




Opposition and Resistance:
working with students with multiple challenges

Presented by Catherine Korah – April 6th, 2022
Centre of Excellence for Behaviour Management



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Opposition and Resistance
(Counterwill Instinct)

... is a pushing back against the will of others

or a defensive reaction to perceived control and coercion





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Counterwill Instincts

To do the opposite of what is expected
To resist and counter
To be obstinate and stubborn
To be quarrelsome and argumentative
To be noncompliant and defiant
To disobey and defy
Etc.

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What signs does your student give that show opposition and resistance?

Verbal:

Non-verbal:

Paraverbal:

Physical:

Other:

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Counterwill Instincts

Why are children moved by their counterwill instincts?

- There is a **natural** and **intended** purpose to the counterwill instincts. We are all born with this instinct.
- It is quite **healthy** for a child to show counterwill tendencies.
- When children stay **stuck** in counterwill, they may be **having difficulties with**:
 - Experiencing vulnerable feelings
 - Trusting the adult (may not feel cared for or may be feeling exploited)

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By 'will' is meant:

Intentions and initiatives
Wants and wishes
Preferences and priorities
Judgements and opinions
Values and goals
Plans and decisions
Meanings and motives

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What is the purpose of counterwill?

- It serves **attachment** by protecting against outside influence and direction.
- It serves **development** by preparing the way for separate functioning.
- It is quite **healthy** for a child to show counterwill tendencies.



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Resisting because of a LACK OF CONNECTION




COUNTERWILL serves attachment by **protecting against outside influence & direction** from those NOT within the parent-sanctioned village of Attachment.

"Children were designed to be impossible to manage unless sufficiently attached to those in charge"

It is the **default dynamic** in a child that serves to **PROTECT** them.

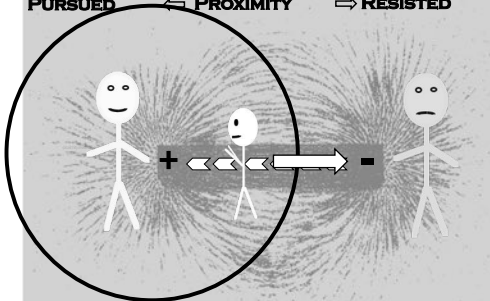
Hence the importance of good parent-teacher-school relationships.
And the problem with Substitute teachers

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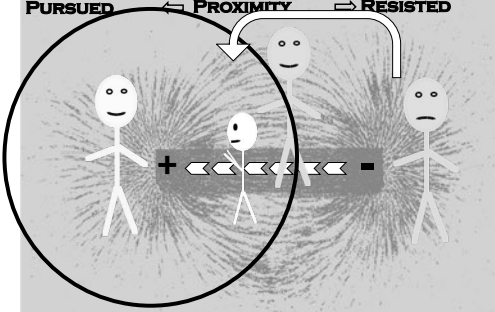


What practices do you use to **BUILD** and **DEEPEN** the relationship with the student?

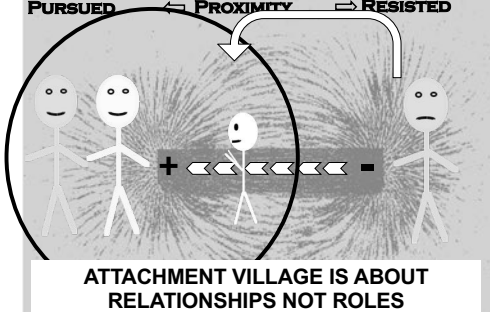
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ATTACHMENT VILLAGE IS ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS NOT ROLES

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ATTACHMENT & CounterWill

Why does a child oppose an adult to whom he/she is attached?

- When the directive is given the child is attached to someone or something else
- Counterwill has been "held at bay" earlier and re-emerges when in a safe place



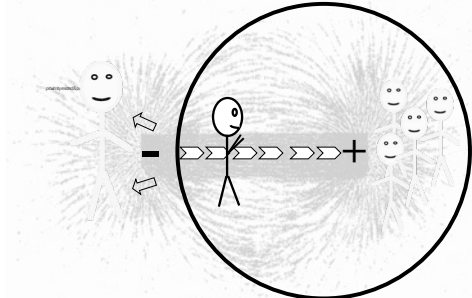
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What practices do you use to **ENGAGE** the student's **attachment** and **RECEPTIVITY**?

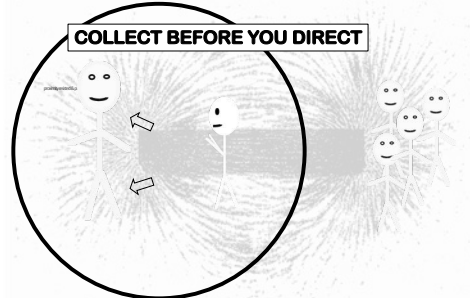
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RESISTED \leftrightarrow PROXIMITY \leftrightarrow PURSUED



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COLLECT BEFORE YOU DIRECT



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COUNTERWill happens when the pressure or coercion felt is greater than the child's pursuit of attachment.

commands	>	impulse to comply
obligations	>	urge to make it work
expectations	>	desire to please
demands	>	inclination to defer
pressure	>	desire to measure up
forcefulness	>	desire to be good

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"HAVE-TO" INVENTORY

List all the frustrations your student could have that morning prior to coming to the classroom. How many "Have-tos" are involved into the **classroom/school** experience?

What "Have-tos" are added involved a **learning** situation?

What other "Have-tos" are present, or have been present, in this **student's life**?



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CounterWill and DEVELOPMENT

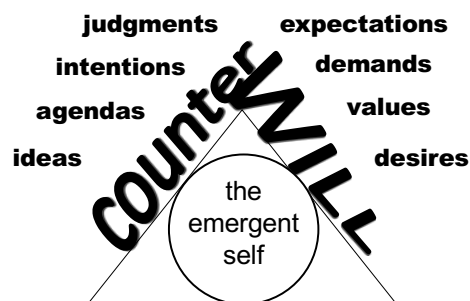


COUNTERWILL serves DEVELOPMENT by preparing the way for SEPARATE FUNCTIONING

The first step in finding one's own WILL is to resist and counter the WILL of others.

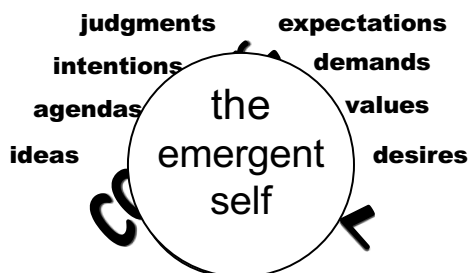
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THE WILL OF OTHERS



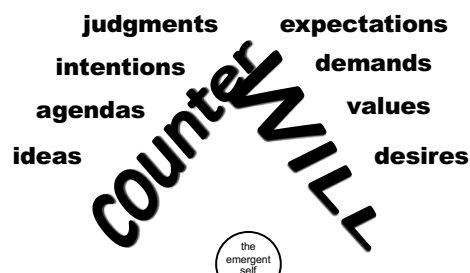
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THE WILL OF OTHERS



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THE WILL OF OTHERS



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COUNTERWILL happens when the experience of **coercion** is greater than the sense of one's **own WILL**

expectations	>	initiative
pressure	>	purpose
demands	>	desires
have to's	>	want to's
directives	>	intentions
input	>	curiosity
incentives / rewards	>	interest


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What practices do you use to **MAKE ROOM** for the student's **own WILL** (their initiative and involvement)?

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Children stuck in counterwill are challenging



much less receptive to being lead in general

highly resistant to direction and guidance

often are less endearing, tending to alienate the adults responsible for them

appear independent and much less needy and so not as likely to evoke care-taking responses in the adults responsible for them

very difficult to bring to state of **REST** and **SATIATION**

consequences and sanctions are highly **PROVOCATIVE**

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The DRAMA of the STUCK CHILD

a tragedy in three acts

ACT I

*When kids get **stuck**, adults start **pushing**.*

ACT II

*When kids **feel pushed**, they put on the **brakes**.*

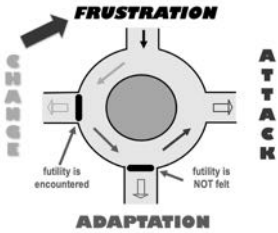
ACT III

*When kids get stuck in their **resistance**, adults tend to get stuck in their **persistence**.*

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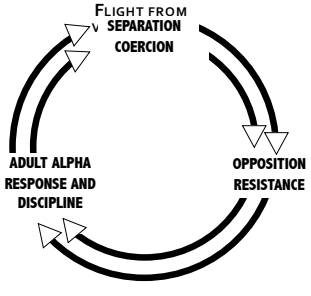
Counterwill leads to FRUSTRATION problems

- More frustration when faced with the adult's pressure.
- Frustration problems, and aggression if defended against feelings of futility.



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Counterwill Cycle



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Handling *CounterWill*

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CounterWill is NOT a learned response, but an **EMOTIONAL REACTION** that plays a critical role in **PRESERVING** the self and becoming a separate person.

The belief that resistance and opposition must be unlearned (a) doesn't recognize or **value the developmental benefits of having one's own mind** and (b) fails to appreciate that we need to **GROW a child out of resistance**, not punish or teach a child to behave otherwise.

from Rest Play Grow by Deborah MacNamara

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Handling *CounterWill*

Understand what makes a student feel **VULNERABLE**, evoking counterwill

- New learning
- Not knowing what is expected
- Looking inadequate, especially in front of peers
- Confirming inadequacy
- Facing loss of attachment



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Don't let counterwill Break the CONNECTION

- don't take counterwill personally
- anticipate and expect counterwill
- reflect the resistance as natural & normal
- repair damage done by counterwill fallout
- don't use separation as a consequence
- don't make behaviour the bottom line
- repair damage done by counterwill fallout

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When faced with a challenge of the 'wills'

- Be careful about finding yourself into a **power struggle**.
- Don't let yourself be **alienated** by their behaviour and don't take the behavior personally. **Detach your anger from your discipline.**
- Separate the response from the incident and **choose a more suitable time** (*except in case of emergency or security)
- **Change the circumstances** affecting the child rather than trying to control their behavior.



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Guidelines to consider

1	Give the impression that you can and will take care of the child by projecting calmness and confidence (If necessary, fake it until you can make it!)
2	Rely on structures, routines and rituals to help (*this limits reliance on child direction/control)
3	Be careful about revealing your own sense of helplessness "I don't know what to do with you anymore!"
4	Be careful about revealing your own needs, felt inadequacies or fears

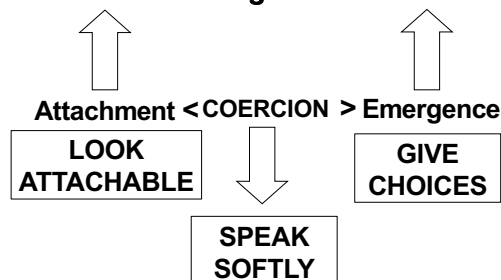
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Guidelines to consider

- Provide for some **sense of choice** to reduce the impression of coercion (without giving them too many options)
- **Normalize** that there are times when we all get pushed around by our emotions and that we do or say things we don't mean.
- Focus on the child's **intentions** and **efforts** – Try to solicit the child's good intentions where possible
- Make room for the child's **initiative** and **involvement** (for example, in a reparative action)
- **Bridge** the behaviour by saying something like "I still love you" or "Tomorrow is another day"

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A three-pronged approach To handling *counterwill*



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REDUCE COERCION

- **back off** until you get a better attachment hold
- **LEAD** the child out of the impasse (power struggle)
- draw attention **AWAY** from the coercive elements of the situation



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REDUCE COERCION



- refrain from using a **commanding** or **prescriptive** manner
- make agendas **less explicit**
- refrain from focusing on the **SHOULDs**, the **MUSTs** & the **HAVE TOs**
- use as little force and leverage as possible

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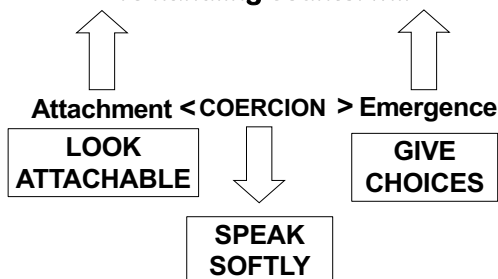
REDUCE COERCION

- use **structures** and **routines** to orchestrate behavior
- the routine guides the behavior
- teach routines in a fun way
- make routines engaging:
"hop like a bunny", "quiet as a mouse",
"big steps like a giant" "super-hero job"



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A three-pronged approach To handling *counterwill*



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ENGAGE THE ATTACHMENT INSTINCTS

1. Get in the child's face (or space) in a friendly way, **collecting** the eyes, a smile and a nod
2. Provide a '**touch of proximity**' for the child to hold on to
3. Invite the child to **depend** upon you
4. Act as the child's **compass point**



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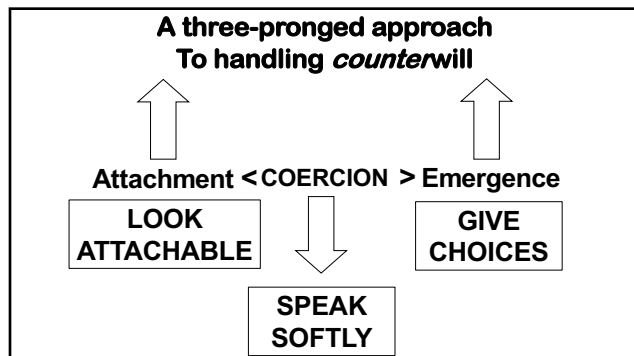
ENGAGE THE ATTACHMENT INSTINCTS

- Talk about **how hard it is** to always "have to do" things
- **Normalize** that there are times when we all want to refuse to do what we "must"
- Allow the child **time and space** to handle their Counterwill instinct



COME ALONGSIDE

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ENHANCE EMERGENCE

- provide for some sense of **choice**
- put the focus on the child's **will**
- make room for the child's **initiative** and **involvement**
- solicit **good intentions** where possible
- place **in charge** where appropriate and possible

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Use Play and Playfulness

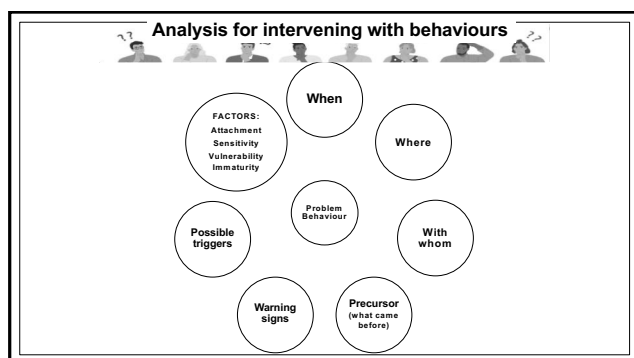
- Being playful helps to diffuse tense situations.
- Being playful helps to get our directives across without pressure and coercion.
- Through fantasy, stories and make-believe, play can provide cues and guidance towards expected behaviours.

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USE PLAY AND PLAYFULNESS

- **Singing** and **actions** – to take the mind off of the “have to”
- **Playing** usually evokes smiles – increasing attachment
- **Play with “no”** – a “no” dance – saying “no” or “I don't want to” as loud as you can – as silly as you can

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Our ROLE as the adult

Adjusting our VIEW	Taking things LESS PERSONALLY
	Recognizing that instinct is involved
	Aiming to “do no harm”
Adjusting our STANCE	Normalizing by conveying that some pushback is part of the process
	Placing child in charge when possible
	Being patient
Making ROOM for	For child to display own “ will ”
	To be indulged in the play mode

teacher
Educator
Parent
COACH
Technician
Principal
counsellor

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A website that helps schools to use a Developmental Trauma-Informed Approach to helping children.

Website: <https://www.cebm.ca>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Centre-of-Excellence-for-Behaviour-Management-2688202652038/>

YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCaVn_x3loZz8zeYxcFdo_wu7view_ga5ubsciber

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Challenge: Resistance & Opposition
Making Sense of What is Unfolding and Mapping Interventions to Support a Student

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Thank you for your participation.
Please complete the **evaluation/feedback form**.
The link can be found in the chat box or on our website
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/>

	Next online PD session:
April 27, 2022	4:00-5:00 PM – Panel discussion with PIM <i>Analysis for Intervention and Q & A</i>
May 5, 2022	4:00-5:00 PM – Online Webinar <i>The Neuroscience Of Play</i>
May 26, 2022	4:00-5:00 PM – Online Webinar <i>Helping The Highly Sensitive Child</i>

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DEBORAH MACNAMARA, PhD
**REST
PLAY
GROW**
Making Sense of Preschoolers
(Or Anyone Who Acts Like One)

<https://macnamara.ca/kids-best-bet-blog/>

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Hannah Beach
EMOTIONAL GROWTH
FOR CHILDREN
<https://hannahbeach.ca/>

**reclaiming
our
students**
Why Children Are More Anxious,
Aggressive, and Shut
Down Than Ever—And What
We Can Do About It

HANNAH BEACH &
TAMARA NEUFELD STRIACK
Jungian/psychodynamic approach, this
Adaptive copy - not for distribution

The Child
Who Is Resistant

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COUNTERWILL
The resistance to push back, resist, oppose
and defy when adults' intentions are unmet

RESISTANCE CAN BE HEALTHY OR A SIGN OF STUCKNESS

STUCKNESS IS UNHEALTHY
It's a state of mind where a child is stuck in a loop of resistance and defiance, often with no clear reason for the behavior.

COUNTERWILL DISTINCTS CAN BE EXPRESSED AS:

- 1. In the absence of adult's request
- 2. When a child has a strong and clear opinion
- 3. In the presence of a demand
- 4. In the presence of a demand
- 5. In the presence of a demand
- 6. In the presence of a demand
- 7. In the presence of a demand
- 8. In the presence of a demand
- 9. In the presence of a demand
- 10. In the presence of a demand

WHY ABOUT COUNTERWILL?

- 1. The child has a strong and clear opinion
- 2. The child is in a state of mind where they are stuck in a loop of resistance and defiance
- 3. The child is in a state of mind where they are stuck in a loop of resistance and defiance
- 4. The child is in a state of mind where they are stuck in a loop of resistance and defiance
- 5. The child is in a state of mind where they are stuck in a loop of resistance and defiance
- 6. The child is in a state of mind where they are stuck in a loop of resistance and defiance
- 7. The child is in a state of mind where they are stuck in a loop of resistance and defiance
- 8. The child is in a state of mind where they are stuck in a loop of resistance and defiance
- 9. The child is in a state of mind where they are stuck in a loop of resistance and defiance
- 10. The child is in a state of mind where they are stuck in a loop of resistance and defiance

WHAT DOES A GOOD ATTACHMENT
LOOK LIKE BETWEEN AN
ADULT AND A CHILD?

The Dance of Right Relationships

1. The adult is present and available

2. The adult is present and available

3. The adult is present and available

4. The adult is present and available

5. The adult is present and available

6. The adult is present and available

7. The adult is present and available

8. The adult is present and available

9. The adult is present and available

10. The adult is present and available

<https://macnamara.ca/why-do-kids-do-that/>

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