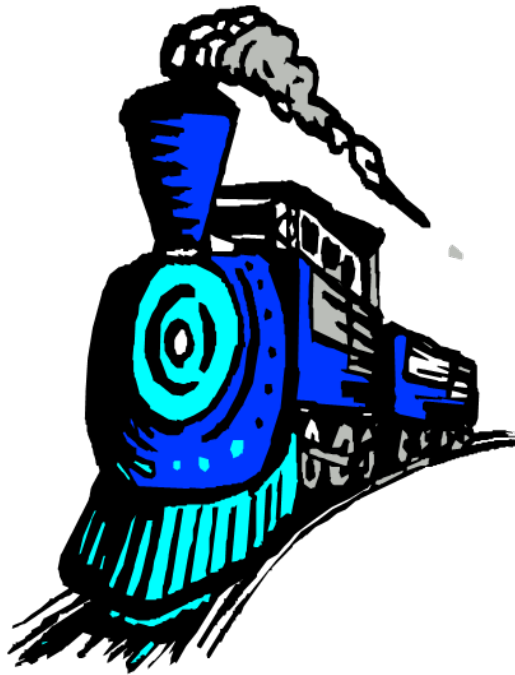


# The Power of a Strength-Based Approach in Reshaping the Lives of Children and Youth Faced with Emotional & Behavioral Challenges



## Positive Theories and Strategies for Making a Difference

Charlie Appelstein, MSW  
charlieap@comcast.net  
www.charliea.com  
www.parentrapsody.com

# The Power of a Strength-Based Approach

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

Professionals maximize client potential when they convey an attitude to each and every one that says:

I believe in all of you and I am *thrilled* to be working with you.

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

Genuine believing attacks self-doubt, makes clients feel better about themselves and provides hope – which is humanity's fuel.

“I was successful because you believed in me.”

- Ulysses S. Grant in a letter to Abraham Lincoln

When children and youth feel better about themselves they are more likely to use and cultivate their strengths.



“Self-doubt kills ability.”

- Degas

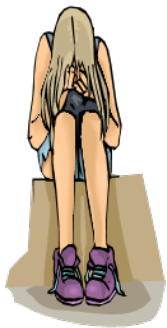
“A smile is the face's way of giving an emotional hug.”

Research has shown that a student entering high school with a history of violence, is not likely to commit an act of aggression (at his/her school) *if* the student believes there is at least one educator at the school that thinks “I'm terrific!” - James Garborino, Ph.D.

*Twenty years from now your clients won't remember much of what you said to them, but they'll all recall how you made them feel.*

Have you ever watched an actor in a bad mood? If you're in a bad mood, fake that you're not. Most professionals have the strengths to do this.

Children & youth with post traumatic stress disorder will shut down (i.e. become protective) when approached by an adult with a stern expression. 2



## Gus on Pejorative Labeling



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

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

*“Manipulative kids aren't fun to work with.”*

*“They're a pain in the ass.”*

*“Boy, is that kid manipulative!”*

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

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

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

## Strength-Based Beliefs and Terminology

Response to problem behavior: Understand > Reframe > Squeeze

### Pejorative Label

### Positive, Hope-Based Reframe

Obnoxious

Good at pushing people away

Rude, arrogant

Good at affecting people

Resistant

Cautious

Lazy, un-invested

Good at preventing further hurts, failures

Manipulative

Good at getting needs met

Just looking for attention

Good at caring about and loving yourself

Close-mouthed

Loyal to family or friends

Different, odd

Under-appreciated

Stubborn & defiant

Good at standing up for yourself

Tantrum, fit, outburst

Big message

Learning disability

Roadblocks

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

## Reframing

### Seeing and praising the positive, self-protective value in “negative” behaviors

1. A child who is always looking for attention:

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

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

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

3. A youth who acts rudely:

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

4. A youth who makes funny noises at the wrong time:

**R:** You're a very creative kid. What range, pitch, resonance! These are great noises. How about saving them for the end of the day. You can put on a show for five minutes.

5. A youth who acts in a stubborn manner:

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

6. A student who seems unmotivated:

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

7. A youth who frequently swears:

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

8. A child who's bossy with peers:

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

# Providing Hope & Possibility Through Metaphors & Positive Predicting

## Poker



“Life is like a poker game. Even if you’re dealt a bad hand, you can still win the game.”

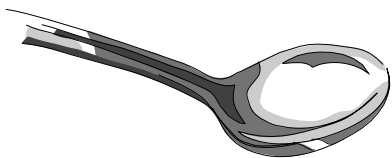
## The Roadblock



“It’s not a learning disability; it’s a Roadblock. All big cities have them, but people get to work on time every day.”

## Positive Predicting

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



## The Melting Snowball



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

## The Train



“You’re Big and Powerful...but a bit off track.”

## The 2010 Edition



“Cars and people improve every year. You’re the 2010 Ricky. You don’t over-heat as much...have a sleeker design, follow the road signs better...” 6

# Strength-Based Practice

**What is it?:** Emerging approach to helping people that is more positive and hope-inspiring.

Powerful combination of the strength-building model and solution-focused therapy

Emphasis is on:

*Strength-building* rather than flaw-fixing

*Doing* rather than understanding

*Believing* in every youth unconditionally - See and believe!– Not “Believing is seeing” (positive responses are earned)

..which produces **Optimism** – which feeds possibility, and motivates coping and adaptive behavior, even in the face of difficult odds: *Hope is Humanity’s Fuel*

P. 57 “Lacking the words to communicate their pain, they may express feelings of vulnerability by becoming aggressive or feigning disinterest in academic success *because they believe they cannot succeed.*”

**Begins** with belief that all children have strengths and past successes that can be utilized to stop troublesome behavior.

**Continues** with practice methods that identify and marshal these strengths for necessary behavior change.

## **The Goal:**

*Change* rather than *insight* and *awareness*

## **The Work:**

*Problem-driven* not problem-focused (solution-focused):

Devoted to helping kids *initiate actions* to dispense presenting problems

Primarily *short term*

*Goal-oriented* and focused on *resolving the identifying problem*

## **Assumptions (or lack thereof)....**

Strength-based practice does not assume that ownership of guilt is somehow automatically curative....Does assume that change is inevitable, not uncertain

Strength-based practice does not assume **LARGE** problems require **LARGE** efforts for solutions....Does assume that **SMALL** changes can ripple out to bring resolution.

# The Solution-Focused Approach

The Language of Hope and Possibility!

## **Explorative Historical:**

How many kids have been, or are, in similar situations? How many succeeded? So why can't you? What steps did they take to succeed? Have you ever felt this way before and made the right choice(s) to see your way through? So why can't you do so again?  
How will we celebrate when you get there?

## **Qualifiers:**

"I hate this place!" > "So you're saying you hate this place right now."

## **Past Tense:**

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

## **When & Will:**

(Positive Predicting)

"I'll never get a job!" > "When you do, what will it be like?"

## **Scaling Questions:**

"On a scale of one-to-ten, ten being the highest probability of accomplishing this, what number do you think you're at now? What number will it be in 3 months?"

## **Identifying In-Between Change:**

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

## **Glass Half-Full Question: (Changing Perspective Q)**

"How come you're not doing worse?"

# Activities & Self Esteem Building

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

## Universal Opportunity for Individual Success

Create and/or modify tasks and activities to maximize success opportunities

**Example:** A basketball game where the ball must be passed 3 times before it can be shot.

Self-Esteem Building Options:

- Professional & amateur sports
- Games: Board, video, bingo
- Special events (food drives, car washes, bottle-collecting, walk-a-thons)
- Karaoke & music (concerts, kazoo bands, shows, music videos, lip-syncing, etc.)
- Employment opportunities (Key: cultivate relationships with local employers)
- Volunteering (w/handicapped, elderly, younger kids, animals, etc.)
- Sports (bowling, karate, roller-skating, soccer, etc.)
- Fitness (create fitness charts, aerobics, jogging/walking, meditation, rope and obstacle courses, etc.)
- Hobbies (art, theater, music, crafts, pottery, card and/or coin collecting, carpentry, photography, magic, etc.)
- Animals (pets, therapeutic horse-back riding, fish, etc.)
- Home repair jobs (painting, landscaping, repairing, etc.)
- Religious endeavors



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



*Trumpet Success*

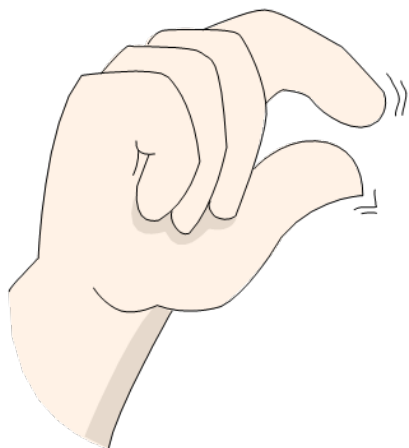
*Every kid needs his/her own special niche!*

Call parents with good news....keep a scrapbook....post pictures, etc.

# Strategic Verbal Interventions

## The Millimeter Acknowledgement

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



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

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

## Honoring Hellos and Goodbyes

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

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

### Examples:

Goodbye to: Living w/family of origin

Hello to: Foster or adoptive care

Goodbye to: Loss of idealized childhood

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



Tip: Replace cognitive distortion (stinkin’ thinkin’)

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

## Strength-Based Practice: Principles

### Seeing is Believing

= Unconditional support

If you visit the home of family that has a toddler or two what do you see everywhere? Toys. Did the children need to earn them? No. They were offered unconditionally. This act of unconditional love and kindness strengthens bonds, facilitates object constancy (my parents are always there for me), and enhances self-image (“I’m someone of value!”)

vs.

### Believing is Seeing

= Standard behavior management

(If I do well, I am rewarded. If I don’t, I am not)

*Seeing is believing* produces **Optimism** – which feeds possibility, and motivates coping and adaptive behavior, even in the face of difficult odds

### *Seeing is Believing*

“Butch, you D’a man! We’re excited that you’re here!”



**NOT:** *Believing is Seeing!*

“We’ll treat you nicely once you put that slingshot down, lose some weight, and get rid of that ridiculous hat!”

### Seeing is believing examples:

Have lunch with a struggling child or youth; Do something fun with a group that is struggling; bring in a special snack; give the group extra recreation time even if they haven’t earned it. “You don’t always have to behave great for me to treat you great. I love working with you guys and I care about you –regardless of your behavior. Of course, I like good choices and fine acting – but I’m behind you either way.”

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

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

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

### **Anger Control**

NBD...easier than 1-2-3! NO BIG DEAL!

Stop and think, don't be a dink!

Let it go, Joe (Just stay cool no need to blow)

Let it go...So (So I can be happy or earn things, etc.)

When you're mad...don't do bad (or don't get sad)...just talk or walk.

Talk, walk, or squawk!

Stay in control, that's the goal. I can, I will, I gotta chill.

### **Social**

Take turns when you talk, if you don't the kids will walk.

Give kids their space, it's their place.

Don't poke, it's not a joke.

Stop and think, don't be a dink.

Stay arms lengths away...today.

### **Following Through/ Being Independent**

Don't quit, take it bit by bit

Inch by inch, life's a cinch. Yard by yard, life is hard.

Take it little by little and play da fiddle!

Like a king on a throne, I can do it on my own.

Step after step, that's the prep. Take it inch by inch...it's a cinch!

Sit and relax, learn to the max! Make a list, it will assist.

### **Drugs and Alcohol**

I can make it if I choose, time to quit the drugs and booze.

If you lose hope, don't do dope.

### **Anxiety**

Don't be in a hurry to worry.

Stop and listen, cause you don't know what you're missing.

### **Encouragement/Affirmations**

I'm smart. It's in my heart. Learning is your (my) ticket to a good life.

I can make it if I choose...Only I can make me lose. If it is to be, it's up to me!



Use Bongos!

View more cues  
at [www.charliea.com](http://www.charliea.com)

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

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

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

Bad Habit: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Cue: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Bad Habit: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Bad Habit: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Cue: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Bad Habit: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## **Examples of coping raps or recovery rhymes:**

“When I’m stressed, I won’t regress  
I’ll just do my best to express.”

“I need to stop lying, so my family will stop crying.  
And when I stop lying, they’ll notice me trying.”

No matter how big or small, tell it all.  
And if I remember this poem, then I’ll go home.”

“Listen to my inner voice, so I can make the very best choice.”

“When bad things happen, and wrong words I am saying...  
I will go to my room and start quietly playing.”

“I want to change my attitude, sometimes I can be so rude.  
I want to go through life and know I don’t have to fight.”

“I don’t want to end up in jail, so I know I must prevail.  
If I get my act together, I might be good forever.”

“Kool Kat chill out and relax, I know how you feel –  
so keep the deal.”

“It’s not such a chore if I ignore.  
I score when I ignore bad behavior.  
To make a connection, I gotta follow staff’s direction.  
Don’t do the crime or you gotta pay the time.”

My name is R. Skinner and I’m a winner.”

“When I get mad, I gotta get glad.  
Oh what a thrill when I chill.”

“I am compulsive when it comes to being impulsive.  
I need to think before I sink.”

“When I feel down, don’t isolate. Talk to others and participate  
Do not listen to what others say, because I know that I’m okay.”



## Stretch!



Athletes always stretch their muscles before exercising or playing a game. For some students, a similar kind of preparation is necessary before engaging in an evocative activity.

Children and youth who appear inflexible and are prone to explosive outbursts often have trouble functioning in physical activities that can be rough and unpredictable, such as touch football and basketball.

Asking or requiring these students to “Stretch” prior to one of these activities, might prevent an injury or two!

Example:

### 2 Minute Stretch

#### Warm-up Form

1. Is football a very physical and unpredictable game? **Yes or No**
2. Is there a chance someone is going to hit, grab, pull, step-on, or trip me? **Yes or No**
3. If something rough happens to me, what do I think?
  - a. “This is typical, don’t get mad.” **Yes or No**
  - b. “I’m upset. Let it go! NBD (No big deal!) **Yes or No**
  - c. “If I make a bad choice and hit, I could hurt someone or get suspended.” **Yes or No**
  - d. “If I make a bad choice, people (can list names) will be unhappy with me.” **Yes or No**
  - e. “If I do well, they’ll be proud.” **Yes or No**
4. Am I warmed up and ready to play? **Yes or No**

# Stretch!

Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

- |   |     |    |
|---|-----|----|
| 1, Anger is a good emotion?   | YES | NO |
| 2. People like Martin Luther King used their anger to positively change the world?                              | YES | NO |
| 3. Anger needs to be let out right?   | YES | NO |
| 4. When my anger starts to grow, it's helpful to:   |     |    |
| Take some deep breaths or count?  | YES | NO |
| Think about a pig in a mink coat?   | YES | NO |
| Say to myself "Stop and think, don't be a dink, NBD, or Let it go, Joe?"  | YES | NO |
| Take a step back and think – whom am I really mad at?   | YES | NO |
| Think about me being in a calm, beautiful place?  | YES | NO |
| 5. Sometimes we get too angry because of stinkin' thinkin' We overreact to situations, thinking the very worse? | YES | NO |
| 6. It's often helpful to replace negative with positive, more hopeful thoughts?                                 | YES | NO |
| 7. If I get angry and make a lousy choice, there will be serious consequences...which make life miserable?      | YES | NO |
| 8. If I control my anger properly, like I've done many times in the past, we'll all feel pretty good.           | YES | NO |
| 9. I'm an awesome kid?  | YES | NO |
| 10. I'm going to make something of my life!   | YES | NO |

## Externalizing & Naming Negative Behaviors

Giving life to a problematic issue or “bad habit” by naming it (i.e. externalizing ) can help kids rid themselves of problematic tendencies/habits/compulsions.

### Examples:

A child who needs to do things perfectly:

*“Get lost Mrs. Perfecto! Get out of here. Get off my back, you loser!”*

A child who is prone to behavior outburst:

*“Get out of here Mr. Fitz!”*

A youth who talks rudely:

*“Get lost Rudy! You’re nothing!”*

A youth who argues incessantly:

*“Go far Mr. R!” “You’re through Mr. R Gue!”*

A child who is reluctant to write:

*“Get out of town, Mr. No Write!”*

A youth who is often late to school, or truant:

*“Tell Mr. I.B. Tardy/Truant not to get you in trouble next week.”*



Rudy

Create your own:

Bad Habit

Name

---

---

# Behavior Modification: Strategically Using Incentive Plans

- Reward Improvement.
- Create an incentive system that's easy to administer, and follow through!
- Make incentive systems time-limited unless they are part of an ongoing plan.
- If used for one or two kids, keep charts in a private place. Be discreet!
- Award incentives in a private manner.
- If other kids complain. "Why don't I get checks and rewards?" be honest with them, explain that every kid is unique and that some have special needs. Ask for *their* help in getting the child back on track.
- Slowly raise expectations for incentives – but don't act too fast.
- In general, the more troubled a kid appears, the greater the frequency he/she should be rated and rewarded. As kids improve, frequencies should decrease.
- Be flexible! Incentive systems frequently need to be changed and modified.
- Kids often tire of the same rewards. A great deal of creativity and effort often.
- Needs to be put forth to successfully maintain systems.
- Make incentive charts and/or document forms colorful (but age-appropriate) and easy to read.

## Suggested Rewards:

Adults must provide rewards based on available resources (i.e. "best possible"). Ideally, the best pay-off for a kid is *individual time with an adult*. This reward has obvious ancillary benefits that material items do not. For instance, a kid who earns 30 checks during a week might be able to trade them in for 30 minutes of one-to-one time with an adult. The kid could choose to do sports and/or games with the adult. Based on circumstances, it's often advantageous to allow a kid who has earned individual time to invite a friend to join him/her.

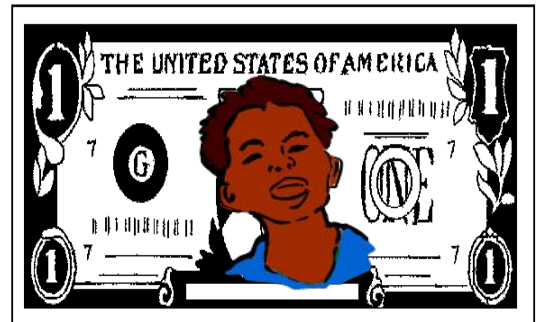
If circumstances and/or resources do not allow for kids to earn one-to-one time, than earning computer time or time doing something else that's enjoyable is preferred to paying-off with material items.

Other non-material rewards include:

- Special activity trips
- Additional free or recreational time
- Additional time at a favored activity
- Earning a special chore or privilege
- Watching a video, or having preferred music played

If material items need to be used as incentives, here are some options:

- Comic books
- Baseball cards
- Art supplies
- Candy (generally for short, time-limited programs)
- Gift certificates
- Food (e.g. pizza, McDonalds, etc.)
- Cassettes, CDs



Keyshawn Dollar

### Other Considerations:

With older kids, using points or checks is a popular method for administering incentive systems. Most behavior charts are created on 8 x 11 paper and consist of various grids which denote the time periods in which stickers or checks can be earned, criteria for earning stickers or checks, and available incentive rewards.

### The Medium of Exchange

Younger kids often get excited about earning chips, tokens, "gold" coins, stickers, etc. which they can trade-in for the items or privileges listed above. These symbols of success are called the *medium of exchange (MOE)*. A very popular MOE occurs when you place the picture of a kid on a dollar bill and make photocopies (i.e. create "Billy" dollars).

# Jamal's Good Choices Chart

M T W TH F TOTAL

9/12-17th	* 3 2	— 4	2 1	* 4 4	3 3	26 + 2 Bon us = 28
9/20-25th						

4 = Great choices – Met my responsibilities (chores, academics, activity participation) respectful to kids & adults  
 3 = Pretty good choices in the above areas. May have received a few consequences – but handled them well.  
 2 = Some good choices “ “ “ “ handled well.  
 1 = Not my best day  
 - = Train off track

25 points = 20 minutes of computer time  
 30 points = 20 minutes of computer time w/friend

\* = Target  
 20  
 Behavior

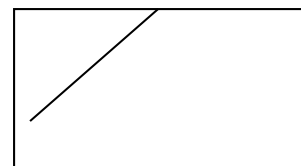
# Jim's Good Choices Plan

	Here's some advice, talk real nice	Let it go, Joe!	Give kids their space, It's their place
<b>M</b>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <span>2</span> <span>3</span> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; font-size: small;"> <span>am</span> <span>pm</span> </div>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <span>--</span> <span>1</span> </div>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <span>3</span> <span>3</span> </div>
<b>T</b>	*		
<b>W</b>			
<b>TH</b>			
<b>F</b>			

Total for week \_\_\_\_\_

Youth can earn bonus points for practicing the one-line raps

- 3 = Great choices in this area
- 2 = Okay choices
- 1 = A few good choices
- = I'll try harder tomorrow



Bonus, target behavior

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Daily Tracking Form

Class	On time?		Prepared?		Homework Assigned?		Behavior			Teacher's Initials
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Excellent	Fair	Off-Track	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

**Key for Behavior:**

**Excellent**

1. Consistently follows classroom rules.
2. Actively listens.
3. Volunteers in class discussions/activities.
4. Speaks respectfully to others.

**Fair**

1. Follows classroom rules most of the time.
2. Listens at least 75% of the time.
3. Participates when called upon.
4. Speaks respectfully to others some of the time.

**Off-Track**

1. Chooses not to follow classroom rules
2. Chooses not to listen to the teacher.
3. Chooses not to participate in class-room discussions/activities
4. Chooses not to be respectful to others.



## Staying on Track, Jack!

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Dates \_\_\_\_\_

Goal(s) for the week:

	M	T	W	Th	F	Total
Attend school 4 days						
Be more respectful to French teacher						

Total \_\_\_\_\_

8 checks = Pizza and soda on Friday

Self-management tool

## Strength-Based Mission Statement

We believe there is no such thing as a bad kid or bad parent; just bad luck and bad choices.

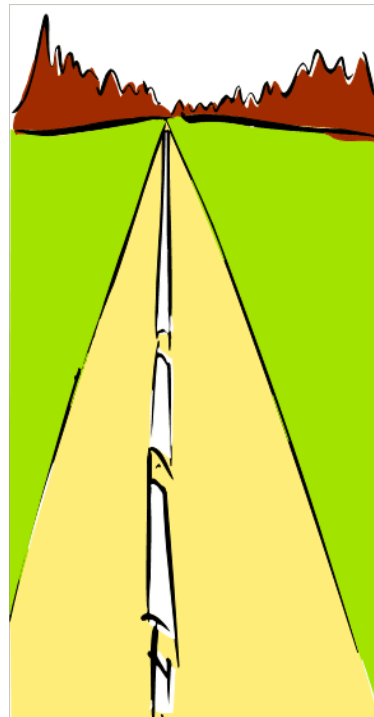
We believe that all individuals possess core strengths that can be utilized to lead meaningful lives.

We strive to help children and their families help themselves.

Our work involves mutually identifying, developing, encouraging, practicing, and maximizing the inherent strengths in every individual we engage.

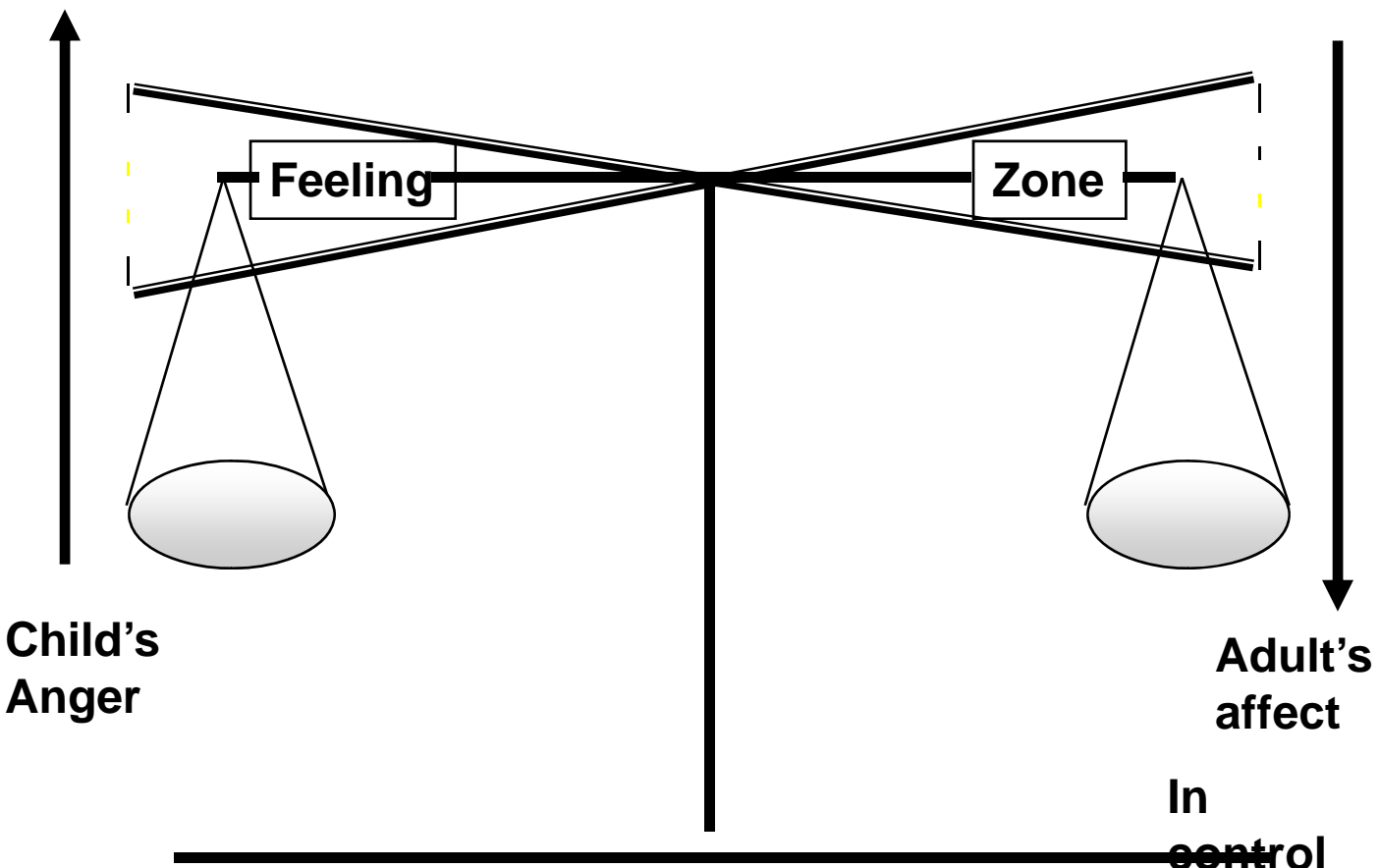
To accomplish our treatment goals we establish a positive, upbeat, and safe environment that instills hope, provides multiple opportunities for success, and, at all times, adheres to the golden rule.

We believe a good life is all about making good choices. Although we have deep respect and empathy for where our clients have been, our major focus on the present and the road ahead.



# The Affect Scale

Loss of Control



Child's Anger

Adult's affect

In control

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

Said in a controlled, but somewhat expressive manner:

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

“Mary, I’m angry about that...”

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

## Behavior Management: Understanding, Prevention, and Principles

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

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

Practice *pattern identification*. Note if a child or group act out in a predictable manner (i.e. at the same time each day, over the same issues, etc.). Once a pattern is identified, investigate your (or the setting’s) role in contributing to the problem(s). What can you change, modify or practice? How can you make the environment more *user-friendly*? Next, seek out the youth’s input and develop a plan.

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

Behavior experts suggest individuals should hear four positive comments for every one negative.

Use *consequences* instead of punishment. A consequence is *related* to an inappropriate behavior, a punishment is not. Consequences reinforce the values of your setting/society.

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

Practice progressive discipline

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

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

Use *best possible* interventions but advocate for resources to enhance the treatment climate.

Whenever possible, and for more serious behaviors, try and let the youth or group decide the appropriate consequence(s).

# Limit Setting

Limit setting progresses in five clearly defined stages:

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

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

Verbal prompts, reminders, warnings

Redirection, distraction, divide & conquering

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

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

Humor

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

Use the power of a group

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

Hold an impromptu meeting

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

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

# Logical Consequences

## Proximity Manipulation

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

“John, would you please sit up front for the remainder of the activity?”

“Carla, we're going to walk side-by-side to the gym.”

“Billy, you will need to stay in sight of a counselor until dinner, and then we'll talk.”

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

Supervision levels can be created to address unsafe, problematic acting out, such as: *In-sight, one-to-one, and close supervision*. These levels – which represent proximity manipulation – can be adjusted as a kid or group regain (earn) their trust.

## Re-Doing

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

“Okay John, I'd like you to go back to the living room and try walking here again...s-l-o-w-l-y.”

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

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

**Option:** “I think you said I'm a wonderful dude and a sharp dresser, but I'm not sure.”

## The Directed Chat

When a youth is not responding to supportive interventions, an adult – if conditions permit – can request a private chat, preferably in a different location. By changing location, it is often easier to approach the issue at hand with more calmness and emotional distance. Going to a neutral location often facilitates conflict resolution.

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

## **Removal of Attention**

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

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

If a staff member is becoming angry with a youth or group, a fellow staff member should be empowered to step in and take over for the person. Some programs employ a “tag-off” like in professional wrestling.

## **Natural Consequences**

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

Examples:

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

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

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

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

## **Loss of Privileges**

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

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

## **Reparation (Restitution, Community Service, etc.)**

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

A youth is caught bullying others:

**Reparation:** Have the youth apologize to the kids he/she has tormented and require her to help others for a certain duration of time.

A youth throws food in the kitchen:

**Reparation:** Require the youth to help out in the dining area.

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

Staff member: “Bill, you took away some of the respect and harmony we feel here by making the bad decision to damage the property. I’d like for you to give something back by coming up with a project that will contribute to the well-being of this place.

You took something away...now give something back

Whenever possible let the youth or group decide the consequence

## **Breaks (Time-Out)**

Children and youth often react negatively to the term *time-out*. As a result, it is best to use alternative terminology:

“Could you please step outside the room and *chill out*?”

“Jim, I'd like you to sit on the bench, calm down, and think about making some better choices.”

“Sara, would you please go to your room for a short *break*, thanks.”

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

**Set Amounts** = Established time-out lengths and progressions

*Example:* 2 minutes > refusal > loss of points > refusal > contextual decision > completion of original 5 minutes > processing.

**Open Ended** = No set amounts of time for breaks

*Examples:* “Could you please go sit on the couch for a while and chill out.” > refusal >

“The longer it takes you to move, the less likely it becomes to for you to get involved with the activities coming up

.”

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

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

### **Where are Breaks Conducted?**

Best place: A non-stimulating area; a natural part of the room. You don't necessarily have to have specific time out areas.

### **How are Breaks Conducted?**

Youth should always be allowed to sit comfortably to complete breaks. A break should be conducted in a quiet and respectful manner. The youth does not have to be facing the corner or wall. “Time” counts when the child is sitting quietly. Do not start break time over if the youth begins to escalate. Give him/her credit for time already served. Do not have the youth stand to do a break. Don't keep adding time if the youth continues to misbehave:

“Please let me know when you're ready to do your 10 minutes.”

## **Extended Separation (i.e. a Breaks longer than one hour)**

For violent and ultra-serious behavior it is often helpful to have the youth who has offended to be away from the group for an extended period of time to regroup and work through the issue. During extended separations youth should not be bored and uncomfortable. It is not a punishment.

## **Grounding, Restricting, & Taking Things Away**

*Key tips:*

Don't take things away from a child unless what you are taking away is the *source* of the problem.

For example:

You take a radio away because you have repeatedly warned the child about it being played too loud.

When grounding a youth over a specific behavior - remember - the child will most likely repeat the behavior (soon). If you make the original grounding for too long a time (such as a week), what will you do if the child exhibits the same behavior tomorrow?

Groundings, restrictions, etc. should follow a *progression* (i.e., the first time the child does X, he is grounded to the house for X amount of time. The next time he does X, he is grounded for XX amount of time, etc.

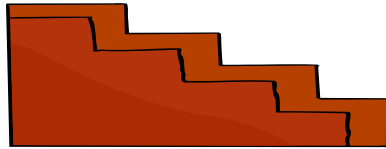
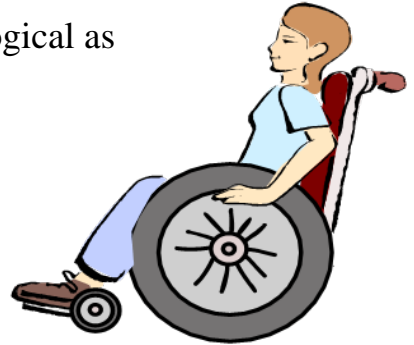
**Practice:** Progressive Discipline and empower the youth to help make these decisions

•

# Helping Inflexible/Explosive Children & Youth

## Characteristics of Such Kids:

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



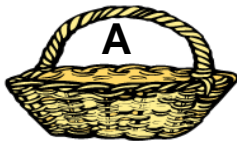
## How to Help:

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

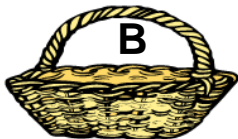
Categorize behaviors and responses into one of three baskets:

A = Non-negotiable      B = Compromise & Negotiation      C = Ignore

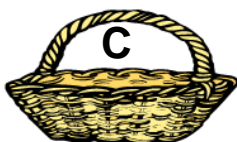
- As kids *meltdown* and approach *vapor lock*, immediately *distract, empathize*, and offer aid. Help them to downshift into a calmer state (i.e. make the *cognitive shift*).



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



*B = Room for compromise & negotiation*



*C = Ignore*