How to Effectively Teach Social-Emotional Skills to Children Who Exhibit Challenging Behavior
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About
Who’s teaching this webinar?
Barb O’Neill, Ed.D. is the creator and host of the Transform Challenging Behavior Online Conference, a free annual online event attended by thousands of early childhood professionals from around the world. Over the past 25 years she has worked as a preschool teacher, special education teacher, center director, and professor. Barb now devotes herself full-time to speaking, training, and teaching online courses on challenging behavior.
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POLL 1
POLL 2

2 Underlining Assumptions in this Webinar

Many children are not learning the social-emotional skills they need to be successful in school.

Behavior is a sign the child has not yet learned a better way to get their needs met.

WHAT YOU’LL LEARN TODAY...

Note: the presentation is geared towards center directors, coaches, trainers, Head Start managers, administrators, and others supporting teachers or working to improve quality in early childhood.

1. WHAT LEADERSHIP HAS TO DO WITH IT
   How do you and your staff think and talk about children who use challenging behavior and families?

2. HOW TO USE THE POWER OF PLAY
   Play is the BEST way to connect with, motivate, and engage young children.

3. WHY YOU NEED A CURRICULUM
   Incidental teaching isn’t enough. We need to teach social-emotional skills proactively and reactively responsively.

4. WHICH 5 SKILLS TO FOCUS ON
   Help the children who challenge teachers most with these 5 and set everyone up for success.

5. 6 KEY CURRICULUM COMPONENTS
   Some you are probably doing (and I bet there’s at least one we’ve not!)

6. WHAT WORKS: STORIES OF SUCCESS
   You’ll get practical examples and real stories of how the strategies have been used successfully throughout!
LEADERSHIP
WHAT TYPE OF CULTURE ARE YOU CREATING?

Think:
What’s your mindset like when it comes to “challenging behavior”? Is it you and your staff embrace this part of the job?

Talk:
How do you and your staff talk about challenging behaviors, the children that exhibit these behaviors, and their families?

Act:
Do you model inclusion and demonstrate your commitment to learning more about supporting children who exhibit challenging behavior?

MINDSET
HOW DO YOU RELATE TO “CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR” & THE CHILDREN WHO USE IT?

Fixed vs. Growth Mindset (Carol Dweck)
Applied to working with children who use challenging behavior

**Fixed Mindset**
- Believes specialists should “fix” behavior
- Gives up easily when not seeing immediate results
- Sees effort as fruitless if the child’s family doesn’t follow through
- Ignores useful feedback
- Threatened by others’ success
  ➔ Does not believe effectiveness in preventing and addressing challenging behavior can improve

**Growth Mindset**
- Embraces challenging behavior as part of the job
- Persists in trying new methods
- Sees effort as a path to mastery
- Learns from feedback
- Inspired by others’ success and open to new ideas
  ➔ Believes the ability to support children who use challenging behavior can be developed
PLAY & PLAYFUL TEACHING

CONNECT
The best way to connect with a young child is during play or by being playful.

MOTIVATE
Play is intrinsically motivating to children. How can you use play to motivate?

ENGAGE
Play is the best medium for building children’s attention spans and their ability to focus and engage meaningfully.

YOU NEED A SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SKILL-BUILDING CURRICULUM

Incidental teaching of social emotional skills is not enough!
Not only does the research suggest this, but...
...the evidence is that you all showed up today!
We need to teach social-emotional skills proactively.

When I say “curriculum” I mean...
ANYTHING that happens in the early childhood classroom
Planned or unplanned. Including materials & the physical environment. Interactions.

WHAT we are teaching.
&
HOW we are teaching it.

THE "WHAT": ESSENTIAL SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SKILLS
STRIVE FOR FIVE

1 IDENTIFY & EXPRESS EMOTIONS
2 IDENTIFY & EXPRESS WANTS/NEEDS
3 CALM WHEN UPSET
4 FOLLOW DIRECTIONS
5 FOCUS & SUSTAIN ATTENTION

MOST OF THESE SKILLS ARE INCLUDED IN THE EARLY LEARNING STANDARDS OF MOST STATES
IDENTIFY & EXPRESS EMOTIONS

TRUE STORY: MATTHEW

A 3-year-old child had experienced a lot of family transitions.

The main intervention the teachers used was when Matthew got upset they told him,

"Matthew, you can say, "I’m so mad!""

The classroom aide pointed out: we don’t want him to get labeled as the angry child!

They helped all children to label and express a range of emotions throughout the day.

Within a month they reported a marked decrease in the aggressive behavior.
IDENTIFY & EXPRESS WANTS & NEEDS

4 years-old
Would often fight with preferred play partner over materials He would grab the item or hit while yelling, "mine" or "I had it"

Prevention:
• I would sit with these 2 children at the beginning of play time/outside play
• I would play with them often asking, "can I have it?" (modelling)
• Watched CLOSELY and prompted Robert to say, "can I have it?" whenever I saw him reaching or even looking at an object He would repeat my words and soon he started doing this on his own!

TRUE STORY: ROBERT

2. Regulate his/her responses to needs, feelings and events.
   a) Expresses feelings, needs, opinions and desires in a way that is appropriate to the situation.
   b) Appropriately identifies types of emotions (e.g., frustrated, happy, excited, sad) and associates them with facial expressions, words and behavior.
   c) Demonstrates an ability to independently modify his/her behavior in different situations.

Self Regulation
3 CALM WHEN UPSET

New Jersey Department of Education  2014 Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards

- Provide specific techniques children can learn to channel anger, minimize fear, and calm down (e.g., taking three deep breaths, using calming words, pulling self out of play to go to a “safe spot” to relax, listening to soft music, or working with clay).

Preschool Learning Outcomes

Children will:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preschool Number</th>
<th>Preschool Indicator</th>
<th>P-A1 Database Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1.1</td>
<td>Recognize and describe a wide range of feelings, including sadness, anger, fear, and happiness.</td>
<td>P-A1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.2</td>
<td>Normalize feelings of others (e.g., get a blanket for a friend and comfort them when they feel sad).</td>
<td>P-A1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Channel impulses and negative feelings, such as anger (e.g., taking three deep breaths, using calming words, pulling self out of play to go to “safe spot” to relax, expressive activities).</td>
<td>P-A1.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TRUE STORY: BRANDON

4 years-old
Autistic child; inclusive classroom
when he got angry he often ran across the room and hit

His teacher felt he would get overwhelmed and over-stimulated and sometimes needed a break.

Intervention: when she saw him starting to get upset she said, "Brandon, you can go take a break in the library if you’re getting mad. I’ll watch your Magnatiles."

Year 2 he would walk away on his own initiative and come back in just seconds.

2.0 Self-Regulation

At around 2 months of age

2.1 Need adult guidance in managing their attention, feelings, and impulses and show some effort at self-control.

Children follow simple rules and routines, seek to cooperate, manage classroom transitions, and make efforts at self-control (by taking turns, sharing, and waiting for their turn). Children also display some control of their attention, feelings, and behaviors.

Examples:

- Turns away from an adult to play when an adult asks for their attention.
- Accomplishes a task being carried out in isolation.
- A child with autism spectrum disorder shows progress in self-regulation but sometimes requires adult guidance.
- Frustrated, angry, or disrespectful behaviors.

2.1.1 Regulate their attention, thoughts, feelings, and impulses more consistently, although adult guidance is sometimes necessary.

Children anticipate, initiate, carry out, and respond cooperatively with fewer reminders, can focus attention on the task at hand, and manage transitions. They attempt to listen to others, but they may still have difficulty checking in with themselves and self-regulating自制. Even so, they are aware of the need to self-regulate and sometimes require adult guidance.

Examples:

- Jumps up and down on the couch but stays when asked to sit down.
- Shows signs of being overwhelmed by a new task.
- Annoyed and warrants a reminder to wait for their turn.
- Takes away a teacher’s toy and throws it to the other student.
- Puts away the toys and books after setting up the classroom.
- Initials to self-control, in other situations.

FOLLOW DIRECTIONS
TRUE STORY: MORE EXAMPLES THAN I CAN COUNT!

To help children follow directions at clean up time or other child-directed activities (ie: outdoor play):

- give 2 class warnings (10 mins & 5 mins)
- give 2 individual warnings, as needed
- include an element of choice or something that will be motivational

EXAMPLE: "Natasha, let’s put your name on your drawing. We’re cleaning up in 5 more minutes so that we can go outside and play with the sand."

Teachers everywhere report that this works!

The BEST way to help children develop the ability to focus and sustain attention...
...is through child-initiated play!

APPROACHES TO LEARNING TWO-YEAR-OLDS

A. EAGERNESS & CURIOSITY
   1. Shows eagerness and curiosity as a learner
      Two-year-olds naturally wonder about things. They are curious about new objects and experiences. Encouraging their curiosity by allowing them to explore and use their senses.

B. PERSISTENCE
   1. Speaks more clearly about new activities and seeks and accepts help when learning problems
      Two-year-olds pay attention to interesting objects. They enjoy repeating familiar activities, and extra and tolerate some difficulty without losing interest. For two-year olds, persistence is optimally.
If our goal is to help children develop an attention span then the best way to support this is to offer activities that they will find interesting and want to pay attention to!

THE “WHAT”: 5 ESSENTIAL SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SKILLS

1. IDENTIFY & EXPRESS WANTS/NEEDS
2. CALM WHEN UPSET
3. FOLLOW DIRECTIONS
4. FOCUS & SUSTAIN ATTENTION
5. IDENTIFY & EXPRESS EMOTIONS

ADOPT OR CREATE A SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SKILL-BUILDING CURRICULUM

HOW WILL YOU TEACH THESE 5 ESSENTIAL SOCIAL EMOTIONAL SKILLS TO CHILDREN WHO EXHIBIT CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR AND ALL CHILDREN?
SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL CURRICULUM

Each component can be used in many ways to teach each of the 5 skills.

A CLASS PUPPET

- Only the teacher uses the puppet
- Children develop a relationship
- Provide a visual focus
- Use the puppet to:
  - show emotions
  - model skills
  - review rules & directions
  - talk about class problems
  - discuss scenarios at home

IF ANY OF YOUR TEACHERS DO THIS GET THEM TO TEACH THE REST!
FROM ECE PROFESSIONALS...

“I used a puppet yesterday and the children were SO engaged!” - Teacher

“I don’t feel very comfortable so I like the idea of using a shy puppet.” - Teacher

“I attended your webinar where you discussed puppets…which we had not been using…all research points to the effectiveness…for children experiencing trauma and teaching social skills…so I created a training for our teachers and it has been received with enthusiasm and true engagement from participants”. - Head Start Professional

USING BOOKS TO TEACH SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SKILLS

1. Use books designed to teach social-emotional skills
2. Use favorite stories
   • label characters’ emotions
   • ask about emotions
   • label wants and needs
   • ask, “…what can she do?”
3. Read books about difficult changes in children’s lives
   • death, moving, divorce, new baby, surgery…

TRUE STORY: MARISOL

2.5 years-old physically aggressive
new baby at home

Teachers introduced multiple books about new babies

On shelf and read them at circle

Marisol initially said, “stupid book”

…but grew interested and expressed feelings re: baby

CREATE A “SPECIAL TOPICS” LIBRARY AND/OR GO TO LIBRARY
HOW CAN YOU USE SONGS TO TEACH...

• how to identify and express emotions
• asking for what you want or need
• how to calm down
• direction following
• sustained engagement

USE SONGS TO TEACH SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SKILLS

• “If you’re SAD and you know it…”
• “Can I have it? Can I have it? Please and thank you!”
• “When I’m mad, when I’m really, really, mad I like to take ...3...breaths!” “…stomp…”
• ANY SONG or activity that involves copying teaches directions! and sustained engagement!

BRAINSTORM AND SHARE SONGS AT STAFF MEETINGS!

MUSIC AND MOVEMENT
The #1 way to get kids to learn to follow the directions!
FEELINGS POSTER

• A visual representation
• Always on child-level display
• Could also be in book form
• You introduce refer to often
• Children can initiate using
• Make your own
• Most social-emotional curriculum kits will include one
• Download from CSEFEL:
  http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/modules/2006/feelingchart-sp.pdf

PRO TIP

DON'T force children to use the feelings poster or say how they are feeling!!!!

...or argue with them about how they are feeling!!!!

No unnecessary power struggles!

COACHES, DIRECTORS, MENTOR TEACHERS, EVERYONE, EVERYWHERE: HELP TEACHERS TO NOT MAKE THIS MISTAKE!

USE GAMES TO TEACH SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SKILLS

matching games, memory games...
GAMES
Based on the interests of the child who especially needs help!

PLAY SUPPORT
When we play with children we can:
• build trust and rapport
• convey their play is important
• “feed them the words” to help them express their emotions
• “feed them the words” to help them express their wants and needs
• help them sustain engagement and develop their attention spans
• work on the skills of “leading” and “following” which helps with direction following at other times!

PLAY SUPPORT
STEP 1: Imitate
accept and imitate that is whatever the child is doing
PLAY SUPPORT

STEP 2: Expand
make a very small addition to the play and see if they copy you
“yes, and”

PLAY SUPPORT

STEP 3: Prompt peer interaction
experiment
don’t insist
“Matthew, it looks like Lia wants an animal can you give this to her for me please?”
“Lia, tell Matthew what you just told me. “I’m making a zoo!”

The next time a teacher comes to your office to talk to you about a child’s behavior...

REMEMBER
As a program leader you are creating culture.

Are you and the teacher in a “growth” vs. “fixed” mindset about supporting this child?
The behavior is a sign the child needs to learn a better way to get their needs met.

PLAY and playful teaching are your greatest tools.

Work together on identifying WHAT social-emotional skill the child needs to learn (positive ways of getting attention counts) and HOW to teach it?

…and maybe they need more resources?
Questions?
Contact Info...

Download the Teacher Tipsheet
to bring these ideas to your staff!

http://www.transformchallengingbehavior.com/blog/tipsheet

Also, please feel free to get in touch!
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Thank you for the work that you do and for joining us today.

Barb