

**Differentiating for Students Displaying Challenging Behaviours Elementary**

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**Outline of Session**

1. Where does behaviour come from?
2. How does behaviour change?
3. Why should we differentiate for behaviour?
4. How can we differentiate for behaviour in the classroom?
5. What else can be done to help our challenging students?

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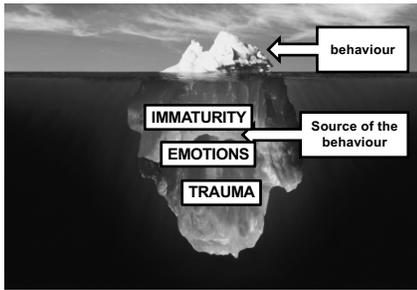
**Using a Developmental and Trauma-Informed Lens**

1. Attachment-based developmental paradigm of Dr. Gordon Neufeld
2. Research on the development of the human brain – Jay Giedd, Laurence Steinberg, Iain McGilchrist, etc.
3. Trauma research – Reggie Melrose, Bruce Perry, Bessel Van der Kolk, McCrory, Edmiston, Jackowski, et al.

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**Gaining perspective**

Behaviour isn't always what it seems, we need to dig deeper and look at what's happening beneath.



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**NEUFELD DEVELOPMENTAL PARADIGM**

Three keys for understanding youth



**the Maturation Key**

**the Vulnerability Key**

**the Attachment Key**

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**MATURATION - PRINCIPLES**

1. Natural process that unfolds according to a plan
2. Cannot be rushed
3. Can become stuck
4. Potential - continues throughout the life span
5. Based in neuroscientific research

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**Jay Giedd** – National Institute of Mental Health

- Since 1991 - watching healthy teen brains grow up using MRI (magnetic resonance imaging)
- Wondered - 16 or 18 as an age to stop?

**CONCLUSION:**  
**The human brain continues to change significantly until about age**

□

**Brain development - from back to front (primitive to sophisticated)**  
**PRE-FRONTAL CORTEX**

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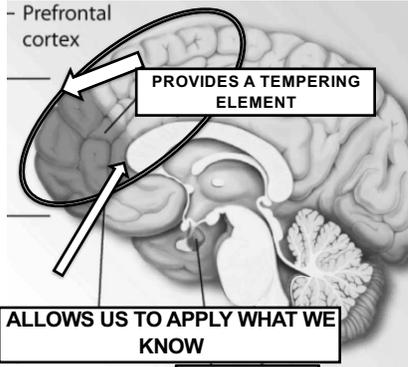
**PRE-FRONTAL-CORTEX**

**Conflicting:**

- **THOUGHTS**
- **FEELINGS**

**Executive Functions:**

- **Suppressing Impulses (tempering)**
- response flexibility
- **delay of gratification**
- time management
- **ability to work**



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LEFT HEMISPHERE	NEO-CORTEX	RIGHT HEMISPHERE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• detail-oriented</li> <li>• decontextualizes</li> <li>• finds facts</li> <li>• wants <b>THE RULE</b></li> <li>• looks for <b>THE ANSWER</b></li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• whole-oriented</li> <li>• contextualizes</li> <li>• makes vivid and concrete,</li> <li>• takes in the <b>whole picture</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>RIGHT HEMISPHERE IS IN RAPID DEVELOPMENT DURING THE PRESCHOOL YEARS</b></p>		
<p><b>RIGHT HEMISPHERE REQUIRES EXPERIENCES NOT INFORMATION TO DEVELOP</b></p>		
<p><b>HENCE THE IMPORTANCE OF PLAY</b></p>		
<p><small>The Master and his Emissary: The Divided Brain. Iain McGilchrist 9</small></p>		

**The IMMATURE struggle with:**

1. Seeing the “WHOLE” picture (immature Corpus Callosum – Developing Right Hemisphere)
2. Finding information efficiently and quickly (developing Cerebellum)
3. Applying what they know in all circumstances, especially when emotions are high (immature Pre-frontal Cortex)

**Behaviour changes as the brain matures**

**We can nurture the soil but cannot really speed up the development.**

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**NEUFELD DEVELOPMENTAL PARADIGM**

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the Maturation Key



the Vulnerability Key



the Attachment Key

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**Vulnerability Principles**

1. Growth requires softness – which means being vulnerable.
2. When the brain senses it is too vulnerable, it protects itself (B. Van Der Kolk)
3. When the brain is **protecting** itself, it cannot be growing.

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**Effects of Adverse Childhood Experiences**

Erin E. Edmiston et al., Yale Univ. 2011

Self-reported scores on the Childhood Trauma Questionnaire (CTQ) show that experiences of **physical abuse, physical &/or emotional neglect** can decrease the volume of the **PREFRONTAL CORTEX**

**MALES = IMPULSE CONTROL**  
**FEMALES = EMOTIONAL REGULATION**

A.P. Jackowski et al., 2008

Children with PTSD had reduced volume in the **Corpus Callosum.**

**Adverse Childhood Experiences Study**

With an **ACE score of 4 or more** the student is at risk for having significant behavioural and mental health issues

- emotional abuse
  - o parent and/or sibling
- physical abuse
  - o parent and/or sibling
- sexual abuse
- loss of family support
- physical neglect
- loss of parent
  - o separation/divorce
  - o absence
  - o multiple step-parents
  - o illness
  - o death
  - o adoption
- witness domestic violence
- familial substance abuse
- familial mental illness
- family member in prison

**Other possible Adverse Experiences**

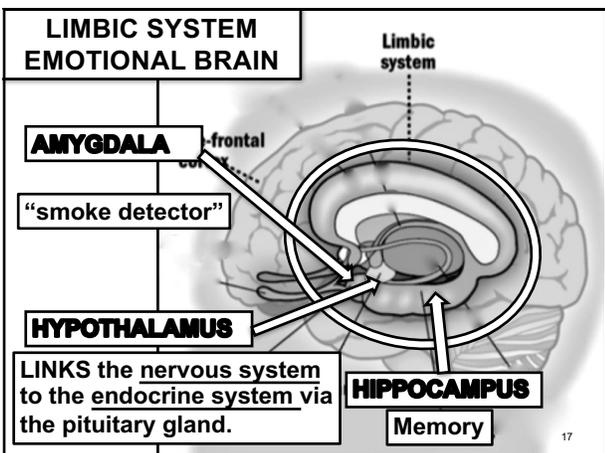
- Frequent hospitalization (parent or child)
- Death of a sibling
- Sibling with special needs
- Foster care
- Multiple changes in parental or guardian care
- Caregivers/parents who are at odds with each other

**Effects of Adverse Childhood Experiences**

Eamon McCrory et al. U College, London, 2011

Children exposed to family violence show the same pattern of activity in their brains as **SOLDIERS EXPOSED TO COMBAT.**

Exposure to family violence was associated with **increased brain activity** in the **AMYGDALA** when they were shown pictures of angry faces.



**SYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM**  
**the system of ACTIVATION**

- **Cortisol** – increase blood sugar – suppress immune system
- **Adrenaline** – increases heart and respiratory rate
- **Norepinephrine** – responsible for vigilant concentration
- **Growth Hormone** – increases glucose
- **Sharp Increase in Breathing & Heart Rate**
- **Blood diverts to Muscles**
- **Constricts blood vessels**
- **Suspends "rest & digest"**

**Effects of Adverse Childhood Experiences**

**The amygdala is "kindled".**  
 The amygdala continues to fire as though DANGER is always imminent

**RAPID ESCALATION:**

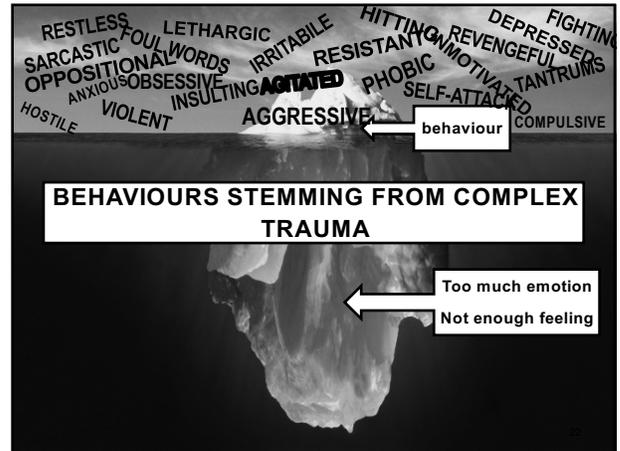
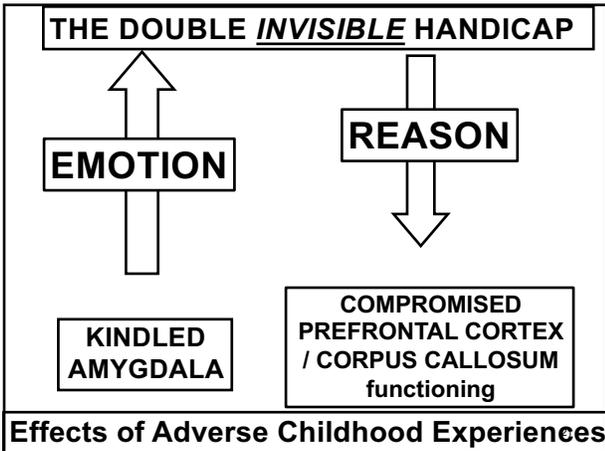
feeling terrorized  
 feeling threatened  
 mildly anxious

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**Effects of Adverse Childhood Experiences**

- HYPER-VIGILANCE –Scanning the environment = difficulty paying attention
- FOCUS is on the **NON-VERBAL**
  - Tone of voice
  - Body language
  - Facial expression
  - Inability to understand words
  - Becomes a being of "sensation"

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**Behaviours that result from Complex Trauma**

- **Attention** problems – the student is paying attention to what could be a possible threat instead of paying attention to the adults.
- **Agitation and hyperactivity** because of an overactive alarm system.
- **Refusal to listen to adults** – feeling too vulnerable or attached to peers and taking cues from them.
- **Seeking attention, being first, being "too good"** - trying hard to be worthy of being loved.

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**Behaviours that result from Complex Trauma**

- **Bossy, a bully, refusing to listen** – needs to be in charge of him/herself for protection
- **Lashing out, screaming, hitting, kicking**, – full of foul frustration and attacking energy and unable to cry.
- **Pushing adults away, ignoring, shutting down** - feeling overwhelmed by too much vulnerability.

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### WHAT DOESN'T WORK

**REASONING, TALKING especially about CONSEQUENCES**

- Talking keeps them in high arousal – flight or fight mode – intensifies the agony.
- When the student is in “survival” mode they cannot hear our words, just our tone.
- They can't process language (the words we are using) just keep hearing the TONE
- They can't remember the future (what will happen if they don't stop) – **only feel the intensity of the present moment.**

**Waiting to hear: “And I've had it with you.”**

### NEW LEARNING INCREASES THE FEELINGS OF VULNERABILITY

Stuck children have trouble learning because they...

- avoid taking risks in their learning: "It's boring."
- have little desire to look at their mistakes.
- are reluctant to ask for help.
- are hypersensitive to humiliation.
- have difficulty talking about their problems and concerns.
- detach when faced with vulnerable situations: "I don't care ...".

### Vulnerability and Resilience

- Defending against a sense of vulnerability (protecting) prevents growth.
- Growing requires softening and results in adaptation and resilience.
- The **process needed for softening** is feeling the **sadness** about what does not work.
- Tears are essential to **ADAPTATION.**
- **Tears only can happen when a child feels safe.**



### WHAT DOES WORK?

**A CHANGE IN HOW THE ADULTS SEE THE STUDENT'S BEHAVIOUR**

It is not easy to adopt an approach that is **RESPONSIVE** to trauma – it requires a shift. It requires a change in how we intervene:

**FROM**

**WHAT IS WRONG WITH THIS STUDENT?**

➔

**TO**

**WHAT HAS HAPPENED IN THE LIFE OF THIS STUDENT?  
WHAT CAN WE DO TO HELP?**

**Behaviour changes when vulnerability is protected**

### NEUFELD DEVELOPMENTAL PARADIGM

Three keys for understanding youth



## the Maturation Key



## the Vulnerability Key



## the Attachment Key

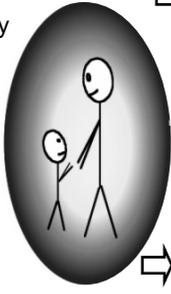
### ATTACHMENT PRINCIPLES

1. Attachment is the primary need of a developing being.
2. Growth takes place in the context of a safe Attachment.
3. A “safe” Attachment figure both **cares about** and **cares for - takes charge of** - the dependent being.
4. Being dependent requires the ability to tolerate vulnerability.

### ATTACHMENT FACILITATES DEPENDENCE

**What attachment does ...**

1. Arranges hierarchically
2. Creates a sense of home
3. Creates a compass point



**enables adults to...**

- Take charge of them, take care of them and act with natural authority
- Provide comfort, rest and a place of retreat
- Command their attention, guide & direct them and transmit our culture

**Behaviour changes when students are attached to adults**

### Differentiating for Behaviour

1. Recognizing the student's limitations and meeting the student's needs based on:
  - level of MATURITY (due to age or being "stuck")
  - having the "Double Invisible Handicap" – kindled amygdala and under developed Prefrontal Cortex – easily overwhelmed
2. Accepting that
  - not all students will be given the same "consequences" – at least "privately"
  - Some students need more support from us to be able to handle the demands of school

### Differentiating for Behaviour

Why should we differentiate for behaviour?

Because by providing what the student needs it:

- increases chances of success
- decreases sense of shame and worthlessness
- increases likelihood the student will stay attached to adults so they can be guided by us.

### DEVELOPMENTAL INTERVENTIONS

1. Maximize **ATTACHMENT** (with adults)
2. Compensate for **IMMATURITY** and the effects of **TRAUMA**
3. Build a **VILLAGE OF ATTACHMENT** (focus on adults)
4. Allow for **EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION** and **TEARS**

**PREVENTION and INTERVENTION**

Key factors in supporting challenging students

Targeted Intervention Based on RTI Model of Response to Intervention

1-5% Benefits from individualized supports

5-10% Benefits from targeted supports

80-85% Benefits from school-wide supports

[www.cebm.ca/intervention-continuum](http://www.cebm.ca/intervention-continuum)

### TIER 1 Interventions that benefit the whole group

- o Teacher greeting and engaging their students individually and as a group (in morning and after each transition)
- o Well established structures and routines
- o Visuals to cue desired behaviors (ex. Taped areas on the ground, handwashing station, etc.)
- o Short work periods
- o Alternate seating options – different items to sit on or sit in
- o Alternate workstation options – different locations within the classroom for students to work
- o Physical movement "Brain Break" – after each work period
- o Individual "Quiet Time" activity – ex. Small craft, sketching, mandalas/coloring pages, Search'n Find, etc.)
- o Emotional release activity with the whole group – daily
- o Designated Area for students to retreat to within the classroom when a break is needed from the group and/or their work
- o Community projects (1-3 per classroom) Puzzles, building game (Lego, maze building, mural weaving)
- o Increased opportunities to be outside – structured games, learning times, play

### Greeting students at the Door

Research show significant improvements in **academic engaged time** and **reductions in disruptive behavior**.



**HUG?  
HANDSHAKE?  
OR HIGHFIVE?**



**ALLOWS THE TEACHER TO  
GET A SENSE OF WHERE  
THE STUDENT IS AT WHEN  
HE/SHE ENTERS THE  
CLASSROOM**

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### ENGAGING the Attachment Instincts

1. Get in their face (or space) in a friendly way – collect the eyes, a smile and a nod.
2. Provide something to hold on to – SIMILARITY, delight, INTEREST, warmth (not praise as praise is conditional upon performance).
3. Invite the student depend on you
4. Act as the student's compass point



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### ENGAGE THE ATTACHMENT INSTINCTS

#### COLLECT BEFORE YOU DIRECT

**Get the eyes - a smile - a nod**

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

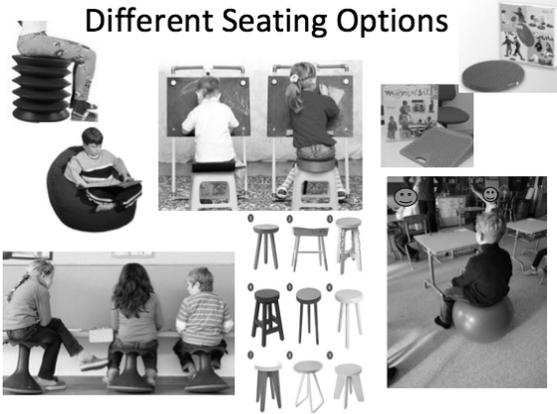
- Speak softly
- Say name with warmth and kindness

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



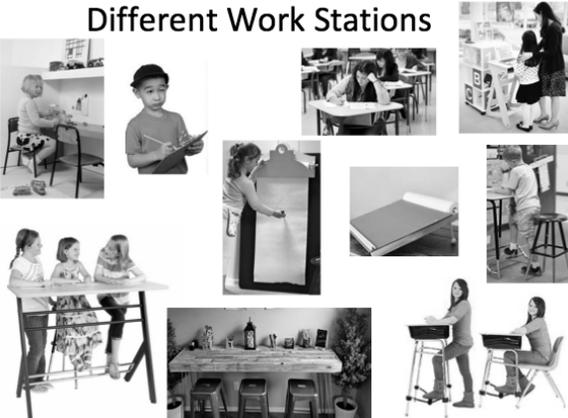
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### Different Seating Options



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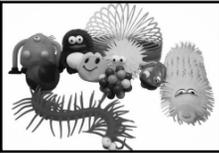
### Different Work Stations



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### PROVIDE OUTLETS FOR REDUCING ANXIETY

#### FIDGET ITEMS



#### WEIGHTED ITEMS



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### Classroom Brain Breaks

As movement is incorporated into the daily classroom routine

- the brain is able to function at higher levels,
- Stress and anxiety are reduced



Improves **STAYING ON TASK**

Increases **ATTENTIVENESS**

Restores **ENERGY AND MOTIVATION**

<https://www.cebm.ca/brain-breaks>

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### MOVEMENT STATION

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





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### Classroom Brain Breaks

#### IDEAS FOR PLAYFUL RELEASE

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dance party</li> <li>• Paper snowball fights</li> <li>• Clapping games</li> <li>• Pool noodle drumming</li> <li>• Simon Says</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stomp dancing</li> <li>• Pretending emotions</li> <li>• Pretending to be animals</li> <li>• Playing monster games</li> </ul>
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BE CREATIVE!

EMOTIONAL RELEASE THROUGH PLAY WITH YOUR STUDENTS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

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### CREATE A QUIET CORNER

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

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### KNOW YOUR LIMITS AND WORK WITHIN THEM

**If you are starting to "reach your limit" with a student:**

**Use Time Away instead of Time Out**

1. Send the student **TO SOMEONE** with a "task"
  - ☐ a book or an envelope
    - Another adult – Behaviour technician, Guidance Counsellor, secretary
    - Nurturing Support Centre
    - Another place in the school with adult supervision
2. Always go to the student and let them know that the relationship is still intact and that you will take care of them the next day.

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### Keep student-adult relationships strong

Despite the chronic and difficult behaviours displayed by these students

- Don't let the behaviour cause a break in the relationship with the adults
- Don't take the behaviour personally
- Find ways to reassure the student that adults will continue to care for him/her even when it has been a difficult day or a difficult week
- Find ways to bridge to the next point of connection

"Deep relational safety is certainly the means through which children who have suffered abuse and violence come to settle and find the comfort and love they need to recover from its traumatic effects." Australian Childhood Foundation

**BRIDGE ALL THAT CAN DIVIDE**

❖ **PROBLEM BEHAVIOUR**

- "I am looking forward to seeing you tomorrow."
- "We'll find a way to make things better."



**Focus on the next point of contact**

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**The message we want to give our youth is that NO MATTER WHAT they DO or how they BEHAVE**

**ADULTS WILL CONTINUE TO CARE FOR THEM.**

**BRIDGING gives the youth HOPE.**

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**TIER 2**

- Daily Check-Ins with a significant adult
- Use of the Designated Area within the classroom **at scheduled times** (ex. Transitions)
- Assigned Alternate Seating options and Alternate Workstation options
- Movements Breaks in the hallway and/or outside as they have pent-up emotional and physical energy that must be released (otherwise they will be unable to focus and be attentive to adult requests) – frequency dependent on student's level of energy needing to be released
- Scheduled Breaks in **another location**:
  - Pre-determined location
  - Pre-determined times (visual schedule for student to have a visual anchor of when this will take place)
  - Pre-determined options of what can be brought and/or done in this location (Ex. Set-up a Personal Choice Board when the student is calm and receptive. This will help them know and plan for their Break away from the classroom)
  - Individual/Personal bin that contains 2 different projects that they can use within the classroom for an *'In-class Break'* or bring with themselves when they go to an alternate location.
  - You've Got Mail – intervention cards to provide movement as the student heads to a predetermined adult, fulfills the requirements of the card and returns to their classroom.
  - End of Day Recap with the same significant adult who did the Check-Ins (if possible)
  - Ongoing communication amongst all adults working with these students is key

**COMPENSATE FOR IMMATURITY**

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**PROVIDE EXTRA ORGANIZATION (ADHD)**

- Make it easy for the student to access necessary materials – pencils, work folder, paper, scissors etc.
- Organize tasks and materials
- Help with time management – break big assignments into manageable chunks
- Homework – keep to the essential – identify what must absolutely be done
- Provide assignment sheets with enough info to help parents, tutors, & homework aides guide the student
- Provide extra time and help for organizing assignments and studying for tests

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**HELPING the UNFOCUSED STUDENT**

**Year 1 and up – seat work**

- When focus wanders – redirect to completing one small step / fold the paper / highlight the ones to be completed
- When focus wanders again – provide an alternate activity – Personal Bin or permission to use the Kinesthetic hallway – if other children ask why he gets to "not work" – say, "He completed **his** work." This may help the student so that he/she does not disturb the group.

**Short work periods to complete essential tasks may be all this student can handle.**

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**TIER 2**

**PERSONAL BIN**

Contains

- activities to engage the student if they need a moment of respite
- less demanding educational work
- can be easily transported to another location or another room






**TIER 2**

**Kinesthetic Pathway / Movement Stations**





**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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**COMPENSATE FOR IMMATURITY**

**CHANGE THE CIRCUMSTANCES that control the youth**

- Recess/Breaks
  - Under supervision
- Hallways
  - Away from other students
- Bathrooms
  - Under supervision
- Lunch
  - In a quieter space
- Substitute teacher
  - Make introductions
  - Send to someone the student knows

**ANTICIPATE & PREVENT**

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**Managing Circumstances**

**If the student continually gets into difficulty in a situation or with an object, you can take charge of that, BECAUSE IT IS IN THE STUDENT’S BEST INTEREST NOT because you want the child to change his or her behaviour.**

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TIER 3

School Team

- Daily Check-Ins with a significant adult at **multiple scheduled times each day**
- Students who require an **adapted schedule** with blocks of time scheduled outside of the classroom:
  - the Resource Room
  - the Technician Room or Nurturing Support Centre
  - the student is provided with a visual schedule in order to know when, where and for how long they will be in another location before returning to class
- Scheduled intervention with a significant adult to assist them in naming and processing their big emotions. Introduce a variety of intervention avenues to help prime expression without consequences and providing additional outlets for physical release that will also be without consequences.
- End of Day Recap with the **same significant adult** who did the Check-Ins (if possible)

Ongoing communication amongst all adults working with these students is key

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**BUILD A VILLAGE OF ATTACHMENT**

1. Surround the youth with as many caring adults as possible
2. Help youth form attachments to adults and adults to form relationships to the children.
3. Create a positive relationship with the parents
  - Positive phone calls/notes home
  - Welcome parents warmly even when there is “trouble”.

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**BUILD A TEAM OF INTERVENERS**

**Create or use your existing a school team to**

- Plan regular meetings to discuss challenging students and how best to help support them so they can handle being in school
- Put together a team of adults to share the responsibility of caring for challenging students
- Use adult resources in the school creatively

*“Children come to feel themselves as being safe through their experience in relationship with a caring and protective adult.” Australian Childhood Foundation*

**ALLOW FOR EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION**

1. Encourage ARTS, MUSIC, DRAMA, WRITING, SINGING, RAP – These are all EMOTIONAL PLAYGROUNDS
2. Create a SAFE SPACE to
  - a. Provide students with time for venting
  - b. Allow students to cry (be sad)

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**Differentiating for Behaviour in Real Life**

Make 1 small change

See the student as

- Immature
- Hurting or in distress
- Struggling with a messy emotional world
- Having a brain with the double invisible handicap

**Just seeing differently will change your face and can give the student the message “I see YOU”**

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**Differentiating for Behaviour in Real Life**

Try one thing different:

- Give the student: a pencil – calculator – piece of paper - **generously**
- Make a quiet comment recognizing emotion – “This is hard for you.” “You’re having trying day.”
- Let another adult know the student may need extra help.
- For a student who is hard to get to know try “2 x 10” - say a quick “hello” every day for 10 days when you meet the student in the hallway.

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**STUDENTS WITH CHALLENGING BEHAVIOURS ARE JUST TRYING TO TELL US THAT THEY NEED US TO HELP THEM.**

**Calvin and Hobbes**

**Bill Watterson 1995**

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Eva de Gosztanyi, Martine Demers, Catherine Korah  
Centre of Excellence for Behaviour Management  
[www.cebm.ca](http://www.cebm.ca)

**Members site password: CEBMmembers**

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

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