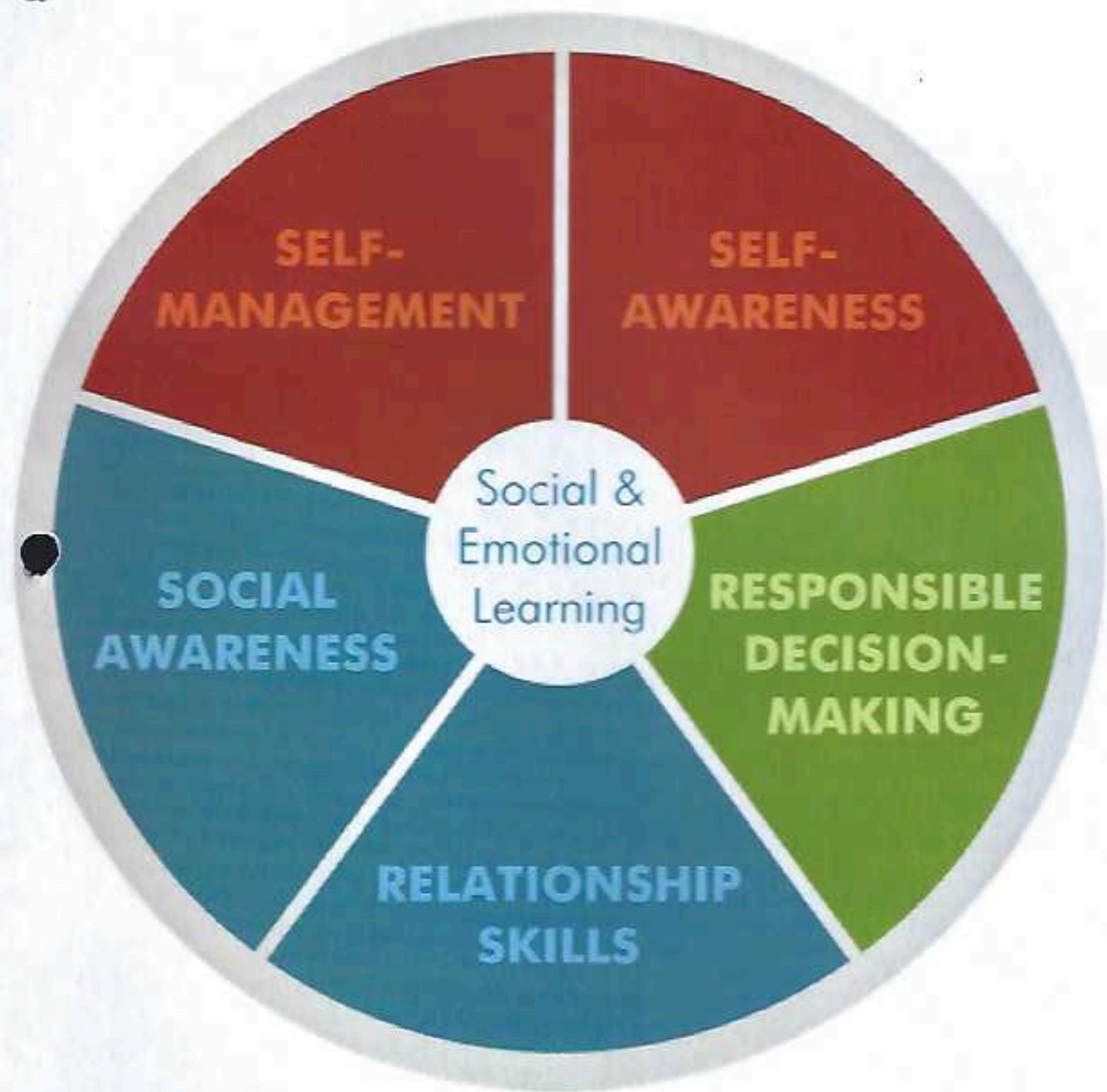
Competency 5: Social Awareness

Social awareness is the ability to understand others and how they feel. This involves recognizing emotions and reading body language. It also involves putting yourself in someone else's shoes and seeing a situation from their perspective. Students who can empathize with others from backgrounds that are different from their own will build stronger relationships with classmates and future co-workers.

Develop Social Awareness: In the classroom, students should have opportunities to consider perspectives other than their own. Start with characters in a book: What are they feeling right now? What might they do next? How would you feel in that situation? Challenge students act out a pivotal moment in a book, when a character has made an important decision. As the audience, the class can ask questions including, Why did you make that choice? Do you think it was the right choice? Why or why not? Remind the student "actors" to answer from the character's perspective.

Teachers can model empathy by talking over disagreements and listening to students' feelings without making judgments: "It sounds like you're feeling..." Caregivers might help elderly neighbors and encourage kids to do the same, whether it's carrying groceries or helping with yard work.

Students should also have opportunities to practice empathy. Take on a service project as a class. You might create cards for seniors in a local nursing home, or collect items for donation to a soup kitchen or homeless shelter. For more ideas, check out these volunteering ideas for students. Afterward, discuss with students how they feel about the project and why it's important to help others.

SELF-MANAGEMENT

SELF-AWARENESS

Social & Emotional Learning

SOCIAL AWARENESS

RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING

RELATIONSHIP SKILLS

Social & Emotional Learning

Self-Management
Managing emotions and behaviors to acheive one's goals

Self-Awareness
Recognizing one's emotions and values as well as one's strengths and challenges

Responsible Decision-Making
Making ethical, constructive choices about personal and social behavior

Relationship Skills
Forming positive relationships, working in teams, dealing effectively with conflict

Social Awareness
Showing understanding and empathy for others

The Feeling Wheel

Developed by Dr. Gloria Willcox
PO Box 48363
St. Petersburg FL 33743

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL) COMPETENCIES

SELF-AWARENESS

The ability to accurately recognize one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior. The ability to accurately assess one's strengths and limitations, with a well-grounded sense of confidence, optimism, and a "growth mindset."

- ◊ IDENTIFYING EMOTIONS
- ◊ ACCURATE SELF-PERCEPTION
- ◊ RECOGNIZING STRENGTHS
- ◊ SELF-CONFIDENCE
- ◊ SELF-EFFICACY

SELF-MANAGEMENT

The ability to successfully regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations — effectively managing stress, controlling impulses, and motivating oneself. The ability to set and work toward personal and academic goals.

- ◊ IMPULSE CONTROL
- ◊ STRESS MANAGEMENT
- ◊ SELF-DISCIPLINE
- ◊ SELF-MOTIVATION
- ◊ GOAL SETTING
- ◊ ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS

SOCIAL AWARENESS

The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures. The ability to understand social and ethical norms for behavior and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.

- ◊ PERSPECTIVE-TAKING
- ◊ EMPATHY
- ◊ APPRECIATING DIVERSITY
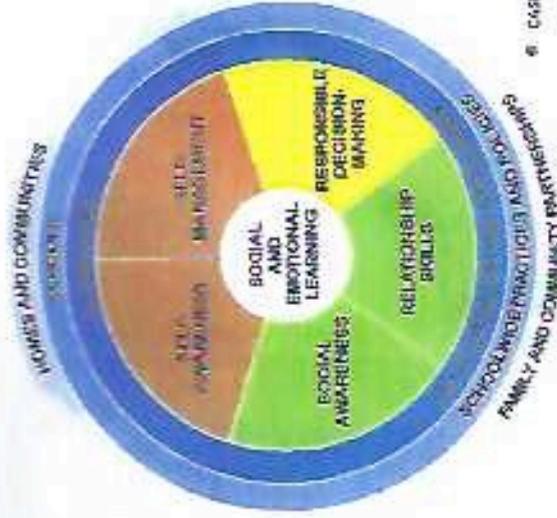- ◊ RESPECT FOR OTHERS

RELATIONSHIP SKILLS

The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. The ability to communicate clearly, listen well, cooperate with others, resist inappropriate social pressure, negotiate conflict constructively, and seek and offer help when needed.

- ◊ COMMUNICATION
- ◊ SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT
- ◊ RELATIONSHIP BUILDING
- ◊ TEAMWORK

RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING

The ability to make constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety concerns, and social norms. The realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and a consideration of the well-being of oneself and others.

- ◊ IDENTIFYING PROBLEMS
- ◊ ANALYZING SITUATIONS
- ◊ SOLVING PROBLEMS
- ◊ EVALUATING
- ◊ REFLECTING
- ◊ ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITY

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING — SELF-AWARENESS, SELF-MANAGEMENT, RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING, RELATIONSHIP SKILLS, SOCIAL AWARENESS — SCHOOLS, WORKS AND COMMUNITIES, SCHOOL/WIDE PRACTICES AND POLICIES, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

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THE EMOTIONAL CUP

Imagine that every child has a cup that needs to be filled -- with affection, love, security, and attention. Some seem to have a full cup most of the time, or know good ways to get a refill. But most children get a little nervous when their cup gets near empty.

Some ways that children deal with having an empty cup:

- steal from other people's cups
- misbehave to get your attention and show that they need a refill
- seem to have bottomless cups, or need constant 'topping off'
- can't sit still for refills or actively refuse them
- bounce off the walls when they approach 'empty'
- think they have to fight or compete for every refill

What fills a child's cup:

- play
- friendship
- one-on-one time
- love and affection
- connection
- succeeding
- doing what they love to do or what they choose to do
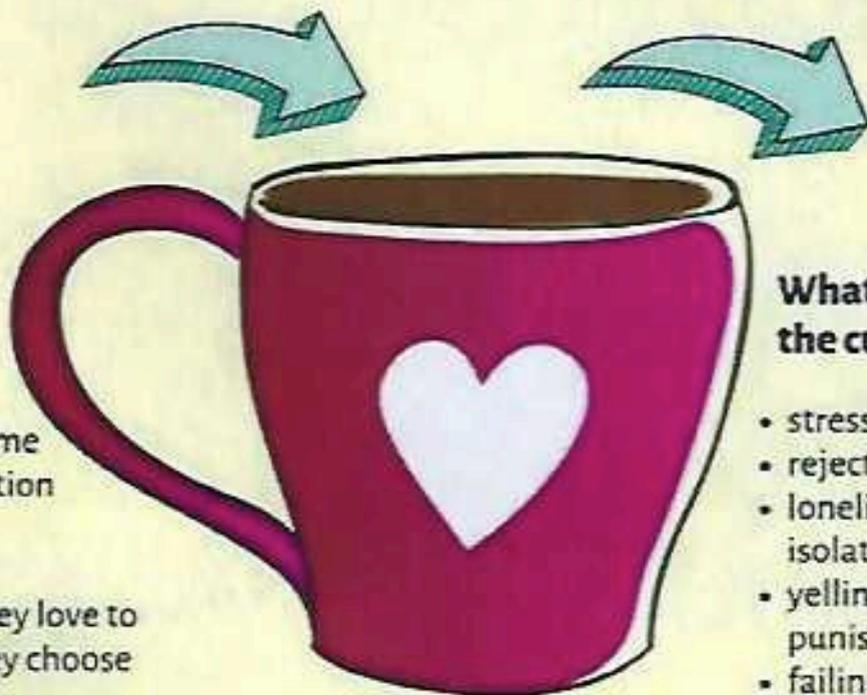
What empties the cup:

- stress and strain
- rejection by peers
- loneliness and isolation
- yelling and punishment
- failing
- fatigue
- doing what they're forced to do or they hate to do

Dr. Greene's CPS View:

> Guiding Philosophy: "Children do well if they can".
> Explanation: Children's difficult behavior is the byproduct of a learning disability in the domains of flexibility, adaptability, and frustration tolerance.
> Goal of treatment: Teach children lacking cognitive and emotional skills.
> Tools of Treatment: Teach children and adults how to work towards mutually satisfactory solutions to problems underlying difficult behavior.
> Emphasis: Proactive focus on solving and preventing problems before they occur.

How Do These Children Get This Way?

There are differing factors that may underlie the lack of skills with which they present. For some children it is purely developmental, for some it is more complex with neurological or neurobiochemical underpinnings as well.

Dr. Greene and Dr. Ablon have identified 5 major pathways (Cognitive Skill Areas) that if lacking frequently result in explosive behavior:

The Five Major Pathways:

1. **Executive Function Skills**
2. **Language Skills**
3. **Emotional Regulation Skills**
4. **Social Skills**
5. **Cognitive Flexibility Skills**

EXECUTIVE SKILLS:

These are the thinking skills, associated with the frontal lobe of the brain. They enable one to do the clear, organized, reflective thinking in the midst of frustration that is crucial for solving problems in an adaptive (non-impulsive) manner. The executive skills include:

- shifting cognitive set (the ability to shift gears, to make transitions in activities and thinking smoothly)
- organization and planning, and working memory (allow you to use hindsight and forethought to solve problems in a systematic fashion)
- separation of affect (the ability to put feelings on the shelf to get on with the clear thinking needed to solve problems)

When lacking, these children will have difficulty shifting from one activity to another. They will have difficulty anticipating problems. In the face of frustration, they will have difficulty staying calm enough to think clearly and will have difficulty sorting through different solutions to organize a coherent plan of action.

LANGUAGE SKILLS:

Language skills are incredibly crucial as it relates to one's ability be flexible and deal with frustration. Problem solving is essentially a linguistic skill. Why? Most of the thinking and communicating that we do involves language. Language skills set the stage for labeling, categorizing, communicating and managing (metacognitive strategies) our emotions. They also kick-start problem solving by allowing us to label and communicate the problem, and do the necessary verbal give and take.

Children with difficulty in this domain may get hung up at any point. They may not have a rudimentary vocabulary for labeling their emotions (happy, sad, frustrated), may not be able to articulate their concerns ("I am hungry/tired", "I am in the middle of something") and may not have a problem solving vocabulary ("I need help"). When faced with frustration, or when trying to process situations later with the child, children lacking in this domain can often be heard saying such things as: "shut-up", "get away" , "I don't know", "I don't want to talk about it" or they may swear.

EMOTION REGULATION SKILLS:

This refers to the cognitive skills one uses to control, modulate and regulate emotions, outside of the context of frustration. It is important to note that this is different from separation of affect (our ability to put feelings aside so we can think clearly in the midst of frustration).

What do we see with children who have difficulty in this domain: chronic grouchiness, irritability, fatigue, anxiety and agitation. These chronic states make dealing with frustration difficult. These children can often find the energy to look good in certain situations, only to fall apart later.

COGNITIVE FLEXIBILITY SKILLS:

Children who have difficulty in this area are wired in rigid, black and white ways. They are literal and concrete in their thinking and see things as their way or the highway. They often adhere to predictable routines/rigid/inflexible rules in order to feel ok. They become totally lost when things don't go just as they expected or the way they went the last time. Although they may be very bright verbally, they have poor skills when it comes to handling the "grays" of the world.

Children who demonstrate these difficulties typically have great difficulty in the social arena. There is no area that requires the ability to see the "gray" more than social situations.

SOCIAL SKILLS:

There are two types of social skill deficits: cognitive deficiencies and cognitive distortions. What you will often see with cognitive deficiencies is poor perspective taking and appreciation of how one's behavior affects others, poor appreciation of social nuances, and poor social repertoires (ability to start a conversation, ability to enter a group). Cognitive distortions are typically based in reality, can often be seen as overgeneralizations or misconstruing of events.

What Is Collaborative Problem Solving (CPS)?

The **Collaborative Problem Solving Approach (CPS)**, originated by Dr. Ross Greene, and described in his book **The Explosive Child**, is a practical alternative approach for helping behaviorally challenging children. One clue about how it is different from standard approaches lies in the word "collaborative". Most standard approaches involve applying techniques (rewards and punishments) to these children. The word collaborative indicates that this approach is about utilizing new tools together with your child. The CPS approach is a tool for teaching lacking skills. Just as with a reading disability it will take time to make changes.

The CPS Approach Is Based On Three Critical Points:

THAT *CHILDREN* DO WELL IF THEY CAN

* These children are not choosing to be explosive and difficult. The outbursts are not intentional or planned, are not a way to manipulate adults or get attention. No child would want to feel this way. Listen to the child afterwards, and you will often hear how sorry he/she is for having lost control. Some children may have no recollection of what is was all about. Their outbursts are fueled by lagging thinking (cognitive) skills needed for coping with frustration.
* These children require a careful assessment to determine (a) the nature of their difficulties (pathways), (b) the factors that contribute to their overall level of frustration, and (c) the situations, times and people with which they have the most difficulty (triggers).
* They require an approach that is based upon a shared understanding of these difficulties.

THAT YOUR EXPLANATION SHOULD GUIDE YOUR INTERVENTION

* If a lack of motivation is not the problem, then attempts to motivate these children to control their tempers (through rewards and punishments) makes little sense and may actually make things worse. Since a lack of skills is the problem, we need to create an environment and interventions that provide opportunities to help the child expand/catch up on their skills.
* These children respond best if they view adults as helpers who: understand their difficulties, recognize the need to establish parenting priorities, and are ready to help guide them through frustrating situations.

THAT WE NEED TO FOCUS OUR EFFORTS ON THE FRONT-END

- We can provide the best help for these children if we focus our efforts before they become overwhelmed with frustration on solving and preventing problems rather than during or after a meltdown.

The CPS Approach Has Three Goals:

1. Allow adults to pursue expectations
2. Teach lacking thinking (cognitive) skills
3. Reduce meltdowns*

*When a child enters into a meltdown they lose the ability to think clearly, no learning occurs. There is no evidence to indicate that having meltdowns will build lacking skills. Since motivation is not the key, and also that these kids typically lack the ability to remember the consequences of a prior event when in the midst of frustration, it is unlikely to be of help them to them in the future.

The CPS Approach Has Three Ingredients:

1. **Understanding the pathways** (skill deficits) underlying the explosive behavior, **factors which add to overall level of frustration**, and typical situations where meltdowns are most likely to occur (**triggers- or problems yet to be solved**) This may raise need for further assessments, and a comprehensive approach that includes CPS, as well as: medication, OT, social skills, organizational skills training, speech and language therapy....
2. **Decide which Plan will be used to handle specific problems/unmet expectations.** Use Front-end Mantra: "Should I use Plan A, B, or C to handle this problem/unmet expectation?"
3. **Executing Plan B** successfully so as to teach lacking skills.

The Plans Framework: (formerly called The Baskets Framework)

There are and always have been only three ways for adults to resolve problems with kids. Adults can impose their will, let the child have his way, or work it out. **The Plans framework**, renames these **Plans A,B,C** (formerly Baskets A,B,C) and provides a method for establishing adult priorities, in other words it is a tool to help caregivers make decisions about how you wish to address problems or unmet expectations with the behaviorally challenging child.

- **Plan A: (A=Adult)** refers to handling a problem/unmet expectation by imposing your will. Your concern is the only one on the table. Using **Plan A** greatly heightens the likelihood of a meltdown. You know that you are using **Plan A** when what comes out of your mouth in response to a problem/unmet expectation is: **"No," "You must", "You can't", "In five minutes you will"**, or the threat or imposition of consequences. What you are likely to say afterwards would be: **"He did what I said"**. **Plan A helps adults ensure safety.**
- **Plan B: (B=Both)** is the **Collaborative Problem Solving Plan.** Using **Plan B** does not generally cause meltdowns. Using **Plan B**, your role (at least initially) is as surrogate frontal lobe (doing what the child can't yet do). You and the child are engaged in a process by which you will come up with mutually satisfactory solutions to problems (**address triggers**) or unmet expectations. Both your concern and the child's concern will be on the table. **It is also using Plan B, where you will help promote the communication and problem solving skills (address the pathways) that the child needs to be more flexible and handle frustrations more adaptively.** You know you are using **Plan B** when what comes out of your mouth in response to a problem/unmet expectation is: **"Let's work it out."** Afterwards, you are likely to say: **"We worked it out"**.
- **Plan C: (C=Child)** is where the adult is eliminating or reducing the problem expectation. Only the child's concern is considered. Using **Plan C** does not cause meltdowns. Using **Plan C helps adults eliminate unnecessary demands, thereby reducing a child's global level of frustration and enabling him or her to deal more successfully with the more critical remaining demands.** You know that you are using **Plan C** if nothing comes out of your mouth in response to an unmet expectation/problem, except maybe: **"Okay"** or **"Oh"**. Later you might say: **"I didn't bring it up"**.

It is important to note that the same problem can be handled using any of the plans. Many adults rely on just **Plan A** and **Plan C** to resolve problems. Dr. Greene suggests that you will want to try and use **Plan B** much of the time. If you are just using **Plan A and C** you are really just **"picking your battles"** and missing an opportunity to help your child develop the lacking skills.

Goals Achieved By Using Each Plan:

	Pursue Expectations	*Reduce Meltdowns*	*Teach Skills*
• **Plan A**	yes	no	no
• **Plan C**	no	yes	no
• **Plan B**	yes	yes	yes

This chart emphasizes that adults can pursue their expectations using both **Plan A** and **B**. In other words, **Plan B**, just like **Plan A** allows adults to set limits. The adult is not "giving in", not saying "yes", just won't be imposing their will. By engaging the child using **Plan B**, the adult will be letting the child know that their concerns are important, too and will be teaching lacking skills (the ability to identify and express concerns, the ability to take others concerns into account, the ability to generate possible solutions to create win-win situations...)

Implementing Plan B - The Three Steps:

It is fairly simple to understand the **Plans Framework**. However, it often takes caregivers time to learn how to execute **Plan B**, well and to feel comfortable doing it. Remember though, that unlike the effort involved in "cleaning-up" after a meltdown when using **Plan B** you will have something to show for your effort. You will be helping the child in the long run, by building lacking skills.

Plan B consists of **three** steps: **Empathy** (**+Reassurance**), **Define the Problem**, and **Invitation**. (Note: Dr. Greene and Ablon have changed the way they teach **Plan B** since the 2nd book publication was published. It was previously described as having two steps: (Empathy and Invitation).

> • **Empathy**, which is communicated through **reflective listening** or the utterance of a simple, *"I hear you"*, accomplishes two missions: (1) it helps keep the child calm and (2) it ensures that the child's concern is "on the table." If empathy is insufficient for keeping a child calm as you're initiating **Plan B**, it may be useful to add some **reassurance** (in other words, reassuring the child that you're not using **Plan A**). This is usually accomplished with a statement such as, *"I'm not saying 'No"*. Often children will put their solution on the table rather than their concern (i.e.: *"I want pizza"*, rather than *"I am hungry"*). Getting the concern identified can often be accomplished with a statement, such as, *"What's up"*.
> • **Problem Definition** (Note: This step has been added since the book publication) is where the adult concern finds its way onto the table. The definition of a "problem" is simply a situation in which adult and child concerns have yet to be reconciled.
> • **Invitation** is where you're inviting the child to work collaboratively toward a mutually satisfactory resolution of the two concerns (**"let's see if we can solve that problem...let's work it out."**)

Thus, if a child were to verbalize, *"I don't want to go to bed right now,"* here's how the three steps of **Basket B** would sound:

- **Empathy:** *"You don't want to go to bed right now..."* (note: this is a solution, not a concern). *"What's Up?"* (need to identify concern). .Child responds: *"I want to watch the end of this t.v. show!* (**Reassurance**): *"I am not saying you can't "*.
- **Problem Definition:** *"I am concerned about your getting up for school in the morning"*.
- **Invitation:** *"Let's think about how we can work that out."* Give the child the first opportunity to propose a solution. If unable, you can then offer some possible solutions.

What if the child doesn't know what their concern is? Based on your understanding of situations that your child is often exploding over, you can often make educated guesses to assist the child in figuring it out. What if the child cannot (appropriately) articulate his concerns. He/she can be taught vocabulary to use to express his specific concern, (*"The seam on the sock bothers me"* rather than *"This sock stinks"*) or taught a more general set of phrases that can be applied across many situations, i.e.: *"Give me a minute"*, *"This isn't going how I thought it would"*, *"I can't talk about it right now"*....

What if the child doesn't seem to have any idea where to start when it comes to thinking of solutions? You can teach a solutions framework. Most solutions tend to fall into one of three categories: *ask for help, meet halfway/give a little,* or *do it a different way*.

What if the child's solution is not something you can agree with? Remember, solutions are supposed to be mutually satisfactory. Let the child know that her idea is a good one–but explain to him/her that it might make them happy, but wouldn't address your concern. Re-invite them to find a solution where everyone's concerns are taken into account.

What if the child's solution is not something you think they can realistically do at this point? Your job as surrogate frontal lobe is to guide them towards solutions that are within reach of their capabilities. You might say to the child: "Wow that sounds like a great idea(shutting off the tv in 5 minutes), and I know that you would LIKE to be able to do that for me, but I have never seen you be able to do that before. Lets see if we can think of another way of solving the problem that is more doable.

Proactive vs. Emergency Plan B:

Dr. Greene now also differentiates between "**Emergency Plan B**" and "**Proactive Plan B.**" He has found that given a thorough understanding of the child (an essential aspect of the **CPS** approach) most meltdowns/explosions are highly predictable. By using "**Proactive Plan B**", we can collaborate with the child to solve the problem when they are calm.

What happens if when the time comes around the child "forgets" your previously agreed upon solution? You can always go back and use **Emergency Plan B.** It may be that you agreed upon a solution that just wasn't doable (yet) by the child.

Common Difficulties Executing Plan B:

- You may be waiting until things get heated up and then applying **Emergency Plan B**. In most families/classrooms, the same problems are causing meltdowns on a daily basis, which means these problems are highly predictable. Since the problems are predictable, you'll be much better off trying to resolve them using **Proactive Plan B**, well before things get heated up. You must act as a surrogate lobe- weeding out solutions that won't work/child can't do yet. Even if child can't do what was agreed upon-in better place to do Plan B again-than if hadn't approached at all yet.
- You may not really be using **Plan B**...in fact, if a meltdown was the end result, there's an outstanding chance you were using **Plan A**. **Plan A** with explanations-is still **A**. Time to go back and review the three entry steps for using **Plan B** (empathy, define the problem, invitation) – did you really use the three steps and in the correct order?
- If your child is accustomed to your using **Plan A**, there's a good chance it's going to take a while before they become accustomed to your using **Plan B**. In other words, they may still get heated up in your early attempts to use **Plan B** because they're just accustomed to getting heated up whenever is difficult problem is broached. Once they begin to trust that you're really doing things differently now, the calming effects of **Plan B** should take hold.
- You and/or your child may be putting solutions on the table rather than concerns. The problem won't be solved unless two very specific concerns are on the table.
- Young children will typically need our help at least initially to generate possible solutions. It is important though that we remember though that it needs to be a collaborative process.

Conclusion

We hope is that you have a better sense of why it is crucial to understand the nature of a child's difficulties and why an approach aimed solely at motivation may not be well suited to these children.

We hope that you begin to ask new questions as you think about these children. Instead of asking yourself, "What is it going to take to motivate this child to behave differently?' that instead you begin to ask, "Why is this so hard for this child"?, " What 's getting in his way"?, "How can I help"?

Resources

1. *Foundation for Children with Behavioral Challenges:* Provides education, resources and support for caregivers of children with behavioral challenges. http://www.fcbcsupport.org
2. *Center for Collaborative Problem Solving:* Includes information about the work of Dr. Ross Greene, including research, upcoming workshops, and the Collaborative Problem Solving Institute. http://www.ccps.info

COLLABORATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING
PATHWAYS INVENTORY
Ross W. Greene, Ph.D

PATHWAYS

Executive Skills
_____ Difficulty handling transitions, shifting from one mindset or task to another, adapting to new circumstances or rules
_____ Poor sense of time/difficulty doing things in a logical prescribed order
_____ Disorganization/difficulty staying on topic, sorting through thoughts, or keeping track of things
_____ Difficulty considering the likely outcomes or consequences of actions (impulsive)
_____ Difficulty considering a range of solutions to a problem
_____ Difficulty staying calm enough to think rationally

Language Processing Skills
_____ Often has difficulty expressing thoughts, needs or concerns in words
_____ Often appears not to have understood what was said
_____ Long delays before responding to questions
_____ Difficulty knowing or saying how he/she feels

Emotion Regulation Skills
_____ Cranky, grouchy, grumpy, irritable (outside the context of frustration)
_____ Sad, fatigued, tired, low energy
_____ Anxious, nervous, worried, fearful

Cognitive Flexibility Skills
_____ Concrete, black-and-white, thinker; often takes things literally
_____ Insistence on sticking with rules, routines, original plan
_____ Does poorly in circumstances of unpredictability, ambiguity, uncertainty
_____ Difficulty shifting from original idea or solution; possibly preseverative or obsessive
_____ Difficulty appreciating another person's perspective or point-of-view
_____ Doesn't take into account situational factors that would suggest the need to adjust a plan of action

Social Skills
_____ Difficulty attending to or misreading of social cues/poor perception of social nuances/difficulty recognizing nonverbal social cues
_____ Inaccurate interpretations/cognitive distortions or biases (e.g., "It's not fair," "I'm stupid," "Everyone's out to get me"
_____ Lacks basic social skills (how to start a conversation, how to enter a group, how to connect with people)
_____ Seeks the attention of others in inappropriate ways; seems to lack the skills to seek attention in an adaptive fashion
_____ Seems unaware of how behavior is affecting other people; is surprised by others' response to his/her behavior
_____ Lacks empathy; appears not to care about how behavior is affecting others or their reactions
_____ Poor sense of how he/she is coming across or being perceived by others
_____ Inaccurate self-perception

TRIGGERS

SUGGESTIONS FOR USING THE CPS PATHWAYS INVENTORY

This **CPS Pathways Inventory** is an ideal tool for organizing information about your child. It is also an important first step to implementing the **CPS** approach (identifying the lagging thinking skills contributing to the child's difficulties in the domains of flexibility, frustration tolerance and problem solving), provides an excellent means for sharing information about your child with other caregivers, and provides a tool for reviewing the child's progress.

Begin by filling in the Common Triggers section at the bottom of the form. The common triggers are problems yet to be solved. These are the situations that arise with your child that frequently precipitate a meltdown (examples: your child having to stop an activity to do an errand or go to bed, when plans for the day change, tactile sensitivities, etc.).

You can then look through this list of situations for patterns. This will provide clues as to the pathways involved and the specific lacking skills that need training. For example if across multiple situations on multiple days you notice that your child struggles whenever he/she is asked to stop what they are doing to engage in another activity, it is likely that the child demonstrates difficulty shifting from one mindset/task to another. Check marks can be placed next to the corresponding lacking skills in the Pathways section of the form.

Caregivers can then select one trigger at a time to work on using **Proactive Plan B.** The goal will be to come up with a durable solution to each problem/trigger through use of a proactive collaborative process (**Plan B**) and to then move on to the next. In this way, you will not only be able to reduce the number of meltdowns and get your expectations met, but will be engaged in a process where you will be teaching lacking thinking skills and enhancing the child's capacities for flexibility, frustration tolerance, communication and self-regulation.

COMMUNITIES

FAMLIES & CAREGIVERS

SCHOOLS

CLASSROOMS

Builds cognitive flexibility skills

Builds emotion- & self-regulation skills

Builds social thinking skills

Develops adult/youth relationship

Collaborative Problem Solving®

Develops adult/youth relationship

Youth supported in generating their own solutions

Builds language & communication skills

THINKING SKILLS REFERENCE SHEET: ADULTS

Language and Communication Skills
- Understands and processes spoken words with adequate speed
- Understands and follows conversations well enough to respond
- Expresses concerns, needs, or thoughts in words
- Is able to tell someone what's bothering him or her

Attention and Working Memory Skills
- Stays with tasks requiring sustained attention (perseverance)
- Does things in a logical sequence or set order
- Keeps track of time; correctly assesses how much time a task will take
- Reflects on multiple thoughts or ideas at the same time
- Maintains focus and concentration
- Ignores irrelevant noises, people, or other stimuli; tunes things out when necessary
- Considers a range of solutions to a problem

Emotion- and Self-Regulation Skills
- Manages emotional response to frustration so as to think rationally
- Manages irritability well enough to respond appropriately to others
- Manages anxiety well enough to respond adaptively
- Thinks before responding; considers the likely outcomes or consequences of his/her actions
- Can adjust his/her arousal level to meet the demands of a situation (e.g., calming down after being upset)

Cognitive Flexibility Skills
- Handles transitions, shifts easily from one task to another
- Is able to see "shades of gray" rather than thinking only in "black-and-white"
- Thinks hypothetically, is able to envision different possibilities
- Handles deviations from rules, routines, and original plans
- Handles unpredictability, ambiguity, uncertainty, and novelty
- Can shift away from an original idea, solution, or plan
- Takes into account situational factors that may mean a change in plans
- Interprets information accurately/avoids over-generalizing or personalizing ("Everyone's out to get me," "Nobody likes me," "You always blame me," "It's not fair," "I'm stupid," or "Things will never work out for me.")

Social Thinking Skills
- Pays attention to verbal and nonverbal social cues
- Accurately interprets nonverbal social cues (like facial expressions and tone of voice)
- Starts conversations, enters groups, and connects with others appropriately
- Seeks attention in appropriate ways
- Understands how his or her behavior affects other people
- Understands how he or she is coming across or being perceived by others
- Empathizes with others, appreciates others' perspectives or points of view

Collaborative & Proactive Solutions
THIS IS HOW PROBLEMS GET SOLVED

A more compassionate, productive, effective, approach to understanding and helping behaviorally challenged kids.

Dr. Ross Greene is the originator of the research-based approach— now called Collaborative & Proactive Solutions (CPS)— to understanding and helping behaviorally challenging kids, as described in his books *The Explosive Child* and *Lost at School*. The CPS model has been implemented in countless families, schools, inpatient psychiatry units, therapeutic group homes, and residential and juvenile detention facilities. The approach sets forth two major tenets. First, challenging behavior in kids is best understood as the result of lagging cognitive skills (in the general domains of flexibility/adaptability, frustration tolerance, and problem solving) rather than as the result of passive, permissive, inconsistent, noncontingent parenting. And second, the best way to reduce challenging episodes is by working together with the child – collaborating – to solve the problems setting them in motion in the first place (rather than by imposing adult will and intensive use of reward and punishment procedures). Here are some of the important questions answered by the model:

QUESTION: Why are challenging kids challenging?

ANSWER: Because they're lacking the skills not to be challenging. If they had the skills, they wouldn't be challenging. That's because –and this is perhaps the key theme of the model - *Kids do well if they can*. And because (here's another key theme) *Doing well is preferable to not doing well*. This, of course, is a dramatic departure from the view of challenging kids as attention-seeking, manipulative, coercive, limit-testing, and poorly motivated. It's a completely different set of lenses, supported by research in the neurosciences over the past 30-40 years, and it has dramatic implications for how caregivers go about helping such kids.

QUESTION: When are challenging kids challenging?

ANSWER: When the demands or expectations being placed upon them exceed the skills that they have to respond adaptively. Of course, that's when we all respond maladaptively: when we're lacking the skills to respond adaptively. Thus, an important goal for helpers is to identify the skills a challenging kid is lacking. An even more important goal is to identify the specific expectations a kid is having difficulty meeting, referred to as *unsolved problems*... and to help kids solve those problems. Because unsolved problems tend to be highly predictable, the problem-solving should be proactive most of the time. Identifying lagging skills and unsolved problems is accomplished through use of an instrument called the *Assessment of Lagging Skills and Unsolved Problems (ALSUP)*. You can find the ALSUP in The Paperwork section of the website of Lives in the Balance, the nonprofit Dr. Greene founded to help disseminate his approach (*livesinthebalance.org*).

QUESTION: What behaviors do challenging kids exhibit when they don't have the skills to respond adaptively to certain demands?

ANSWER: Challenging kids communicate that they're struggling to meet demands and expectations in some fairly common ways: whining, pouting, sulking, withdrawing, crying, screaming, swearing, hitting, spitting, kicking, throwing, lying, stealing, and so forth. But what a kid *does* when he's having trouble meeting demands and expectations isn't the most important part (though it may feel that way). *Why* and *when* he's doing these things are much more important.

QUESTION: What should we be doing differently to help these kids better than we're helping them now?

ANSWER: If challenging behavior is set in motion by lagging skills and not lagging motivation, then it's easy to understand why rewarding and punishing a kid may not make things better. Since challenging behavior occurs in response to highly predictable unsolved problems, then the goal is to solve those problems. But if we solve them unilaterally, through imposition of adult will (referred to in the model as "Plan A"), then we'll only increase the likelihood of challenging episodes and we won't solve any problems durably. Better to solve those problems collaboratively ("Plan B") so the kid is a fully invested participant, solutions are more durable, and (over time) the kid -- and often the adults as well -- learn the skills they were lacking all along. *Plan B* is comprised of three basic ingredients. The first ingredient - called the *Empathy* step - involves gathering information from the child so as to achieve the clearest understanding of his or her concern or perspective on a given unsolved problem. The second ingredient (called the *Define Adult Concerns* step) involves entering into consideration the adult concern or perspective on the same unsolved problem. The third ingredient (called the *Invitation* step) involves having the adult and kid brainstorm solutions so as to arrive at a plan of action that is both realistic and mutually satisfactory...in other words, a solution that addresses the concerns of both parties and that both parties can actually perform.

QUESTION: Where can I learn more about this model?

ANSWER: The *Lives in the Balance* website is a very good place to start. It has a ton of free resources to help you learn about and apply Dr. Greene's approach, including streaming video, audio programming, commentary, support, and lots more.

QUESTION: Isn't this the same model as what was previously known as Collaborative Problem Solving?

ANSWER: Dr. Greene is the originator of the Collaborative Problem Solving approach, and for many years referred to his model by that name in his research papers, scholarly articles, books, and workshops. He now calls his model *Collaborative & Proactive Solutions (CPS)*. Be careful! There are others using the name Collaborative Problem Solving out there, but they had nothing to do with the origination or development of Dr. Greene's model and are not associated with Dr. Greene or Lives in the Balance in any way!

Lives in the Balance
FOSTERING COLLABORATION · TRANSFORMING LIVES · INSPIRING CHANGE

GOALS	PLAN A	PLAN C	PLAN B
Try to get your expectation met	✔	✖	✔
Reduce challenging behavior	✖	✔	✔
Build skills, confidence	✖	✖	✔
Solve problems	✖	✖	✔
Build relationship	✖	?	✔

FIGURE 1.1 Goals purused by using each of the three plans taught in CPS

Plan B Ingredients

1: clarify the
child's
concern

2: share
adult's
concern

Clarifying question

Educated guessing

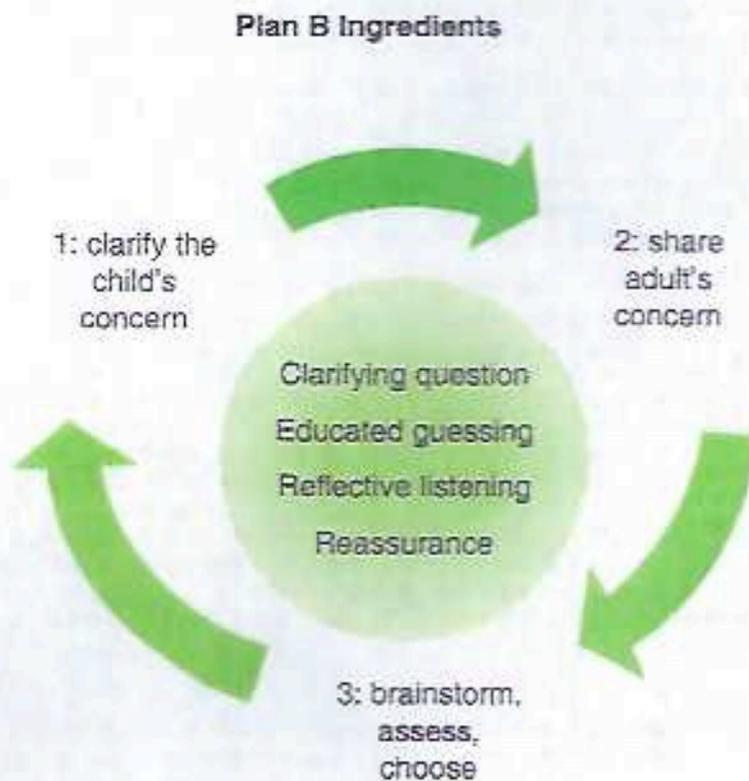Reflective listening

Reassurance

3: brainstorm,
assess,
choose

FIGURE 2.4 The repetitive cycle of Plan B builds new associations in the brain and thus builds skill. (Reprinted with permission by Think:Kids)

Think:Kids
RETHINKING CHALLENGING KIDS

MASSACHUSETTS
GENERAL HOSPITAL

Plan B *Prep Sheet*

GENERAL PLANNING

WHAT is the focus of the conversation (*the problem to be solved not the challenging behavior!*)?

_____

WHO is going to have the conversation? _____

WHEN, WHERE and **WHILE DOING WHAT** are you going to have the conversation?

_____

INGREDIENT # 1: EMPATHIZE

HOW ARE YOU GOING TO START THE CONVERSATION AND FRAME THE PROBLEM? Be specific about the problem but don't focus on the behavior, assume or blame.

- Stick to the facts or externalize the problem.
- Examples: "I've noticed that..." "...waking up has been tough lately,"
  "...something's been up with the homework,"
  "...something about group hasn't been working for you lately,"
  "...something about the food we have in the house seems to be bothering you," "...something about seated work has been tough,"
- Finish by asking, "Can you fill me in?" or "What's going on?

Write down opening statement here and on *Plan B Cheat-Sheet*:

_____

(NOTE: *Complete next section* **ONLY** *if you anticipate the youth having difficulty expressing his/her concerns*)
DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT THE CHILD'S CONCERNS MIGHT BE? *What types of clarifying questions might you ask / educated guesses might you make if needed?*

_____

INGREDIENT #2: SHARE ADULT CONCERN

WHY ARE YOU BRINGING THE PROBLEM UP?

- Clarify your concerns ahead of time. Be specific and concise! **Health, safety, learning, impact on others?** Write down how exactly you will communicate them to the youth here and on Plan B Cheat Sheet:

_____

Plan B *"Cheat-Sheet"*

INGREDIENT #1: EMPATHIZE

Opening statement: *"I've noticed that ...."* (neutral, don't blame or assume, stick to the facts!)

- **Focus on the problem, *not* the challenging behavior!**
- **Gather information**: Ask questions, take guesses, reflect what you hear, provide reassurance.
- **Don't rush!** Move on only when you know the kid's concern or perspective
- Use sentence starters if needed:
    - It bothers me when ...
    - I have a hard time with ...
    - I don't like when ...
    - I'm worried that ...
    - It's hard for me because I need to ...
    - It's hard for me because I want to ...

Record child's concern(s):

INGREDIENT #2: SHARE ADULT CONCERN

- **What are your concerns?** Health, safety, learning, impact on others? Be specific and write them down below!

- **"AND** the thing is ..." or **"AND** I'm worried that ..."

Share the adult's concern(s):

INGREDIENT #3: BRAINSTORM!

- ***Frame the problem***: "I wonder if there's a way we can address...(insert child's concerns) _____
  AND (insert your concerns) _____
- ***Give kid a first-crack at it***: ("Do you have any ideas?") but, provide help if needed.
- Any idea is a good idea! *Litmus test: Does it address [restate the child's concern(s)]? Does is address [restate the adult concern(s)]?*
- Try the solution and make a plan to come back to talk about how it worked and revisit if the problem is still not solved.

Potential Solution(s):

Plan B Worksheet (revised 8/10; © MGH)

- WHAT is the focus of the conversation _____

(which problem to be solved)?

- WHO is going to have the conversation? _____

- WHEN, and WHERE are you going to have it? _____

EMPATHY / UNDERSTANDING:

- HOW ARE YOU GOING TO START OFF?

o Be specific about the problem but don't focus on the behavior, assume or blame.

o Stick to the facts or externalize the problem.

o Examples: "I've noticed that" .... "waking up has been tough lately" ... "something's been up with the homework" ... "something about group hasn't been working for you lately" ... "we've been arguing about food a lot lately" ... "its been tough to sit still during seated work"

_____

_____

- DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT THE CHILD'S CONCERNS MIGHT BE?

o What types of clarifying questions might you ask?

o What type of educated guesses might you make if needed?

1. _____ 2. _____

3. _____ 4. _____

DEFINE THE PROBLEM:

- WHY ARE YOU BRINGING THE PROBLEM UP?

o Clarify your own main concerns ahead of time. Be specific! Health, safety, learning,

impact on others?

1. _____ 2. _____

Plan B "Cheat Sheet" (revised 3/10; © MGH)

1. Empathy / Understanding

• "I've noticed that ...." (neutral, don't blame or assume, stick to the facts!)

_____

• Gather information: ask questions, take guesses, reflect what you hear, provide

reassurance.

• Don't rush! Move on only when you know the kid's concern or perspective

2. Define the Problem

• "The thing is ..." or "I'm worried that ..."

• What are your main concerns? Health, safety, learning, impact on others?

1. _____ 2. _____

3. _____ 4. _____

3. Invitation to Brainstorm

• Frame the problem: "I wonder if there's a way that...." (repeat their concerns and

your concerns)

• Give kid first crack at it ("Do you have any ideas?) but provide help if needed

4. After the Invitation

• Any idea is a good idea! Litmus test: Does it work for you? Does it work for me?

Doable? Bring up any other concerns?

• If neither of you has any ideas, come back to it later.

• If you do come up with a solution, see try it out and then come back and talk about

how it worked!

Think:Kids
RETHINKING CHALLENGING KIDS

MGH | MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL HOSPITAL

Collaborative Problem Solving
Assessment and Planning Tool (CPS-APT)

Youth's Name _____   Date _____

Responding to life's demands requires a lot of thinking skills. If a youth doesn't have the skills to handle a trigger or meet an expectation, that is what we call a "problem to be solved." Until we solve that problem, the trigger or expectation is likely to result in some form of challenging behavior.

The most important task during the assessment phase is identifying the specific triggers or expectations that frequently lead to challenging behavior, as well as the thinking skills that would help the youth to handle those demands more adaptively.
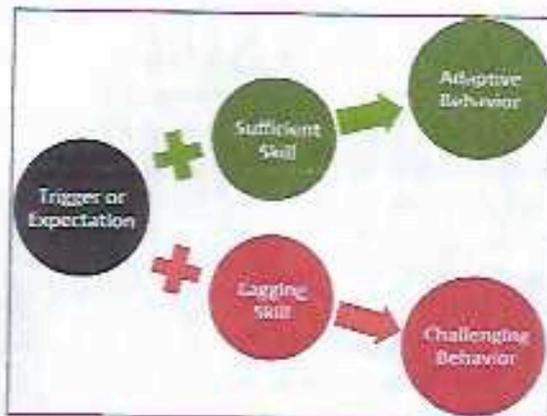
Part 1: Identifying Triggers/Expectations, Lagging Skills, and Challenging Behaviors

PLAN (to be completed in Part 2)	TRIGGERS/EXPECTATIONS	LAGGING SKILLS	CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS
	• These are the demands that the youth is having a hard time meeting. • They are the triggers, expectations, precipitants, antecedents, situations, or contexts that can lead to challenging behavior. • When making your list, describe who, what, when and where. Be specific!	• Lagging skills are the reasons that a youth is having difficulty meeting expectations or responding adaptively to triggers. • Take a guess at which specific lagging skills are contributing by looking at the list of triggers/expectations, and referring to the Thinking Skills Reference Sheet on the next page.	• These are the observable, challenging behaviors that often bring up the greatest concerns for adult caregivers. • Examples are yelling, swearing, refusing, hitting, cutting, shutting down, running, etc. • Challenging behaviors are the result of a youth not having the skills to handle the specific triggers or expectations.

THINKING SKILLS REFERENCE SHEET

Language and Communication Skills
- Understands spoken directions
- Understands and follows conversations
- Expresses concerns, needs, or thoughts in words
- Is able to tell someone what's bothering him or her

Attention and Working Memory Skills
- Stays with tasks requiring sustained attention
- Does things in a logical sequence or set order
- Keeps track of time; correctly assesses how much time a task will take
- Reflects on multiple thoughts or ideas at the same time
- Maintains focus during activities
- Ignores irrelevant noises, people, or other stimuli; tunes things out when necessary
- Considers a range of solutions to a problem

Emotion- and Self-Regulation Skills
- Thinks rationally, even when frustrated
- Manages irritability in an age-appropriate way
- Manages anxiety in an age-appropriate way
- Manages disappointment in an age-appropriate way
- Thinks before responding; considers the likely outcomes or consequences of his/her actions
- Can adjust his/her arousal level to meet the demands of a situation (e.g., calming after recess or after getting upset, falling asleep/waking up, staying seated during class or meals, etc.)
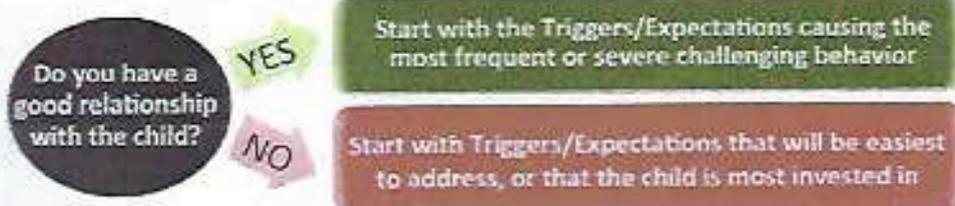
Cognitive Flexibility Skills
- Handles transitions, shifts easily from one task to another
- Is able to see "shades of gray" rather than thinking only in "black-and-white"
- Thinks hypothetically, is able to envision different possibilities
- Handles deviations from rules, routines, and original plans
- Handles unpredictability, ambiguity, uncertainty, and novelty
- Can shift away from an original idea, solution, or plan
- Takes into account situational factors that may mean a change in plans (Example: "If it rains, we may need to cancel.")
- Interprets information accurately/avoids over-generalizing or personalizing (Example: Avoids saying "Everyone's out to get me," "Nobody likes me," "You always blame me," "It's not fair," "I'm stupid," or "Things will never work out for me.")

Social Thinking Skills
- Pays attention to verbal and nonverbal social cues
- Accurately interprets nonverbal social cues (like facial expressions and tone of voice)
- Starts conversations with peers, enters groups of peers appropriately
- Seeks attention in appropriate ways
- Understands how his or her behavior affects other people
- Understands how he or she is coming across or being perceived by others
- Empathizes with others, appreciates others' perspectives or points of view

Part 2: Planning and Prioritizing Problems to Solve

Next, decide which Triggers/Expectations are the first to be addressed with Plan B. Mark those Triggers/Expectations with B in the leftmost column. Not sure where to start? Use these guidelines:

Do you have a good relationship with the child?

YES → Start with the Triggers/Expectations causing the most frequent or severe challenging behavior

NO → Start with Triggers/Expectations that will be easiest to address, or that the child is most invested in

For Triggers/Expectations that won't get Plan B right away, mark with A or C (for now).
- Choose Plan A if trying to get your expectation met is more important than reducing challenging behavior.
- Choose Plan C if reducing challenging behavior is more important than getting the expectation met for now.

REMINDER: As problems get solved using Plan B, you will choose new Triggers/Expectations from those marked A and C to be addressed next with Plan B.

REFRAME THE BEHAVIOUR

"KIDS DO WELL IF THEY CAN"
~ROSS GREENE

WON'T → CAN'T YET

WON'T		CAN'T YET
• JUDGMENTAL	ADULT'S MINDSET	• CURIOUS
• WILLFUL	VIEW OF CHILD	• TOO MANY STRESSORS
• DEFIANT		• SKILLS DEFICITS
HE'S LAZY SHE JUST WANTS ATTENTION ...RUDE!	THOUGHTS	WHAT'S GETTING IN THEIR WAY? HOW CAN I HELP?
• REWARDS & PUNISHMENTS	RESPONSE	• FIND & REMOVE BARRIERS
• FRUSTRATION	CHILD'S EXPERIENCE	• SUPPORTED
• GUILT/SHAME		• STRENGTHENED

"SEE A CHILD DIFFERENTLY, YOU SEE A DIFFERENT CHILD"
~Dr. Stuart Shanker

When kids exhibit challenging behaviour we can be "STRESS DETECTIVES"... finding and removing barriers.

- FIND STRESSORS → REDUCE THEM
- FIND UNMET NEEDS → MEET THEM
- FIND SKILLS DEFICITS → TEACH THEM

@kwiens62

Thinking Skills Reference Sheet

Language & Communication Skills

- Understanding what others are saying

- Following the flow of conversations

- Quickly understanding people who are talking

- Saying what they are thinking or what they need

- Saying what's bothering them

- Saying what they are feeling

- Quickly finding the words they need

Attention & Working Memory Skills

- Sticking with things that need a lot of attention

- Doing things in order

- Keeping track of time

- Thinking about more than one thing at a time

- Staying focused during activities

- Ignoring distractions

- Thinking of more than one solution to a problem

Emotion- & Self-Regulation Skills

- Handling feelings when angry or frustrated

- Handling feelings when annoyed

- Handling feelings when nervous, worried, or anxious

- Handling feelings when disappointed or sad

- Thinking about what might happen before doing something

- Pausing before they respond

- Waiting for something they want

- Being energetic at the right time; getting energy up when expected to

- Being calm at the right time; calming down when expected to

Cognitive Flexibility Skills

- Handling changing from one activity to another

- Understanding that things can be "kind of" rather than all one way or all the other way;

seeing "shades of gray" rather than only "black and white"

- Imagining different ways things could happen in the future

- Handling changes to a routine or rule

- Handling new situations or unclear answers (e.g., "I don't know.")

- Changing their mind if offered a different idea or solution

- Understanding why a plan may need to change

- Not taking things too personally, exaggerating, or thinking things are worse than they
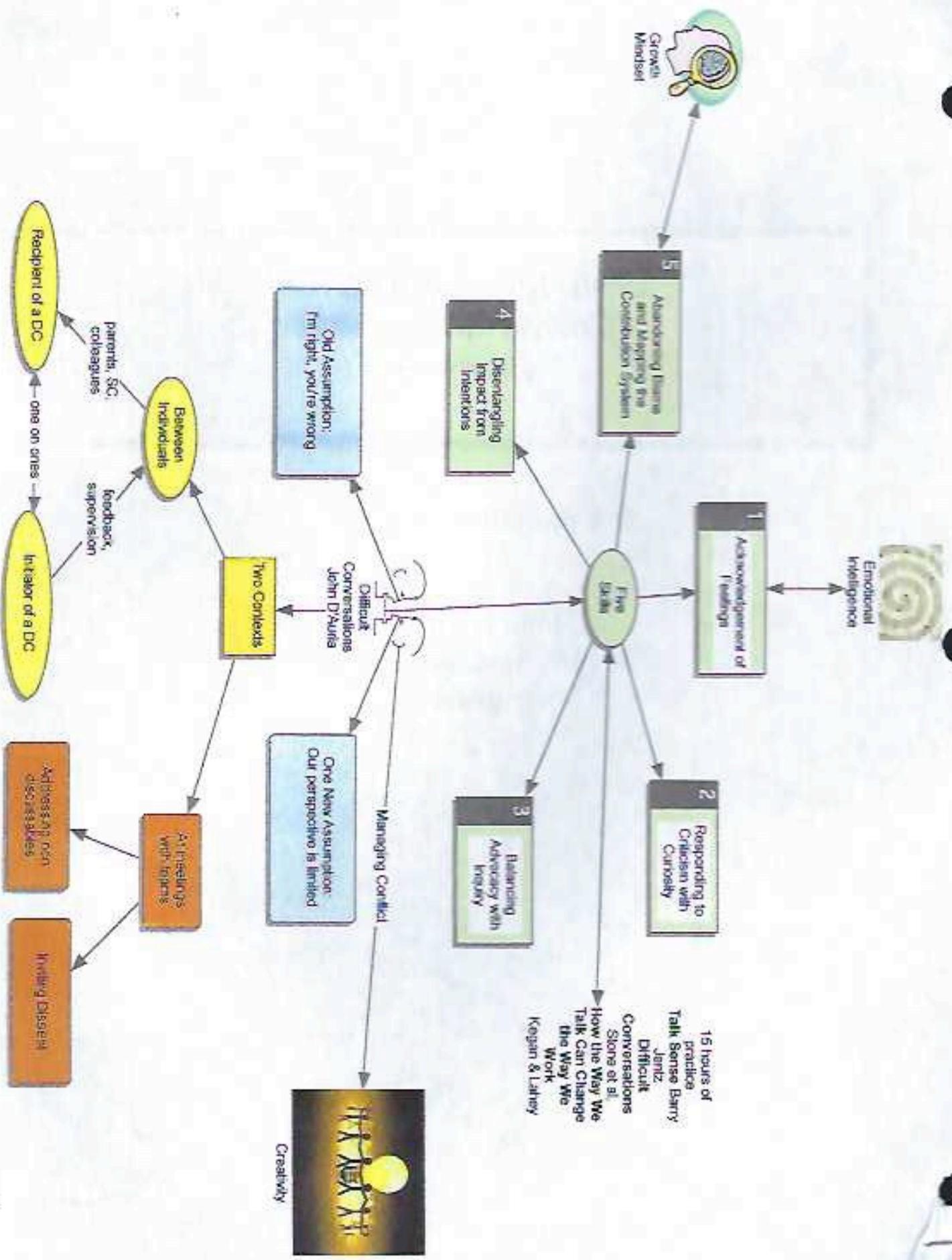
are

Social Thinking Skills

- Paying attention to what others are saying and doing

- Understanding what other people mean from the way they behave or talk

- Starting and having conversations with others

- Getting other people's attention in positive ways

- Understanding how their behavior makes other people feel

- Understanding what other people think of them and their behavior

- Understanding other people's points of view

The Thinking Skills Reference Sheet is a user-friendly derivative of a validated measure called the Thinking Skills Inventory

Transforming Difficult Conversations into Learning

WORKSHOP PACKET

John D'Auria
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Growth Mindset

5: Abandoning Blame and Mapping the Contribution System

4: Disentangling Impact from Intentions

Old Assumption: I'm right, you're wrong

Recipient of a DC

parents, SC, colleagues

— one on ones —

feedback, supervision

Between Individuals

Initiator of a DC

Two Contexts

Difficult Conversations
John D'Auria

Five Skills

1: Acknowledgement of Feelings

Emotional Intelligence

2: Responding to Criticism with Curiosity

3: Balancing Advocacy with Inquiry

One New Assumption: Our perspective is limited

Managing Conflict

At meetings with teams

Addressing non discussables

Inviting Dissent

Creativity

15 hours of practice
Talk Sense Barry Jentz
Difficult Conversations Stone et al.
How the Way We Talk Can Change the Way We Work Kegan & Lahey

2

The Culture Builder

Roland S. Barth

Nondiscussables

An important part of awareness is attending to "nondiscussables." Nondiscussables are subjects sufficiently important that they are talked about frequently but are so laden with anxiety and fearfulness that these conversations take place only in the parking lot, the rest rooms, the playground, the car pool, or the dinner table at home. Fear abounds that open discussion of these incendiary issues—at a faculty meeting, for example—will cause a meltdown. The nondiscussable is the elephant in the living room. Everyone knows that this huge pachyderm is there, right between the sofa and the fireplace, but we go on mopping and dusting and vacuuming around it as if it did not exist.

Each school has its own nondiscussables. For one it is "the leadership of the principal." For another, it is "the way decisions are made here." For many it is "race" or "the underperforming teacher." Schools are full of these land mines from which trip wires emanate. We walk about carefully, trying not to detonate them. Yet by giving these nondiscussables this incredible power over us, by avoiding them at all cost, we issue the underperforming teacher a license to continue this year as he did last year, taking a heavy toll on countless students and other teachers. We deprive the principal of honest, timely feedback and thereby continue to suffer from poor leadership. We condemn ourselves to live with all the debilitating tensions that surround race.

The health of a school is inversely proportional to the number of nondiscussables: the fewer nondiscussables, the healthier the school; the more nondiscussables, the more pathology in the school culture. To change the culture of the school, the instructional leader must enable its residents to name, acknowledge, and address the nondiscussables—especially those that impede learning. No mean task, for as one principal put it, "These nondiscussables are the third rail of school leadership."

Roland S. Barth is a former teacher, principal, and member of the faculty of Harvard University, where he founded the Harvard Principals' Center and the International Network of Principals' Centers.

Possible Norms

1. We expect disagreements with our colleagues; the dissonance is part of making sense of this complicated endeavor called education. Treat our differences as a potential resource.

2. We will disagree agreeably.

3. We will balance advocacy with inquiry be as interested in the other perspective as your own

4. We will listen for the quiet voice, reach out to those who don't speak quickly in groups

5. We will monitor your personal air time...the group is large and our time is short

6. We will encourage the asking and raising of tough questions

7. We will try to see the other's perspective and to listen without judgment.

8. We will be crisp and say what is core.

9. We will be willing to engage in conflict and stay engaged to resolution.

10. We will lean into discomfort.

11. We will take responsibility for identifying what is troubling us and for sharing it with the appropriate person.

12. We will check for understanding and agreement.

13. We will share our feelings in service of getting to a better place.

Quick Check on Group Work

*How well did I follow our norms?

1   2   3   4   5

*How well did the group follow our norms?

1   2   3   4   5

The following can be added over time

To what degree did the meeting focus on matters
central to our work?

1   2   3   4   5

Something that made me feel safe during this meeting was

Something that I did to make others feel safe at this meeting was


Comments?

Suggested Norms

1. We expect disagreements with our colleagues; the dissonance is part of making sense of this complicated endeavor called education. Treat our differences as a potential resource.
2. We will balance advocacy with inquiry-- - be as interested in the other perspective as your own
3. We will listen for the quiet voice, reach out to those who don't speak quickly in groups
4. We will encourage the asking and raising of tough questions

Discussion Prep

What I know about the issue	What I have heard others say about the issue	Questions that surround this issue	What makes this issue hard to discuss?

The Feeling Wheel

Developed by Dr. Gloria Willcox
PO Box 48363
St. Petersburg FL 33743
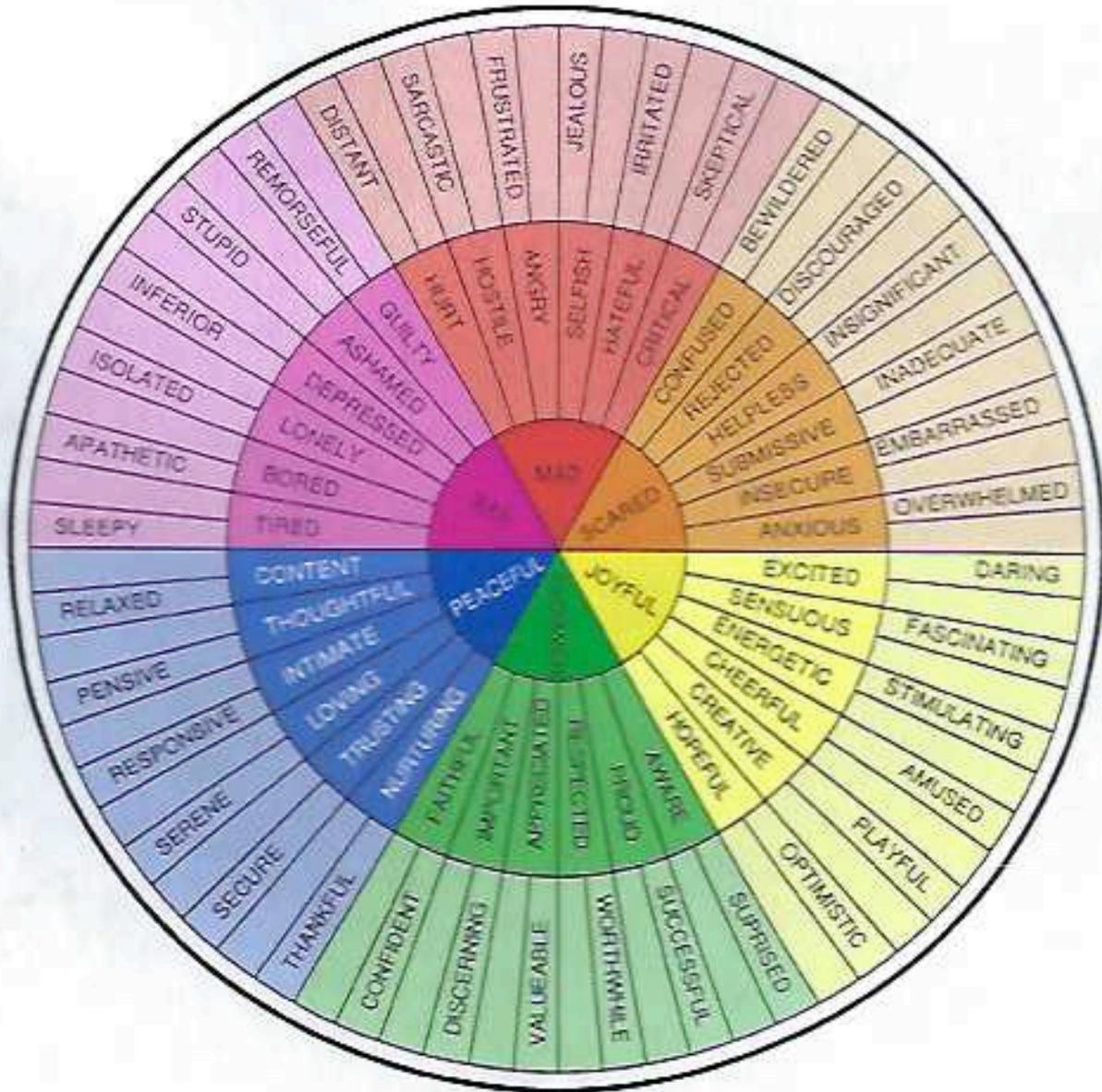
How to understand another's persective and have them be open to yours[1]

1. Acknowledge the other person's feelings (including how do YOU feel about those feelings)
2. Express your the other position clearly, vividly, and fairly (the other person says, "I could not have said it better myself.")
3. List any points of agreement (especially if they are not matters of general or widespread agreement).
4. Mention anything you have learned from this exchange
5. Share your perspective

Sequence	How well was this accomplished? 0-3 (0= not at all and 3= effectively executed)	Notes
1.Acknowledgment of feelings		Required
2.Clear&accurate restatement of the other's perspective	Check for understanding- did I get it right?	Required
3.Note where you agree with that perspective		Optional
4.Note what you have learned from this conversation		Optional
5. Present your perspective		

---

[1] Adapted from *How to Criticize with Kindness: Philosopher Daniel Dennett on the Four Steps to Arguing Intelligently* by Maria Popova

Select one of the feedback scenarios from the packet
Using a reflective *approach, initiate a conversation where you can raise one of these issues/concerns
*reflective approach= open agenda, good data, listen for understanding (Barry Jentz)

Observer Guidance

How well did the initiator .....

1 (no evidence)   2   3   4   5 (clearly achieved)

	Notes	Rating
1. a.Share what the conversation will be about b.Signal that there was an open agenda	Option: offer a CHOICE of times	
2. Clearly present your perspective without backing away OR signaling that it is the only or complete perspective		
3. Present good data (specifics)		
4. Respect the other perspective		
5. Show genuine puzzlement/curiosity		
6. Acknowledge feelings where appropriate		

Motor Skills And More! Working on a Vertical Surface

June 12, 2015 By

Learn more about the benefits of working on a vertical surface and find some creative ways for kids to work in this position!
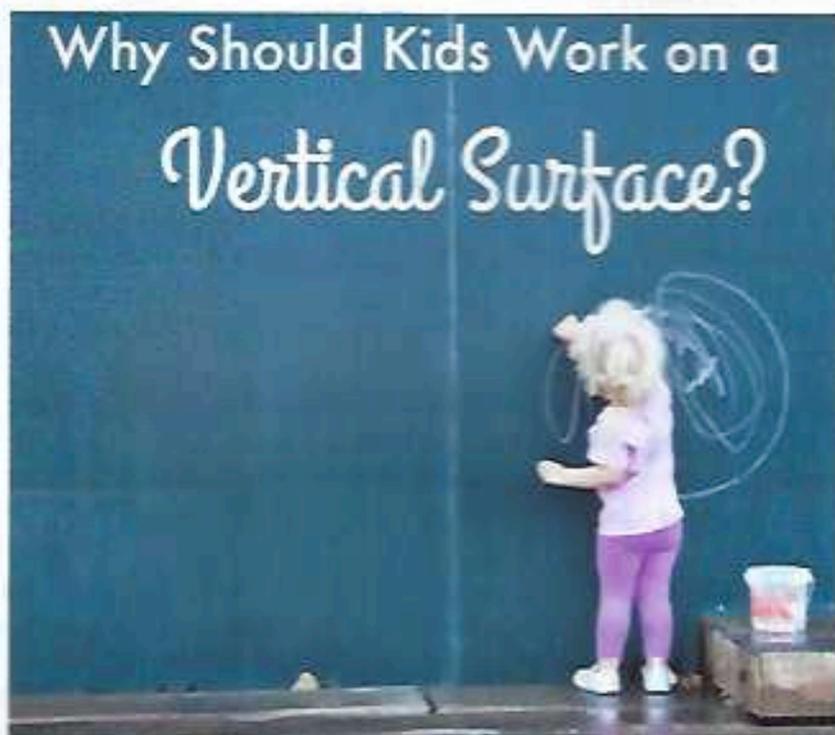
One thing that stands out to me in the schools where I work is that you never see a good old fashioned chalkboard anymore! Gone are the days of feeling that chalky dust all over your hands, racing classmates to finish math facts on the chalkboard, and clapping out the erasers during detention! :)

Back when I was in school, I never thought about the developmental benefits of writing and working on the vertical surface of the chalkboard, but as a therapist, now I know that there are many! The occupational therapists I work with encourage children to work on vertical surfaces all the time and here's why...

Why Kids Should Work on a Vertical Surface

1 || Shoulder/Elbow Stability

The use of larger vertical surfaces such as chalkboards, marker boards, and Smart boards allows children to use bigger arm movements that encourage strength and flexibility throughout the joints and muscles of

the upper extremities. Even the **hand gets a hefty boost of strengthening** as it works against gravity to keep making vertical, horizontal and diagonal lines.

2 || Bilateral Coordination

Have you ever tried to use a stencil while working on a vertical surface? I once tried to stencil a pretty fleur de lis pattern on a wall — it was a *disaster*! This is a tough skill!

For kids, tracing an object, using a stencil, or even just stabilizing their paper to write on an upright surface requires the use of both hands (one to trace, one to hold) AND it requires **proprioception** and strength to hold the object that is being traced.

3 || Midline Crossing

When a child is writing or drawing across a large vertical surface, he has to cross the midline of his body with his dominant hand to reach all of the spaces. This is great practice for children who are struggling with **midline crossing** and establishing a strong **hand dominance**.

4 || Wrist Extension/Pencil Grasp

Vertical surface writing naturally puts the wrist in an extended position which encourages hand stabilization for better **pencil grasp** and control of writing utensils.

5 || Visual Attention and Hand-Eye Coordination

Working on a vertical surface brings the task closer to the child's eyes. This helps kids who have difficulty maintaining visual attention to activities and can help to encourage hand-eye coordination, as the child has a better view of what they are doing!

6 || Spatial Awareness

When a child works on a large vertical surface, it makes directional terms (up, down, left, right) much easier to understand because the child can relate the words to his very own body!

7 || Sensory

Working at a vertical surface may be beneficial for **fidgety kids who work better in a standing position than sitting at a desk**. Let's face it, we all work better if we can change positions!

8 || Core Strength and Posture

Working in a kneeling or standing position at an upright surface gives kids a good dose of **core strengthening**. There's no slumping or leaning on the back of the chair – the only choice is to engage those core and back muscles to maintain upright **posture**!

Vertical Surface Activities

There are tons of fun ways to play and work using a vertical surface. Here are some of our favorites:

-Play with stickers! Have the child stick them all over the wall at different levels and then give him directions for which stickers to touch – he may have to **jump** or bend!

-Make your own **DIY Removable Lego Wall**! Building with Legos on a vertical surface? Not only super fun, but also great for all of the skills listed above!

-Tape a piece of paper to the wall and trace objects or **stencils**

-Paint with paintbrushes or **paint rollers**

-Decorate a window with **window clings**

-Play with **magnets** on the refrigerator

-Paint with shaving cream or **finger paint** on an **easel**

-Play with felt shapes and pictures on a **felt board**

-Stick **Squigz** to a wall and pull them off

-Draw and color with **chalk** on a **chalkboard**

-Writing with **dry erase markers** or **window markers** on a window or hanging mirror

-Writing/drawing activities on a Smart board

-Writing and drawing with **bath foam** or **bath crayons** in the tub

-Prop iPads and other tablets up using a slant board or the **prop that comes on the case**. Let kids use a **stylus** to encourage use of an efficient grasp.

-Wash windows and using a **squigee**

-Help wash the car

-Erase a chalkboard or wipe down a marker board

-Try any of the above in kneeling, standing, or while seated

Lauren Drobnjak

Lauren Drobnjak is co-author of The Inspired Treehouse blog and a pediatric physical therapist who currently practices in the educational environment. She has been a physical therapist for 18 years, with 17 of those years specifically in pediatrics. Her drive to make a difference in the lives of kids has led her entrepreneurial spirit in the direction of creating opportunities for play-based wellness and child development. She is a busy mama of 3 who thrives on chaos. To come down from the stress, Lauren enjoys exercising like she's still 20, yoga, chocolate, a great book, browsing Pinterest, and anything crafty!

Why Should Kids Work on a Vertical Surface?

There are many benefits of having kids write, draw, paint, or color on a vertical surface (e.g. marker board, Smart Board, easel) throughout the day.

Benefits of Working on a Vertical Surface

-Strengthening upper extremities
-Encouraging midline crossing
-Promoting hand/eye coordination
-Strengthening core and improving posture
-Improving bilateral coordination
-Encouraging proper pencil grasp
-Improving spatial awareness
-Appealing to different sensory systems with changes in positioning

Ideas for Working on a Vertical Surface

Sticker Twister: Have the child stick stickers all over a wall at different levels. Then give directions for which stickers to touch (jump, bend and reach with different limbs)

DIY Removable Lego Wall: Build with legos on a vertical plane.

Trace and stencil on paper that has been taped to the wall to encourage using one hand to stabilize and the other to draw.

Hang a mirror on a wall and draw with a dry-erase marker.

Smart Board activities involving writing and drawing.

Tablets and iPads can be propped (some come with a prop). Use a stylus to encourage an efficient grasp.

Try any of the above in a standing, kneeling or seated position.

USING A

Vertical Surface

AND

Floor Activities

TO IMPROVE

Core Stability

DEVELOPLEARNGROW.COM
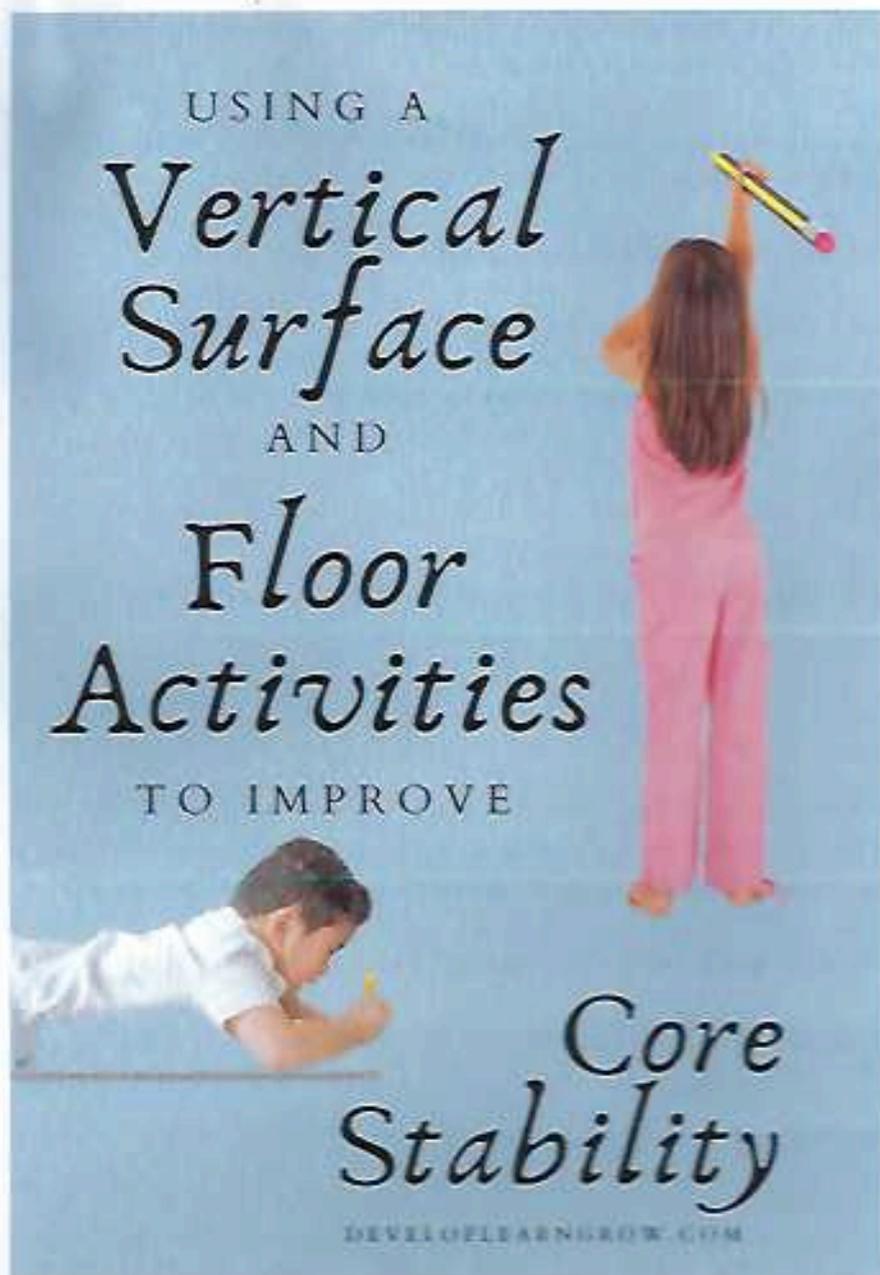
Using a Vertical Surface or the Floor to Improve Core Stability

A teacher I worked with years ago was incredible at incorporating my occupational therapy strategies into her classroom. She was always asking for tips and even wanted to understand the *why* behind the strategies!

This teacher also recognized the developmental and postural changes over the years in her students. Our plan for her classroom: embed vertical work and floor activities into her routines.

Vertical work surfaces were created for her students for various classroom stations.

During calendar or story time, instead of having her students sit on her carpet, she had them lie on their stomachs. From consulting with me, she knew what cues to give when they were on their bellies.

This teacher explained to her students how to use their upper back and neck muscles to hold their head up. She encouraged them to keep their forearms and hands on the floor.

The first month involved some groans out of the kiddos. Many needed breaks to rest their heads in their hands. Some even rolled to their sides with their heads down on the floor.

The teacher gradually increased the frequency and amount of time spent lying on their stomachs.

Vertical work continued and she increased the challenge of what was expected from their muscles.

Finally, she approached me one day, a little proud and excited for her students. "They're ALL able to stay on their stomachs during carpet time. No one props or rests their head anymore!"

The difference in their strength and stability was noted. And so was their ability to sit and attend!

5 Benefits for Kids when Lying on the Stomach for Learning Tasks

1. Increases attention

Pressure input from the floor gives sensory feedback to the brain. When lying on the belly, different muscle groups are stretched (also gives input to the brain.) The overall deep pressure input and the heavy work for the upper body is both calming and **alerting** for the nervous system.

2. Strengthens muscles in the back and neck for improved posture

Lying on the stomach activates muscles against gravity that are needed for sitting upright. This is especially important with increased tablet / phone use, computer time, and virtual learning that's causing hunched necks and backs!

3. Stabilizes the shoulder

This is a simple way to provide needed strength and stability for the shoulders. It keeps the shoulders still to isolate smaller movements of the forearm, wrists and hands.

4. Stabilizes the forearm and hand

Pressure on the forearms gives stabilizing input to the pinky side of the hand. The pinky and ring fingers stabilize the hand as the other three fingers move to manipulate objects. This improves fine motor skills and dexterity within the hand.

5. Increases visual attention to the task

For children who tend to be more distracted with movement and activity around them, placing their work on the floor reduces extra distractions.

5 Benefits for Kids when Sitting on the Floor for a Task

1. Stretches core muscles

When children sit on the floor for tasks, they lean, stretch and reach for objects. They also tend to sit with legs to the side and press all their weight into one arm. This stretching through the side of the trunk activates different muscles needed for sitting and balance.

2. Enhances shoulder stability

When leaning into the straightened arm, the shoulder is being activated to keep the arm stable. Kids tend to shift around which activates more of the complex shoulder muscles.

3. Weightbearing through open palms improves hand strength

If a child is leaning into their hand, the weight through the open palm stretches and strengthens all of the muscles within the hand. This helps to activate muscles needed for writing and manipulation tasks.

4. Gives a larger visual workspace than a desk if using a bigger area

If kids need more room for a project, the floor gives a larger work area. When moving and shifting around on a firm floor, more muscle groups are activated. (More parts of the body used = more parts of the brain being activated.)

5. Gives pressure input to different body parts

As stated previously, deep pressure input from the floor gives calming / organizing input for the brain but it's also alerting, too!

3. Weightbearing Activities on Open Palms

When kids place weight and pressure through their open palms, it stretches out the hand muscles. Stretching the muscles helps activate them and prepare them for proper use.

This position is also good for core and shoulder stability. And it provides proprioceptive heavy work input which is calming and organizing for the nervous system and increases attention and focus.

A really good weightbearing activity on open palms is a wheelbarrow walk.

Other examples of weightbearing activities on open palms are a bear walk, a crab walk, or a tall plank position. If space is not available, I often have kids hold the positions and carefully lift and kick their legs. (You can count or recited the alphabet.)

10 Benefits of a Using a Vertical Surface during Learning and Play

1. Gives proprioceptive input through the feet

The pressure input through the feet and legs can be alerting for some kiddos. Standing for a task can 'wake' up the brain!

2. Improves balance and core stability

Slight shifts in weight when standing work on balance and core stability. Reaching up and around a vertical surface activates core muscles.

3. Vertical surface improves posture

Standing upright at a vertical surface (with objects at eye level) aligns the spine and neck.

4. Increases upper body and shoulder stability

The shoulder works against gravity when standing at a vertical surface. A child's body needs the shoulder to be strong and stable in order for the hand to move well.

5. Helps with bilateral integration and stability in the non-dominant shoulder

If a child is holding a piece of paper against a flat vertical surface, the non-dominant hand is required to work harder at keeping the paper still. This also improves the shoulder stability in the non-dominant hand. Bilateral coordination is important for motor and brain development.

6. A vertical surface improves forearm stability and wrist extension needed for functional hand movements

Extending the wrist naturally curls the fingers toward the palm. Some kiddos try to incorrectly gain stability by bending their wrist – this makes it much harder to control the finger movements. The vertical surface promotes proper wrist extension and stability.

7. Facilitates grasping patterns

When the wrist is extended, the fingers curl toward the palm. Especially the pinky and ring fingers. This helps to stabilize that side of the hand so that the "skill fingers" (thumb, index and middle) can do all of the moving and manipulating. (For more info on grasping patterns, check out Development of Pencil Grasp.)

8. Helps with crossing the midline of the body

If a task is set-up properly, children can cross the midline using large movements at a vertical surface.

I feel it's important to note that vertical work *can* help with midline crossing… IF, the child keeps his / her trunk still! I've watched many kiddos appear as if the arm is crossing midline when working at vertical, but they actually turn their body or slightly lean to 'avoid' it.

9. Vertical surfaces improve the visual presentation of work, improving focus on a task

Having the paper or materials right in front of a student at eye level helps them to visually focus on a task. This has been so helpful for my students who have visual attention difficulties. Or, who just have a hard time attending to anything.

10. Helps with position in space and spatial relations

Kids have an easier time making sense of position in space when the paper is oriented in the same plane as their body. They're able to better *see and feel* directional terms (up/down.) The concepts make more sense.

18 Quick Midline Crossing Activities for Academic Tasks

These occupational therapy midline crossing activities are quick and easy to use. They're great for all developing brains, bodies and eyes!

What is Midline Crossing?

Midline crossing, or crossing the midline, is when a person's arm or leg crosses the middle of the body to the other side.

Picture an imaginary line that goes from the top of the head through the nose, neck, chest, and belly button. This line divides the body into left and right sides.

When a child crosses midline, their hand will **reach across this imaginary line to the other side of the body**.

The important part to note, is that the trunk stays still – the body does not twist – as the arm reaches across the middle.

You cross your midline when you put on your seatbelt or turn the steering wheel for a sharp turn. Midline crossing is also required when washing your body, putting on lotion, and getting dressed.

For kids, crossing the midline typically starts around age two. This skill continues to develop as they grow.

It's an important skill needed for completing daily motor tasks and academic tasks.

Crossing midline and bilateral coordination skills help with the efficiency of motor movements. Additionally, they help both sides of the brain communicate for learning.

How Can You Tell If a Child is Having Difficulty Crossing Their Midline?

Some kids have *difficulty* with midline crossing. They don't automatically cross the middle of their body smoothly for motor tasks.

You will see them use their right hand on the right side of the body... and their left hand on the left side of the body.

They may pass things from one hand to the other at the center of their body.

Or, it may look like they're crossing midline, but they actually twist their trunk and/or turn their head. Their core may not be stable. They may have difficulty keeping the head still to move the eyes to either side.

It's almost as if the dividing imaginary line is a more like a plexiglass panel that blocks the arm from passing the middle of the body.

You will see kids reach with their right arm to the left side – but they twist their body and turn their head. The "glass panel" is blocking the arm from reaching over the middle.

Even if they slightly cross the middle of their trunk with their hand, they may turn and tip their head. They don't allow the hand to move past their nose.

The eyes also have to cross the midline when visually tracking objects. They need to smoothly move side to side.

When the eyes have difficulty crossing midline, you will see them pause or jump at the middle... as if there's a bump in the center of them.

This greatly impacts reading skills and visual attention for learning tasks.

Why Are Midline Crossing Activities Important for Kids?

Crossing midline activities encourage communication of the two sides (hemispheres) of the brain. This is VERY important for development and learning!

Midline crossing activities help to make motor movements more efficient. They help with the development of hand dominance and bilateral coordination.

When these motor skills are addressed, kids can effectively manage classroom materials. Tasks such as cutting, getting dressed, and tying shoes are easier and less awkward.

Drawing and writing tasks are easier when kids can automatically cross the midline. They can form letters and numbers properly and write across a page without difficulty.

An inability to cross the midline may cause letter and number reversals as well as difficulties writing left to right. The two sides of the brain need to communicate effectively for writing.

Crossing midline activities help eye movements needed for learning tasks such as reading. They help the eyes smoothly move back and forth across text.

In summary, midline crossing activities are essential for the developing brains and bodies of *all kids*. They're especially beneficial for kids who have motor or learning difficulties.

18 Quick Midline Crossing Activities for Academic Tasks

The activities are divided into two sections: quick exercises / games and YouTube Videos. The exercises and games can be plugged into any part of your day. In between lessons, when kids need a quick brain break, etc.

The YouTube videos are fun if you'd like someone else leading a classroom brain break!

Quick Brain Break Exercises

#1 Arm Scissors

Students can sit or stand for this exercise. Tell them to hold arms straight out to the sides. Keep arms straight as they cross them in front of their body. Return the arms out to the sides.

Encourage them to alternate which arm goes on top. For example, right arm crosses over left arm. Arms return to the sides. Then, left arm crosses over right arm.

Have them count as they scissor their arms in front of their body.

#2 Infinity Loop

1. Start in the center
2. Move up to the left
3. Continue around smoothly several times
4. [Stop at the center]

DevelopLearnGrow.com

This is great for the arms *and* the eyes to cross midline. Make sure kids keep their bodies still and only move their arms.

Start at the center – move up and around to the left –> continuing around & back to the center –> continuing up to the right –> back around to the center –> continuing up to the left and around to the center –> up to the right and around to the center…

For more infinity loop activity ideas, check out Visual Tracking Activities Using Flashcards and the Infinity Loop.

#3 Windmills

Kids stand tall with legs wider than shoulder width. Hold arms straight out to the sides. Bend at the waste to touch opposite hand to the opposite foot.   Repeat other side.

Complete as many repetitions as desired. This exercise is also a great movement (vestibular) activity to wake up the brain.

#4 Firecracker

Kids can sit or stand for this. They press their hands together in front of their bellies (fingertips straight.)

Hands stay together and move in front of the body in a smooth side to side position. As the hands are winding side to side, they're also winding upward above the head.

When they wind above the head as far as they can reach, kids clap hands loudly (firework explosion.) Then, they wiggle the fingers down to make the "sparkles."

It's fun to add a whistling sound to this exercise. (Why not add an oral sensory component!) I like to make a whistle that gradually gets louder as the "bottle rocket" is winding upward.

#5 Paddle Board

Kids can sit or stand for this. They clasp hands together (fingers folded in front of them) and pretend they're holding onto a paddle.

They paddle side to side. Add a song or a chant.

#6 Pass the Ball in a Line

Have kids stand arms width apart. Encourage them to square up to the front of the room and to keep their legs, head, and body still.

Using a gym ball, they **reach with both hands** to the left to grab the ball and pass it in front of them to the person on their right.

Try more than one ball. You can also use balloons or beach balls. (A combination of different sizes and weights would be an added motor challenge for force modulation.)

If this set-up won't work to use as a group activity, try having them mimic the movement at their desk. They can sit like a statue and pick up an object with both hands (block, pencils, eraser, etc.) They move the objects from the left side of their desk and move it to the right side.

Then, repeat the activity and pass it all back to the left.

#7 Partner Ball Pass

Have two kids stand or sit back to back. They pass the ball using two hands, from left to right for several rounds. Then, have them switch and pass right to left. Use the same number in each direction to keep it equal.

Again, make sure their bodies and heads are still and they're just reaching with their arms.

#8 Simon Says

Play Simons Says or have kids imitate different body movements. You can lead, or choose the helper of the week to lead the exercise.

You can also work on auditory skills and following directions. Give several series of directions, such as:

"Touch your right hand to your left ear."

"Tap your left hand to your right foot, three times."

#9 Dance Moves

If you're feeling spontaneous and creative – show some dance moves that cross the midline! Or, have a student come up with their own moves that require midline crossing!

Some examples: teach your kids the Macarena, the Hustle (classic 70's moves!), or do the "dab"!

#10 Cleaning Up and Wiping Surfaces

When your students need to wipe their desks, they can focus on crossing midline! If a kiddo is right handed, I will sometimes cue them to hold onto the right corner of the desk with their left hand as their right hand does all the wiping. This way, they *have to* cross the middle of the body without rotating the trunk.

Other surfaces to clean: chalkboards, whiteboards, large windows, doors, etc

YouTube Videos for Midline Crossing

#11 Jack Hartmann's Crossover | Brain Breaks | Crossing the Midline (3:05)

Upbeat music, song, and demonstration that gets the arms crossing midline.

#12 Yoga for Kids – Children's Yoga – Brain Breaks – Kids Songs by the Learning Station (3:59)

A lady and boy demonstrate the exercises with song / music. The movements in this video have the arms *and* legs cross midline.

#13 **Minidisco Chocolat | Team4Animation (3:21)**

Two ladies dance to a fast, upbeat song.

#14 **Crossing the Midline: Heel Touches (1:30)**

This one is shorter *and* has more relaxing music. The lady's voice is soft and calming! Perfect if you want your kiddos to wind down as they take a break!

**These last four videos are from Minute Moves. They each contain quick dance move tutorials (by Kiki) followed by music and dancing.

They were created for dancing at home, but they're quick ones for school! Why not add a little hip-hop into your day!

#15 **The GRAPEVINE (1:49)**

This is a great one to get the feet crossing midline! I love the grapevine for kids!

#16 **The Kool Moe Dee (1:00)**

The arms cross midline in a "dab" position with side-to-side stepping.

#17 **The Cabbage Patch (1:39)**

The arms circle across the middle of the body. More footwork is required (but the feet don't cross midline.)

#18 **The Bart Simpson (1:46)**

This move is a little more complicated for kids, if they're up for the challenge! Legs step side to side and the arms cross in a "dabbing" position!

Hand Development

WHY NOT TO PUSH
EARLY WRITING

15 YEARS

8 YEARS

3 YEARS

@ADVICEIGIVEMYFRIENDS

✏ Learning to write My friend asked the other day, what's a good way to start teaching my nearly 3 year old how to write? Too soon!

As you can see in these X-rays, a young child's hand is not fully developed. The growth plates where the bone is still growing quickly make it look like a small stub on the end of each bone. The wrist doesn't have all the bones yet (they are there in the form of cartilage not ossified and hardened with calcium which will make them visible).

Most children won't have the fine motor strength or control til closer to kindergarten to write(4-5), though some will have it develop a bit sooner. Yes, preschool kids are learning a lot of prewriting skills and you can encourage this:

Letter puzzles and matching activities.
Sandpaper letters or using an index finger to trace out letter in dirt/sand.
Looking for letters and numbers in their environment.

🤲 But they need a lot of dexterity and fine muscle control which takes time and work to develop by:

✏ Scribbling and free drawing
🗂 Lacing, 🔗 Bead work (with supervision)
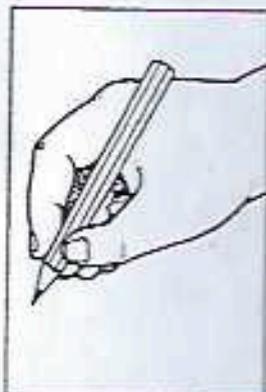💩 Play dough
✂ Scissors and Tweezers/tongs
🖌 Painting
🧱 Legos, paper airplanes, etc.

This is a great time to choose to worry less and let them be little. Hand strength and writing will come.

(X-rays courtesy of Dr Jeremy Jones, Radiopaedia.org From the case 23244.)

| Developmental Levels | | Pattern Components | 3.a. Crayon or Pencil Grasp |

Left Right

| L | R |

4½-6 years

Dynamic Tripod Posture:
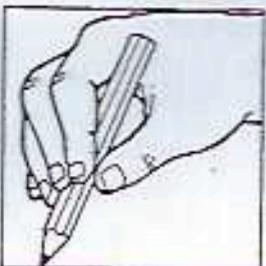Held with precise opposition of distal phalanges of thumb, index, and middle fingers
Ring and little fingers flexed to form stable arch
Wrist slightly extended
Grasped distally
MCP joints stabilized during fine, localized movements of PIP joints (Test by drawing tiny circles)
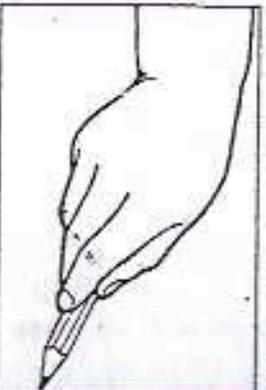
3½-4 years

Static Tripod Posture:
Held with crude approximation of thumb, index, and middle fingers
Continual adjustments by other hand
Ring and little fingers only slightly flexed
Grasped proximally
No fine localized movements of digit components, hand moves as a unit

2-3 years

Digital-Pronate Grasp:
Held with fingers
Wrist straight
Wrist pronated
Wrist slightly ulnar deviated
Forearm moves as a unit

1-1½ years

Palmar-Supinate Grasp:
Held with fisted hand
Wrist slightly flexed
Wrist slightly supinated away from mid-position
Arm moves as a unit

Develop Learn Grow

Development of Pencil Grasp – How to Promote a Functional Grasp with 5 Types of Activities

These 5 types of activities will help promote the development of a functional pencil grasp. You'll be surprised that a pencil is not even needed!

Development of pencil grasp for school and writing tasks starts at a very young age. And it continues through preschool and early elementary.

Near the start of my career as an occupational therapist, I was lucky enough to work in a preschool program that was absolutely amazing.

The director made sure that all staff members were well trained and worked together with the kids. We were such a well-oiled machine! As a team, we embedded helpful developmental strategies into every single part of the preschool routine!

The best part about the teachers and staff... not only did they incorporate the many therapeutic strategies... but they wanted to know the reasons *why* they were using them!

They loved learning more about the OT tricks that I had to share. And they wanted to know how and why they were helping the kids!

Our entire team loved seeing the results!

How Does Proper Pencil Grasp Develop?

Grasp development (and fine motor skill development) starts in babies!

Many motor milestones are important for grasping. Proper positioning during play and using the right toys lay the foundation for fine motor development.

The body starts building a foundation as a baby plays on the floor. She lies on her side for play, learns to roll and pushes up on her arms while on her belly.

Every movement against gravity helps the core and shoulders get strong and stable.

Pushing through open hands (weight-bearing) during tummy time prepares the muscles in the palms for grasping.

Play with various sizes and weights of toys help with grasping patterns in babies and toddlers. Proper developmental toys and activities can offer many opportunities for hand strengthening.

The skill development continues in older toddlers, preschoolers and kindergartners.

Pencil Grasp Development

Palmar Grasp

Digital Pronate Grasp

Digital Grasp

3-Jaw Chuck Grasp

Tripod Grasp

DevelopLearnGrow.com

(Pin this

What Does the Development of Pencil Grasp Look Like?

Young toddlers will typically first use their whole fist to grasp a large crayon or marker ('gross' or 'palmar grasp.')

As the nerves in the hand start to mature, they will turn their pointer finger toward the paper ('digital pronate grasp.') This grasp looks awkward (and incorrect) since the elbow often wings out to the side. However, it's part of the sequence for most kiddos.

Next, a young child may use the pads of *all* their fingertips on a marker or crayon in a 'digital grasp'.

Or, they may just use the pads of their **skill fingers: thumb, index and middle fingers**. This is called a '3-jaw chuck grasp' where the thumb is held in close to the palm.

Eventually, between ages 3 and 4, the 3-fingered static tripod grasp develops.

The thumb is held out away from the other fingers, making a circular shape with the index finger.

This maturing grasp is called a **static tripod grasp** because the fingers stay still like a statue. Movements for coloring or drawing come from the shoulder, or the forearm, or the wrist.

The mature pencil grasp that you want to see is called a **dynamic tripod grasp – the 3-finger grasp that uses finger movements!** This typically develops between ages 4 and 6.

Just like in the static tripod grasp, the pads of the thumb and index finger hold the pencil, as it rests on the side the middle finger. However, in the dynamic tripod grasp, the fingers move to control the pencil. The entire arm and wrist remain still and only finger movements are used.

Alternate Pencil Grasps That Are Functional for Kids

An alternate grasp that I sometimes see kids use on a pencil is the 4-fingered **quadrupod grasp**.

The pad of the middle finger has contact with the pencil and the and ring finger helps hold and support it. Instead of the pencil resting on the first joint of the middle finger, it rests on the ring finger.

All four fingers hold and move the pencil. The quadrupod grasp is functional and works for some kids. They still use finger movements, they're just gaining extra support from the ring and pinky fingers.

Another alternate grasp that kids will use is the **modified tripod grasp**. A child will place the pencil in between the index and middle fingers. When grasping a pencil in this manner, finger movements are also still used.

Functional Pencil Grasps

*Dynamic
Tripod Grasp

Quadrupod
Grasp

Modified
Tripod Grasp

DevelopLearnGrow.com

There are other not-so-pretty ways that kids hold a pencil! The thumb may wrap around the other fingers. Instead of seeing curved fingers, the end joints on the finger may bend inward.

Or, a child may try to hook their index finger around the top of the pencil.

Any of these last few examples can cause a child's hand to become sore and can cause more fatigue when writing.

The following activities are important for preschool, kindergarten and first grade students. However, they're also beneficial for older students who lack core strength and have poor hand awareness.

Activities That Promote the Development of Pencil Grasp

1. Vertical Surface Activities

Activities at a vertical surface help give the body stability needed for fine motor tasks.

In order to have a functional grasp, the core, shoulder, and wrist need to be strong and stable. They all support the whole arm so that the fingers can move freely without getting tired.

Vertical activities place the wrist in slight extension, allowing the fingers to move more effectively.

Have kids play or work at an easel, a wall, or a magnetic vertical surface. Place Legos or other building materials on a vertical surface.

2. Prone Activities (Lying on the Floor on the Stomach)

Lying on the belly helps to strengthen the shoulders and upper back.

The pressure from the floor is also *really* important for the forearms. It gives pressure input to the pinky side of the forearm that provides needed stability during grasping. It's what helps the pinky and ring fingers curl in for the tripod grasp.

Encourage lying on the stomach to look at books, play a boardgame, or complete a fine motor project.

[Check out Vertical Surface and Floor Activities for easy ways to add strategies 1 and 2 into to your play and learning routines.]

How a Vertical Surface and Floor Activities Improve Core Stability – FREE Printable

Having children use a vertical surface and complete tasks on the floor improves core stability, motor development and fine motor skills needed for school tasks. It also improves attention!

As a pediatric occupational therapist, I have kiddos work on the floor or at a vertical surface whenever possible! As much as possible!

They need it…

Due to changes in play from infancy to preschool, some kids' bodies aren't developing the core stability they need.

- I've seen decreased tummy time and play on the floor in babies. In place of this, I see increased time spent in seats and saucers.

- I've witnessed changes in outdoor and gross motor play in toddlers and preschoolers. I see more technology, more motorized toys and decreased movement activities.

- This impacts the development of muscles. The muscle (proprioceptive) system and movement / balance (vestibular) system don't get enough input. It affects strength and stability throughout the body, especially the core.

- This causes difficulty using core muscles to sit upright in a chair for learning tasks when the child gets older.

- Kids end up frequently shifting positions and they have trouble paying attention due to this constant moving. (It's also distracting for peers!)

Correct Sitting Posture for Your Student explains the importance of why children need to sit upright for school tasks.

Fine Motor Skills

Fine motor skills are the coordinated small muscle movements in the hands, fingers, thumb, and wrists. These small movements include:

- Pincer grasp (using just the thumb and one finger to pick something up).
- Hand-eye coordination (coordinating small movements in conjunction with their eyes).
- Hand and finger strength (to manipulate and grip objects).
- Two-handed tasks (coordinating the use of both hands together).

Working on fine motor skills:

Link to Fine Motor Activities : https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/families/help-your-child-build-fine-motor-skills

Fine Motor Materials:
1) Spray bottles
2) Tweezers
3) Spring-loaded clothespins
4) Child-sized paper punch
5) Tops to spin
6) Card, coins, or buttons to turn over
7) Manual eggbeaters in the water table
8) Eyedroppers and pipette
9) Finger puppets

Examples of activities that build fine motor skills

- Cutting with scissors.
- Holding and using a pencil.
- Color, scribble, or draw with markers, crayons, or chalk.
- Playdough manipulation.
- Snapping together blocks.
- Stacking blocks, small cups, buttons, wooden spools.
- Building with small blocks.
- Pulling apart objects
- Stringing beads
- Puppet play.
- Putting together simple puzzles.
- Playing board games.

- Opening and closing things (latches, lids, boxes).
- Eating with silverware.
- Holding and drinking from a glass.
- Brushing their teeth.

6 fine motor skills activities for kids

By Amanda Morin

Kids develop motor skills at different rates. But when young kids struggle with fine motor skills, they can have trouble with key tasks like grasping utensils (like pencils), moving objects with their fingertips, and using tools like scissors. They may also have difficulty learning to tie shoes. If your child's fine motor skills need a little extra help, try these fun activities.

1. Play-dough and putty

Play-dough and putty are often used as part of the heavy work component of a sensory diet. They can also help improve a child's fine motor skills. Encourage your child to squeeze, stretch, pinch and roll "snakes" or "worms" with the play clay. You can even have your child try to cut the play-dough with scissors. (Learn how to make three types of sensory-friendly slime, including putty slime.)

2. Painting

Different types of painting can help strengthen your child's hand-eye coordination and manual dexterity. Finger painting gives kids an opportunity to use their hands — and to get messy. Painting with a brush helps kids learn to hold a brush and gain greater control using it as a tool. (Paint-by-number kits are great for brush painting.) To add a little sensory play to the mix, you can even try scratch-and-sniff painting.

3. Playing with sponges

A new, clean sponge, some water and two bowls are all you need for another activity to build fine motor skills. Fill a bowl with water and leave the other empty. Your child can soak the sponge in the water and then squeeze out the sponge into the other bowl. It's a simple game that can strengthen hands and forearms. If you cut off a cube of the sponge and have a small chalkboard and some chalk, you can also do a "Wet-Dry-Try" multisensory handwriting activity.

4. Rice races

Divide a handful of uncooked rice into two plastic bowls and have an empty bowl handy. Give your child small plastic tweezers and grab a pair for yourself. Then, have a race to see who can be the first to transfer their rice into the empty bowl using the tweezers. If your child is struggling because the grains of rice are too small, you may want to begin with O-shaped cereal or pony beads.

5. Water play

Fill a cup about a quarter full of water. Give your child an empty cup and an eyedropper or a clean medicine syringe. Have your child try to transfer the water from one cup to the other by drawing the water into the dropper or syringe and then dropping or squirting it into the empty cup. You could also give your child more cups, add food coloring to the water, and make this a color-mixing experiment.

6. Gardening and planting

Digging and gardening may seem like activities more suited to building gross motor skills, but there are parts of it that require smaller muscle control, too. For instance, transferring seedlings into a garden requires hand-eye coordination skills to safely carry the smaller plant to the new hole. Your child will also need to be able to grasp a trowel to dig and to use a pincer grasp when picking up seeds to plant.
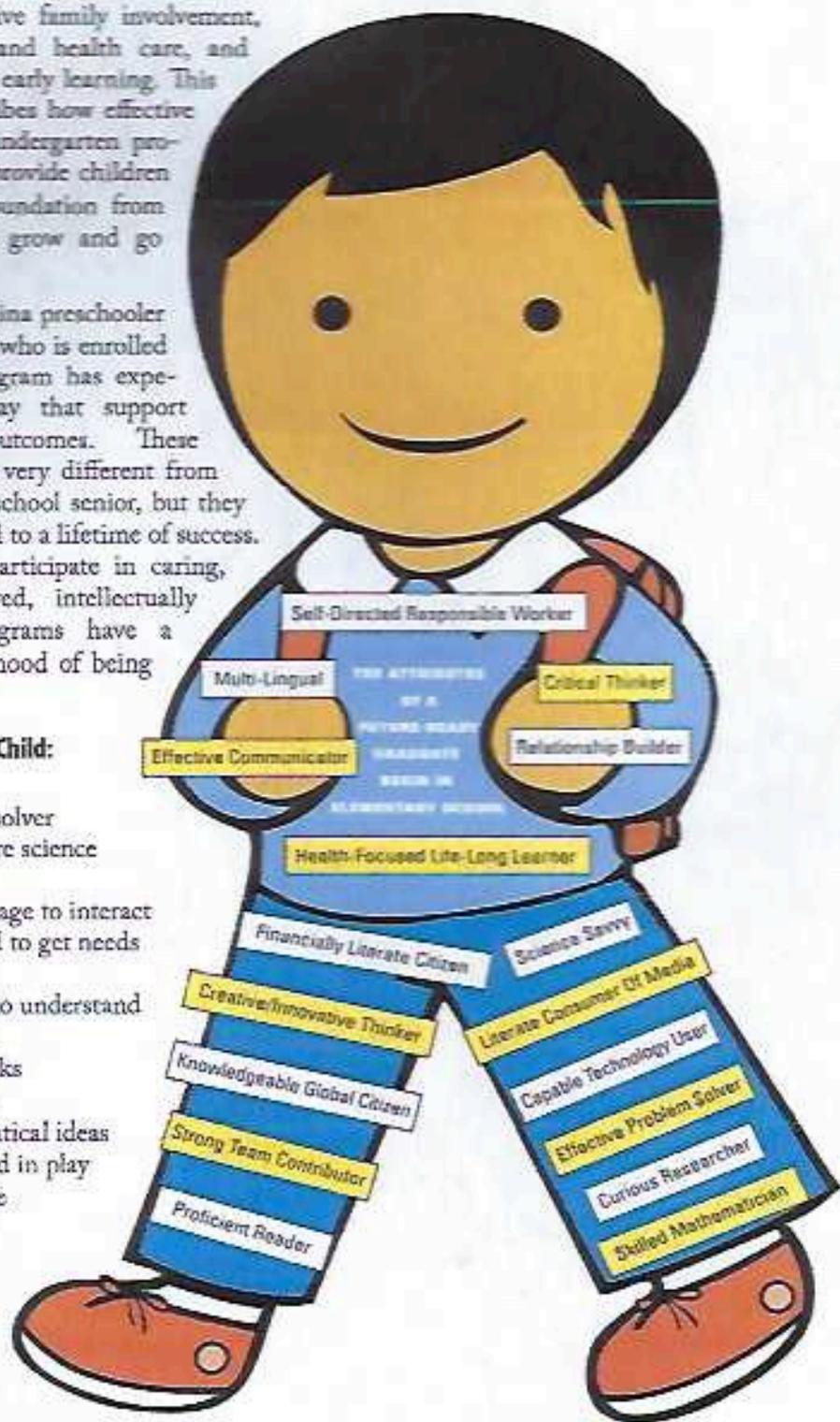
Future-Ready

We now know just how crucial it is for children to have a strong beginning if they are to succeed in school and in life. They need positive family involvement, good nutrition and health care, and access to quality early learning. This new *Guide* describes how effective preschool and kindergarten programs can help provide children with a sturdy foundation from which they can grow and go forward.

A North Carolina preschooler or kindergartner who is enrolled in a quality program has experiences every day that support future-ready outcomes. These experiences look very different from those of a high school senior, but they are no less critical to a lifetime of success. Children who participate in caring, safe, play-centered, intellectually challenging programs have a far greater likelihood of being future-ready.

The Future-Ready Child:

* is curious
* is a problem-solver
* likes to explore science activities
* can use language to interact positively and to get needs met
* is beginning to understand print
* plays and works intentionally
* uses mathematical ideas while engaged in play
* can use simple technology
* knows and practices healthy behaviors

Self-Directed Responsible Worker

Multi-Lingual

THE ATTRIBUTES OF A FUTURE READY GRADUATE BEGIN IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Critical Thinker

Effective Communicator

Relationship Builder

Health-Focused Life-Long Learner

Financially Literate Citizen

Science Savvy

Creative/Innovative Thinker

Literate Consumer Of Media

Knowledgeable Global Citizen

Capable Technology User

Strong Team Contributor

Effective Problem Solver

Proficient Reader

Curious Researcher

Skilled Mathematician

7 Ideas From Reggio Emilia That Any Early Childhood Teacher Can Use

How to adapt principles from the famed approach to foster interest-based learning for the youngest students.

By Abby Bucher
December 22, 2020

Photo by Allison Shelley/The Verbatim Agency for American Education: Images of Teachers and Students in Action

Twenty years ago, I learned something that changed my life. I was in an undergraduate class, and my mentor and professor shared slides about the schools of Reggio Emilia. At that moment as a teacher in training, I immediately found purpose and passion for what was possible through education.

Twenty years later, I am still as passionate about the Reggio Emilia approach as I was back then. Working in two Reggio-inspired schools and traveling to Italy twice to visit the birthplace of this teaching philosophy have given me opportunities to learn more about what this practice is, and how it looks, feels, and sounds.

Reggio Emilia is a child-centered approach to early childhood education that was developed in a northern Italian town of the same name shortly after World War II, and Reggio-inspired practice is a teacher's and/or school's interpretation of the Reggio Emilia approach. It will look different outside of Italy because the people and culture and history are what make it. That's why we use the phrase "Reggio-inspired practice"—we're inspired by Reggio to support our own context.

Every person and every school that becomes inspired will take various ideas for their own. In fact, any school can learn from this approach.

Reggio Emilia Principles That Other Schools Can Embrace

1. Image of the child: In Reggio Emilia, there is a phrase, "image of the child." It's what we believe about children and is at the center of my work. I believe that all children are capable, competent, and creative.

Tip: Write down three words that you believe about children and tape them somewhere obvious. Use those words to guide the day, the activities, and the environment.

2. Project work: Responding to children's interests helps bring authentic engagement and exploration to life. Project work fosters in-depth studies that the children and teacher(s) are living and learning alongside each other. Listening well, leading with questions, and exploring—using experience, materials, hands-on learning, and integrating content areas—all create opportunities to learn in deeply integrated ways throughout the day.

Tip: Notice what the children are talking about, what they are playing, and if there are patterns or excitement around that topic. Ask what the children already know about that topic, or maybe ask the children what they are curious about. Follow up with questions they have about the topic, and start exploring those questions.

3. 100 languages: In Reggio Emilia, "100 languages" refers to the fact that children learn in many different ways, and it's important to offer multiple opportunities for children to show what they know. It might be through reading, writing, creating a sculpture, painting, or hiking. Having various ways to create and construct offers children multiple ways to learn.

Tip: Ask the children what they like to do. If, for example, you have a lot of children who like to draw, maybe offering experiences with clay, watercolor, or loose parts can engage the children in deeper ways through a medium that excites them.

4. Environment as the third teacher: How does your environment reflect all learners? How does it invoke wonder, beauty, and engagement so that the children feel excited to enter? In Reggio Emilia, "environment as the third teacher" is an idea that allows us to think critically about how we are setting up the environment so that all children can learn.

Tip: The thinking of the children should be on the walls. Put up their math strategies, artwork, and photographs. Put up stories they have written in the book area. All of this shows that you think their work is valuable enough that it should be shared.

5. Teacher as learner: Even though I have been focused on my learning and teaching practices over the last 20 years, I still feel like I am learning something new about Reggio-inspired practice every day. Through reading, collaborating, and thinking alongside the children, I learn more. We, as teachers, should see ourselves as learners and researchers so that we can be in a space of process and active learning.

Tip: Write down what the children say in order to be inspired about what you do. Carry around a clipboard, and write down conversations so that you have a living document that shows you are a learner.

6. Family as partner: We cannot be a school without our families. It's important to value the relationships with families. To be able to know the child well and share that with families makes them feel seen and valued.

Tip: Find the best way to contact three to five families a week: Whether it's by email, phone call, or text, let them know what you see their child doing. Be specific. Be authentic.

7. Documentation: Children share so many ideas and questions. It's important that we, as teachers, document that work and make it visible so that they can see their process of thinking. We can, as observers, assess the process and learning that has taken place during the project.

Tip: Take lots of photographs. Write down students' thoughts. Share the story and the big findings so that the various audiences (children, teachers, families, policy makers) can see the thinking that has happened.

What I have learned through my studies of Reggio-inspired practice is that everything is done with purpose and intention. We should not just do to do, but we should have intent for everything we do with children. Reggio Emilia has given me an opportunity to deepen my understanding of what teaching, learning, and living can look like. Over the years I have been studying it, I have continued to take what I have read, observed, learned, and interpreted for my own context. It's an ongoing process that will forever be my passion.

The Hundred Languages of Children / The Hundred Languages of Childhood

The child is made of one hundred.
The child has
A hundred languages
A hundred hands
A hundred thoughts
A hundred ways of thinking
Of playing, of speaking.
A hundred always a hundred
Ways of listening of marveling of loving
A hundred joys
For singing and understanding
A hundred worlds
To discover
A hundred worlds
To invent
A hundred worlds
To dream
The child has
A hundred languages
(and a hundred hundred hundred more)
But they steal ninety-nine.
The school and the culture
Separate the head from the body.
They tell the child:
To think without hands
To do without head
To listen and not to speak
To understand without joy
To love and to marvel
Only at Easter and Christmas
They tell the child:
To discover the world already there
And of the hundred
They steal ninety-nine.
They tell the child:
That work and play
Reality and fantasy
Science and imagination
Sky and earth
Reason and dream
Are things
That do not belong together
And thus they tell the child
That the hundred is not there
The child says: NO WAY the hundred is there

- Loris Malaguzzi,

The Reggio Emilia approach is an early education or preschool philosophy that uses four key principles to focus on a child's natural development. The approach is both child-centered and directed, taking the philosophy that learning must make sense to the student (even the youngest students) in order to be effective and meaningful.

A child's point of view is completely respected and the student is encouraged to follow their own educational path. It is believed that a child's driving sense of curiosity, along with their inherent potential will foster an interest in learning, allowing them to learn and succeed long-term. It is that curiosity and potential that should ultimately set the path and the direction that any and all learning will follow.

Reggio Emilia Principles

The Reggio Emilia philosophy is based upon the following set of principles:

- Children must have some say over what they learn; additionally, the senses play a big role in the learning process.
- Children engage with their senses to help them learn and fully process something.
- Children are encouraged to interact with other children and explore the world through material items and relationships.
- Children should be encouraged to always express themselves and be given infinite means and opportunities to do so.

Development

This unique approach to educating children was founded in the villages around Reggio Emilia, Italy after World War II. Parents were looking for a way to teach their children and found that the early years of development were the best time to help children figure out who they are as individuals.

The villages in and around Reggio Emilia still follow these principles today. Students are taught by *atelieristas,* who are teachers with arts backgrounds.

What to Expect

Parental involvement is invited and encouraged. Many parents volunteer in the classroom and employ many of the methods found in the classroom at home. A major tenet of the Reggio Emilia philosophy is that students should study in a comfortable environment that makes them feel at home. Classrooms are also aesthetically pleasing.

When it comes to actual learning, a variety of materials and vehicles are used, including clay, paint, dramatic play, among others. Individual and class projects are often undertaken and last for weeks and sometimes months. These projects allow students to learn about many different facets of whatever it is they are studying.

Important Words:

Co-construction is the method used to increase a child's learning while they are working with another child or other children. Co-construction allows for active dialogue and collaboration between the students and the teacher.

Documentation is a way for children to display what they have learned at school. It could be a project that a child has created or a series of drawings that have been created throughout the school year. Documentation is a way to show a child's progress in learning.

Flowcharts are the system used to record curriculum planning and assessment. They record progress step-by-step and are designed to record the past, present, and future.

Portfolios are a collection of a child's work over a designated period of time.

Every person and every school that becomes inspired will take various ideas for their own. In fact, any school can learn from this approach.

Setting up a Reggio-inspired Activity: Start with a question

Reggio inspired activities are about exploration and discovery, exploring with their senses, asking questions, testing theories, making plans and thinking deeply.

When you are **setting up a provocation** (*an inquiry or discovery activity*) think about some of the questions your students have been asking. **What have they been wondering about?**

This is your cue, **your opportunity to provide an experience** which will engage their interests.

From there, get some idea of **what the children already know** about the subject. Depending on their age you can **do a brainstorm** where you discuss what you know and make a mind map. For younger children, what they understand will **probably come through in their play**, drawings and paintings.

Make notes of these as well as any misconceptions they may have, this will help you to plan an activity/inquiry that really relates to what your child knows or wants to know.

Plan your activity: Connect the activity to your students' interests

Now thinking about what they **want to know** and what they **already know,** you can start to plan your activity/inquiry.

Is your activity going to be:

1) An observation
2) A sensory exploration
3) Exploring a new material/art medium
4) An observational painting or drawing
5) A discovery activity like a nature walk

Gather your materials

Take along a notebook and pencil for sketching, a bag to carry any treasures and go explore.

Listen to what your students are talking about, notice what they are doing, these little clues will help you expand on the learning

Presenting an Activity (*A Provocation*)

As much as possible, **try to include natural materials in your activity**. Natural materials are not only beautiful but also appeal deeply to our senses; their color, texture, smell, and even taste are far more engaging than plastic alternatives. Baskets and bowls as well as glass vases can be picked up inexpensively at charity stores.

Try using:

- cane baskets
- wooden bowls
- wooden trays
- water
- Flowers and plants
- Leaves, pinecones, sticks, rocks

When you are arranging an activity, **think about how the activity looks**.

- Does it make you want to play too?
- Would you be attracted to this activity?
- Can you see everything that is available?
- Do you have some idea of what you might do with this activity?

Define your work area

Next, **define the work area.** When you define the work area with a mat or a tray you draw your child's attention in, they will move to that area. Try using:

- A small cloth placemat like the one in the math provocation above
- A hard surface for building with blocks
- A mirror

Gather and group your materials

Then, **group your materials around your work area.** Use wooden trays or baskets to keep similar materials together.

Using mirrors

Can mirrors can enhance the activity. Is there an aspect of the activity which would benefit from being seen from another perspective?

- Using a mirror with blocks allows the front side of the blocks to be seen, encouraging the child to build more 3-dimentionally.
- When painting or drawing, a mirror underneath the object allows the underside to be seen as well as reflecting light and color.
- Surrounding the activity with mirrors reflects light back onto the child as well as engages the child's curiosity as they watch their movements.

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Taken from:

1) VERYWELL Family https://www.verywellfamily.com/reggio-emilia-approach-2764968
2) An Everyday Story https://aneverydaystory.wordpress.com/
3) Edutopia https://www.edutopia.org/article/7-ideas-reggio-emilia-any-early-childhood-teacher-can-use