


Managing Behaviour without Rewards



Centre of Excellence for Behaviour Management

www.cebm.ca Eva de Gosztanyi, coordinator


"Building the Capacity of the English School Boards of Quebec"

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Why are reward systems so popular?

- "Common" practice – everyone uses them – they've always been used
- Go-To practice when there are behavioural challenges
- Claim is that they are evidence-based
- Can make a difference in behaviour especially with a challenging group – in the short term
- Belief that they create optimal learning conditions
- Seem to be fun
- Thought to be harmless



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Let's take a look from different perspectives

Developmental - neuroscientific

Learning

Social Emotional abilities

Relationship/Attachment

Emotion

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What kind of reward systems are we talking about?

- Behaviour Charts
- Star Charts – group
- Star Charts – individual
- Tracking sheets
- End of day evaluation in Agenda
- Digital Behaviour systems

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Are reward systems evidence based?

In the short term – the evidence shows that external behaviour does improve when incentives are given.
Most studies do not follow students over time.
Experience often shows that:

- Behaviour does not generalize to non-reward situations.
- Rewards have to be changed and increased to maintain behaviour.
- Students begin to expect rewards for standard behaviour.

Alfie Kohn:
No controlled study has ever found a long-term improvement in the quality of work as a result of any kind of incentive plan. And yet those plans are as popular as ever.

Evidence Informed

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Do reward systems actually change behaviour?

Thinking Developmentally – using neuroscience

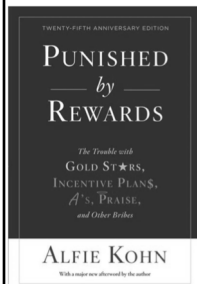
- AK: Rewards are not actually solutions at all; they are gimmicks, quick fixes that mask problems and ignore reasons. They never look below the surface.
- Gordon Neufeld: The neuroscience now informs us that most troubled behaviour is actually driven, deeply rooted in impulse and emotion.
- What tempers impulse and emotion is a well-developed and functioning Prefrontal Cortex and a robust corpus callosum
- Jay Geid: Neuroscience tells us that it takes 25 years to develop a human brain that is capable of mature behaviour.
- The brain grows from within – prefrontal cortex, cerebellum, corpus callosum, right hemisphere, left hemisphere.

How is it possible that a sticker or a reward would actually grow a brain so that behaviour could change?

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How do reward systems affect behaviour?

Alfie Kohn: Punished by Rewards



- People actually do inferior work when they are enticed with money, grades, or other incentives. Programs that use rewards to change people's behavior are similarly ineffective over the long run.
- Promising goodies to children for good behavior can never produce anything more than temporary obedience. In fact, the more we use artificial inducements to motivate people, the more they lose interest in what we're bribing them to do.

- Felt marker study. Children rewarded for using markers did not use them when there was no reward.
- Rewards turn play into work, and work into drudgery.

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Do reward systems really change behaviour?

AK: But several experiments have found that dangling goodies in front of children to deal with distractibility or hyperactivity in particular also doesn't make much sense. In one study, rewards given to hyperactive children made them respond *more* impulsively. Firestone and Douglas (1975)

In another, any beneficial effects of rewards (on reaction times) disappeared as soon as the rewards stopped coming, and sometimes they had the consequence of undermining performance from the beginning. Douglas and Parry (1983)

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Do reward systems really improve learning?

- Richard Curwin: Bribes (rewards) tend to produce "finishers" rather than "learners."
- Alfie Kohn: Students who are encouraged to think about grades, stickers, or other "goodies" become less inclined to explore ideas, think creatively, and take chances.
- At least ten studies have shown that people offered a reward generally choose the easiest possible task (Kohn, 1993). In the absence of rewards, by contrast, children are inclined to pick tasks that are just beyond their current level of ability.
- AK: When rewards are used activity increases while the quality of work decreases.

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Are reward systems harmless?

In one representative study, young children were introduced to an unfamiliar beverage called kefir.

Some were just asked to drink it;

others were praised lavishly for doing so;

a third group was promised treats if they drank enough.

Those children who received either verbal or tangible rewards consumed more of the beverage than other children, as one might predict.

But a week later these children found it significantly less appealing than they did before, whereas children who were offered no rewards liked it just as much as, if not more than, they had earlier (Birch et al., 1984).

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Are reward systems harmless?

Felix Warneken and Michael Tomasello (2014) **Extrinsic Rewards Undermine Altruistic Tendencies in 20-Month-Olds**

- investigated the influence of rewards on very young children's helping behavior.
- after 20-month-old infants received a material reward during a treatment phase, they subsequently were less likely to engage in further helping during a test phase as compared with infants who had previously received social praise or no reward at all.
- This so-called overjustification effect suggests that **even the earliest helping behaviors of young children are intrinsically motivated and that socialization practices involving extrinsic rewards can undermine this tendency**.

AK: When we reward a naturally occurring kind behaviour we make it into a selfish behaviour.

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Whose behaviour is really changed?



Teacher correcting a behaviour



Teacher giving a star

Which person would I prefer to listen to?

Remember: Attachment instincts are engaged when we collect children's eyes, a nod and a smile. A reward system makes adults smile.

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Why do Reward Systems work?

Thinking about Attachment


- Attachment is our preeminent need
- Humans are naturally attuned to what can increase or maintain attachment – Emotion = Pursuit
- A reward system makes it very clear which behaviours will make an adult “happy”.
- Now, **attachment becomes conditional** –
 - for the teacher or my parents to be “happy with me” – want me in their presence, I must be “good”.

A child said to his mother,

“Mommy, I could have gotten 45 points today, but I only got 35 points. CAN YOU STILL LOVE ME?”

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What is the emotional fallout of a Behaviour System?

THE BEHAVIOUR CHART

- after the first few weeks of school, it is usually the same children who are in yellow, orange or red
- if they could change their behaviour they would
- immaturity and emotional needs are the real reasons behind most “mis-behaviour”
- the warning system can cause shame or alarm – displacing behaviour but not changing or dealing with the underlying cause

USE THE TIME TO FOR PREVENTATIVE INTERVENTIONS

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Why I Will Never Use a Behavior Chart Again

Nikki Sabiston

I remembered my own son coming home from Kindergarten, day after day, in tears because he just couldn't seem to stay on 'green'.

He wanted so badly to behave. He wanted to please his teachers. He wanted mom and dad to be proud of him. But his impulsivity did not allow him to keep himself in check for the whole school day. Every time she moved that clip, he was being reminded that he wasn't good enough for his teacher. That kindergarten year was one of the hardest years our family has endured. It is utterly heartbreaking to hear your child say things like, "I hate myself. Why can't I be good? My teacher hates me. I'm not good enough." Tears are dropping on the keyboard as I remember those moments.

Now that he is being treated for ADHD, he is much happier at school and doing well, but that color chart just about destroyed my son.

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Why I Will Never Use a Behavior Chart Again

Nikki Sabiston

- They track behavior, but they do not change it.
- For kids who are not able to adhere to the cultural expectations of school, the chart can be absolutely demoralizing. And this seems to be mostly boys - hmmm.
- The chart makes the assumption, before the kid ever crosses the threshold of the classroom door, that he is going to misbehave. Ouch.
- As much as we try to make that chart seem like a 'reminder' and not a negative thing, it is still embarrassing to many children.
- Even kids who always stay on 'green', often feel stress and worry as they watch some of their classmates repeatedly move on the color chart

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What is the emotional fallout of a Behaviour System?

USING THE AGENDA TO REPORT BEHAVIOUR AT THE END OF EACH DAY

- A “red” or “yellow” face puts the child into a state of facing separation – imagining and/or seeing DISAPPOINTMENT on the parent's face.
- The parent is disappointed, wants to correct the behavior, but it can't happen overnight, so everyone is tense.
- The parent and child are both frustrated or alarmed and therefore, the child cannot “rest” in the relationship – poor rest increases the likelihood of poor behaviour.
- “Good” children can become alarmed – fearful of getting a “yellow” or “red” face = Sunday night meltdowns.**
- The adults at school are not seen as “safe” because they are the ones reporting the behavior to the parents.
- Children's anxiety increases or they start not caring.

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What is the EMOTIONAL fallout of a Behaviour System?

Humans are creatures of emotion.

Emotions move us.

Behaviour is an expression of what is happening emotionally.

When we work at controlling the symptoms, true change cannot happen

In fact, things can get worse as emotions seek expression and a student who is “good” in class so as to get a reward will often erupt with emotion once outside of class. Or if the school is lucky, will save the eruption for home.

Richard Curwin: Bribes are threats in disguise. Withholding rewards can be used as a threat hammer very easily. The truth is that threats and bribes are two sides of the same coin: control.

The more we tell children how good they are, the greater the fall if they cannot live up to all that praise

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Understanding Emotion

Receiving a reward may be satisfying in the moment but NOT receiving a reward evokes emotions such as:

- **Frustration:** "I wanted the reward and couldn't earn it."
 - which can lead to acting out, aggression or a meltdown.
- **Alarm:** "What will happen if my parents found out that I couldn't be "good enough."
 - thus, increasing anxiety and possibly contributing to a meltdown
- **Intensified Pursuit:** "I will pay attention to and do only those things which will earn me the reward."
 - resulting in performance but not necessarily true learning. This can also cause exhaustion as it is hard to be good all the time.

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USING A DIGITAL BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT SYSTEM What does it really do?

- i. Puts the child into state of facing separation – keenly imagining the DISAPPOINTMENT of the parent if they didn't EARN "enough" points or if they get a "bad" point.
- ii. The child in such a classroom is now very aware of what behaviour is expected, and wishing to be "acknowledged", will put a lot of effort into acting in a way that will get noticed by the teacher.
- iii. When children focus energy on acting appropriately, they will have less energy to engage in real learning. They may look more engaged in the task assigned, but can their brains fully engaged in the learning process? Humans do not multi-task very well.

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USING A DIGITAL BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT SYSTEM What does it really do?

- iv. What if:
 - a child is having a bad day (they are tired, feeling sick, were just rejected by a friend)?
 - a child is immature and over-reactive and finds the behavioural demands of a full day in school overwhelming?
 - a child is trying very hard, and the teacher doesn't notice?
 - a child consistently receives fewer points than her classmates?

How does not receiving points make those children feel?
- v. The reality is that when a teacher or staff is occupied with trying to monitor behaviour, then they cannot be attending to the other needs of their students. Is there not a better use of their time?

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USING A DIGITAL BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

- vi. If the parents receive the "results" before seeing their child – they can start to question their child's performance.
- vii. Now, instead of a "happy face" that summarizes the day, Mommy and Daddy can know exactly how many times the child behaved. "I only got 35 points. CAN YOU STILL LOVE ME?"
- vi. "Good" children can become alarmed – fearful of not getting enough points = Sunday night meltdowns. Anxiety increases.
- vii. The adults at school are not seen as "safe" because they are the ones reporting the behavior to the parents.
- viii. AND – what happens when a parent is "dinged" with a notice of a negative behaviour at 10 am?
 - o The parent is wondering all day about what happened
 - o The child is waiting for the parent's disappointment and displeasure
 - o Emotions of Frustration and Alarm increase, meltdowns can happen
 - o The parent tries desperately to fix the behaviour or gets upset with school staff

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USING A DIGITAL BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT SYSTEM What does it really do?

- ix. Other concerns:
 - o The creation of digital behaviour profiles on students could have a long-lasting impact. Old fashioned points systems such as star charts were temporary, had a short life, and weren't terribly effective. ClassDojo collects and retains all recorded data on students.
 - o Concerns have been raised over who owns this behaviour data and how it might be used in the future. There is potential for behavioural data profiles to follow students through school. It's too early to tell how they might be used in the future and what problems this might present.

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Implications

Reward systems are NOT innocuous or harmless.

They have been shown to:

- Make attachment conditional
- Affect relationship with parents
- Cause feelings of shame and even hopelessness
- Increase alarm and anxiety even among the "good children"
- Discourage and decrease natural behavioural tendencies
 - the desire to be good for one's teacher
 - caring for others
 - trying new things – creativity and risk
 - joy of learning

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Interventions

1. Maximize **Attachment**
2. Compensate for the effects of **Immaturity**
3. Build a Village of Attachment
4. Minimize the effects of Peers
5. Allow for **Emotional Expression and Play**

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ENGAGE THE ATTACHMENT INSTINCTS BEFORE TRYING TO GET THE CHILD TO LISTEN OR TO BEHAVE


COLLECT BEFORE YOU DIRECT

space - eyes - a smile - a nod

How can I get the child to look at me and smile?

- Speak softly
- Say name with warmth and affection

**DOES THIS CHILD GIVE ME
PERMISSION TO EXIST IN HIS/HER
PRESENCE?**

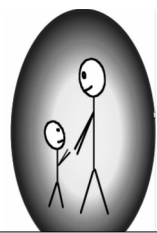


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GETTING STARTED RITUAL *Getting into the LEAD position*

- Engage ALL the Senses
- Focus on the Teacher
- Use every time you see the students

SILENCE - SMILE



- All eyes on you
- Now give your directions



LEADING

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TRANSITIONS

GETTING THE STUDENTS' ATTENTION WITHOUT RAISING YOUR VOICE

Have the children do something that is incompatible with other behaviours like talking to their friends.

The alternate behaviour should be fun:
Songs, Chants, Funny gestures

Attention Please!

Teacher	Student
1. Scooby Dooby Doo	1. Where are you?
2. Oh me!	2. Oh my!
3. Ready set	3. You bet!
4. Hocus pocus	4. Everybody focus!
5. Holy moly	5. Guacamole!
6. Macaroni and Cheese	6. Everybody freeze!
7. 1, 2, 3 eyes on me	7. 1, 2, 3 eyes on you!
8. To infinity	8. And beyond!
9. Zip, zip, zop	9. We're all that!
10. Ready to rock	10. Ready to roll!
11. All set	11. You bet!

Playfulness can be contagious!


All eyes on you

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SILENCE - SMILE

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Now give your directions



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











CREATE A QUIET CORNER


<https://www.cebmmember.ca/cocoon-area>

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It is also possible to set-up a Movement Area within the classroom with

MOVEMENT STATION




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USE TIME-AWAY instead of TIME-OUT

**If you are starting to “reach your limit” with a child
OR
if a child needs to be away from the other children**

- Send the child to a safe place
 - The “quiet corner” within the room
 - Behaviour Technician
 - the Office
 - Nurturing Support Centre**
- Send the child **TO SOMEONE** to deliver something
 - a book
 - an envelope
 - “You’ve got mail”
- Always go to the student and let them know that the relationship is still intact.

QUIET ZONE




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Use TIME AWAY

- If necessary, use TIME AWAY and let the student know that you will be there soon.
- Send the student **TO SOMEONE**
 - Book strategy
 - Envelope strategy
 - Foster Classroom
 - Nurturing Support Centre
- Always go to the student and let them know that the relationship is still intact.
- It is always up to the adult to restore and maintain the relationship with a child.



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COMPENSATE FOR THE EFFECTS OF IMMATURITY

**ANALYSE THE ENVIRONMENT AND SCHEDULE FOR
WHERE AND WHEN TROUBLE HAPPENS**

Getting ready to work:

- Provide extra pencils – erasers - calculators – etc.
- Make it easy for the students to find their copy books and texts

Location of:

- pencil sharpener OR have many sharpened pencils available
- student desk to where least disruptions will happen

Have a plan for Rainbow Days

These are days when the students have more than 3 teachers in a day

- where else can the student go to be with a significant attachment figure

Don't penalize students for adult decisions

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COMPENSATE FOR THE EFFECTS OF IMMATURITY

**SET UP YOUR ENVIRONMENT TO
HELP GUIDE ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR**

USE VISUAL PROMPTS

LINING UP:

- Masking tape
- Floor decals



CIRCLE TIME:

- Masking tape
- Chairs
- Hula hoops
- Carpet swatches



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HELPING the UNFOCUSED CHILD

SEAT WORK AND WRITING

- When focus wanders – redirect to completing one small step / fold the paper / highlight the ones you want completed
- When focus wanders again – provide an alternate activity – PLAY – if other children ask why he gets to play – say, “He completed **his** work.”
- Read the group, cut the activity short and give permission for free time

Insisting on completing an assignment is not necessary for development

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HELPING the AGITATED CHILD

**Provide the student with an environment that is
necessary for THEIR level of functioning.**

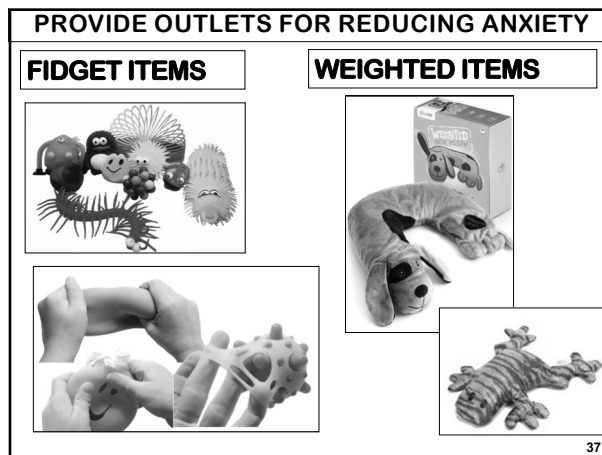
- Tolerate movement – allow for pacing or squirming
- Provide acceptable fidget items
- Provide sufficient “elbow room”**
- Allow for frequent movement breaks – Active Corner
- Give active jobs
- Use Brain Breaks – all the class will benefit
<https://www.cebm.ca/brain-breaks>
- Go outdoors!

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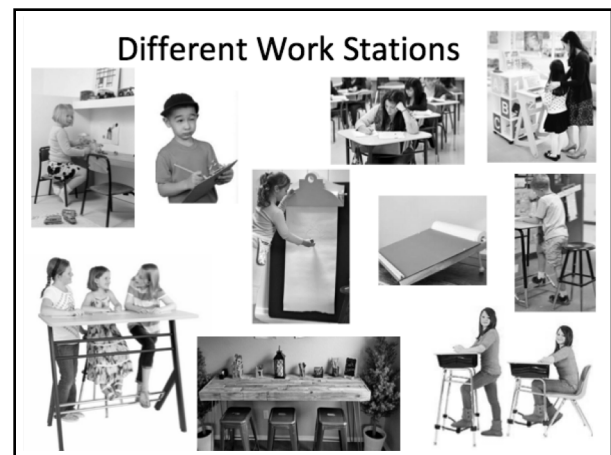
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Eva de Gosztanyi, Psychologist, Centre of Excellence for Behaviour Management

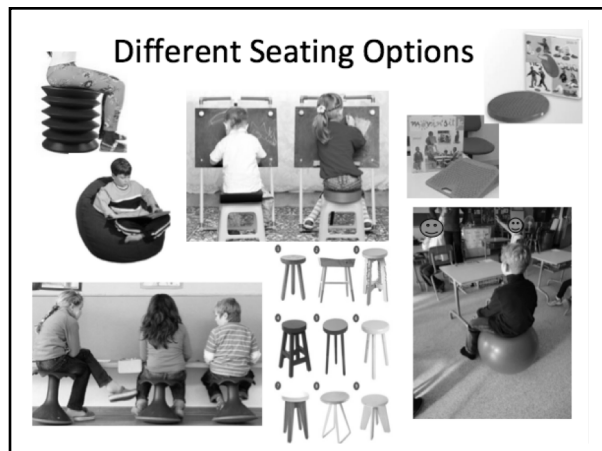
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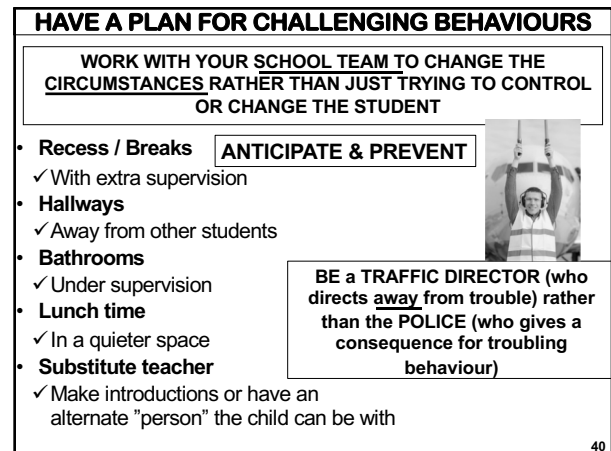
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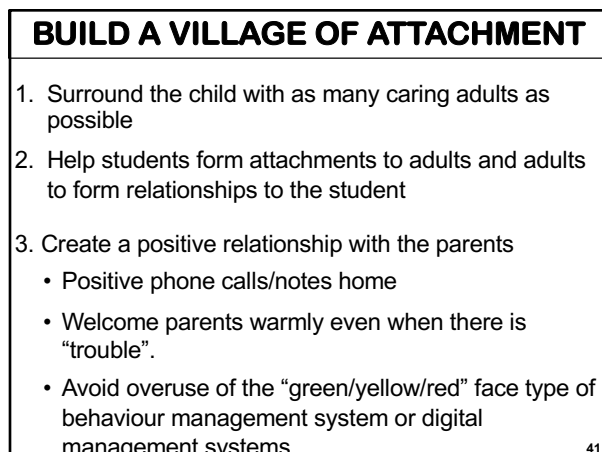
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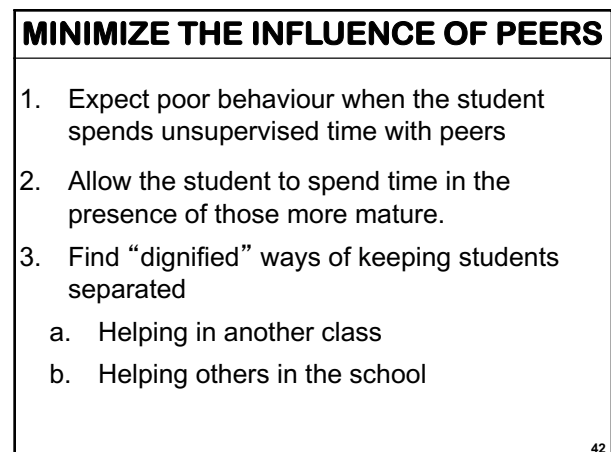
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PROVIDE OUTLETS FOR EMOTION AND GIVE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PLAY

1. Encourage ARTS, MUSIC, DRAMA, WRITING, SINGING, RAP
2. Provide lots of time for PLAY

ESCALATING DIAGNOSES OF CHILDHOOD DEPRESSION AND ADHD HAS PARALLELED THE LOSS OF PLAY

<https://www.cebm.ca/emotion-and-play>

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IDEAS FOR PLAYFUL RELEASE OF EMOTIONS

- Dance party
- Paper snowball fights
- Clapping games
- Pool noodle drumming
- Simon Says
- Stomp dancing
- Pretending emotions
- Pretending to be animals
- Playing monster game

BE CREATIVE!

EMOTIONAL RELEASE THROUGH PLAY WITH YOUR STUDENTS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

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MANAGING BEHAVIOUR WITHOUT REWARDS – CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

- Do it slowly and be prepared for a reaction
- Frame it as “taking a break” “You’re all doing well enough”
- Give out “prizes” randomly, without having to merit it. *All whose names start ‘A to D’ will get a fancy pencil or a sticker.*
- Explain to parents that you are doing things differently – most will be relieved
- Focus on helping students to get things right – you will have more time for helping when you are no longer monitoring and justifying
- Ask for help from the School Team for creating plans for your most challenging students
- HAVE FUN with your students – use Brain Breaks and Play

Students who are attached to adults want to behave for them.

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FINAL THOUGHTS

It is only in the context of a SAFE ATTACHMENT that children can GROW and DEVELOP.

When a flower doesn't bloom you fix the environment in which it grows, not the flower.

- Alexander den Heijer

PROVIDE GENEROUSLY

FORGIVE EASILY

FEEL YOUR SADNESS


HAVE FAITH IN NATURE’S PLAN

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Centre of Excellence for Behaviour Management

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Members site password: CEBMmembers



THE CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT (CEBM)

Welcome to our site! As a support to the 10 English School Boards of Quebec, the CEBM aims to enable boards and their staff to find developmentally friendly and trauma informed interventions that are effective in helping students who are struggling with behavioural challenges in the school setting.

WELCOME BACK!
2021-2022 will be another “interesting” year. Things are still in flux, but we are all better prepared for the challenges that a pandemic brings.

Upcoming Events 2021-2022

A website that helps schools to use a developmental-trauma-responsive-attachment friendly approach

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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/r/MBwoRewards>

Next online PD session:

Thursday December 2 – 4 to 5 pm

BULLYING PART I - WHAT’S REALLY GOING ON?

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