



*Teaching Students with Severe Emotional and
Behavioral Disorders:*

BEST PRACTICES GUIDE TO INTERVENTION

From Firwood & Oak Grove Schools

**A Connecting IDEAS Project
funded by the Office of
Superintendent of Public
Instruction, State of
Washington**

A joint venture with the
Clover Park School District,
Child Study and Treatment
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Running head: TEACHING STUDENTS WITH SEVERE EBD

Teaching Students with Severe Emotional and Behavioral Disorders: Best Practices Guide to Intervention

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Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, State of Washington

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Preface

This best practices guide is written for general and special education teachers who work with students that demonstrate severe emotional and behavioral disorders in the classroom. As will be described later, students in today's classroom are demonstrating challenging behaviors that are more frequent and intensive than in previous years. Teachers complain about not having the knowledge base, skills, or confidence to teach these students. In addition, there is a severe shortage of teachers trained in this area. This shortage of teachers is also coupled with a high burn-out rate among existing teachers, since students with emotional and behavioral disorders are especially challenging to teach.

Our goal in writing this manual is to provide current and future teachers with information regarding effective practices for working with students that are demonstrating emotional and behavioral disorders in the classroom. We hope that the knowledge presented will help teachers feel more confident in working with these students and help teachers be more effective in their practices. This will result in more students with emotional and behavioral disorders receiving the help they need.

Resource Guide Structure

Part I of this guide gives an overview of best practices for teaching students with emotional and behavioral disorders. This overview begins with a discussion of issues and causal factors relating to students with emotional and behavior disorders. Selected proactive interventions are then described, followed by a discussion of individualized behavioral programming.

Part II of this guide presents 10 common problem behaviors that our contributing teachers have faced. Suggested techniques for successful intervention are then provided in detail. These chosen problem areas are those that practicing teachers at Oak Grove Elementary and Firwood Secondary Schools (see below) designated as the most important issues they feel teachers face today in their daily interactions with students with emotional and behavioral disorders. The interventions listed are from the voice of the teachers, as the interventions are designed by teachers themselves. The guide ends with an extensive reference list, which can be a valuable resource for those looking for additional information.

Development

This best practices manual is a result of work funded by a Special Education Improvement Grant awarded in 2002 by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction in the State of Washington. The grant provided funding to establish a training site for the teaching of students with behavior disorders and to form a best practices design team in order to develop a best practices guide for classroom teachers.

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The two partner organizations in the grant were the School of Education at Seattle University and the Oak Grove Elementary and Firwood Secondary Schools of the Clover Park School District. The elementary and secondary schools are located on the grounds of the Child Study and Treatment Center (CSTC) in Lakewood, Washington. The Child Study and Treatment Center (CSTC) is Washington's long-term care facility for children and adolescents presenting with significant emotional and behavioral disorders. Youth involved with CSTC have a history of exhibiting severe emotional and behavioral issues that have not been well-managed in less restrictive environments.

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Seattle University is one of the Northwest's largest independent institutions of higher education. The School of Education at Seattle University offers numerous graduate level programs, including master in teaching (MIT), counseling, school psychology, literacy for special needs, and special education. One focus of the Special Education Graduate Program at Seattle University is to train teachers to work with K-12 students in special education who demonstrate significantly challenging behaviors.

Throughout the 2002-2003 academic year, six 2-hour workshops were conducted with the best practices design team. During these workshops, contributors met, brainstormed, and wrote about current issues teachers face in regard to problem behavior and effective ways to intervene. These brainstorming sessions captured actual knowledge gained from the "hands-on" experience of teachers and faculty members who have been in the field for many years. The knowledge captured in the brainstorming sessions was organized and formatted to fit this manual. Theoretical underpinnings were added to enhance the recommendations even further. During the 2003-2004 school year, the content of this manual was further refined and edited.

Contributors

The contributors to this guide include school professionals from the Oak Grove Elementary and Firwood Secondary Schools and faculty from the School of Education at Seattle University. Each of the school professionals contributing to this manual have more than 20 years experience in this field; thus, the recommendations provided are the result of tried and true practices. University faculty involved in this project have many years of "hands-on" experience in working with youth in need, as well as having the research knowledge to help guide practice. Thus, the advice given in this manual comes from school professionals and faculty members who have seen it all.

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Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following school professionals for their contributions to the resource guide through the brainstorming and writing sessions: Bill Christensen, Mary Jaeger, Rick Lorenz, Eileen Rieke, Shirley Morton, LuAnn Neuman, and Betty Simpson. These educators spent much time and effort in the identification of common problem behaviors and the development of descriptions of previously successful interventions.

We would also like to thank the Seattle University School of Education Dean Sue Schmitt and Principal Carolyn Watkins for their wonderful support and leadership.

We hope you find this resource guide helpful.

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Teaching Students with Severe Emotional and Behavioral Disorders: Best Practices Guide to Intervention

Introduction

Talk to any teacher about students in today's classrooms. These teachers would most likely state there are at least one or two students in their classrooms who are exhibiting especially challenging behavior. Having students with challenging behavior in the classroom is an age-old phenomenon, but it is no secret that students in today's classrooms are exhibiting emotional and behavioral difficulties that are far more numerous and intensive than in previous years (Walker, Zeller, Close, Webber, & Gresham, 1999). In addition, concerns about student behavior in schools have escalated during recent years, most likely due to school shootings, such as the tragic incidents at Columbine (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001). In a 2003 Gallup Poll, the public listed "lack of discipline" second only to "lack of financial support" as the biggest problems the schools face today (Rose & Gallup, 2003).

Definition and Prevalence of EBD

But are these concerns justified? How many students demonstrate challenging behavior in the classroom? Determining the number of students with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD)¹ is dependent on the definition used (Kauffman, 2001). Definitions are subject to teacher perception, preparation, experience, cultural values, and other factors. To one teacher, a student may be seen as very challenging, but to another teacher the same student will be seen as only slightly challenging.

Two commonly used definitions of EBD come from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders – IV (DSM-IV) (American Psychiatric Association, 2000) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The DSM-IV is used primarily in mental health, psychiatric, and other clinical settings to diagnose troubling emotional and behavioral conditions. Definitions in the DSM-IV are also used for research purposes in order to have a consistent terminology used across researchers. Based on criteria from the DSM-IV, 15 to 20% of the entire student population is said to have a clinically significant emotional and/or behavioral disorder at any one time (Costello & Angold, 1995; Shaffer et al., 1996). These disorders include all types of emotional and behavioral disorders, including internalized disorders (e.g., Generalized Anxiety, Major Depressive Disorder, Bipolar Disorder) and externalized disorders (e.g., Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Oppositional Defiant Disorder, Conduct Disorder).

¹ In this resource guide, the term "emotional and behavioral disorder" (EBD) will be used to include all students with emotional and behavior disorders, including, but not exclusively, those students formally identified as needing special education.

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The definition of EBD used in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is used almost exclusively in school settings, primarily within the field of special education. The IDEA definition of EBD is much less inclusive than the DSM-IV. Using the criteria from the IDEA, about 2% of the student population would meet the criteria for EBD (Kauffman, 2001). Students included within this 2% are primarily those students who have trouble following directions, are oppositional, and who become aggressive toward others. Within the special education system, about 1% of the total student population is identified as having an emotional and/or behavioral disorder and is in need of specialized services (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

As noted above, within each school, there is likely to be a substantial percentage of children/adolescents with significant mental health issues. A much smaller percentage will demonstrate challenging behavior that requires special education services. Based on the numbers above, it appears that only a small percentage of students with EBD actually receive formalized special education services. The remainder of the students with mental health issues is educated in the general education system under the primary responsibility of the general education classroom teacher.

Despite the push for inclusion in the 1990s, students formally identified with EBD still spend a significant amount of school time outside the general education setting. During the 2000-2001 school year, 32% of students identified as EBD spent over 60% of their educational experience in settings outside the general classroom. An additional 23% of these students spent between 21 to 60% of their school day outside the general classroom setting. Eighteen percent of students with EBD received their education in settings outside the mainstream setting, such as private treatment programs (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

Shortage of Skilled Teachers

General and special educators carry much of the initial responsibility for providing meaningful education to students with EBD. However, these educators often report lacking the knowledge, confidence, and/or skill to provide effective programming for these students. For example, George and her colleagues (George, George, Gersten, & Grosnick, 1995) reported that two-thirds of teachers of students with EBD indicated their college programs provided poor preparation for working with this student population. Educators also frequently express frustration over the requirements and demands associated with serving students with EBD. Disruptive behavior exhibited by these students takes much teacher time and even more time when teachers do not have the knowledge base, practiced skills, or confidence in working with these challenging students.

Students with EBD also evoke feelings of fear, resentment, and anger in many adults (Jones, Dohrn, & Dunn, 2004). Lack of knowledge, skill, experience, and confidence to effectively intervene, coupled with fear of the student, leads to teachers not being able to effectively work with these students. School disruption

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and violence have been of much concern to teachers and others, but apparently instances of youth violence have actually decreased in the State of Washington over the past several years (Warnick, 2003). Even with this reduction in violence, it is our experience that teachers still struggle with students demonstrating challenging behavior in their classrooms and often feel frustrated. They will resort to more punitive measures in reaction to these difficult behaviors rather than design a more proactive therapeutic intervention.

Currently, there is a serious shortage of qualified special education teachers to work with students with EBD (American Association for Employment in Education, 2000). Working with students with EBD is often viewed as the most demanding and complex of all areas of special education. Special education teachers who are in the field and who work with students identified as having EBD have the highest reported attrition rates among special education teachers (Singh & Billingsley, 1996).

We clearly need an increase in well-trained general and special education teachers to work with these students in need. We believe that the techniques are available to help these children/adolescents, but that many school professionals have not had adequate training and lack the resources to obtain these skills. Without teachers with sufficient training, students with EBD are at risk for being placed in unnecessarily restrictive settings, when they could be served effectively in more mainstream settings if they had adequate support.

Causes of Misbehavior

Understanding the developmental factors associated with challenging behavior greatly helps intervention efforts with these youth. Any demonstrated behavior, positive or negative, is a very complex phenomenon. It is difficult to understand why someone performs even simple behaviors, let alone why someone engages in more complex emotional and behavioral difficulties. Insight into some of the possible causes of EBD helps to increase understanding of a particular student and helps to increase the likelihood that planned interventions will be effective.

Over the ages, a variety of theoretical paradigms have been developed to explain why youth engage in certain behaviors. Examples of these paradigms include (a) the psychoanalytic model (Freud, 1946), which proposes that pathological development is primarily due to unresolved psychological conflicts; (b) behaviorism/social learning theory, which suggests that behavioral difficulties are primarily due to the effects of the environment (Watson, 1913; Skinner, 1953); and (c) the biological model, which proposes that emotional and behavioral disorders are primarily due to constitutional factors. As scientific knowledge has progressed, researchers have come to conclude that emotional and behavioral disorders are much more complex than that explained by any single model alone. We cannot attribute a particular difficulty solely to biology, the environment, or the family. Most often difficulties are an ongoing dynamic between biological, dispositional,

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environmental, sociocultural, and other factors.

A perspective that is rapidly becoming dominant in the study of youth with EBD is the perspective best known as developmental psychopathology. According to Wicks-Nelson and Israel (2003), "Developmental psychopathology is a general framework for understanding disordered behavior in relation to normal development. It acts as a way of integrating multiple perspectives or theories around a core of developmental issues and questions." (p.22). The developmental psychopathological perspective states that emotional and behavioral difficulties are most often the result of a complex interplay of multiple factors. Thus, there are multiple causes of behavior. The developmental psychopathology model assists teachers who work with students with EBD in understanding the interaction between the student's history, current environments, behavior styles, and the interventions used to assist the student in developing more functional behaviors (Jones, et al., 2004). This model helps teachers steer away from simplistic explanations of challenging behavior and instead focus more on the developmental pathways that led up to the challenging behavior in the first place.

Within this model, one avenue of inquiry that helps to understand the development of EBD is to examine the risk and resilience factors. Risk factors are variables that increase the likelihood of future behavioral difficulties. Resilience factors are those that decrease the likelihood of emotional and behavioral difficulties developing in the face of adversity. Coie, Miller-Johnson, & Bagwell (2000) have categorized developmental risk factors into the following categories: (a) constitutional factors (e.g., hereditary influences, prenatal/birth complications); (b) family factors (e.g., poverty, abuse, conflict); (c) emotional and interpersonal factors (e.g., low self-esteem, difficult temperament, peer rejection); (d) intellectual and academic factors (e.g., below average intelligence, learning disability); (e) ecological factors (e.g., neighborhood disorganization, racial injustice); and (d) non-normative stressful life events (e.g., early death of a parent, outbreak of war, other traumatic events).

Examples of resilience factors include (a) good intellectual functioning, (b) easygoing disposition, (c) a close relationship with a caring parent figure, (d) authoritative parenting (i.e., warm, structured, and having high expectations), and (e) bonds to prosocial adults outside the family (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). Youth with many of the above risk factors are more prone to emotional and behavioral disorders. However, when youth have a number of resilience factors, the risk of developing EBD decreases. Thus, when working with youth, it is important to assess what risk and/or resilience factors are present in their lives.

There are certain disorders that have specific causes, such as Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, which is associated with excessive alcohol intake at critical periods of prenatal development (Clarren, 1978). However, in the vast majority of cases, no single cause of an emotional or behavioral disorder will be found. Possible causal factors are numerous, and it is beyond the scope of this guide to discuss all of

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these factors. For more discussion in this area, see works completed by Wicks-Nelson & Israel (2003), Kauffman (2001), and Lewis (2002).

To address the multiple causes of emotional and behavioral difficulties in youth with EBD, it is essential to use a multidisciplinary approach, such as that used in the programs at the Oak Grove Elementary School, Firwood Secondary School, and the Child Study and Treatment Center. These programs involve a variety of professionals, including (a) special education teachers, (b) psychologists, (c) psychiatrists, (d) social workers, (e) psychiatric childcare counselors, (f) nurses, and (g) recreation therapists. They are also based on multiple theoretical paradigms. This multidisciplinary effort allows professionals to draw from multiple theoretical paradigms, which encourages the conceptualization of problems from multiple angles. At times, certain behaviors of concern may be simple to explain. At other times, a youth's challenging behavior may be more complex. When working with youth who display complex and challenging behavior, it is extremely helpful to have input from a diverse group of professionals in order to explain the behavior in question.

Proactive Interventions

There are too many situations in which programs for students with EBD actually replicate and exacerbate the etiological factors that were central to the development of the condition. Studies of programs for students with EBD indicate that these programs frequently emphasize control and exclusion rather than effective prevention and intervention (Knitzer, Steinberg, & Fleisch, 1990). Kaufman (2001) notes that professionals can identify and implement classroom conditions that make behavioral difficulties less likely to occur. "It is essential that those who work with students with EBD create therapeutic learning environments that help students understand and overcome, rather than replicate, the conditions that have been key factors impacting their emotional and behavioral problems." (Jones et al., 2004).

The conditions that promote positive behavior in the classroom are becoming increasingly clear (Algozzine, Audette, Ellis, Marr, & White, 2000; Frieberg, 1999; Jones & Jones, 2004; Nelson and Roberts, 2000; and Sugai & Horner, 1999). Conditions that promote positive behavior in the classroom include (a) clear behavior expectations, (b) the teaching of expected behaviors, (c) consistent and sound responses to rule violations, and (d) individualized programming for more chronic behavioral difficulties. In addition, Jones et al. (2004) emphasize that in order to build a positive classroom climate, the classroom must have an engaging curriculum, curriculum modifications for students with academic difficulties, and a community of support. The community of support will be developed when (a) learning and behavioral expectations are clear; (b) rule violations are addressed immediately and effectively; (c) learning is personalized and demystified; (d) quality teacher-student and peer relationships are encouraged; (e) smaller, more

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personalized learning settings are formulated; and (f) individualized behavioral programs are instituted for students with more chronic behavioral difficulties. These smaller learning settings can be set up within the larger classroom community, since the reduction of class sizes is most likely a distant reality for many school districts.

Three popular models of proactive intervention for teaching students with EBD are presented below. By learning more about the components of these programs, and implementing them in an integrated fashion, the teacher of students with EBD is expected to be more skillful and confident in working with these students. The Re-Education model is presented in more extensive detail since it is a very common model to be used in treatment programs for students with EBD and is applicable to less restrictive settings as well.

Positive Behavior Support

Dramatic occurrences of school violence in the past decade have greatly enhanced the public's awareness of school safety and discipline (Skiba & Peterson, 2000). This has prompted researchers to identify effective interventions to promote a positive school environment, free from school violence and disruptive behavior. A recent and popular model to emerge from major government and educational research programs is positive behavior support (Bradley, 2001; Sugai & Horner, 2001). Positive behavior support (PBS) is a general term that refers to the application of positive behavioral interventions and systems to achieve socially important behavior change (Sugai, Sprague, Horner, & Walker, 2001). PBS is derived from behavioral science, primarily applied behavioral analysis, and has evolved from a focus on individual case management to systems-level implementation, especially for the school as a whole (Sugai, 2002). PBS emphasizes preventive and positive approaches for addressing problem behavior instead of emphasizing traditional aversive measures.

The implementation of PBS is organized along the continuum of the three levels of prevention as described by Walker et al. (1996). Primary prevention involves schoolwide interventions aimed at decreasing the number of new cases of problem behaviors. These interventions include the use of effective school-wide disciplinary practices, classroom-wide behavior management strategies, and effective instructional practices. Secondary prevention involves interventions with at-risk students. Interventions at this level include more focused individual or small group interventions, such as anger management or problem solving skills training. Tertiary prevention involves interventions with students demonstrating initial signs of behavioral difficulties. Intervention at this level includes the development of specially designed instruction and individualized behavioral intervention plans. Among these interventions are functional behavior assessments, behavior intervention plans, and Individualized Education Plans (IEPs).

Extensive data verify that PBS interventions reduce the number of school-

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wide behavior problems. For example, a middle school in Oregon experienced a 42% drop in office referrals in 1 year after implementing PBS (Taylor-Green et al., 1997). For further discussion regarding the efficacy of PBS, see Colvin, Kameenui, & Sugai, (1993); Lewis (2001); Lewis, Sugai, & Colvin (1998); Sugai & Horner (1999); and Sugai & Horner, (2001).

Comprehensive Classroom Management

The model of Comprehensive Classroom Management by Jones and Jones (2004) emphasizes the importance of positive teacher-student and peer relationships in managing student behavior. This model includes many of the components of positive behavior support: (a) development of general behavior standards, (b) development of clear classroom procedures and rules, (c) systematic response to rule and procedural violations, and (d) the designing of individual behavior change plans for students with significant behavioral difficulties. However, central to the model is a focus on (a) instructional excellence, (b) active student involvement in creating and learning classroom/school behavioral norms, (c) problem-solving skills, (d) working with parents, and (e) the creation of a community of caring and support.

The importance of student relationships and being part of a caring community has been clearly supported by researchers in the field (Farmer, Farmer, & Gut, 1999). As an example, the work on developmental assets suggests that students who are more connected to their schools and families are significantly less likely to engage in behaviors that are dangerous to their physical and mental health. In their book *Developmental Assets*, Scales and Leffert (1999) state, "The research consistently shows, for example, that schools that nurture positive relationships among students, and among students and teachers, are more likely to realize the payoff of more engaged students achieving at higher levels" (p 142).

Jones et al. (2004) believe that any comprehensive program addressing the needs of students with EBD must effectively implement both the methods presented in the work on positive behavior support (Sugai & Horner, 2001) and the creation of a positive school-wide climate through the use of tools presented in the model of comprehensive classroom management. Based on data collected in a variety of schools, Jones et al. (2004) state that systematic implementation of comprehensive classroom management has resulted in a reduction of between 35 and 49% of office referrals, suspensions, expulsions, and disruptive behavior in common areas.

Re-Education

Re-Education stands for The Re-Education of Emotionally Disturbed Children and Youth. It is an intervention paradigm for serving children with EBD and their families. It is grounded in educational, psychological, and ecological principles (Fescer, 2003) and was first created and articulated as Project Re-ED by

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Dr. Nicholas Hobbs (1982). Re-Education started out as a model of residential treatment developed in the 1960s and focuses on training teacher-counselors, who are backed up by consultant mental health specialists.

The philosophy of Re-Ed involves four core concepts and 12 basic principles. The first of the four concepts is the “Teacher/Counselor.” According to Hobbs (1982),

A teacher/counselor is a decent adult, educated, well-trained, able to give and receive affection; to live relaxed but be firm, a person with private resources for the nourishment and refreshment of his/her own life; not an itinerant worker but a professional through and through; a person with a sense of significance of time of the usefulness of today and the promise of tomorrow; a person of hope, quiet confidence, and joy, one who has committed him/herself to children and to the proposition that children who are emotionally disturbed can be helped by the process of Re-Education.

The second concept is “Just Manageable Difficulty.” According to Hobbs, Life is highly problematic, and what you will become will rest in no small measure on the kinds of problem situations you get yourself into and have to work your way out of...The art of choosing difficulties is to select those that are indeed JUST manageable. If the difficulties chosen are too easy, life is boring; if they are too hard, life is defeating...When one achieves this fine tuning of his/her life, she/he will know zest and joy and deep/fulfillment.

The third core concept described by Hobbs is the “Ecological Approach.” Hobbs first articulated the concept later known as wraparound treatment planning. Proponents of Re-Ed believe that the interplay and interaction of the people important in the life of a child have more impact than any other variables. Thus, Re-Ed involves a “systems approach” thinking on both a global and an individual level.

“Joy” is the fourth core concept described by Hobbs. He states, “Some of the most satisfying moments are generated by successful achievements in school. To do well in spelling or arithmetic, especially for students who expect and dread failure, is to know a sharp delight.”

In addition to these four core concepts, Hobbs described 12 principles of Re-Education. These are as follows: (a) Life is to be lived now, not in the past, and lived in the future only as a present challenge. (b) Trust between child and adult is essential, the beginning point for Re-Education. (c) Competence makes a difference. Children and adolescents should be helped to be good at something and especially at schoolwork. (d) Time is an ally, working on the side of growth in a period of development when life has a tremendous forward thrust. (e) Self-control can be taught, and children and adolescents can be helped to manage their behavior without the development of psychodynamic insight. Symptoms can and

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should be controlled by direct address, not necessarily by an uncovering therapy. (f) The cognitive competence of children and adolescents can be considerably enhanced. They can be taught generic skills in the management of their lives as well as strategies for coping with the complex array of demands placed on them by family, school, community, or job. In other words, intelligence can be taught. (g) Feelings should be nurtured, shared spontaneously, controlled when necessary, expressed when too long repressed, and explored with trusted others. (h) The group is very important to young people. It can become a major source of instruction in growing up. (i) Ceremony and ritual give order, stability, and confidence to troubled children and adolescents whose lives are often in considerable disarray. (j) The body is the armature of the self, the physical self around which the psychological self is constructed. (k) Communities are important for children and youth, but the uses and benefits of community must be experienced to be learned. (l) In growing up, a child should know some joy in each day and look forward to some joyous event for tomorrow.

Key elements of effective Re-Education programs for children with EBD

Walker and Fecser (2003) have outlined the four elements of an effective Re-Education program for the 21st century. The specifics outlined below will help any teacher of students with EBD become more specific and consistent with the Re-Education philosophy.

Element #1 is the program foundation and philosophy. The foundation of any program lies in its orienting philosophy. Any successful program must have a clearly articulated values system, mission statement, vision, and set of program objectives.

Element number #2 is program structure. Children with EBD require a structured and predictable environment. These children do best when expectations are clear and consistent, and changes in routine are kept to a minimum. A positive building structure occurs when adults do the following: (a) consistently enforce rules, (b) develop a clear system of both positive and negative consequences, (c) use effective limit setting, and (d) use a much higher rate of positive reinforcement than negative consequences in their interactions with students.

Element #3 is program climate and group process. The elements of the program must come together in a way that creates a healthy feeling tone or climate in the program. A healthy program climate provides its members with a sense of identity, cohesion, and belonging, which encourages more appropriate behavior and facilitates success. In a program where the overall climate is not well developed, there will be a higher level of disruption, less cooperation, and a requirement of more external controls.

Element #4 is individualized programming. The first three components address the ecological context within which the child is served. But the core of every program lies in meeting the individualized needs of each child. The first step

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in individualizing a program involves a thorough assessment of strengths and needs. This includes identifying a student's unique learning style, along with social/emotional and developmental needs. Element #4 also includes the use of functional behavioral assessments and the use of individualized positive behavior support plans. Within this Re-Ed classroom, effective instructional techniques are used in all classroom activities.

The first published study of Project Re-Ed compared outcomes for adolescent males in Project Re-Ed with untreated disturbed adolescents and with non-disturbed adolescents. Treated adolescents improved in self-esteem, control of impulsiveness, and internal control compared to untreated adolescents (Weinstein, 1974). A 1988 follow-up study found that outcomes were often predicted by community factors at admission, which suggests that community intervention may be as effective as placement in the treatment setting (Lewis, 1988). Despite lack of other research documenting its efficacy, Re-ED has continued to grow and has become recognized as an effective (at least anecdotally) and efficient means of helping troubled and troubling children reclaim their lives. The concepts and principles make intuitive sense and serve as a wonderful guide for helping children and adolescents with EBD.

Individualized Behavior Intervention Plans

It is well accepted that even the best quality proactive interventions will not prevent all emotional and behavioral disorders from occurring (Kauffman, 1999). Implementing interventions based on the proactive interventions presented above will most likely result in a reduction of problem behavior among most students, but there will always be those students who will require more individualized and specialized instruction and supportive behavioral intervention. Kauffman notes that "nothing to date suggests that every such disorder can be prevented, although we have good reason to suspect that the pervasive use of our best primary and secondary prevention tools would reduce such disorders to a much lower level than we observe today" (p.449).

Some students with EBD will require more specific interventions guided by an individualized behavior intervention plan that is based on a comprehensive functional behavioral assessment. Below is a discussion of functional behavioral assessment and strategies to develop behavior intervention plans. The natural sequence of events is to first conduct a quality functional behavioral assessment of problem behavior. Based on the obtained information from the functional behavioral assessment, a behavior intervention plan is developed through a team process involving a variety of school professionals and quite often the parent(s) or caregiver(s). The plan is then implemented and monitored by a designated professional. Based on the feedback from the monitoring system, the behavioral intervention plan is modified as needed. The discussion below is intended to be

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only an overview of the process and not a comprehensive “how to” manual. For further information, the reader is referred to the resources provided by Alberto and Troutman (2005); Chandler & Dahlquist (2002); Nelson, Roberts, & Smith, (2000); and O’Neill, et al. (1997).

Functional Behavioral Assessment

Functional behavioral assessment (FBA) is a systematic way of gathering information in order to determine a relationship between a child’s problem behavior and aspects of the environment (O’Neill et al., 1997). An FBA is a collaborative problem-solving process rather than simply a set of assessment procedures (Chandler & Dahlquist, 2002; Nelson, Roberts, & Smith, 2000). The purpose of the FBA is to help understand why a student engages in challenging behavior, when/where is the challenging behavior most likely to occur, and under what conditions will the student be most successful. This information helps to formulate hypotheses (summary statements) in order to guide the development of effective behavior intervention plans.

FBAs are based on several assumptions. First, all behavior is supported by current environmental conditions. Second, all behavior serves a function (e.g., to obtain something positive, to escape, to reduce certain sensory experiences). Third, regardless of the etiology, challenging behavior can be changed through the use of positive intervention strategies that address the function of behavior.

The process of FBA involves several distinct steps. In step one, the team or person conducting the assessment must first decide if the behavior of concern is challenging. Sometimes certain behaviors are annoying but not severe enough to warrant focused specialized assessment and intervention. The second step of the FBA is to select and define the target behavior. Students with EBD often present with many behaviors of concern. It is difficult to address all the problem behaviors, and it is much more effective to concentration on only one or two concerns at a time. It is important to prioritize which behaviors are of most concern. The selected behaviors then need to be well-defined in order to facilitate the most effective interventions.

The third step of FBA is to identify setting events, antecedents, and consequences related to the selected target behavior. Setting events are the more “distant” events that happen at some point prior to the demonstrated target behavior. Examples of setting events include having a pre-existing condition of Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, having parents who are in conflict, or struggling with a fluctuating mood disorder. Antecedents are the “proximal” events that immediately precede the target behaviors of concern. Setting events are often seen as setting the stage for the target behavior to occur, and the antecedent events are the events that actually trigger the behavior to occur. Consequences are those events that occur after the demonstration of the target behavior. In the example, scolding a child for a tantrum, “scolding” is considered the consequence.

BEST PRACTICES

The fourth step of FBA is to determine the function of the target behavior. In this step, individuals or teams conducting the assessment analyze the data and formulate hypotheses regarding the function of the behavior. For instance, an aggressive outburst could function as a means to avoid a particularly challenging academic activity.

The final step of the FBA is to develop summary statements. These statements put hypotheses in more formalized terms. The format for a summary statement is typically the following: Given a particular situation (situational event), when “x” happens (antecedents), the student does “y” (challenging target behavior), in order to “z” (function of behavior).

An example of a summary statement is as follows: “On days when John has spent the night at his grandmother’s house and then he comes to school with his mother, he becomes angry and throws a temper tantrum so that his mother will take him back home.”

Behavior Intervention Plans

Once an FBA has been completed, an individualized behavior intervention plan (BIP) is developed (Chandler & Dahlquist, 2002; Nelson, Roberts, & Smith, 2000). This plan is developed using the information obtained from the FBA. The purposes of the BIP are to help clearly define what is to be done. Frequently these plans are also for legal documentation of intervention. Included within the plans are an operational description of problem target behaviors, summary statements from the FBA, the plan for reducing the problem behavior while increasing the desired behavior, and the monitoring plan. BIPs are often based on a “competing behavior model,” in that alternative behaviors (i.e., desirable behaviors) are selected that directly make it difficult to engage in both the problem target behavior and alternative behavior simultaneously. For example, if the problem behavior is yelling at a sibling, the alternative behavior is to talk nicely to the sibling. It is very difficult to yell and talk nicely at the same time.

The 1997 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) requires that the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team consider positive behavior support when a student’s behavior is impeding the student’s learning or the learning of others (Section 614 (d)(3)(B)). The IDEA also requires that an FBA be conducted for a student in special education who is involved in disciplinary action that involves a change of placement for more than 10 days (Section 615(k)(1)(B)(I)). The FBA is a requirement to education who is involved in disciplinary action that involves a change of placement for more than 10 days (Section 615(k)(1)(B)(I)). The FBA is a requirement to make sure the BIP meets the student’s needs. This requirement may or may not continue to be required under pending reauthorization of the IDEA. However, regardless of the legal requirements, conducting an FBA and developing a BIP are effective tools in the teaching of students with EBD.

BEST PRACTICES

In our experience, often teachers and administrators only see the completion of FBAs and BIPs as ways to satisfy certain legal requirements. However, FBA is not just a legal requirement; it is a philosophical way of thinking. When behavior is systematically reviewed under the procedures of the FBA, many important insights regarding the function of the behavior come to light. FBA does not necessarily have to be a long, drawn-out process or result in a complex written report. Teachers can and do incorporate this philosophy in their lesson planning.

In addition to conducting FBAs and BIPs, the readers may wish to take the advice of Jones et al. (2004) and ask the following five questions when faced with students who engage in irresponsible behavior:

What behavior skills does the student need to learn? What behavior skills do I need to teach? What academic needs does the student have that, if unmet, may influence his or her ability to act responsibly? Is the classroom community meeting the psychological needs of the student? Am I able to teach these skills or make these academic modifications in the classroom environment with the resources I have available?" (p.79).

Answers to these questions will help understand the nature of the student's difficulty and provide directions for intervention planning. Directions derived from the answers of these questions may be incorporated into the resulting FBA and BIP.

BEST PRACTICES

Part II: Specific Interventions for Common Problem Behaviors **Explanation of Section**

The proactive interventions, FBAs, and BIPs, all will help in working with students presenting with significant emotional and behavioral issues. The fundamental philosophies underlying these techniques will help guide intervention planning with most problem behaviors. In order to become even more effective, it is extremely helpful to learn what common problem behaviors other teachers have faced in the field and what strategies have been found to be successful with these behaviors.

In the remaining parts of this manual, the reader is provided with common behavior problems facing today's teachers of students with EBD. Immediately following each description of a common problem behavior are suggestions for intervention. Interventions are described according to what the teacher, parent, and student can do to improve the situation. The sections are labeled accordingly. These problem behaviors and interventions were all derived from the brainstorming sessions with the teachers at Oak Grove Elementary and Firwood Secondary Schools at the Child and Study Treatment Center (CSTC). The reader can be certain that these problem behaviors are those most frequently encountered by these teachers. The reader can also be certain that the suggested interventions have been implemented successfully by these very experienced teachers in the field.

BEST PRACTICES



TEACHER

Appropriate Self-Expression

DESIRED BEHAVIOR

Students express their ideas, thoughts, and emotions using non-offensive language.

OBSERVABLE BEHAVIOR

Students use inappropriate language (e.g., swearing).

TEACHING STRATEGIES

Clearly define offensive language. Students may hear swearing at home and in the community and then think it is okay to repeat it at school. Talk with students about what is and is not offensive language in the classroom. Begin by teaching positive ways to express emotions and helping students distinguish positive emotional expression from negative. For younger children, read *Andrew's angry words* (Lachner & The, 1997) or *Elbert's bad word* (Wood, 1996) and discuss.

Post lists of offensive and non-offensive words. Generate lists of "okay words in class" and "not okay words in class" with students. Provide instruction about what type of language to use where, when, and with whom. For example, ask them how they would express anger in front of their grandmother versus in front of teammates when playing basketball.

Send lists home to family members. Inform families of acceptable versus unacceptable language in the classroom. Tell them that some words that are used at home in private may not be words for students to use in the classroom. Ask families to model appropriate language at home as much as possible.

Establish link between self-esteem and language. Inappropriate language is a negative reflection on students who use it and may mean that these students do not think very highly of themselves. Positively reinforce the use of appropriate language to help increase their self-esteem.

Teach about emotions. Post a list of feeling words in the classroom. Beside each word, put a photograph of the students themselves demonstrating the feeling, or have them cut out magazine pictures that demonstrate the feeling. Talk about how each specific emotion feels, how the body physically looks and what the body does when feeling the emotion. Give the clear message that all emotions are okay, but not all ways to express or cope with them are okay.

BEST PRACTICES

TEACHING STRATEGIES

Teach alternative ways to express anger. Teach different ways of expressing anger, other than swearing, such as (a) finding a quiet place to calm down, (b) crying in privacy, (c) squeezing a stress ball, (d) taking a walk, (e) breathing deeply, (f) giving oneself a time-out, (g) writing a letter, or (h) doing self-soothing exercises. Encourage students to use these strategies when feeling anger or frustration.

Share feelings with others. Encourage students to find someone they feel comfortable talking to and have them share their feelings with this person regularly. Allow time to do this each day or on an “as-needed” basis.

Role-play strong emotions. Give students different scenarios that would result in strong emotions. Have them role-play ways of describing their feelings without swearing.

Provide feedback. Display popsicle sticks in a holder on the teacher’s desk (or use straws stuck into a ball of clay or a cup). Each time a student swears, take a stick away, making sure the student sees it being taken. But give no further attention to the matter. This will give feedback to the student without giving a lot of attention. At the end of the day, let the student trade in the remaining sticks for a reward. When the student has remaining sticks, take one stick away for the following day to slowly decrease the rate of swearing.

Use journaling for self-expression. When students are upset, allow them to write letters or in a journal, using any language they want. When they are finished and have calmed down, have them tear up the letter or piece of paper. Talk about the importance of getting rid of hateful language. Make a ceremony out of defeating the words, rather than letting the words defeat them.

Redirect attention. If students are trying to get a reaction from the teacher (i.e., negative attention), make sure to give lots of attention to these same students when they are using appropriate language. When they swear, try to remain calm. Do not respond to a request or statement until the student uses appropriate language.

Create incentives. Create a classroom-wide reward program in which everyone gets points for using appropriate language throughout the day. Encourage students to ignore or not respond to other students if they use inappropriate language. At the end of the day, the students who have the most points can cash them in for a reward.

BEST PRACTICES

Appropriate Self-Expression

DESIRED BEHAVIOR

Child expresses ideas, thoughts, and emotions using non-offensive language.

OBSERVABLE BEHAVIOR

Child uses inappropriate language (e.g., swearing).

PARENT STRATEGIES

Learn about school expectations. Talk with the child's teacher and school staff about general rules and expectations for student behavior in the classroom and on the school grounds. Specifically ask about the rules and expectations for the use of profanity. If the school has a campus-wide or classroom behavior plan, ask for a copy or a verbal explanation.

Talk with child. Discuss concerns with the child, and talk about the child's need to use profanity. Talk about when and where it happens, who the child is with, reactions from others, and alternative forms of expression. Monitor the use of profanity at home as well, trying to establish behavior patterns. Gather information to better understand the need for this behavior. Does the child enjoy the reactions from others? Or has the use of profanity become a bad habit?

Set a goal. With the child, set a goal to decrease the use of profanity. Check in with the child daily to see how the day went. If the child had a good day, discuss what went well and reinforce the child's progress (e.g., praise, hugs, "high fives," treats, privileges). If the child had a bad day, discuss what went wrong, as well as what might have made the day go better. Support and encourage the child's efforts, with a hug, pat on the back, or a listening ear.

Establish household rules/expectations. Discuss the household rules and expectations regarding the use of profanity. Try to use similar terms as those used at school for the sake of consistency in the child's life. Talk about the use of language at home vs. school vs. in the community and how it might change depending on where the child is and who the child is with at the time. Also discuss the importance of knowing where and when to use different kinds of language. For example, discuss the expectations of language used with grandparents vs. what is said with friends when playing basketball. Be very clear about the expectations, but also be realistic. It may not be possible to change the language teenagers use in their interactions with friends.



PARENT

BEST PRACTICES

PARENT STRATEGIES

But do set limits on the language used with parents and other adults, as well as that used at school. Be clear about what will happen when the rules are followed and the consequences when the rules are broken. Make it a point to acknowledge and reinforce the child's positive efforts.

Model appropriate language. Model positive, appropriate emotional expression, especially in negative situations. Parents can show the child ways to handle frustration, anger, and disappointments through their own behavior. However, parents aren't always perfect either. If swearing does occur, be honest with the child, and admit that a mistake was made. Explain that profanity isn't good to use at home or at school, and talk about alternative ways the situation could have been handled. By doing this, the parent is teaching the child a number of lessons. First, the parent is showing that swearing is a negative and inappropriate way to express emotion. Second, the child is learning that parents also make mistakes. Third, the parent is showing the importance of being honest and taking responsibility for the mistakes made. Finally, the parent is modeling ways to process a negative situation and brainstorm more appropriate solutions for future use. By observing the entire process, the child is learning a lot about appropriate expression and ways of coping with tough situations. Discussion is good, but seeing the appropriate behaviors in action is even better.

Respond calmly. Make it a point to respond calmly when the child uses inappropriate language (i.e., watch for "buttons" being pushed). Take a deep breath and make sure one's emotions aren't taking over. When calm, tell the child that the words used are not acceptable. Do not respond to a request or statement until the child can rephrase it in a more appropriate manner.

Monitor media exposure. The language used in the media these days is often filled with inappropriate terms. Frequently monitor what the child is exposed to in television programs, movies, videos/DVDs, computer games, radio, and CDs. When inappropriate language is used, let the child know that it is not okay to repeat the language they heard and that it is expected that they will not use profanity. Don't make a big deal out of it, but definitely don't ignore it (if you know for sure that the child heard it). If the profanity is ignored, especially with older children, they might think it's acceptable to use. If the child does use inappropriate phrases

BEST PRACTICES

PARENT STRATEGIES

(e.g., from a song or computer game), talk to the child about it. If the profanity continues, it might be necessary to limit the child's access to that media.

Communicate with school. If the inappropriate language becomes a major problem that is interfering with schoolwork and other important activities, talk with the child's teacher and pertinent school staff. Share ideas about what seems to help decrease the use of profanity. Try new ideas, and work to approach the inappropriate language in the same manner at home and at school. This consistency will help the child learn more appropriate means of self-expression.

Use resources. For more information, see Clark (1996) and Faber and Mazlish (2004).

BEST PRACTICES

Appropriate Self-Expression

DESIRED BEHAVIOR

Student expresses ideas, thoughts, and emotions using non-offensive language.

OBSERVABLE BEHAVIOR

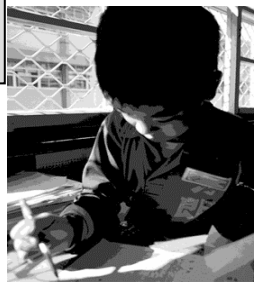
Student uses inappropriate language (e.g., swearing).

STUDENT STRATEGIES

Know expectations. Expectations for language use may be different, depending on the situation or environment and who is there. Thus, it is important to talk to people about their expectations (e.g., parents, family members, teachers, friends, trusted adults). Find out what types of language can be used in their presence to know what is appropriate and what is not. Ask specifically what is expected in different environments, such as (a) at home, (b) at school, (c) in the classroom, (d) on the school grounds, (e) on the baseball field, (f) at a friend's house, or (g) with grandparents. Adults expect kids to talk respectfully to them. Slang and profanity may be okay with friends, but not with unknown kids or adults. They may be upset or offended by the use of profanity.

Monitor use of profanity. Swearing is one way of expressing very strong feelings. It can also be a bad habit. It is okay to express strong feelings, but ask teachers and parents to help find more appropriate words to express these emotions. In this process, pay attention to the use of profanity, knowing where, when, and with whom it occurs. Work to increase the use of more appropriate forms of expression. Ask family and friends for reminders when bad language is used to increase awareness and decrease the automatic use of profanity. When it does happen, be honest, take responsibility, and apologize.

Monitor exposure to profanity. Swearing and bad language are quite common in the media. Pay attention to music lyrics, movies, TV shows, and video games. Hearing profanity increases the chances of using profanity. When the goal is to increase appropriate forms of expression, try to minimize exposure to bad language.



STUDENT

BEST PRACTICES

Following Directions

DESIRED BEHAVIOR

Student follows directions and classroom rules.

OBSERVABLE BEHAVIOR

Student refuses to follow directions given by adults.

TEACHING STRATEGIES

Clearly define problem. To address the problem, it is important to first identify the reason(s) why students are not following directions. Steps in this process include (a) Track the behavior, noting when it happens, what is going on around the students before, during, and after noncompliance occurs, and its frequency. Also include responses from other staff and the student's peers. (b) Look for patterns in the information gathered (e.g., Does noncompliance occur when students are excluded from a group, during transitions, during free time in class?). What are the results of the behavior (i.e., attention from staff or peers)? (c) Interview or talk with students in a nonjudgmental manner. It may be that they are unaware of concerns regarding their noncompliance. (d) Make an educated guess as to why noncompliance is occurring (e.g., wanting attention, unable to express one's feelings in appropriate ways, lacking social skills for interacting with peers, low self-esteem, inattention). (e) Choose strategies based on these reasons, monitoring progress and giving enough time for the strategies to work.

Develop plan. After better understanding the reasons for noncompliance, work together with students and if appropriate, their parents, to develop a plan to address students' difficulties in following directions and possible skill deficits in this area. Ask students what would make it easier for them to comply with directions that are given. Make the expectations for students very clear, and tell them about changes that the teacher will be making when giving directions. This will help them know what to expect as well. Monitor their progress over time. Invite their feedback, listen to it, and use it productively. If noncompliance continues to be a problem, adjust the target strategies as needed.

Use simple directions. Give one direction at a time, using short, concise words. Be clear and consistent. Use "do" words and avoid phrasing requests as questions (e.g., "Please sit down" instead of "Could you please sit down?"). Be near



TEACHER

BEST PRACTICES

TEACHING STRATEGIES

students before giving a direction, and make sure to get their attention (i.e., saying their names, getting eye contact). Be polite, and give students time to respond. If the direction is not followed the first time, get their attention and repeat it again.

Be consistent. Develop a consistent pattern of response to noncompliance using direct requests. Have a set of words to use when giving a direction and a set to use when responding to compliance.

Know when to ignore noncompliance. Pick battles carefully. Decide which directions really need to be followed and which ones are not as important to follow. Try to minimize the energy and attention given to a student who is noncompliant. Ignoring noncompliance, when possible, limits the attention and power students receive and sometimes can eliminate the behavior all together.

Know when to address noncompliance. Students can gain power when ignoring the teacher's directions. In these cases, it is especially important to directly address the problem in a positive manner. To do this, develop a fair and progressive set of responses, and be consistent with it. For example, begin with repeating the request. As noncompliance continues, then take away a reward, lower grades for participation, or call parents.

Directly teach compliance. Sometimes noncompliance is a result of a skill deficit, rather than inattention or defiance. In this case, help students generate ideas about how to respond to different types of directions. Then discuss the chosen responses and how to use them correctly to follow directions.

Empower students in positive ways. While learning these new skills, help students feel empowered in a positive manner. For example, prompt students to practice this new skill of following directions in various situations in the classroom, and help them to use it correctly. Or give students jobs (e.g., tutoring, delivering papers) that are not contingent upon compliance as a way to help them feel empowered and to receive positive attention.

Use positive reinforcement. When students follow directions, reinforce these responses with immediate praise and frequent attention. But be careful not to praise too much. Good intention can lose its meaning. A good rule is to give four positive comments to one negative comment. Genuine and specific reinforcement will encourage positive feelings and continued compliance.

Use resources. For more information, see Goldstein (1980).

BEST PRACTICES

Following Directions

DESIRED BEHAVIOR

Child follows directions and rules, both at home and school.

OBSERVABLE BEHAVIOR

Child refuses to follow directions given by adults.

PARENT STRATEGIES

Work closely with teacher and staff. Meet with the child's teacher and related staff to talk about concerns regarding the child not following directions. Focus on the sharing of information, and reinforce positive efforts of the teacher and school staff. Discuss when the noncompliance is most prevalent at school. Is it during academic lessons or unstructured times? Ask about the specific approaches being used at school. Note the words or phrases that are being used to address the problem and which ones are working the best. Also share with them how the situations are being handled at home and what the outcomes are. Work together to form a plan to address the behavior. Then keep data, meet regularly to discuss progress, and refine the plan as necessary.

Involve child in process. Discuss the problem with the child, and get feedback to better understand the problem from the child's perspective. Talk with the child about the meeting with teachers and staff. Discuss the plan that was developed, and get feedback from the child. Make sure that the expectations for both school and home are clear. Also have the child set one goal to address the problem. Discuss ways to help and support the child to change this behavior. Have the child monitor and chart progress toward this goal.

Support and encourage child. Specifically work with the child on following directions. Say the child's name before giving a direction, and have the child acknowledge hearing the name (e.g., make eye contact, say "Yes?"). Then give the direction, and have the child acknowledge that it was heard (e.g., nod, say "Yes" or "Okay"). Also involve the child in designing words or phrases that will make it easier for the child to follow directions. This could mean using specific words (e.g., "Mary, please help me with ...") or simple sentences (e.g., "John, please do ..."). Role-play difficult situations if necessary. Throughout this process, remember that there may be times that directions need to be repeated.



PARENT

BEST PRACTICES

PARENT STRATEGIES

Do so in a calm and pleasant tone.

Give feedback. Praise the child when there is compliance, whether at school or home. When there are problems, discuss (a) the situation, (b) the choices that were made, (c) consequences of these choices, and (d) other possible choices that might have been better. Be consistent in providing this feedback, be it positive or more constructive.

Role-model compliance. Whenever possible, show the child how to be compliant. When a family member or friend asks for something to be done, acknowledge that the request was heard, and complete the task. Be especially careful in responding to questions or requests made by the child. If the child feels respected and attended to by parents, the child is more likely to respond in a similar fashion to them, as well as other adults.

BEST PRACTICES

Following Directions

DESIRED BEHAVIOR

Student follows directions and classroom rules.

OBSERVABLE BEHAVIOR

Student refuses to follow directions given by adults.

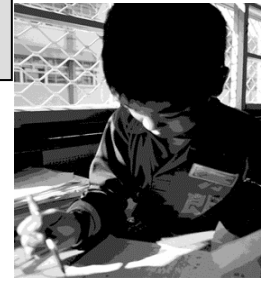
STUDENT STRATEGIES

Understand the problem. Monitor when directions are followed and when they are not. What is the difference? Ask the following questions: (a) Am I not following directions because I am not paying attention? (b) Am I trying to avoid assignments? (c) Do I not understand the directions and don't ask for clarification? or (d) Do I not agree with the directions and therefore choose not to follow them? Talk with parents and teachers about these findings to better understand the reasons for not following directions. Together set one goal to improve the following of directions.

Learn new skills. If following directions is really difficult, ask parents and teachers for strategies to help. Possible strategies include (a) paying attention so directions do not have to be repeated; (b) acknowledging when a direction has been given, with a nod or verbal response (e.g., "Okay."); (c) asking questions when the directions are not understood; (d) making a conscious choice to follow the direction (e.g. completing a task or an assignment); (e) discussing directions that may cause conflict, instead of just ignoring them; and (f) negotiating calmly and respectfully to increase feelings of control. Choose strategies that seem to address the reasons for not following directions, and practice them at home and at school.

Be patient. Sometimes directions need to be followed for reasons that are not readily understood. When this happens, try to accept it, and remain calm when talking about it. Using patience will make following these directions easier over time.

Appreciate progress. Remember that learning a new skill takes time and lots of practice. Be patient with self. Monitor progress over time, and celebrate accomplishments that are made.



STUDENT

BEST PRACTICES

Honesty

DESIRED BEHAVIOR

Students will be honest with themselves and others.

OBSERVABLE BEHAVIOR

Students lie at home, at school, and in the community to family, peers, staff, and community members.

TEACHING STRATEGIES

Clearly define problem. To address the problem, it is important to first identify the reason(s) why students are being dishonest. Steps in this process include (a) Track the behavior, noting when it happens; what is going on around the students before, during, and after the dishonesty occurs; and its frequency. Also include responses from other staff and the student's peers. (b) Look for patterns in the information gathered (e.g., Do students lie when they have done something inappropriate, are excluded from a group, when they have conflicts with others, during free time in class?). What are the results of the behavior (i.e., attention from staff or peers)? (c) Interview or talk with students in a nonjudgmental manner. It may be that they are unaware of concerns regarding their dishonesty, or they might be able to explain the reasons for it. (d) Make an educated guess as to why they are lying (e.g., wanting attention, unable to express one's feelings in appropriate ways, lacking social skills for interacting with peers, low self-esteem, fear). (e) Choose strategies based on these reasons, monitoring progress and giving enough time for the strategies to work. (f) Help students track their own behavior to identify reasons for lying and to develop alternative strategies to being dishonest.

Clearly establish rules. Post rules and values, including "Respect each other" and "Keep hands and feet to self" in a highly visible location in the classroom, and refer to them often. Have large and small group discussions on what each rule or value means and how to show the rule or value to others. Review the rules with the class as part of the morning meeting each day.

Have specific class discussions about lying. Discuss the reasons why people might lie in class discussions or in small groups. Discuss how students feel when someone has lied to them. Also discuss how others might feel when they know someone has been dishonest.



TEACHER

BEST PRACTICES

TEACHING STRATEGIES

Recognize honest behavior. Encourage students to be honest and to talk openly about their concerns and mistakes. In these discussions, be specific, name the behavior (but do not excuse it), and in a positive manner, help students to address the issue (e.g., “John, thank you for telling me the truth about not doing your homework. That must have been hard to do. How can we work together to get your homework done?”).

Do not punish honesty. Hold students accountable for inappropriate behaviors, but give positives for being honest (e.g. “Although I feel bad that my favorite cup is broken, I am proud of you for being honest and telling me what happened. How can we take care of the broken cup?”), (e.g., “I am sorry I didn’t get your paper back to you. I wanted to correct it last night, but I didn’t get it done.”).

Role-play honesty. In the classroom, discuss the importance of being honest and practice telling the truth in different situations, such as when asked questions or when sharing experiences. Role-play especially tough situations, such as the teacher asking about a homework assignment that is not done.

Read stories about being honest. For example, read the Dr. Seuss story entitled *And to think that I saw it on Mulberry Street*(1964). Stop before the ending, and discuss it. Then read the ending. Rewrite the story ending so that it is truthful but interesting. Another example would be *The boy who cried wolf*. Discuss the reasons he cried wolf and what happened as a result of his lying.

Refer to school counselor. In extreme cases, students may lie to parents or guardians at home to protect themselves from physical harm. If abuse is suspected, refer the student to the school counselor.

Use resources. For more information, see Goldstein and McGinnis (1997); Huggins (1997); and Seuss (1964).

BEST PRACTICES

DESIRED BEHAVIOR

Honesty

Child will be honest with self and others.

OBSERVABLE BEHAVIOR

Child lies at home, school, and in the community to family, peers, staff, and community members.



PARENT

PARENT STRATEGIES

Understand problem. Pay attention to the lying, and try to understand why it happens. Monitor when and where it happens, what is going on around the child when it occurs, and how often it happens. Talk to the child's teacher and pertinent school staff to find out when it is happening at school.

Comparing this information, look for patterns. Does it seem to happen at the same time each day? Does it happen during similar activities or around the same people? How do others (e.g., parents, teachers, peers) react to the child's dishonesty?

Talk to child. Discuss concerns with the child and get input. How does the child feel about school, peers, teachers, and activities? Let the child talk without interruption, trying to stay objective and not passing judgment. Just listen calmly, and ask questions for clarification when needed. If it is not possible to talk to the child without getting upset, have a family friend, clergy member, or counselor present to help facilitate this discussion if necessary. Discuss what might help the child to be more honest. Together set one goal to encourage more honest behavior. Check in daily, and monitor the progress together. Positively reinforce the child's efforts with praise and positive attention.

Talk to school staff. Discuss concerns regarding the child and the dishonest behavior with the child's teacher and pertinent school staff. Share observations from home, and listen to the teacher's observations as well. Invite the teacher's input, and discuss ways to better address these concerns at school and at home. Set goals, and work together to support the child's progress toward them.

Discuss household rules and values. At a family meeting, talk about the family rules and values (e.g., treating each other with respect, being honest, taking responsibility for self). Discuss what is important to each family member and how to honor each rule/value (e.g., telling the truth when something happens). In this discussion, make sure that everyone has a common understanding of the family values. Also be very clear about expectations, including what will

BEST PRACTICES

PARENT STRATEGIES

happen when the rules are followed and the consequences when the rules are broken. Be consistent in applying these consequences, whether positive or negative.

Model honesty in daily activities. To encourage honesty in the child, make it a point to model honest behavior in everyday activities. For example, if the clerk at the store gives the wrong change, point it out. Don't lie to a friend and say, "I'm busy and can't go out with you" when it would be more appropriate to say, "I really don't want to do this today. Can we do it another time?" The child learns more from the modeling of honest behavior than from talking about it.

Practice honesty skills. Role-play with the child, taking turns showing how to respond honestly in different situations (e.g., being asked about a chore that has not been done, receiving a poor grade on a test, breaking a dish). In this role play, model honest responses, using "I statements." For example, when being asked about today's homework, say, "I made a mistake and forgot to bring the assignment home." instead of "The teacher didn't give us an assignment." Or if a friend asks how to do something, say "I haven't ever done that." instead of "Sure, I can do that.").

Recognize honest behavior. Positively reinforce honest responses from the child (e.g., "John, thank you for telling me the truth about not bringing home your homework. That must have been hard to do. How can we work together to get your homework?"). Be specific, name the behavior (but don't excuse it), and help the student to complete what needs to be done in a positive way.

Do not punish honesty. Hold the child accountable for inappropriate behaviors, but give a positive response for telling the truth (e.g., "Although I feel bad that my favorite cup is broken, I am proud of you for being honest and telling me what happened. How can we take care of the broken cup?"). If feeling angry about what happened, take time to calm down before talking to the child. Say something like, "Thank you for telling me what happened. I am not mad about you telling me, but I am upset about the [behavior]. I need a few minutes to calm down before we talk." Take those few minutes and then talk about what happened. Again, reinforce the child's honesty, and figure out what can be done to resolve the situation.

BEST PRACTICES

PARENT STRATEGIES

Discuss honesty as depicted in media. Talk with the child about honest and dishonest behavior as portrayed in books, television programs, and movies. Discuss what happens when characters choose honest or dishonest behavior. Talk about different choices the characters might have made and the possible consequences for those choices. Try to relate these situations to examples in the child's life.

Give positive attention. Listen actively to the child. When the child shares stories about the day, pay close attention, and show interest in the small, true details. This positive attention sends a clear message that the child is important and has important things to say, no matter how big or small. This may cut down the need for exaggeration to get attention.

Provide positive feedback. Post positive notes from the school on the refrigerator or on the inside of the front door for all to see. Say or write compliments to the child often (e.g., "Jill, thank you for being honest with me about ..."). Praising the child in front of others can also be a powerful reinforcer (e.g., "Sam was impressive yesterday. Even though he was scared, he came and told me the truth about ..."). When meeting goals, provide an agreed upon reward (e.g., privileges, special attention, small toy, treat).

Develop communication system with school. Throughout the process, share information between home and school frequently. Support one another, and ultimately support the child toward positive change.

BEST PRACTICES

Honesty

DESIRED BEHAVIOR

Student will be honest with self and others.

OBSERVABLE BEHAVIOR

Student lies at home, at school, and in the community to family, peers, staff, and community members.



STUDENT

STUDENT STRATEGIES

Understand problem. How often is dishonesty a problem? Ask the following questions to better understand the problem: (a) When does it happen? (b) Where does it happen? (c) What is going on when it happens? (d) Who is around? (e) What is the outcome of the dishonesty? (e.g., getting extra attention, getting into trouble) and (f) What feelings are associated with lying (before, during, and after)? Talk to someone about these concerns (e.g., parents, teachers, close friends, trusted adults). Together set a goal to decrease lying and increase honesty. Agree upon a reward that will be received when the goal is met (e.g., privileges, a special outing, extra recognition).

Monitor behavior. Watch the frequency of lying vs. behaving honestly. Using a simple chart, tally the number of times each occurs during the day. Try to increase the number of honest tallies, and decrease the number of dishonest tallies. Be aware of the times when it is easier to be honest and the times when it is more difficult. Watch for the triggers for dishonesty, and catch the lie before it is told. Then be very complimentary toward self (e.g., "I did it! Even though it would have been easier to lie, I was honest."). Work on being more honest, even in difficult situations. Each day try to be more honest than the previous day.

Review reasons for being honest. Talk to parents, teachers, peers, and other trusted adults about honesty and why it is important. Review own thoughts about honesty and other important values. Make conscious choices each day to uphold these values.

Practice telling truth. Practice being honest with others, whether it is talking about favorite hobbies, everyday activities, inner feelings, or mistakes that have been made. By being honest with the small and unimportant items, it will be easier to be honest with more important issues when they arise. Also use "I-statements" whenever possible to avoid hurting others (e.g., "I don't like it when you ignore me.",

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STUDENT STRATEGIES

“I feel angry when people call me names.”, “I don’t feel like going with you today. Maybe another day.”, “I feel sad when I don’t tell the truth.”, “I feel happy when I take responsibility for my own actions.”). Notice the positive feelings associated with telling the truth. Remember these feelings next time there is a temptation to lie.

Focus on positive. Use positive “self-talk,” which is the inner dialogue of the mind that is related to oneself. For example, say “I can be honest, although sometimes it is hard to do.” rather than “I can’t do it. I’m too stupid to change.” Acknowledge all positive efforts and achievements, by writing notes to self or telling others (“I did a good job at telling the truth about the missed homework.”). Also focus on making positive statements to others (e.g., “I like the way you are open with your feelings.”, “You sure did a great job today on that project.”, “Thanks for being my friend.”).

Learn from others. Pay attention to people who appear to be honest. Notice how they interact with others, how they handle themselves when things do not go the way they want, and how others react to them. Work to emulate their behavior, especially in difficult situations (e.g., think about what Steve or Mary would do in this situation).

Be realistic. Even with the greatest intentions, there will be days when the goal is not met (i.e., when it is easier to lie than be honest or more difficult to be honest than to lie). Don’t get discouraged and give up. Just review what happened and what might have made the situation easier. Learn from these situations, renew the commitment to be honest, and vow to try harder tomorrow. Be patient, and remember that lasting change takes time.

BEST PRACTICES



TEACHER

Maintaining Boundaries

DESIRED BEHAVIOR

Students keep appropriate distance (i.e., boundaries) from others and use touch in “okay” ways.

OBSERVABLE BEHAVIOR

Students touch others inappropriately (e.g., touching too much, too hard, or in places that are uncomfortable to others).

TEACHING STRATEGIES

Teaching Strategies for Students who Impulsively Touch Others

Teach boundaries. Teach students about boundaries at the appropriate developmental level and include information about boundaries, including the need for personal space as well as appropriate touch. Everyone’s boundaries are different, but everyone has a right to their own boundaries.

Respect cultural differences. There are significant differences in how and when members of a cultural group touch others. Even among families of the same culture, there are differing rules about when, where, who, and how they touch each other.

Recognize cultural biases. Be aware of own cultural biases, and help students to recognize their own. Teach them about differences in their behavior with their family and their behavior at school. For example, it is okay to kiss members of one’s family, but at school, it is better to limit displays of affection to a hug or shaking hands.

Teach about personal bubbles. When teaching younger children about boundaries, have them imagine themselves in a bubble. The bubble defines their personal space. When other people step inside the personal bubble, it can pop. So it is important to tell people when they are in one’s bubble. For an activity, have students pair up and walk toward each other. Have them say “pop” when they think someone is inside their personal bubble. Discuss how they felt when their bubble was “popped.”

Define boundaries as being “at an arm’s length.” Teach older children about boundaries by having them estimate the distance of “an arm’s length.” Have them pair up facing each other and standing approximately an arm’s length apart. Then ask them to briefly step closer with no touching, and have them stay that way for 10 seconds.

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TEACHING STRATEGIES

DO NOT FORCE THEM. Afterward ask them how it felt (or how even just thinking about it felt). Then talk about the differences in boundaries with friends, family, and strangers.

Encourage alternatives to intrusive touching. Teach students alternatives to intrusive touching, such as handshakes, holding hands, pats on the back, side hugs (i.e., one arm around the shoulders, touching only side-to-side). Non-touching alternatives can also be taught, such as drawing pictures, singing songs, doing cheers, or using words to express positive feelings for others.

Teach alternative strategies for positive attention. If students use touch to get attention (e.g., poking, grabbing, or hitting), teach them other ways to get it (e.g., using words to express their feelings, talking through problems, working with others to solve problems).

Clearly define space boundaries. For students who have a hard time understanding space boundaries, use masking tape on the floor. Examples include (a) make boxes around desks where students are supposed to sit, (b) make pathways within the classroom to show students where to walk without touching others, or (c) put X's on the floor where someone is supposed to stand or sit during certain activities.

Use carpet squares. For younger children who sit on the floor for circle time, use carpet squares to define their special place to sit. At the same time, they can also be taught to keep all their body parts on the carpet square so they are not touching others.

Monitor room or seating arrangements. Arrange seating, activities, and space in the classroom to minimize interactions or maximize supervision of them between students who are likely to have difficulty with touching.

Teaching Strategies for Children with Histories of Boundary Violations/Sexual Abuse

Collaborate with parents and professionals. Many children, *but not all*, touch inappropriately because they have been the victims of abuse or boundary violations. If teachers suspect that students may have been abused, talk with the school principal, psychologist, and/or counselor, and review the school district's child abuse reporting procedures. Even if it is just a suspicion, one is mandated to report suspicions to Child Protective Services. Talk to parents and enlist their support. If the child is in treatment for abuse or boundary

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TEACHING STRATEGIES

violation issues, it is important that the teacher, family, and professionals all collaborate and communicate about what behavior to be concerned about and how to intervene.

Develop a safety plan. In collaboration with the parents and other professionals working with the student, develop a plan to provide safety for other students. This might include the following: (a) providing close supervision during experiential learning activities, (b) using the bathroom without other students in it. (c) keeping hands on top of the desk or table at all times, and (d) restricting access to hidden nooks, closets, or corners of the room. The plan should include school procedures for reporting sexual behavior/suspected abuse to school district officials and Child Protective Services. It is much easier to talk about the need to report before an incident occurs rather than after it happens.

Maintain appropriate confidentiality. Parents and students who have histories of inappropriate touching are often embarrassed and afraid they will be unfairly ostracized because of their past behavior. While it is important for the teacher and the people who work with the student to know about potential behavioral problems, it is information that should be maintained with strict confidentiality. The information that must be shared should be carefully, accurately, and respectfully communicated only to those individuals who need to know.

Use resources. For more information, see C.A.R.E. Productions Associations of B.C. (1984); Cavanaugh Johnson (1996); Children's Health Market (2003); Kleven (2002); Pransky & Carpenos (1997); and Safer Society Foundation (2002).

BEST PRACTICES

Maintaining Boundaries

DESIRED BEHAVIOR

Child keeps appropriate distance (i.e. respects boundaries of others and uses touch in “okay” ways).

OBSERVABLE BEHAVIOR

Child touches others inappropriately (e.g., touching too much, too hard, or in places that are uncomfortable to others).

PARENT STRATEGIES

Parenting Strategies for Children who Impulsively Touch Others

Know expectations of classroom. Ask the child's teacher to explain how the child is expected to behave in the classroom and on the school grounds. If the school has a school-wide or classroom behavior plan, ask for a copy or verbal explanation of it.

Establish household rules/expectations. Discuss the family rules and expectations for touching (i.e., what is appropriate and what is not). Help family members to understand that what is appropriate in one situation may not be in another. For example, talk about the display of affection with family members vs. friends vs. acquaintances and strangers (e.g., family members may kiss when they meet, but friends hug or shake hands). Talk about “personal boundaries” or “personal bubbles” and how people have preferences about the size of their personal space. Talk about the importance of respecting these boundaries, and teach family members about setting their own boundaries (e.g., with strangers, acquaintances, friends, family members). Also teach them how to advocate for themselves (e.g., telling Uncle Fred that they feel uncomfortable when he pats them on the bottom). Be very clear about expectations, including what will happen when the rules are followed and the consequences when the rules are broken. Be consistent in applying these consequences, whether positive or negative.

Model own boundaries. On a regular basis, give the child feedback on what is appropriate and inappropriate touch. When the child steps over those boundaries (e.g., consistently tugging on arm, jumping on back, crowding too close), gently but firmly say that the child is violating personal space. Provide an alternative way to touch appropriately (e.g., “Instead of jumping on me, come and sit next to me.”). Reinforce the child's positive efforts to respect the boundaries given.



PARENT

BEST PRACTICES

PARENT STRATEGIES

Set realistic goals. When the child frequently uses inappropriate touch with others, together set one goal to increase more appropriate touch. Each day, check in to see how the child did, using similar terms as those used at school. If the child has had a good day, reinforce the child's behavior (e.g., praise, hugs, "high fives," small treats, privileges). If it has been a bad day, calmly discuss what went wrong and what might have been done differently to make it a better day. Maintain close contact with the child's teacher to see if there are other ways to provide support and encouragement as well.

Parenting Strategies for Children with Histories of Boundary Violations/Sexual Abuse

Collaborate with teachers and professionals. Many children, *but not all*, touch inappropriately because they have been the victims of abuse or boundary violations. If the child is in treatment for boundary issues, it is important that the teacher, pertinent school staff, and professionals (e.g., therapist, doctors, social workers) all collaborate and communicate about what behaviors to be concerned about and how to intervene.

Educate and advocate for child. Many teachers feel squeamish around the topic of abuse and don't have the skills to deal effectively with children who have experienced abuse. As a result, they don't respond appropriately to the child's behavior and avoid talking about the issue because of their discomfort. If you have information that could help them better understand the child (e.g., from own observations or those of a therapist or other professional), share this information with them. If it is not possible to adequately inform the teachers about everything they should know, or feel a professional would be taken more seriously, arrange to have the child's therapist, social worker, or other professional talk with the teachers. The school counselor or school psychologist may also be able to facilitate a meeting to discuss issues specific to the child's needs at school.

Develop safety plan. Together with the teacher and other professionals working with the child, develop a plan to decrease the likelihood that the child will inappropriately touch other children. Specific examples include (a) separate the child from other children who might be willing participants in inappropriate touching, (b) provide close supervision during experiential learning activities, (c) have

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PARENT STRATEGIES

hands on the table at all times, and (d) prohibit access to hidden nooks, closets, or corners of the room.

Be aware of the reporting obligations of school staff and professionals. If the child engages in some types of inappropriate touch, school officials (or other professionals) are required by law to make a report to Child Protective Services. Talk to the child's teacher and other members of the educational team (e.g., counselors, psychologists, therapists) about this and how it is handled in the school district. It is much easier to talk about the need to report *before* an incident occurs, rather than after the fact. If a report is made to Child Protective Services, be as open and honest as possible with the investigating case worker.

Use resources. For more information , see Kahn (2002) and Kleven (2002).

BEST PRACTICES

Maintaining Boundaries



DESIRED BEHAVIOR

Student keeps appropriate distance (i.e., boundaries) from others and uses touch in “okay” ways.

OBSERVABLE BEHAVIOR

Student touches others inappropriately (e.g., touching too much, too hard, or in places that are uncomfortable to others).

STUDENT

STUDENT STRATEGIES

Know rules and expectations. Talk to parents and teachers about appropriate and inappropriate touch. Ask them to explain the rules and expectations for home and school, regarding who to touch and how to touch others. Know that these expectations can change depending on the environment, the situation, and who is there. For example, family members may kiss, but friends usually hug or shake hands when they meet. Some people do not like to be touched at all. It is okay for everyone to decide what they are comfortable with and what they are not. Then it is important to respect the needs and wishes of others related to touch and personal space.

Practice boundaries. Everyone has personal boundaries or personal bubbles. This is the space around them. People have their own personal bubbles, but generally it is about an arm’s length away. When people step inside other people’s personal bubbles and touch in ways that are uncomfortable, it is okay to tell them that they feel uncomfortable, that they need more space, or that they wish (or don’t wish) to be touched.

Monitor touching. Pay attention to the desire to touch others, as well as to the practice of touching others. If one wants to touch others, ask if a handshake or hug would be okay. If other kids say they don’t want to be touched, respect their decision, and leave them alone. If one touches other kids and they say they don’t like to be touched, apologize, and ask how they would like to be treated. Respect their needs and decisions for personal space as well. If one tends to touch others a lot, keep one’s hands in one’s pockets or carry an object (e.g., Koosh ball), so the hands will be busy and less likely to touch others when meeting them.

Ask for help. If someone touches kids in ways that make them feel bad, those kids should tell a parent, teacher, or a trusted adult right away. This means pushing, shoving, hitting, biting, spitting, or just getting too close. It also

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means if someone tries to touch another's private parts. Even if kids aren't sure, they need to ask an adult for help. If kids do not feel comfortable talking to their teacher, they can talk to any trusted adult at school (e.g., the school counselor, librarian, art teacher, or PE teacher), as well as their parents. This is really important.

BEST PRACTICES

Recovering from Upsetting Event

DESIRED BEHAVIOR

Students can recover from upsetting events.

OBSERVABLE BEHAVIOR

Students enter the school/classroom exhibiting behaviors that suggest anger, frustration, and an inability to cope with the demands of the current environment.

TEACHING STRATEGIES

Support students following upsetting events. Find a quiet place or room, and encourage the student to talk about the upsetting event. Ask whether the student would like company or would rather be left alone. If it is the former, give the student opportunities to talk, and just listen. The student may just want the company without having to talk about the event just yet. If so, respect the student's wishes, and just sit with the student. If the student would rather be left alone, keep checking on the student at regular, brief intervals. Sometimes going for a walk with an adult can help drain off some of the impact of the event, helping the student to calm down, feel more in control, and feel ready to address the issue.

Use assistive techniques. For students who are having significant difficulties in beginning to explore the issue, it may be necessary to use assistive techniques. Some examples include (a) using a chart that shows facial expressions and labels emotions, (b) drawing a picture or series of pictures related to the event and associated feelings, (c) using dolls or figurines to help describe the interactions that occurred during the event, or (d) acting out the actual event.

Process the event. When the student is ready and willing to begin, use active listening, reflection, and paraphrasing to help the student discuss the event. Acknowledge the difficulty in talking about an upsetting event, and support the student's efforts.

Give regular feedback. Note the progress being made as the student begins to relax and calm down. Let students know how well they are doing through positive statements. Allow for and expect increased emotions during this time.

Be patient with the recovery process. The progress in recovering from an emotional event is not linear. There are highs and lows, calms and storms as the process continues. Frequently students appear ready to talk only to abruptly stop and change their minds. It is imperative to be patient, and allow students to proceed at their own pace and given level.



TEACHER

BEST PRACTICES

TEACHING STRATEGIES

Develop timeline. Use any assistive device needed to develop a timeline to discover what occurred, as well as when and how. Record on paper or on the board what the student is saying. Repeat back what has been said, but note the sequence as the student portrays it. Return to this timeline with questions to establish some subtle information that may not have been given or possibly was not obvious to the student.

Determine if need for professional assistance. Decide through the decoding of the information given whether to continue, bring in another professional, involve another student, or refer the student to a professional. Use known information about available community, therapist, and family support systems.

Draw conclusions. Based on this information, draw conclusions about the reasons for the student's difficulties, such as (a) limited coping skills, (b) unrealistic expectations for oneself or others, or (c) possible mitigating factors outside of school (e.g., family problem). Based on these conclusions, form recommendations to address what the student needs.

Discuss recommendations with student. Inform the student of the recommendations that have been made, and discuss how any of the possibilities might be of help. Ask permission to proceed by involving others, but be clear about the benefits to the student. Where there are issues that have legal precedent, such as abuse, tell the student what the law requires. Throughout this process, continue to provide support for the student.

Transition student back into classroom when appropriate. Depending upon the necessary action taken, as well as the immediacy of the situation, the teacher will strive to integrate the student back into the classroom environment when appropriate. Let students know that when they are ready, they may return to the classroom. Usually a suggestion to get a drink of water or to wash their face will help as a transition into the class. It is necessary to remember that students have expended a great deal of energy -- mental, physical, and emotional -- and it may be appropriate to offer some rest, a snack, or other modified activities. Continue to support students visually, verbally, and physically as needed. Often a peer can be of help by befriending the student at this time.

Provide skill enhancement. If the issue is primarily a

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TEACHING STRATEGIES

lack of skills, specific scripts may be selected or developed to model and role-play solutions, either individually or in a group setting.

Address cognitive distortions. Where cognitive distortions (i.e., unrealistic expectations) are present, reviewing and challenging the thinking processes that perpetuate faulty reasoning may be of help. This may be done through either group or individual counseling that is supported by classroom activities to help identify the relationship between events, emotions, thoughts, and behaviors. Helping students to understand what is possible to change versus what is not possible to change, as well as building a plan to support their successes will surely have a positive impact on them.

Proceed with caution. Educators can easily get caught up in the student's upsetting event and go beyond their skill levels in trying to help. It is necessary to strive to stay calm and poised. Focus on the student's experience, and resist making promises. Remember the information that has been gathered is primarily the student's perception of the event. While supporting the student, strive to gather more information to gain the clarity and understanding necessary to intervene appropriately.

Take care. Often these interactions are quite involved, and teachers may feel as drained as the students do. Give oneself some time to recover and to reflect on what has happened. Accepting the help and support from others for the work that has been done is not only important, but also is necessary to continue being a successful educator.

Use resources. For more information, see Gerald and Eyman (1981); Goldstein (1980); Greenwald (1986); Long and Wood (1986); Positive Education Program (2003); Tosi and Moleski (1975); and M. Wood (1996).

BEST PRACTICES



PARENT

Recovering from Upsetting Event

DESIRED BEHAVIOR

Child can recover from upsetting events.

OBSERVABLE BEHAVIOR

Child enters school/classroom, exhibiting behaviors that suggest anger, frustration, and an inability to effectively cope with the demands of the current environment.

PARENT STRATEGIES

Parenting Strategies to Address a Major Event

Help child calm down. When a major event has occurred, encourage the child to use relaxation strategies to calm down, such as sitting or standing quietly, breathing deeply, and/or counting to 10. When the child is relatively calm, ask if the child would like to talk or would rather be left alone. If the child needs space and time alone, keep checking with the child at regular, brief intervals. Sometimes going for a walk with an adult will help lower the impact of the event, possibly helping the child to feel like talking. When the child is ready, find a quiet place and encourage the child to explore the upsetting event.

Use assistive techniques if needed. If the child is having significant difficulty beginning to explore the issue, use specific strategies to help. Possible strategies include (a) using a chart that shows facial expressions to label emotions, (b) drawing pictures to depict the situation, (c) using dolls or figurines to describe the interactions, or (d) acting out the event.

Process event. When the child is ready and willing to begin, let the child talk without interruption. Talk about the child's current feelings, as well as those before, during, and right after the event. Be calm and just listen. As the discussion continues, use active listening, reflection, and paraphrasing while continuing to support the child's efforts. Do not argue about the facts at this point. Just support the child's efforts, validate the child's feelings (e.g., "Wow, you seem really angry.", "That must have made you feel sad.", "That must have been so scary.", "You were very brave.", "Thank you for sharing this with me."), and provide reassurance (e.g., hugs, holding the child's hand, stroking the child's hair). Be available for further discussion as the child asks for it or seems to need it.

Support and give regular feedback. Note the progress

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the child is making, as the child begins to relax and calm down. Use positive statements to reinforce how well the child is doing. Allow for and expect increased emotions during this time. If necessary, encourage deep breathing and/or short breaks to cope with the stress and emotion.

Be patient with recovery process. The progress made in recovering from an emotional event is not linear. There are highs and lows, calms or storms as the process unfolds. Frequently, the child appears ready to talk and then abruptly decides not to talk. Be patient, and allow the time the child needs to calm down.

Be objective. Parents can easily get caught up in their child's upsetting event. It is necessary to stay calm and poised. Focus on the child's experience, and resist making promises. Remember, the child is giving only one side of the situation. Continue to be supportive, but also be prepared for other information to surface over time.

Develop timeline. Use any assistive techniques to develop a timeline to discover when, how, and what occurred. Record on paper what the child is saying. Repeat back what has been said, but note the sequence as the child portrays it. Throughout the process, return to this timeline frequently with questions to clarify inconsistencies or to establish subtle information that was either not given or possibly not obvious to the child.

Use supports. After talking with the child about the situation and the child's feelings about it, decide what needs to happen next. Use any resources that are available to the child and family. This would include (a) family members (immediate and extended), (b) friends, (c) neighbors, (d) school staff, (e) clergy, (f) church members, (g) community organizations, and (h) professionals as needed. Involve the child in this process as appropriate, discussing the importance and benefit of help and support from others.

Take care of self. Often these situations are quite involved and emotionally draining for children and parents alike. Take time to recover and reflect. Also take good care of oneself, and allow others to help. Having this care and support is imperative to being an effective parent.

Return to regular activities. How quickly to encourage the child to return to regular activities depends on the nature of the situation, the child's reaction to it, and how well the child has calmed down during the process. Allow the child to guide this process. When the child is ready, develop a

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plan together to help the child safely return to the usual activities. Go slowly and offer calming strategies, especially in the beginning (e.g., getting a drink of water, washing face, having a snack, taking a nap). Also work to ensure success whenever possible (i.e., eliminate other kids, toys, or variables that may have led to the original upset).

Know when to seek professional assistance. Over the next few days or weeks (depending on the situation), monitor the child's mood and daily activities (e.g., general attitude, energy level, eating, sleeping, desire to play/be with others). If the child seems to be struggling with the usual daily activities and does not seem to be physically ill, talk with the child's teacher. If the child seems to be struggling at school as well, it may be necessary to seek professional help.

Parenting Strategies to Address an Ongoing Problem

Help teacher and staff understand child. When the child has an ongoing problem in coping with upsetting events, meet with the child's teacher and related staff. Discuss the child's strengths and weaknesses, interests and activities, relationships and responsibilities. Also discuss any major events, positive or negative, that have occurred in the child's life that are pertinent to the child's current coping abilities.

Be actively involved with child. Make it a point to check in with the child throughout the day and encourage open expression. Ask about the child's day (e.g., what has gone well, what has been tough, what was the favorite part) and how the child felt during these situations. Work to identify triggers for positive emotions, as well as those for negative emotions, and establish patterns of behavior. Help the child to see and understand these connections as well. Discuss potential consequences of negative emotions and specific ways to cope with them (e.g., counting to 10 when upset, talking to a friend when sad, shooting baskets when angry). Brainstorm ways that the child can cope with tough situations and tough emotions. Make a list and post it in the child's bedroom. Have the child refer back to it when having difficulty coping.

Work to understand triggers. Overreactions are often caused by irrational thinking or cognitive distortions (e.g., "No one will ever like me."; "I have to be perfect."; "If anyone ever gets angry with me, I am a failure."; "If my

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friend makes a new friend, my friend won't like me anymore.""). If these distortions appear to be present after monitoring the child's thoughts and feelings, it is important to review and challenge these thought patterns with the child. This can be done informally or more formally through individual or group counseling. In this process, it is important to understand the nature of these thought processes and how they relate to external events, emotions, and behavior. No matter which strategy is used, help the child to understand that change is possible. Support the child in setting goals, monitoring progress, and celebrating successes.

Gather data. Set goals and help the child to monitor progress toward them. Focus on just one or two goals, making sure they are simple and realistic to attain (e.g., take a 10-minute time-out when feeling angry, talk to Mom or Dad when feeling sad using "I-statements," shoot 20 baskets when feeling upset, listen to music for 10 minutes when feeling frustrated). Post a chart on the refrigerator, and have the child document progress.

Give feedback. Reinforce the child's positive efforts, as well as progress toward these goals with verbal and/or nonverbal rewards (e.g., praise, hugs, stickers, privileges). When progress is slow or difficulties arise, discuss possible obstacles and ways to overcome them. When outbursts or inappropriate behavior occurs, discuss what happened, the child's feelings, and ways the situation might have been handled differently. Focus on what can be learned from these situations, rather than seeing them as failures.

Work closely with teacher and staff. Communicate regularly with the child's teacher, sharing observations from home and getting feedback regarding the child's behavior at school. Methods of communication might include (a) weekly progress reports (or daily if necessary), (b) phone calls, (c) e-mail, or (d) regular meeting times. Discuss the child's progress and ways to reinforce it. Also discuss consequences for emotional outbursts or sulking, both at school and at home. Finally, talk about ways to encourage and support more positive coping strategies. Work to be consistent across environments as much as possible.

Develop crisis plan. Whether a family is in crisis or just experiencing a little extra stress, it can benefit from a crisis plan. This means working together with family members

BEST PRACTICES

PARENT STRATEGIES

to develop a plan to cope with stress in difficult situations. This plan would include strategies to cope with a range of stressors, from very minor stresses to those of crisis proportion. Thus, it would encompass simple strategies, such as (a) having more family dinners, (b) making a list of family supports, (c) setting a game night, or (d) going away on a much-needed vacation. But it would also involve more complex strategies as well, such as (a) having regular family meetings to discuss specific concerns, (b) developing family conflict resolution strategies, or (c) using an emergency escape plan in case of an accident or fire. The goal of this plan would be to help family members cope with any situation that might occur in a positive, cohesive manner.

Use resources. For more information, see Gerald and Eyman (1981); Goldstein (1980); Greenwald (1986); Hart (1995); Long and Wood (1986); Positive Education Program (2003); Tosi and Moleski (1975); and Wood (1986).

BEST PRACTICES

Recovering from Upsetting Event

DESIRED BEHAVIOR

Student can recover from upsetting events.

OBSERVABLE BEHAVIOR

Student enters the school/classroom exhibiting behaviors that suggest anger, frustration, and an inability to effectively cope with the demands of the current environment.

STUDENT STRATEGIES

Calm down. Tell a trusted adult (parent, teacher, friend) about feeling upset. Ask to go to a quiet place to calm down. Focus on taking deep breaths and releasing body tension. Think about a quiet, peaceful place and imagine being there. Continue taking deep breaths. Other relaxation strategies might include (a) slowly counting to 10, (b) pacing, or (c) going for a walk.

Talk with others. Ask to talk with a trusted adult when ready to talk. Try to recount the event in a timeline fashion (i.e., who did what and when) as much as possible. Help the adult understand the event. Use deep-breathing techniques as needed during this process to stay calm and focused. Be aware of feelings, and share them with the adult. Listen to questions being asked, and try to respond to them.

Follow plan. If there is an anger/frustration or upset plan, review it and prepare for the next step in the plan. Continue to relax and work toward problem recovery.

Ask for help. Think through the situation, current demands, and what one needs. Think about what it will take to resolve the situation. Think about returning to class and what will need to be done, both before and upon the return (e.g., participating in a class discussion, taking a test, doing an activity). If help is needed in any of these areas, ask for it (e.g., an adult to mediate in the problem resolution, extra quiet time before returning to class). When ready to return to class, first wash face, get a drink of water, and then reenter the classroom. Follow up with any plan or commitment that has been made to ensure complete problem resolution. Be open to new coping techniques, and work with others as agreed. Then sit back and be proud of all the hard work that has been done!



STUDENT

BEST PRACTICES

Respecting Property

DESIRED BEHAVIOR

Students respect the property of others, as well as their own.

OBSERVABLE BEHAVIOR

Students destroy property.

TEACHING STRATEGIES

Clearly define problem. To address the problem, it is important to first identify the reason(s) why students are being destructive. Steps in this process include (a) Track the behavior, noting when it happens; what is going on around the students before, during, and after this behavior occurs; and its frequency. Also include responses from other staff and the student's peers. (b) Look for patterns in the information gathered (e.g., Do students destroy things when they are angry, when they are excluded from a group, during conflicts with others, during transitions, during free time in class?). What are the results of the behavior (i.e., attention from staff or peers)? (c) Interview or talk with students in a nonjudgmental manner. It may be that they are unaware of concerns regarding their destructive behavior. (d) Make an educated guess as to why they are destroying things (e.g., wanting attention, unable to express one's feelings in appropriate ways, lacking social skills for interacting with peers, low self-esteem). (e) Choose strategies based on these reasons, monitoring progress and giving enough time for the strategies to work.

Encourage self-monitoring. For students with self-control issues, it is helpful to understand the triggers for destructive behavior and encourage the students to watch out for these triggers when they occur. Possible triggers could be name-calling, someone bumping into students, anxiety brought on by another event or concern, or an apparent unknown. Reaction to these triggers can start a chain of events that eventually leads to something being broken or destroyed. If the trigger can be identified, it is possible to help students deal with their anxiety. If the trigger is not identifiable, students can learn to read their own body cues (e.g., tight muscles, rapid breathing, sweaty hands). When teaching students to recognize and monitor these cues, teach them ways to control the cues, such as deep breathing, relaxation exercises, walking away from negative situations, or finding someone to talk to about their concerns.



TEACHER

BEST PRACTICES

TEACHING STRATEGIES

Give verbal or nonverbal cues. Giving students cues can help them track their own reactions and behavior. These cues can be verbal or nonverbal but should be clearly defined and agreed upon by teachers and students. It is imperative to maintain a calm tone and presence when a student is losing control. If the teacher gets upset or angry, students will pick up on these cues. As a result, the situation will intensify, and feelings will escalate. However, if the teacher remains calm and helps students to recognize their feelings and behavior, together they can defuse the situation and avoid negative outcomes.

Promote communication and understanding. Ask students why they think they are destructive at times. Listen to what they say in a nonjudgmental manner. Help them to elaborate on what they were feeling during a recent incident, using “I-statements.” Discuss alternative approaches students could have used to address the issue or solve the problem, as well as possible outcomes of each choice. Have students choose which one would have been the most beneficial. Based on this information, discuss how to make more positive choices in the future.

Help students who are out of control. When students are out of control to the point that others are in danger (e.g., not listening or hearing others, not responding to cues, yelling, throwing/breaking things, dumping tables/chairs/desks,), teachers and staff need to physically intervene to take control of the situation. Remove these students from the group and give them a time out in an area where they (and others) will be safe. At first do not try to talk with students. Give them time to calm down. When they can follow simple directions (e.g., sit down, use a quiet voice), begin talking with them about what just happened. Talk about the triggers, thoughts, feelings, behavior, and outcome. Specifically, talk about the incident in detail and about the reality of what happened. Next, help students to define steps toward resolution and taking responsibility for one’s behavior. Finally, rehearse what will happen when they transition back into the classroom and how to resolve any remaining topics or feelings students might have.

Encourage restitution. Once students have calmed down and talked about the incident, they need to assess the damage done during it. Do this when both the student and teacher are calm. Is it that they only need to clean up the

BEST PRACTICES

TEACHING STRATEGIES

mess they made, or did they do damage to an object that needs to be replaced or thrown away? There are some choices that can be made. Teachers must have knowledge of their students and what they are capable of handling. If the damaged article needs to be replaced or thrown away, then maybe students can work off the cost of replacement. They could help clean the classroom or do recycling, whatever the teacher and student feel will be fair and just. Students should also write or draw an apology to all that have been affected by their actions.

Coach them through apologies. Having students apologize in person is a good skill to build, but remember that this is very difficult for children (and adults alike). Structure the situation so it may be successful for the students and coach them during the process. Promote a positive outcome, such that no one is left feeling humiliated.

Model respect and pride in ownership. Sociologists have shown that if people see things broken, they are more likely to commit further crimes or display negative behavior. Therefore, clean up or fix broken things quickly to send the message that people care about the classroom/school and the things in it. Discuss the need to respect one's own property, as well as that of others and to take pride in their surroundings, both at home and at school.

Use resources. For more information, see Goldstein (1980); Long and Wood (1991); Sprick & Howard (1995); and M. Wood (1996).

BEST PRACTICES

Respecting Property

DESIRED BEHAVIOR

Child respects the property of others, as well as the child's own.

OBSERVABLE BEHAVIOR

Child destroys property.

PARENT STRATEGIES

Understand problem. Talk to the child's teachers to learn more about the destructive behaviors that are being displayed. A clear understanding of these behaviors, the triggers promoting them, and the associated consequences is imperative for parents to help their children learn the self-control strategies necessary to become less destructive and more respectful of others. Share observations from home or other settings to help teachers and staff better understand the problem as well.

Learn about behavior programs. Ask if there is a behavior program being used at school, and if so, request a copy. If not, ask if a behavior program might be useful, and volunteer to help in its development. Review the program with the teacher and the child. Ask questions if there is any confusion. Use the same terminology at home as the teacher uses at school to support the program, set clear expectations, and be consistent across settings.

Work closely with school staff. Check in with teachers regularly to determine if the behavior program is working, if changes are needed, and what can be done at home to support it. Continue to share observations to help staff maintain a good understanding of the problem in other settings, the progress being made, and any assistance that is needed. Continue to ask questions when necessary.

Talk openly with child. Discuss concerns, expectations, progress being made, apparent obstacles to progress, and goal attainment. Talk about the child's feelings associated with the destructive behaviors, including feelings before, during, and after they occur. Also discuss potential consequences and possible responses to the behavior, such as (a) avoidance from others, (b) friends or classmates refusing to play, or (c) peers feeling the need to protect their property and denying the child's use of it. Support the child's feelings, but also remind the child that there are more positive forms of self-expression and better ways to solve problems. Reinforce positive self-expression when it occurs.



PARENT

BEST PRACTICES

PARENT STRATEGIES

Directly involve child throughout process. Involve the child in meetings with teachers and staff. Encourage cooperation and participation, as well as reward compliance and progress made throughout the process. Provide positive feedback when the child has had a good day. When destructive behaviors have occurred, talk calmly with the child about what happened. Review the events and the triggers that led to the destructiveness. Talk about other choices that might have been made and what can be learned from the situation. Encourage responsibility for one's actions, and reinforce positive participation in this discussion.

Expect and support restitution. Talk with the child about possible ways to pay for objects that have been broken or damaged. Children can use their allowance to pay for them, or they can do constructive work around the home or for others. Another possibility is to do compensation work for the person whose property was damaged (e.g., doing another child's chores, doing housework or yard work for an adult). An apology, either written or verbal, is essential.

Be a good role model. Children emulate the adults in their lives. Take good care of possessions, and respect the property of others. Quickly take responsibility when damage is done, and work to right the situation. When conflict arises, use creative problem-solving strategies, and speak carefully when frustrated or angry.

BEST PRACTICES

Respecting Property

DESIRED BEHAVIOR

Students respect the property of others, as well as their own.

OBSERVABLE BEHAVIOR

Students destroy property.

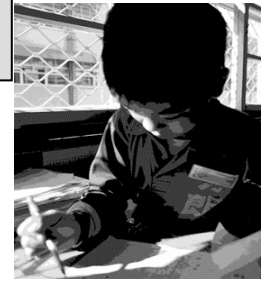
STUDENT STRATEGIES

Monitor destructive behavior. Keep track of time, place, and what is happening when the desire to break things begins. Chart the frequency of these feelings, as well as the behavior. Watch for patterns (e.g., "Do I always feel destructive at the same time of day, around the same people, or in the same settings? How am I feeling when I want to break things? Am I angry, upset, frustrated, sad ..."). If this seems too difficult, ask a trusted adult (e.g., parent, teacher, friend) to help.

Use self-control strategies. Practice strategies to help control feelings and destructive behavior, including (a) stopping and thinking before acting, (b) deep breathing, (c) counting to 10, and (d) expressing self using "I-statements" (e.g., "I feel angry when you will not share with me" instead of taking the toy and breaking it). If nothing helps to calm down, ask an adult (e.g., parent, teacher, friend) for assistance. Talk about what has been tried, what seems to work, and what does not. Together brainstorm other ways to encourage self-control.

Discuss concerns. Talk about feelings and destructive tendencies with a parent, teacher, or another trusted adult. If something has been broken, talk about what happened. Also talk about the reasons it happened and what might have been done differently to avoid the destructiveness. Ask for help and advice as needed. Role-play different scenarios and different outcomes to help make a better choice next time.

Restitution. When control is lost and something is broken, one needs to make restitution (i.e., showing one is sorry and making it up to everyone involved). This can be done in person or in writing. The steps involved include (a) apologize, (b) clean up the mess, (c) talk to the owner of the object, (d) offer to replace object with own money, and (e) if short on money, offer to work off the amount it will cost to replace the object. If necessary, ask a trusted adult to help.



STUDENT

BEST PRACTICES

Safety

DESIRED BEHAVIOR

Students will be safe with peers and staff.

OBSERVABLE BEHAVIOR

Students harm others with physical contact, such as hitting, biting, or kicking.

TEACHING STRATEGIES

Clearly define problem. To address the problem, it is important to first identify the reason(s) why students are being physically aggressive. Steps in this process include (a) Track the behavior, noting when it happens; what is going on around the students before, during, and after aggressive behavior occurs; and its frequency. Also include responses from other staff and the student's peers. (b) Look for patterns in the information gathered (e.g., Do students become physically aggressive when they have conflict with others, are excluded from a group, during transitions, during free time in class?). What are the results of the behavior (i.e., attention from staff or peers)? (c) Interview or talk with students in a nonjudgmental manner. It may be that they are unaware of the problems resulting from their aggression. (d) Make an educated guess as to why they are becoming aggressive (e.g., wanting attention, unable to express one's feelings in appropriate ways, lacking social skills for interacting with peers, low self-esteem). (e) Choose strategies based on these reasons, monitoring progress and giving enough time for the strategies to work.

Clearly establish rules. Post rules and values, including "Respect each other" and "Keep hands and feet to self" in a highly visible location in the classroom, and refer to them often. Have large and small group discussions on what each rule or value means and how to show the rule or value to others. Review the rules with the class as part of the morning meeting each day.

Develop individual contracts. After better understanding the reasons for aggression, work together with students and if appropriate, their parents, to develop a contract to address students' tendencies toward being aggressive and possible related skill deficits. For example, if Johnny uses positive ways to gain attention 5 days in a row, he will select a 30-minute activity of his choice. Help students to monitor their progress over time, adjusting the contract as needed to promote more appropriate behavior.



TEACHER

BEST PRACTICES

TEACHING STRATEGIES

Use positive reinforcement. In helping students track their own behavior, also help them to identify improvements and positive changes they have made. Reinforce these changes with praise and attention. Teach and model “I statements” (e.g., “I like it when you remember the rule and raise your hand to get attention.”). Also help students themselves appreciate the positive changes they have made (i.e., encouraging them to feel pride in themselves and their efforts).

Separate students. Separate students who are most likely to fight, and only allow contact in highly structured interactions that are closely monitored.

Be consistent. Develop a consistent response to aggression and the resolution of related conflict. Provide a quiet area for students to go when feeling frustrated, feeling a desire to hurt others or when needing to de-escalate. A “Koosh” ball or something similar can be used to hold or squeeze when feeling frustrated. When there has been a conflict or physical encounter, allow time for the students to calm down. Talk to the student about (a) What caused the frustration to build? (b) What are other ways to handle frustration? (c) What could the student do if the same situation arose again? (d) What needs to happen for the student to return to the classroom or learning area?

Teach and model journaling. Provide students with notebooks in which they can express feelings and frustrations, as well as record related behaviors. Allow them to use these journals when they are beginning to feel frustrated.

Teach relaxation. Brainstorm with students, and develop a list of ways for them to relax when they are feeling frustrated (e.g., deep breathing, counting to 10). Practice these techniques often with students so they will be able to do them automatically when they begin to feel frustrated.

Use role modeling. Use social skills training for the entire class that will reinforce positive, appropriate interactions with others. Use practice and role playing to show what happens when students are continually aggressive as well as what happens when they use more positive ways to get attention. Have students practice how to get positive attention and reinforce their efforts. Specific topics to address include (a) starting a conversation, (b) asking a question, (c) introducing oneself, (d) giving and receiving compliments, (e) asking for help, (e) joining in and dealing

BEST PRACTICES

TEACHING STRATEGIES

with feeling left out, (f) expressing feelings, (g) sharing something, (h) helping others, (i) negotiating, (j) using self-control, (k) responding to teasing, and (l) making a complaint. Specific lessons to teach these skills can be found in the resources below.

Use resources. For more information, see Goldstein & McGinnis (1997); Huggins (1997); Linehan (1993); and Sunburst Communications (2003).

BEST PRACTICES



PARENT

Safety

DESIRED BEHAVIOR

Child will be safe with others

OBSERVABLE BEHAVIOR

Child harms others with physical contact, such as hitting, biting, or kicking.

PARENT STRATEGIES

Understand problem. First try to understand why the child is hurting others. Pay attention to when it happens, where it happens, how often it happens, what is going on around the child when it occurs, and what happens afterward. Talk to school staff about their observations as well. Look for patterns in this behavior. Does it seem to happen at the same time each day? Does it happen during similar activities? Does it happen with certain peers or no one in particular? Does it happen when the child is unsupervised? Observe the child and pinpoint the physical warning signs of anger in the child (e.g., tight muscles, red face, clenched fists, fast and shallow breathing, increased heart rate).

Talk with child. Discuss concerns with the child and get input. How does the child feel about school, friends, and teachers? Are there concerns? Encourage the child to talk and just listen. Refrain from passing judgment, but do ask questions for clarification when needed. Calmly discuss the signs of anger in the child. Agree to watch for these signs, and work with the child to catch the anger in the early stages before it escalates to the point where the child is hurting others.

Discuss household rules and values. Talk about household rules and family values, especially pertaining to respect, interactions with others, conflict management, aggression, and violence, with all family members. Discuss what is important to each family member, and talk about ways to honor each rule/value (e.g., use words to express anger and frustration, rather than hurting others). Talk about it being OK to be angry but that it is NOT OK to hurt others. Discuss examples showing how everyone can get angry during the day, but also talk about safe ways of expressing and coping with it (e.g., "I was so mad at work today. I had to count to 10 four times."). In this discussion, be very clear about expectations, including what will happen when the rules are followed, and the consequences when the rules are broken. Be consistent in applying these consequences, whether positive or negative.

BEST PRACTICES

PARENT STRATEGIES

Develop contract with child. Working together with the child, make a contract to reinforce safe behavior (e.g., “If Johnny doesn’t hurt anyone for 5 days in a row, he will get to have a friend over.”). Set one goal that is realistic and very specific. Together choose a reward that will be valuable to the child. Then encourage the child to monitor this behavior, using a tally sheet posted on the refrigerator or in the child’s bedroom.

Support and reinforce efforts. Review the child’s progress daily, looking at the tally sheet and talking about the child’s day. Encourage the child to talk by really listening to what the child has to say and not interrupting. Validate the child’s feelings, and ask questions for clarification. The goal is to convey a wish to understand and help the child. During this discussion, if the child acknowledges having felt frustrated or angry that day, talk about the situation, including what happened before, during and after it. Also discuss how the child felt during the process and how the situation was handled. Talk about what can be learned from the situation and how it might have been handled in a different (possibly better) way. Reinforce the child’s positive efforts in positive ways, such as (a) using “I-statements” (e.g., “I like it when you remember to use your words instead of pushing to get your brother’s attention.”); (b) posting positive notes from school on the refrigerator; (c) praising the child (e.g., “Jane, you did a great job telling your sister you were angry when she was not sharing. You should be proud of yourself.”); or (d) giving hugs, and/or privileges.

Discuss ways to calm down. Talk to the child about ways to calm down, sharing strategies that have worked in the past (e.g., taking a time-out, taking deep breaths and counting to 10, listening to music, taking a hot bath, going for a walk, squeezing a Koosh ball, talking to a parent or friend). Make a drawing or list (depending on the age and reading ability of the child), and post it in a visible location. Refer back to it when the child (or any family member) is becoming upset or angry. To encourage mastery, practice these self-control strategies when the child is not angry as well.

Make a family safety plan. Meet with all family members together, and develop a safety plan. The purpose of this plan would be to establish a protocol for what to do when someone is angry and losing control. As part of the plan, set up a quiet, safe area in the house where a family member can go

BEST PRACTICES

PARENT STRATEGIES

when feeling angry. Make a “Do Not Disturb” sign to display when someone is there and does not want to be bothered. Another part of this plan would include a policy to process the “blow-up” after those involved have calmed down. Talk about what happened, including (a) what caused them to get angry, (b) other ways to have shown the anger, (c) what they might do differently next time, and (d) how to right the situation. If the child has hurt someone, the child needs to take responsibility. Discuss possible ways of “repairing” the damage (e.g., apologizing to those involved, doing something nice for them). Model use of this plan, and encourage other family members to use it as well.

Focus on prevention. It is also important to work on preventing angry outbursts. First, encourage a positive focus in the family, and compliment family members often. Second, encourage family members to use appropriate emotional expression. Third, encourage immediate attention to concerns and/or conflict to avoid the build-up of emotion over time. Fourth, monitor what the child and other family members are watching and listening to (e.g., on television, videos, DVDs, computer games, radio, CDs). Discourage exposure to violent programs and music. Finally, encourage the use of the self-control strategies at the first sign of anger. Then talk about what is going on, how the child feels, and what to do to make the situation better.

Model appropriate emotional expression. Show the child appropriate ways to express emotions on a daily basis, both positive or negative (e.g., “I feel happy when we are together.”, “I feel sad when you are sad.”, “I feel angry when other drivers don’t look before they switch lanes.”). Also model the use of nonverbal methods, such as writing in a diary or journal, drawing a picture, or playing the piano. The child will be more likely to use appropriate expression if the parents do so. Encourage the daily use of these strategies.

Role-play appropriate emotional expression. As a family, practice ways to express feelings, resolve conflict, and get one’s needs met without anger. Possible areas to work on include (a) joining in so as not to feel left out, (b) starting a conversation, (c) sharing something, (d) helping others, (e) negotiating, (f) responding to teasing, (g) making a complaint, and (h) using self-control. Make it a game, and have fun with it. Everyone will benefit!

BEST PRACTICES

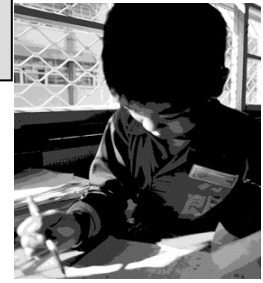
PARENT STRATEGIES

Encourage positive interactions. To practice positive interactions, have the child invite friends over or invite people over that have children close to the same age as the child. While they play, help the child to use positive social skills and emotional expression. If negative situations arise, coach the child through them, using the skills that the child has been learning. Reinforce the child's positive efforts.

Work closely with teacher and school staff. Develop a communication system with the child's teacher and pertinent school staff. Let the school know what is being done at home, and find out what is being done at school. This teamwork will enable the parents and school staff to support each other and ultimately better help the child.

BEST PRACTICES

Safety



STUDENT

DESIRED
BEHAVIOR

Student will be safe with peers and staff.

OBSERVABLE
BEHAVIOR

Student harms others with physical contact, such as hitting, biting, or kicking.

STUDENT
STRATEGIES

Understand problem. Pay attention to the aggression/violence, and ask the following questions: (a) When does it happen? (b) Where? (c) What else is going on when it happens? (d) Who is there? (e) How often does it happen? (f) What feelings are associated with it (e.g., anger, frustration, sadness, embarrassment, excitement)? and (g) What purpose does the aggression/violence serve (e.g., does it bring extra attention from others?). Discuss these concerns with teachers, parents, a good friend, or a trusted adult. Together set a goal to decrease the aggression and increase acts of self-control. Then monitor both the aggression and the self-control using a simple chart. Each day tally the number of times there was aggression and the number of times there might have been aggression but there was self-control instead. Work to decrease the frequency of aggression and increase the frequency of self-control.

Be aware of feelings. Pay attention to what anger feels like (e.g., tight muscles, red face, tight fists, rapid breathing). Also pay attention to thoughts when angry (e.g., "I'm no good."; "He makes me so mad. I want to hurt him."; "I'll show them."; "I'm right, and she's wrong."). Notice when feelings of anger are beginning, and then focus on strategies to calm down. Possible ideas include (a) taking a time-out, (b) taking deep breaths, (c) counting to 10, (d) walking away from stressful situations that could lead to aggression, (e) staying away from others that elicit angry feelings, (f) listening to music, (g) drawing, (h) reading, (i) going for a walk, (j) writing in a journal, (k) talking with friends, and (l) squeezing a Koosh ball, stress ball, or small bean bag. Post a list of these strategies, and refer to it often. Practice using them not only when feeling angry, but also when not feeling angry to improve their effectiveness.

Practice self-expression. Practice using "I-statements" to express feelings (e.g., "I feel angry when you don't choose me to be on your team.", "I feel sad when you ignore me.", "I feel happy when you include me in your game.", "I feel angry when you call me names.", "I feel

BEST PRACTICES

STUDENT STRATEGIES

do poorly on a test.”, “I feel proud when I can control my anger.”). Other forms of self-expression include writing, doing art, singing or playing music, and acting.

Designate a quiet area to calm down. Talk to teachers or parents about designating a particular space in the classroom or at home as a “quiet area.” Use this as a place to go and calm down when feeling angry. If this space is in use by someone else, be respectful, and wait for a turn in the quiet area. Use alternative coping strategies while waiting (e.g., deep breathing; writing in a journal; talking with a peer, teacher, or family member).

Focus on positives. Using a journal, diary, or even Post-it notes, document positive progress and achievements. Look at these notes often as a reminder of the good work being done. Also focus on positive self-talk (i.e., those internal thoughts about self). For example, when a mistake has been made, consciously saying “I made a mistake, but with practice I will do better” rather than “I’m dumb.” Also compliment self when using self-control, such as “I did it! I told Sue how I felt without being insulting or mean.” Share positive thoughts with others whenever possible, and graciously receive them when a compliment is given.

Learn from others. Watch peers to see how they cope with anger and difficult situations. Identify other students who seem to be good at handling their anger. Watch how they carry themselves, interact with others, and cope with situations in which things do not go the way they want. Also watch how others react to them, in both positive and negative situations. Try to emulate their style, while continuing to practice positive coping strategies.

Be realistic. Remember that anger is a universal feeling that has its place in the realm of all emotions. The goal is not to eliminate anger but to know how to effectively cope with it and to resolve negative situations associated with it. Thus, set small, realistic goals, and work steadily toward their achievement. Bad habits are formed over time. Breaking these habits is like learning any new skill. It requires patience, time, and a lot of practice.

BEST PRACTICES

Satisfying Interactions

DESIRED BEHAVIOR

Students communicate with adults in a positive manner.

OBSERVABLE BEHAVIOR

Students argue, have an “attitude,” or engage in power struggles.

TEACHING STRATEGIES

Model or imitate positive communication. Perhaps the most powerful tool that teachers have available to them is using the behavior that they wish the child to use on a day-to-day basis. It may also be the easiest and most effective tool for producing the behavior that is desired. It is a matter of using good communication with students. When points of disagreement are reached, teachers have the opportunity to demonstrate negotiating and reasoning skills.

Teach positive communication. It is often assumed that children naturally have all the communication and common sense skills that adults have once they reach a certain age. The truth is that these skills and values are acquired by a series of experiences and feedback from peers and adults. By directly teaching positive communication skills, teachers can help students to learn and master these skills, as well as promote positive experiences with others. As students come to feel more effective in communication and more successful in relating to their peers and significant adults, they will come to value these important life skills.

Show respectful attitude. Sometimes teachers can develop a “drill sergeant” style when working with students who have a habit of arguing. This practice can cause power struggles to escalate. If a quiet, firm, and caring attitude is used, it elicits more positive attention and response from children, even if they are very argumentative. It is easier to explain something or reach a compromise if a calm and respectful style is used.

Use “parroting back” techniques. This is sometimes called the “broken record” technique. A direction is given in a calm, even voice. Students do not appear to have heard the direction. Rather than confront the students and introduce argument-like behavior, repeat the same direction in the same tone of voice. If needed, it can be repeated even a third or fourth time, still in that same calm tone of voice. It is important to not escalate the situation by becoming louder and more threatening as the directions are parroted.



TEACHER

BEST PRACTICES

TEACHING STRATEGIES

Help students understand negative consequences of arguing. Most of the time, students do not get what they want when they argue with parents or teachers. If teachers have an atmosphere of open communication with their students, they can talk about how effective this arguing style is for them. As children get older and are better able to understand this concept, they will be able to see the connection between positive communication and getting their needs met.

Help students accept “no.” Everyone hates to hear this word. Children are no different. This single word may be responsible for more arguments than any other in the English language. Students can be taught to accept “no” for an answer and communicate their feelings in a positive manner. Social skills programs provide many strategies for doing this.

Help students learn when to say “no.” While working with students on accepting “no,” it is critical to teach them that “no” has a place in their vocabulary. There are times when saying “no” will keep them safe and will allow them to avoid situations that do not coincide with their values. Social skills programs have helpful strategies for teaching these skills as well.

Use “DEARMAN”. One specific strategy to use to teach students interpersonal effectiveness skills is “DEARMAN,” which is taken from Dialectical Behavior Therapy (Linehan, 1993). This is a strategy students can use to calmly ask for what they need. “D” stands for describe the problem. “E” is to express feelings and opinions. “A” is to assert oneself by directly asking for what is wanted. “R” stands for reinforce/reward, meaning to tell others what they will gain from the idea being presented. “M” stands for (stay) mindful or do not be distracted. “A” is for appear to be confident and positive. “N” is to negotiate (i.e., be willing to give to others to get something in return).

Use resources. For more information, see Goldstein (1980); Long and Wood (1991); McGinnis and Goldstein (1984); and M. Wood (1996).

BEST PRACTICES

Satisfying Interactions

DESIRED BEHAVIOR

Child communicates with adults in a positive manner.

OBSERVABLE BEHAVIOR

Child argues, has an “attitude,” or engages in power struggles.

PARENT STRATEGIES

Understand problem. Talk with the child’s teacher about the child’s attitude, communication styles, and interactions with others. Share concerns, and ask the teacher for feedback. Discuss triggers for a poor attitude or negative interactions and the consequences that follow. Share observations from home as well. Develop a plan to address the problem, and share feedback regularly to monitor progress.

Talk with child. Discuss concerns with the child, and ask for input. Talk about the child’s perceptions, as well as other concerns the child may have. Work together to identify the triggers for negative interactions, as well as the consequences that have followed. Discuss what might help the child to have a more positive attitude (e.g., getting more sleep, eating better, exercising regularly, smiling more). Also talk about strategies that would encourage more positive communication with others (e.g., initiating conversations, complimenting others, asking questions, ignoring negative comments, taking a time-out when feeling angry or frustrated). Have the child set one goal, and then help to monitor progress toward it.

Model positive interactions. Practice using positive communication with the child, family members, and friends. When talking to others, maintain eye contact, use a pleasant tone, show interest in what they are saying, negotiate when disagreements arise, and be willing to calmly walk away from negative situations if necessary. And remember, good communication is not just about talking, but it is also about listening. Pay attention, and be respectful when others are speaking. Wait for them to finish, and do not interrupt. If what they are saying is unclear, politely paraphrase what has been said, or ask questions for clarification. If children see their parents using good communication skills, they are more likely to learn from these interactions and communicate positively as well.



PARENT

BEST PRACTICES

PARENT STRATEGIES

Monitor power struggles at home. Be aware of the triggers for negative interactions and power struggles between family members. Watch for these triggers, and develop strategies to defuse these situations before they escalate (e.g., diversion, changing the subject, using humor, reflecting feelings). Also work directly with family members to avoid negative, unproductive situations and to promote more positive, productive interactions.

Help child accept “no.” The word “no” is a frequent trigger for arguments and power struggles. Children can be taught to accept “no” for an answer and communicate their feelings in a positive manner. Look for social skills programs, or ask the child’s teacher for suggestions.

Help child learn when to say “no.” While everyone must accept a “no” from time to time, this word does hold an important position in their vocabularies. Children must also be taught the appropriate use of the word “no.” There are times when saying “no” will keep them safe and will allow them to avoid situations that do not coincide with their values. Parents can model the use of “no” in social situations, in response to requests from others, and when potential obligations cannot be met.

Provide support and feedback. Catch the child having a positive attitude and using good communication skills, and reward these efforts (e.g., praise, hugs, stickers, privileges). Discuss what is working, as well as ways to maintain this positive attitude. If a power struggle is brewing or the child has had a bad day, remain calm, and encourage the child to calm down as well (e.g., take a time-out, listen to music, go for a walk). Afterward, calmly discuss what went wrong, what happened as a result, and what the child might have done differently. Encourage the child’s participation in this discussion, and reinforce all efforts made.

BEST PRACTICES

Satisfying Interactions

DESIRED BEHAVIOR

Student communicates with adults in a positive manner.

OBSERVABLE BEHAVIOR

Student argues, has an “attitude,” or engages in power struggles.

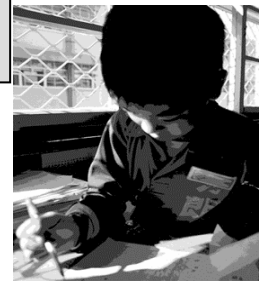
STUDENT STRATEGIES

Be aware of rules and expectations. What are the rules at school? Get a copy of the rules from the teacher or other school staff. Ask them to review it, and ask questions if anything is unclear. What about the rules at home? Talk with parents about the rules and expectations at home. Again, ask questions if anything is unclear.

Learn through observation. Ask parents if they could demonstrate interactions that are expected at home. This is maybe the best way to learn what parents expect. This is all about good communication among family members. When points of disagreement are reached, parents can demonstrate negotiating and reasoning skills. At school observe teachers and how they interact with others. A teacher that models good communication probably encourages students to say what they are thinking within the limits of the classroom rules. Become a participant in these discussions to practice good communication skills.

Work on communication skills. Others cannot read your mind. To improve your interactions, work on being open with others and expressing what you desire or are thinking. When others do not know what you want, or what you believe, they will act for you. Thus, communicate what you would like to see happen or what you would like others to know. It is hard to always be open. If you are having difficulty expressing yourself, begin by stating bits of information. This will help you begin the communication process.

Be calm during interactions. When people argue, they usually do not get what they want. In fact, sometimes parents and teachers use a “drill sergeant” style in response when people are argumentative. Using this style can escalate the situation, causing even more arguments to occur. When talking with others, use a quiet, firm voice. By demonstrating control and the ability to speak and listen, more positive



STUDENT

BEST PRACTICES

STUDENT STRATEGIES

attention will come from parents and teachers. When a calm style is used, it is easier to explain oneself or reach a compromise that is agreeable to everyone.

Accept “no” for an answer. Everyone hates to hear this word. This single word may be responsible for more arguments than any other in the English language. Learning to accept “no” as an answer is a huge accomplishment. There are many ways to practice a positive reaction to being given a “no.” If the word “no” does not automatically trigger an argument, it will be easier to talk to parents about what has to happen to get a “yes” answer.

Know when to say “no.” There are times when it is essential to say “no.” These times are necessary to keep people safe and will allow them to avoid situations that are not consistent with their value systems. It is important to talk with parents, teachers, and friends about different situations, discussing when it is appropriate to go along with others and when it is not. Spend time defining values, and know when to say “no.”

Use “DEARMAN” technique. If the goal is to convince parents or teachers of a certain point of view, use a technique called “DEARMAN.” Each of the letters stands for a step to take to help calmly convince others. “D” stands for describe the problem. “E” stands for express feelings or opinions. “A” stands for assert self by asking for what is wanted. “R” stands for reinforce/reward the person (i.e., tell what will be gained from the idea). “M” stands for stay mindful or do not be distracted. “A” stands for appear confident. “N” stands for negotiate (i.e., be willing to give to others to get something in return).

Allow others to help. There is a strategy that teachers use called the “broken record” technique. The teacher gives a direction in a calm, even voice. If the student does not change behavior or does not seem to have heard the direction, the direction is repeated again in the same tone of voice (rather than confronting or arguing with the student). If needed, it is repeated a third and fourth time. The voice remains the same each time. As the student, it is important not to escalate the situation by reacting negatively to the directions being given (e.g., saying “Okay.” instead of shouting “I heard you already!”).

BEST PRACTICES

Staying in Designated Area

DESIRED BEHAVIOR

Students stay in the designated area (i.e., seat, playground, wherever they were asked/expected to be).

OBSERVABLE BEHAVIOR

Students wander in class, walk out of class, or run away.

TEACHING STRATEGIES

Clearly define problem. To address the problem, it is important to first identify the reason(s) why students are not staying in designated areas. Steps in this process include: (a) Track the behavior, noting when it happens; what is going on around the students before, during, and after noncompliance occurs; and its frequency. Also include responses from other staff and the student's peers. (b) Look for patterns in the information gathered (e.g., Do students wander or run away when they are excluded from a group, during transitions, during free time in class?). What are the results of the behavior (i.e., attention from staff or peers)? (c) Interview or talk with students in a nonjudgmental manner. It may be that they are unaware of concerns regarding their noncompliance. (d) Make an educated guess as to why they are not staying in the designated areas (e.g., wanting attention, unable to express one's feelings in appropriate ways, lacking social skills for interacting with peers, low self-esteem, inattention). (e) Choose strategies based on these reasons, monitoring progress and giving enough time for the strategies to work.

Post clear rules. Use five basic rules, such as (a) follow directions, (b) keep hands and feet to oneself, (c) use appropriate language, (d) raise hand to talk, and (e) stay in the designated area. Discuss these rules, and make sure all the students understand what each rule means, what will happen when the rule is followed, and what will happen when it is not followed.

Set clear expectations. Be specific in classroom expectations (e.g., "Please stay in your seat.", "You need to be seated to complete this assignment.", "When you are out of your area, you will not earn points for this assignment/activity."). Be clear about the consequences when expectations are not met.

Develop contract. Make a simple contract with students to address over activity. Allow students to provide input, and post it on or near their desk.



TEACHER

BEST PRACTICES

TEACHING STRATEGIES

Use consistent structure. Use the same classroom routine on a daily basis, and post the daily schedule to prevent lag time. This consistency will help students to better predict when they are expected to be where.

Monitor length of instruction. Keep the time frame short, and build in frequent opportunities for movement to “get the wiggles out.” Using music and movement during instruction can also help kids with high activity levels stay on task and be focused.

Change seating arrangements. Position the student’s desk in the area next to the teaching area to facilitate instant monitoring/positive feedback. If necessary, change groupings to facilitate the “best” seating arrangement for the student.

Use floor markers. Define the appropriate area where students should be by using tape on the floor. Different colors of tape could be used for appropriate areas and “off limits” areas.

Change room arrangement. If students are always getting out of their seats to obtain materials, bring the materials to them, have them be helpers to pass out materials, or rearrange the room so that everything is close by for the completion of the project.

Be flexible. If the task can be completed with students standing at their desk, working on the floor, in a bean bag, or in another area, be flexible enough to allow these accommodations. For some students, concentration is increased in a position other than sitting at a desk.

Provide sensory input. Some students need to move because their neurological systems need additional input. Give them a “Koosh” ball, nubby seat cushions, gum to chew, or a stress ball to squeeze to provide their systems with the needed stimulation to stay in one place.

Minimize distractions. Sometimes students get distracted by noises and get up to check out what they hear. Encourage those students to wear noise-blocking headphones.

Use common language. Use the same statement each time the student is wandering or is out of the designated area in a calm, firm voice (e.g., “You are out of the area.”).

Use nonverbal cues. If students are wandering in the class, say their names and then nonverbally cue them (e.g., shake head “no,” point to the designated area, move hand down as if to say “sit down.”).

BEST PRACTICES

TEACHING STRATEGIES

Use positive reinforcement. Make positive statements to students to encourage and support them (e.g., “I know you can stay in your seat.”, “Let’s see if you can do as well as you did yesterday.”). When students are doing what is expected of them, it is recommended the teacher use tangible rewards (e.g., points, privileges) or intangible reinforcement (e.g., praise, nonverbal positive responses). Use positive “I statements,” such as “I like it when you are seated.”, “I like the way you stay in your area.”, or “I can see you want to stay with the group by the way you are walking slowly with us.”

Remove audience. To decrease attention from other students to negative behaviors (i.e., wandering, being noncompliant), take the remainder of the class outside of the area. This also serves to reinforce students who are following directions.

Use role modeling. Use social skills training for the entire class that will reinforce staying seated during instruction, on the playground, or in the assigned area. Illustrate what happens when students continually stay in their areas (e.g., giving points, smiley faces, tokens). Have students practice how to get positive attention in the assigned area and reinforce their efforts.

Practice “Playground Five Drills.” To specifically practice staying on the playground or other large area where students can run away, do Playground Five Drills. Tell students that there will be a signal from the teacher at various times during playground time (e.g., a whistle or call to them) and whoever gets to the teacher within 10 seconds will get a prize (e.g., a sticker, small edible treat, or a “high five”). This will keep students within close proximity and will allow students who return quickly to be positive role models for the students who wander away.

Encourage self-monitoring. Have students put a tally sheet on the desk to track when they stay in the designated area. Review these sheets, and reward students numerous times throughout the day for staying in assigned areas.

Directly address tendency to run away. If students do run away unexpectedly (i.e., “bolt off”), put an alarm on the classroom door, and have a quick response system in place for the student’s safety. Use extra care with these students when in open areas.

BEST PRACTICES

TEACHING STRATEGIES

Use resources. For more information, see Choate (2004); Fay and Funk (1995); Flick (1998); Friend and Bursuck (2001); Huggins, Wood Manion, and Moen (1994); McCarney (1994); McGinnis & Goldstein (1984); Long and Wood (1991); Rhode, Jensen, and Reavis (1992); Weltman Begun (1995); and M. Wood (1996).

BEST PRACTICES

Staying in Designated Area

DESIRED BEHAVIOR

Child stays in the designated area (i.e., seat, on the playground, in the yard, with parents at the store).

OBSERVABLE BEHAVIOR

Child wanders, walks out of class, or runs away.

PARENT STRATEGIES

Clearly state house rules. Make sure all family members are aware of the house rules, especially those related to where they are supposed to be at any given time or what they are expected to be doing in specific situations. Possible examples include (a) staying together at the store unless other arrangements are made; (b) holding a parent's hand or onto the shopping cart at the grocery store; (c) asking before going to a different part of the neighborhood, park, or store; or (d) staying in one's room at night after the lights are turned out. Discuss these rules, encourage questions, and clarify any confusion about what is expected. Make it very clear what will happen when the rules are followed and the consequences when rules are broken. Be consistent in applying these consequences, whether positive or negative.

Involve child in process. Talk to the child about the problem to better understand what is going on and possible strategies to solve it. Ask the child what makes it easier to be where one should be and what makes it harder. Together set a realistic goal to improve this behavior. Have the child monitor progress toward this goal. For example, put a tally sheet on the refrigerator on which the child can chart positive behaviors. This direct feedback can be rewarding to the child and help keep the child on track toward the specified goal.

Constantly set clear expectations. Each day be very clear about what is expected from the child, whether it is staying (a) in the bedroom while doing homework, (b) in the yard while playing outside, or (c) with a parent while at the store. Explain specifically where the child is to be, what the child is to do, and how long the child will be there. If necessary, give the child a timer or watch to keep track of time. During problem situations, frequently remind the child what is expected, but also be realistic about expectations (e.g., allowing the child to take breaks during the homework



PARENT

BEST PRACTICES

PARENT STRATEGIES

process and come out of the bedroom; providing periodic supervision outside; keeping shopping trips short). The goal is to help the child to be successful.

Support and encourage child. Give the child frequent prompts and reminders (e.g., “I know you can stay in your room until you have finished.”, “I can see you want to stay with me by the way you are walking next to me.”, “Don’t forget to hold my hand when we cross the street.”, “I like the way you ask to go to a different play structure at the park.”). Be consistent and use the same words when approaching difficult situations (e.g., “You need to walk with me.”).

Plan trips realistically. When wandering or running off at stores or in public places is an issue, keep outings short and very structured. Encourage the child to bring along something interesting to do (e.g., quiet toys, books, paper and pens). Or engage the child in the activity (e.g., helping to push the cart, monitoring the shopping list, helping to find necessary items in the store). Other options include word games, “20 Questions,” singing songs, or telling stories. Once short trips are consistently successful, slowly work up to longer trips.

Provide feedback. Catch the child doing what is expected, and reinforce with tangible rewards (points, stickers, privileges) or intangibles (praise, a hug, or other nonverbal gestures). If the child is having difficulty (e.g., wandering off), say the child’s name and give an agreed upon nonverbal cue (e.g., shaking head “no”). If the child continues to wander and the situation becomes unsafe, end the shopping trip, play date, or other expedition calmly, and go home. Take time to cool off if necessary. Discuss what happened and the consequences for the behavior. Try to do this in a calm, supportive manner. Use “I-statements” to discuss your concerns and feelings, and encourage the child to do the same. Also discuss how the situation might be handled differently in the future. End the discussion on a positive note, reinforcing participation in this discussion, as well as in problem solving for future successes.

Restrict attention for wandering. Sometimes negative situations cannot be changed or ended abruptly (e.g., being on an airplane, in the doctor’s office). In these cases, take the child to a quiet, contained place (e.g., the bathroom, quiet corner) to decrease the stimulation and reinforcement that onlookers may inadvertently be providing. Possible strategies to improve the situation include (a) talking about what is going on calmly, and discussing ways to make it better; (b) using

BEST PRACTICES

PARENT STRATEGIES

distraction to change the mood; or (c) using humor to lighten up the situation.

Teach positive attention-seeking strategies. Practice how to get positive attention by staying in the assigned area or doing what one is expected to be doing. Make it fun by including the whole family. Discuss tough situations, brainstorming positive solutions and role-out playing ways to carry them out. Reinforce the child (and others) for making positive choices and doing what is expected (e.g., using praise, points, smiley faces, stickers). Enlist the help of other family members in giving positive attention when the child stays where the child is supposed to be.

Teach positive coping strategies. Some children seem to have a greater need to move because their neurological systems need the input to function properly. If this seems to be the case, give the child a “Koosh” ball, chewing gum, a stress ball to squeeze, or books to read to provide extra stimulation that might be needed to stay in one place.

Use “Playground Five Drills.” Have the child practice staying close by in a store or public park by playing a game. Discuss the rules before going out, which are that the child’s name will be called (or make it even more fun by whistling or singing a song) and if the child comes back in response to this, the child will immediately get a prize (e.g., sticker, small edible treat, hug/kiss, or “high five”). Call the child’s name (or whistle or sing) intermittently, and each time the child responds, reinforce it positively.

Be open to different strategies. If talking, teaching, support, and reinforcement are not working and safety continues to be an issue, look into more restrictive strategies. For children who run away unexpectedly (i.e., “bolt off”), put alarms on windows or doors. There are also wrist or ankle bracelet systems that will go off if the child wanders too far away in the store or in an open public area.

Use resources. For more information, see Canter, Canter, and Schadow, (1985); Fay and Funk (1995); Flick (1998); Rhode, Jensen, and Reavis (1992); and Zions, Zions, and Simpson (2002).

BEST PRACTICES

Staying in Designated Area

DESIRED BEHAVIOR

Students stay in the designated area (i.e., seat, playground, wherever they were asked/expected to be).

OBSERVABLE BEHAVIOR

Students wander in class, walk out of class, or run away.

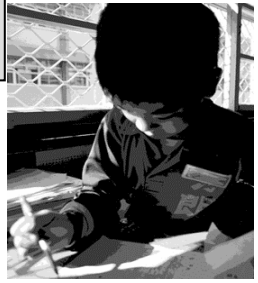
STUDENT STRATEGIES

Know classroom rules. Talk with the teacher about the classroom rules and expectations. Make sure these rules are understood, and ask questions when they are unclear. Be especially clear about what happens when rules are followed and what happens when they are not. If necessary, ask the teacher to tape off the designated area on the floor where one is expected to stay (or tape off areas that are considered “off limits”).

Make a contract. Together with a parent or teacher, develop a simple contract to address the need to stay in one’s seat or designated area. State what is expected and what rewards will be received if these expectations are met. Then put a tally sheet on the desk, and monitor progress toward this goal. Work hard, and take pride in accomplishments that are made.

Practice positive attention-seeking strategies. Talk to parents and/or teachers about ways to get attention in a more positive manner, while staying in the designated area. If the motivation for getting up is get assistance or share information, try raising a hand instead. If boredom is the reason for getting up, focus even harder on the task at hand or read a book to help pass time while waiting. If students are being distracted by noises in the classroom, leading to a desire to get up, they can ask the teacher if they can wear noise-blocking headphones to decrease the likelihood of distraction. If materials are needed, ask to move to a place where everything is close by, so there is no need to get up. If there is a simple need for attention from others, ask for it (e.g., raising hand, asking questions, initiating conversation with peers close by when appropriate). Practice these skills knowing that, like any other skills, it will take time to master them.

Monitor self during day. When it becomes difficult to sit still during the day, ask to get up and “get the wiggles out.” Or ask to change positions, such as to work standing by the desk, on the floor, in a bean bag chair, or in another part of the room.



STUDENT

BEST PRACTICES

STUDENT STRATEGIES

Use *positive self-talk*. Everyone talks to themselves out loud or in their heads. Focus on positive statements that will encourage success (e.g., “I know I can stay in my seat.”, “I know I can walk with my mom at the store.”). Repeat statements such as these regularly to promote confidence in the ability to make changes.

BEST PRACTICES

Waiting to Talk

DESIRED BEHAVIOR

Students raise their hand to talk.

OBSERVABLE BEHAVIOR

Students interrupt others when they are talking, as well as talking “out of turn,” or “blurting out” answers.



TEACHER

TEACHING STRATEGIES

Clearly define problem. To address the problem, it is important to first identify the reason(s) why students are being destructive. Steps in this process include (a) Track the behavior, noting when it happens; what is going on around the students before, during, and after this behavior occurs; and its frequency. Also include responses from other staff and the student’s peers. (b) Look for patterns in the information gathered (e.g., Do students interrupt when they are angry, when they are excluded from a group, during transitions, during free time in class?). What are the results of the behavior (i.e., attention from staff or peers)? (c) Interview or talk with students in a nonjudgmental manner. It may be that they are unaware of concerns regarding their tendency to interrupt. (d) Make an educated guess as to why they tend to interrupt others (e.g., wanting attention, unable to express one’s feelings in appropriate ways, lacking social skills for interacting with peers, low self-esteem, inattention). (e) Choose strategies based on these reasons, monitoring progress and giving enough time for the strategies to work.

Post clear rules. Use five basic rules, such as (a) follow directions, (b) keep hands and feet to oneself, (c) use appropriate language, (d) raise hand to talk, and (e) stay in designated area. Discuss these rules, and make sure all the students understand what each rule means, what will happen when the rule is followed, and what will happen when it is not followed.

Set clear expectations. Be specific in classroom expectations (e.g., “Please raise your hand.”, “You need to wait until you are called on to talk.”). Be clear about the consequences when expectations are not met. Be consistent in carrying out these consequences. Do not make statements that one is unwilling or reluctant to carry out.

Encourage self-monitoring. Have students put a tally sheet on their desk to track each time they talk out in class. This will help them to understand the frequency with which they interrupt or talk out in class. Encourage them to do this daily, and reward students as the frequency diminishes.

BEST PRACTICES

TEACHING STRATEGIES

Reinforce positive efforts. Acknowledge students for doing what is expected with a tangible reward (e.g., points, privileges) or intangible reinforcement (e.g., praise, nonverbal positive responses, extra attention). Use positive “I-statements” (e.g., “I like the way you remembered to raise your hand before talking.”, “I like the way you let ... finish what they were saying.”, or “I am proud of you for waiting to talk and raise your hand.”).

Change seating arrangement. Put the student’s desk in the area next to the teaching area to facilitate instant monitoring/positive feedback. If necessary, change groups to facilitate the “best” seating arrangement for the student. For example, seat students near a peer who can act as a positive role model.

Ignore interruptions. Oftentimes, it is best to ignore interruptions. Do not call on students who are speaking out; however, do call on them as soon as they raise their hand.

Use nonverbal cues. When ignoring the interruption is not possible, use nonverbal cues to prompt the desired response. For example, raise own hand (as a quiet reminder) before responding; put hand to lips, as in “Shh;” or give a “thumbs up” when students remember to raise their hand.

Practice role modeling. Use social skills training for the entire class that will reinforce raising one’s hand in class and waiting to speak. Both the teacher as well as students can practice this. Play games that require participants to wait their turn and raise their hand.

BEST PRACTICES

Waiting to Talk

DESIRED BEHAVIOR

Child waits for a turn to talk.

OBSERVABLE BEHAVIOR

Child interrupts others when they are talking, as well as talking "out of turn."



PARENT

PARENT STRATEGIES

Be clear about house rules. Develop very clear house rules about communication, taking turns, and respect. Discuss these rules with the child and other family members. Make the expectations very clear (e.g., "Please don't talk until I am finished.", "Don't interrupt your brother when he is telling a story.", "When I ask your sister a question, don't give the answer for her."). Make it very clear what will happen when the rules are followed and the consequences when the rules are broken. Be consistent in applying these consequences, whether positive or negative.

Set realistic goals. Monitor the problem by counting the number of times the child waits/does not interrupt during conversation vs. how often the child does interrupt. Look at the triggers for these interruptions to better understand the problem. Then with the child, set a small, realistic goal toward positive change. Make a chart, and record the number of times the child waits to speak. Have the child monitor progress as well, using a tally sheet on the refrigerator.

Reinforce child's efforts. Using positive "I-statements," reinforce the child's efforts to wait for a turn in the conversation (e.g., "I like the way you remembered to wait while I finished talking on the phone.", "I like the way you let your brother finish what he was saying before you talked."). Also praise other family members for modeling this behavior (e.g., "Johnny, great job remembering to let me finish what I was saying before you talked. Next time your brother will remember too."). When the child has met the established goal, provide a reward (e.g., treat, small toy, privilege), and then set a new goal. Reward goals consistently when reached, but as the process continues, start fading this reinforcement. Continue to provide praise and affection throughout the process.

Be realistic about interruptions. In the beginning, expect there will be times when the child forgets to wait for a turn. Provide a gentle verbal reminder to wait or a nonverbal cue (e.g., hold one finger up as if to say "Just a minute.").

BEST PRACTICES

PARENT STRATEGIES

Or let the child know how long the wait might be, using a watch or timer. Another approach is to ignore the interruptions. Then when the child does wait, immediately pay attention, and talk with the child. Each time reinforce the child's efforts with praise, hugs, "high fives," or a "thumbs up." If the child becomes frustrated during the process, remind the child that change is slow. Remember that major changes do not happen overnight, and work together to build on the small changes for lasting success. Expect the occasional "backslide," knowing that they will become less frequent as the positive communication becomes routine.

Practice waiting skills. Give the child imaginary situations where it is necessary to wait (e.g., when the parent is talking on phone or to someone else, and the child wants to talk with the parent). Role-play these situations, thinking up ways to make the waiting easier (e.g., going off to play until the parent is finished, reading a book). Another way to practice waiting is to play games that require taking turns. Make it even more fun by involving the whole family.

Talk with teacher and staff. Work with the child's teacher and related staff to support the child's efforts. Share feedback from the school with the child, and post positive notes where everyone can see them. Working together with the teacher and school staff builds a strong team and shows that everyone cares about the child's success.

Use resources. For more information, see Canter, Canter, and Schadlow (1985); Fay and Funk (1995); Flick (1998); and Zions, Zions, and Simpson (2002).

BEST PRACTICES

Waiting to Talk

DESIRED BEHAVIOR

Student raises hand to talk.

OBSERVABLE BEHAVIOR

Student interrupts others when they are talking , as well as talking “out of turn,” or “blurting out” answers.



STUDENT

STUDENT STRATEGIES

Follow the rules. Be aware of the rules and expectations at home and at school (e.g., “Wait my turn to talk.”). Ask questions to clarify anything that is not understood. Make sure it is clear what will happen when the rules are followed and what will happen when they are not.

Monitor behavior. One way students can wait to talk is to raise their hand. To monitor this, set a goal (e.g., “I will stop myself from interrupting and raise my hand xx times.”). Then count the number of times the hand is raised during each period, calculating the total at the end of the day. Negotiate with parents and teachers for rewards for meeting the set goal.

Reinforce own behavior. Appreciate own progress made, and use positive “I-statements” to reinforce own behavior (e.g., “I am proud of myself because I waited my turn.”). Share accomplishments with others (e.g., “I remembered to raise my hand before talking.”).

Observe and model others. Watch other students in class, and imitate those who remember to raise their hand or wait their turn. Ask to sit next to the teacher if it might help to remember to raise the hand and not interrupt. Or ask to sit near peers who almost always remember to raise their hands.

Celebrate positive behavior changes. Be patient, and build on small changes. Do not expect major changes to happen overnight. There will be times when it is more difficult to wait, and interruptions will increase again, but it will get easier and easier with time and practice.

BEST PRACTICES

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