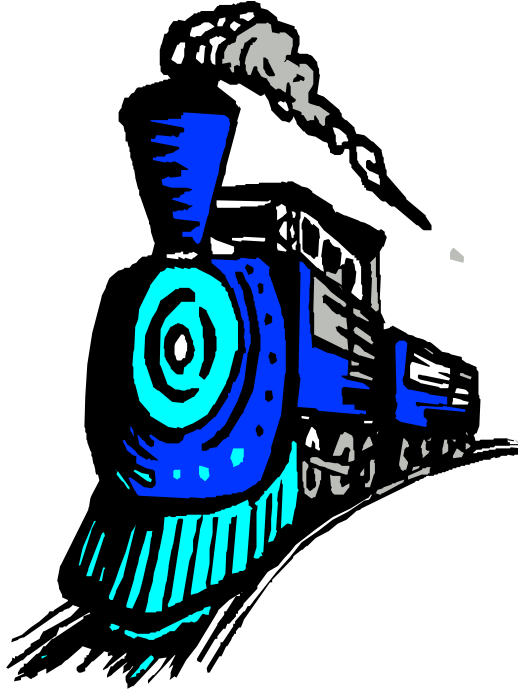


Parenting Under Pressure



Core, Strength-Based Strategies
for Responding Instead of Reacting to
Your Kids During Times of Stress

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The Power of a Positive, Strength-Based Approach



What is it?

- An emerging approach to raising children that is exceptionally positive and inspiring. It begins with belief that all young people have or can develop strengths and/or utilize past successes to mitigate problem behavior and enhance functioning. It continues with practice methods that identify and marshal these strengths for necessary behavior change

Strength-Based Practice: It's all about *Attitude & Actions*

- Educators, professionals and parents maximize children's potential when they convey an attitude to each and every one that says:

I believe in you and I am *thrilled* to be part of your life.

And then, through their daily actions - show that they mean it.

When parents display such positivity, kids feel better about themselves and, from both a neurological and psychological perspective, are more likely to use and cultivate their strengths.

- “Positive emotions flood our brains with dopamine and serotonin, chemicals that not only make us feel good but dial up the learning centers of our brains to higher levels. Positive emotions help humans to organize new information, keep that information in the brain longer and retrieve it faster later on. And they enable us to make and sustain more neural connections, which allows us to think more quickly and creatively, become more skilled at complex analysis and problem solving and see and invent new ways of doing things.”

- Sean Achor, Happiness Advantage

- Genuine believing attacks self-doubt (“Self-doubt kills ability” – Degas), makes kids feel better about themselves, and provides hope &

Hope is Humanity's Fuel.

- When kids are raised in positive, strength-based settings, they function better and, most importantly, build meaningful, energizing relationships with their parents – which sustain and motivate them through the vicissitudes of life. Parenting is all about relationship.

Rules without Relationships = Rebellion

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

- James Garborino, Ph.D

- Twenty years from now, your kids won’t remember much of what you said to them, but they’ll all recall how you made them feel.
- . Do the “little” things right (e.g. greet warmly, maintain a neat and appealing environment, follow a schedule, create and maintain routines, *spend time with your kids and truly listen to them*, etc.) and big problems diminish. In a nutshell: Practice the Golden Rule. Don’t say or do anything to your kids that you wouldn’t want said or done to you.
- Use consequences instead of punishment. Consequences are related to what a kid does, punishment isn’t. Consequences reinforce values.
- Emphasize hellos and goodbyes: “How are you?” “Fantastic!” “All the better for seeing you!” “I’m living the dream, and you?” Good morning, handsome!”) Make bedtime special. A smile and a warm greeting is the face’s way of giving an emotional hug.
- Have you ever watched an actor in a bad mood? If you’re in a bad mood, it might be prudent to fake that you’re not. Actors entertain for a few hours. Parents shape lives. A positive attitude sends the message: I want to be here. I care about you. I believe in you. You will make it. And we will get through hard times. We always do!

Activities & Self Esteem Building

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

Universal Opportunity for Success

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

Self-Esteem Building Options:

- Games: Board, video, card, bingo, Simon Says, Pictionary, etc.
- Karaoke & music (concerts, kazoo bands, shows, music videos, lip-syncing, etc.)
- House records: longest dice roll without getting doubles, longest domino chain, highest stack of playing cards, etc.
- Volunteering (delivering food, helping neighbors & relatives (in safe ways)
- Sports (hiking, biking, weight-lifting, martial arts, roller-skating, soccer, etc.)
- Fitness (create fitness charts for jogging or calisthenic, aerobics, jogging/walking, yoga, meditation, rope and obstacle courses, etc.)
Richard Louv, author of *Last Child in the Woods* cites childrens; “disconnection from nature” as a major reason kids with mental health issues are often over-medicated. Get them outside!
- Hobbies (art, music, crafts, pottery, carpentry, reading, photography, magic, technology, word search. etc.)
- Animals (pets, fish tanks)
- Home repair jobs (painting, landscaping, reorganizing, repairing, etc.)



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

Every kid needs his/her own special niche!

Trumpet Success

Call friends and grand



parents, keep a scrapbook....hang

pictures.

The Observing Ego

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

Respond instead of ***React***.

Use the Force, Betty!

...I mean, Luke."

Lack of support leads to punitive actions.

Respond =
The Golden Rule

Strategies to use in order to keep your cool:

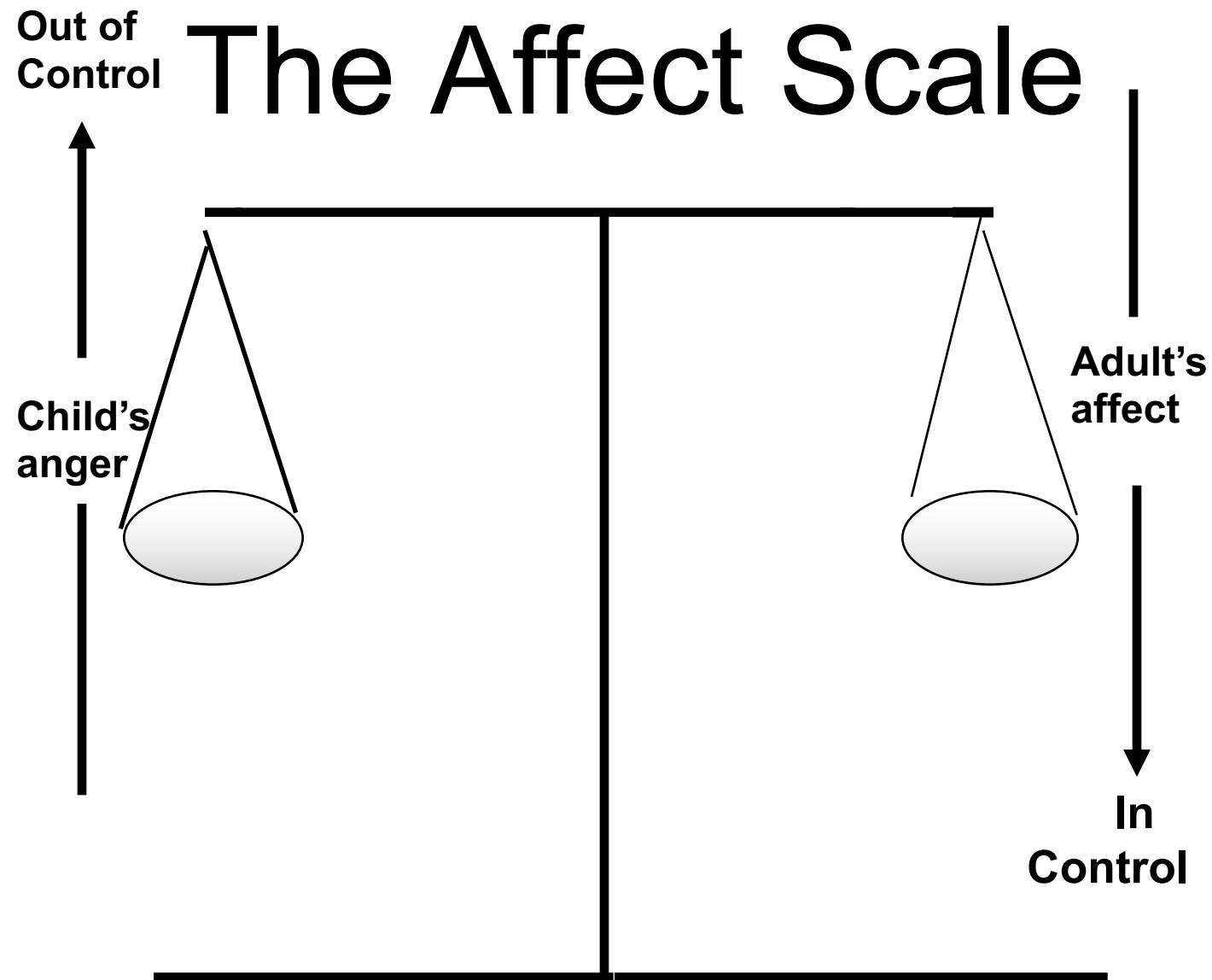
1. Think about the principle of lack of support being related to punitive actions – and don't go there. Think: *"I can do anything for 90 more minutes!"*
2. Visualize yourself going to bed with a BIG smile on your face or driving home content, *thinking "I kept my cool all day. I didn't 'react' like I have in the past. I did good!"*
3. Think about tomorrow: *If I respond instead of react to the end of every day, my relationships will grow stronger...and parenting will get easier.*
4. Think about a M.A.S.H. Unit: *When I'm at my worst, I need to give it my best!*
5. ***Use the Force, Luke!*** *Don't succumb to the Dark Side.*
6. Think Wants and Needs: What do *I want* to do! But what do I *NEED* to do. I want to yell but....



Self esteem is fragile even when it's good!

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

The Affect Scale

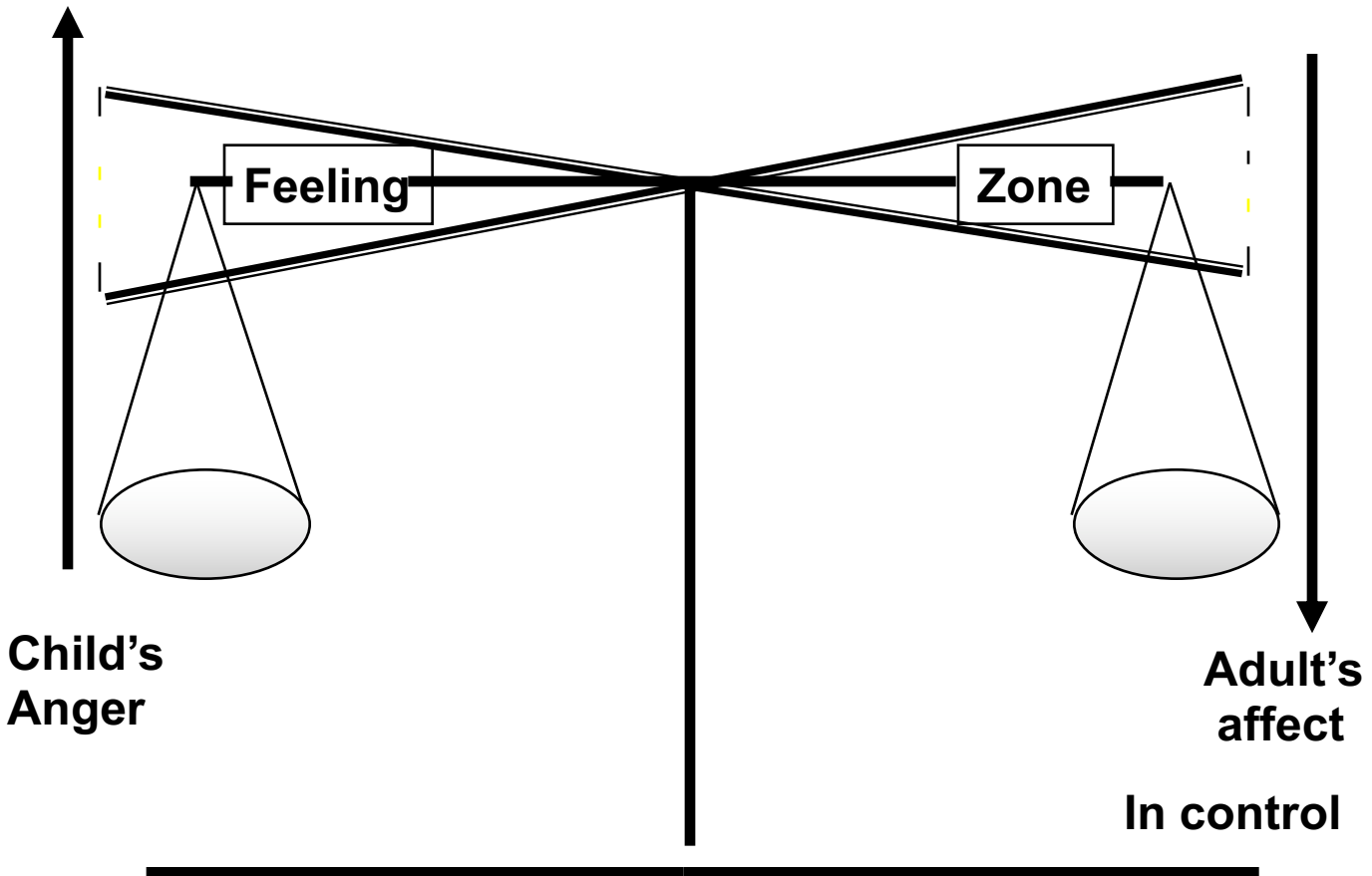


Key: Establish inverse relationship

As they get louder, you become more quiet

Loss of
Control

The Affect Scale



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

Said in a controlled, but somewhat expressive manner:

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

“Mary, I’m angry about that...”

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

Content vs. Message



“You won’t be around next week?”

2 weeks later...

“*You*...won’t be around next week.”



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

Body Messages



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

NBD = No Big Deal!

VS.

“You need to get it done now!”

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



Core Verbal Interventions

Non-Judgmental Exploration & Supportive Interventions:

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

Repeating or Paraphrasing w/qualifiers:

Child: “I hate doing this chore!”

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

Youth: This thing will never end. It will never be the same, again.

Parent: *Sometimes*, we have thoughts like those, don’t we? *Right now* we’re going through a brutal period, right?”

Feelings Update:

“How do you feel about that?”

Sandwich Approach:

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

Praise and Encouragement:

“Way to go!” “That was fantastic!” “I like the way you sorted the clothes and folded them.” (Try and praise the specific action(s) versus the child) “You’ve done this before and can do it again.” “You have the ability to work this out, don’t you?” “Take it slowly. You can do it.”

Humor:

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

Apologizing:

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

Reasoning Responses:

“What if every parent let her kid....”

Connecting Statements:

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

•Empowering Interventions:

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

Explorative (Control):

“How about we focus on what you can control?”

Explorative Responses (psychological):

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

Explorative Responses (historical):

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

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

“Have you ever completed such a difficult assignment? How’d you do it?”

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

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

Explorative (reflective):

“Is that behavior working for you?”

Plan Making:

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

Positive Predicting

It is extremely beneficial to talk with kids about their futures. Doing so literally opens up their brains and gives them hope! And *hope is humanity's fuel*.

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

“How are we going to celebrate when this pandemic ends and we can get back to our normal life?”

“What’s the first restaurant we should go to when this is over?”

“What are you to be when you grow up?”

“Tell me your top 3 colleges you’d like to attend?”

“How should we celebrate when you run a miles without stopping, and whom should we call?”

Visualizing the Future

James Garbarino postulates that terminal thinking – the inability to articulate one’s future – may be the clue to why some children succeed while other’s fail.

Positive Predicting

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

“How should we celebrate when you...”

“Whom should we call to tell them what you did?”

Kids with executive functioning issues are often helped by seeing photographs of an expected task or behavior. They need to visualize what is expected.

Three Universal Truths from Kids at Hope (KidsatHope.com):

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

Create questions that you can ask your kids:

Decoding Problem Behavior

Response to problem behavior: Understand > Reframe > Squeeze

Behavior is always a message

Pejorative Label	Positive, Hope-Based Reframe
Obnoxious	Good at pushing people away
Rude, arrogant	Good at affecting people
Resistant	Cautious
Lazy, un-invested	Good at preventing further hurts, failures
Manipulative	Good at getting needs met
Just looking for attention	Good at caring about and loving yourself
Close-mouthed	Loyal to family or friends
Different, odd	Under-appreciated
Stubborn & defiant	Good at standing up for yourself
Tantrum, fit, outburst	Big message
Learning disability	Roadblocks

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

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

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

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

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

The harder I try the higher I fly! Be the eagle!

What's a mistake? An opportunity to take!

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

Reframing

Seeing and praising the positive, self-protective value in “negative” behaviors. Careful attention should be given to the age and cognitive level of a child before using a reframe.

1. A child who is always looking for attention:

R: I think it's great you look for attention – good or bad. It means you feel you deserve more and that's good. But I'm like a pie and have to make sure everyone gets an equal slice

2. A youth who acts rudely:

R: You have an amazing ability to affect people! Or, “I think you're pretty good at giving to others what you might be experiencing.

3. A youth who cheats on an exam:

R: I'm glad you wanted to pass, get a top grade. That's great! But you made a real bad choice to cheat. You can pass any test on your own.

4. A child who acts in a stubborn manner:

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

5. A youth who seems unmotivated:

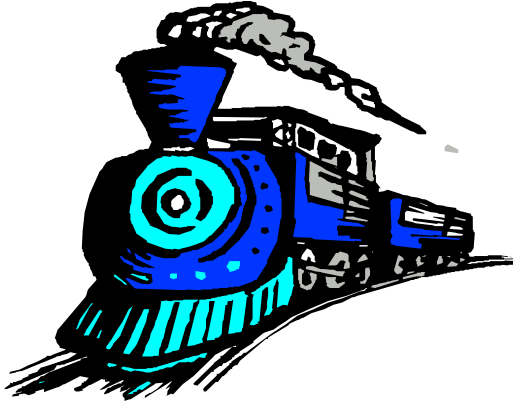
R: You're pretty good at protecting yourself. If you don't try you can't be embarrassed. But you're a bright kid and if you just take it step by step you'll probably have success.

6. A child who's bossy with peers:

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

Providing Hope & Possibility Through Metaphors & Positive Predicting

The Train



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

The Roadblock



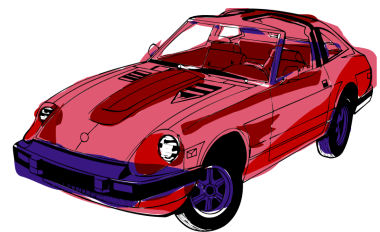
“It’s not a learning disability, bi-polar, Asperger’s; it’s a roadblock. All big cities have them, but people get to work on time every day. Why? They find away around it. You can to. Many successful people have roadblocks similar to yours.”

The Melting Snowball



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

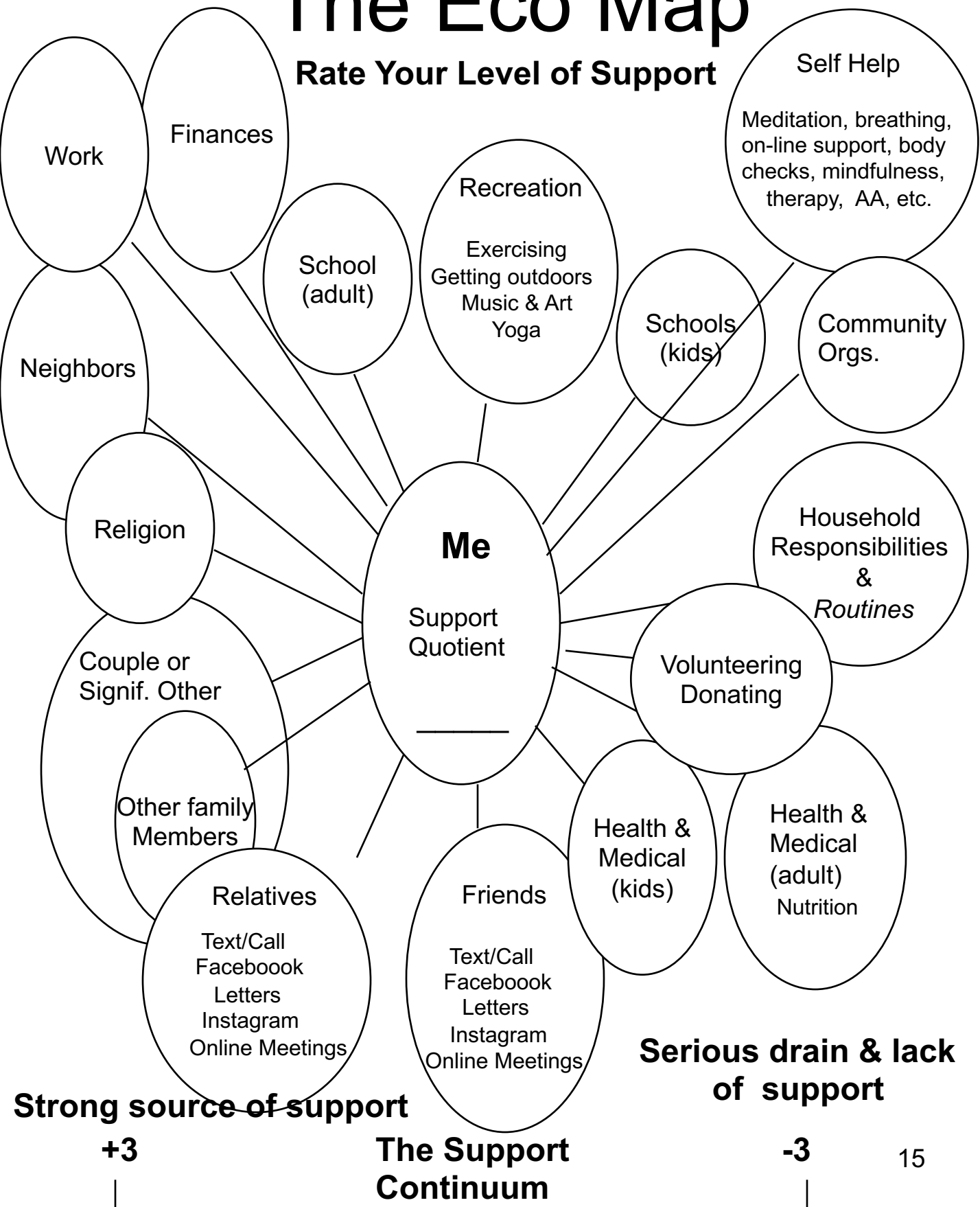
The 2020 Edition



“Cars improve every year. People get better every day. You’re the 2020 Steve. You don’t over-heat as much as the 2019 Steve...have a sleeker design, follow the road signs better. Don’t give me this bull: ‘Same old me.’ You get better every day, man...wiser, more experienced, more mature.”

The Eco Map

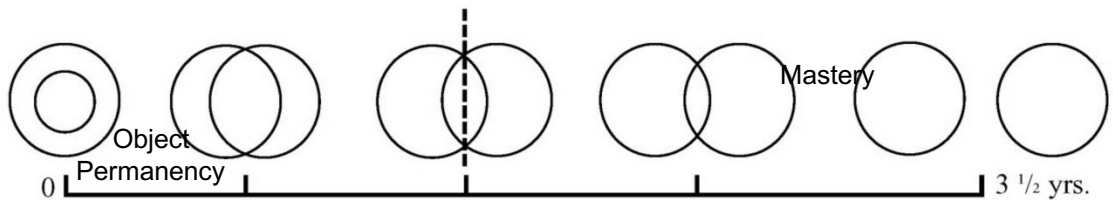
Rate Your Level of Support



THE HOLDING ENVIRONMENT

"A Total Environment Provision"

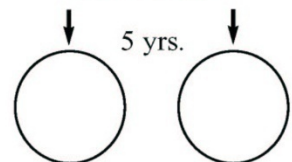
TASK: "good enough parenting"



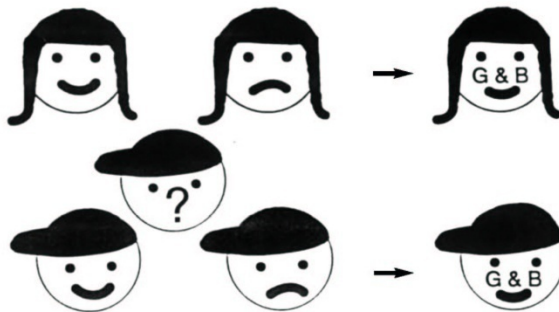
Sociopathic
Borderline
"Terrible Twos"
Separation-Individuation

SPLITTING MECHANISM
Good mother/Bad mother

OBJECT
CONSTANCY
cohesive self
sense of self

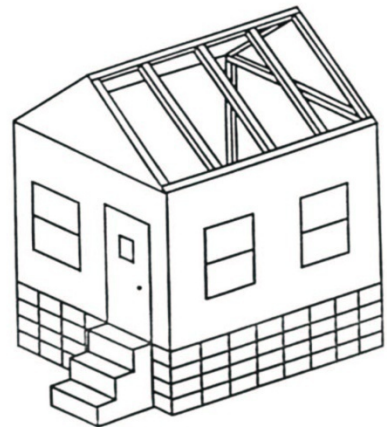


TASK:
merge the good
and bad introjects



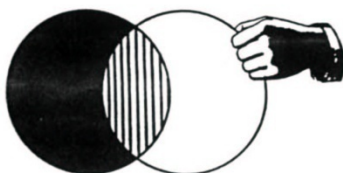
Social Accommodation
Social Subordination

Foundation



GOAL:
Filling in the emptiness

Effect of Separation



FILLERS VS. TALKERS
DEFICITS VS. CONFLICT



Behavior Management: Understanding, Prevention, and Principles

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

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

Practice *pattern identification*. Note if a child or group act out in a predictable manner (i.e. at the same time each day, over the same issues, etc.). Once a pattern is identified, investigate your role in contributing to the problem(s). What can you change, modify or practice?

What new skills does the child or group need to practice? How can you make the environment more *user-friendly*? Next, seek out the child’s input and develop a plan.

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

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

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

Give kids choices regarding the nature of their discipline (e.g. Let a kid decide where he wants to take a break, or a task that will make up for the poor choice he/she made)

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

Remember the most important factor, other than safety, when issuing consequences, is the sanctity of the parent/child relationship.

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

Establish a limit setting progression. In other words, everyone should know exactly what happens if a child refuses to accept a limit. Refusals lead to a loss of trust (temporarily – which can restrict access to certain things/activities.

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

Whenever possible, and for more serious behaviors, try and let the kid decide the appropriate consequence(s). Base decisions on *frequency* and *severity*.

Practice progressive discipline. Use *severity* and *frequency* to determine more serious consequences. Empower the youth or group to determine their consequences.

Limit Setting

Limit setting progresses in five clearly defined stages:

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

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

Verbal prompts, reminders, warnings

Redirection, distraction, divide & conquering

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

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

Humor

Non-verbal interventions (e.g. Hand signals, lights out, circulating around the room, etc.)

Use the power of a group

Channel (e.g. Have an energetic kid do something physical)

Hold an impromptu meeting

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

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

Logical Consequences

Proximity Manipulation

Levels of supervision can be intensified when children and youth behave inappropriately:

“Carla, please don’t bike off the street today.”

“Billy, you will need to stay in the house until you start acting in ways that restore our trust.”

When a child begins to improve his behavior, he can earn the incentive of gaining more freedom, with respect to his proximity to adults.

Re-Doing

Youth who have trouble meeting expectations, such as walking quietly to lunch, not running in the hallways, talking inappropriately, etc., can be asked to **re-do** the specific task.

“Could you please try and redo this chore? I don’t think it’s your best effort.”

“Could you please try and say that to me again? Thanks.”

The Directed Chat

When a child is not responding to supportive interventions, a parent – if conditions permit – can request a private chat, preferably in a different location. By changing location, it is often easier to approach the issue at hand with more calmness and emotional distance.

Going to a neutral location often facilitates conflict resolution.

A parent, for instance, could ask a disruptive child to join her outside the kitchen for a minute. Oftentimes, by giving a kid such one-to-one attention, problematic behavior is ameliorated.

Removal of Attention

At times, the best way to deal with negative behavior is to walk away from it and/or switch-off.

Parent: “You’re choosing to make me upset. I think I’m going to take a break from being with you now. I’m hoping that later we can work this out.”

Natural Consequences

Natural consequences involve discipline that it is a *natural* byproduct of one’s actions.

Examples:

“I think I am going to stop working with you now. I’m uncomfortable with your language. You could make better choices. I’ll check back with you in a little while to see if you can talk with me in a more civil manner.”

If a group is too loud and unruly an adult could just sit quietly and wait for them to calm down. Other consequences could be applied if this intervention isn’t successful.

A youth refuses to do his homework. The natural consequence: He fails the test.

A child refuses to wear gloves. The natural consequence: Frozen fingers

Loss of Privileges

Restricting a privilege, such as using a computer, going outside, or missing an activity, is generally a *delayed consequence* and should only be used for more serious behaviors or when minor behaviors become problematically repetitive.

Bettelheim: Taking activities away from a troubled child is like taking cough syrup from a person with a sore throat

Reparation (Restitution, Community Service, etc.)

If a child out towards a human being or physical object, it invariably causes psychological and physical damage, respectively. It is, at times, helpful to have the youth (or group) that has offended *repair* the damage (within herself, as well). Examples:

A youth is caught bullying others:

Reparation: Have the child apologize to the person/people he/she has offended and require her to help others for a certain duration of time.

A child throws food in the kitchen:

Reparation: Require the child to help out in the kitchen.

Another way to frame this consequence is to view the act of repentance as “giving back.”

Parent: “Bill, you took away some of the good feelings and safety we feel here by making the bad decision to _____. I’d like for you to give something back by doing something nice that makes us all feel better.

You took something away...now give something back

Whenever possible let the youth or group decide the consequence

Breaks (Time-Out)

Children often react negatively to the term *time-out*. As a result, it is best to use different words. It's also quite helpful to give your kids choices about where they go:

“Could you please step outside the room and find a place to *chill out*, thanks?”

“Jim, I'd like you to sit at the table or couch, calm down, and think about making some better choices, thanks.”

“Sara, would you please take a *break*, thanks. You can choose where to do it.”

There are two forms of Breaks: **Set Amounts** and **Open Ended**

Set Amounts = Established time-out lengths and progressions

Example: 2 minutes > refusal > loss of fun activities until its completed > refusal > contextual decision > completion of original 5 minutes > processing.

Open Ended = No set amounts of time for breaks

Examples: “Could you please go sit on the couch or bed for a while and chill out.” > refusal
> “The longer it takes you to move, the less likely it becomes for you to get involved with the activities coming up. If you can't make good choices in the house, how can we feel comfortable having you leave it right now?”

2 warnings (i.e. supportive interventions) > “Could you please take a break.
Please return when you think you are ready to calmly join the family.”

2 warnings (i.e. supportive interventions) > “Could you please take some space?
I'll come and talk to you when you are sitting quietly.”

Where are Breaks Conducted?

Best place: A non-stimulating area; a natural part of the house. You don't necessarily have to have specific time out areas. Give kids a choice about where to take their break.

How are Breaks Conducted?

Children should always be allowed to sit comfortably to complete breaks. A break should be conducted in a quiet and respectful manner. The child does not have to be facing the corner or wall.

Processing: Upon completion of a consequence, kids and parents should generally process what occurred. They should be asked to:

- Give their view of what happened.
- Come up with better choices that could have been made.
- Recollect if they have been in similar situations and acted more appropriately?
If yes, what skills did they use?

Parents should be open to admitting mistakes and taking some ownership for what transpired. Apologizing is a powerful tool.

Reintegration: Review steps for integrating back into the swing of things (i.e. review expectations, logistics, etc.