

MENDING CHILDREN'S BROKEN HEARTS
A GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND TEACHERS

John J. McGee, Ph.D.

Children with Broken Hearts

All children are like flowers. They need to be nurtured with great care. They are delicate and need our full attentions until their roots are deep and strong. The main nurturing that we do is to teach our little ones to feel safe with us and loved by us. As they grow in body and spirit, we then teach them to feel engaged with us and loving toward us and others. Without realizing it, parents and teachers generally give this nurturing, teach these life-lessons, and help children flourish. It is an instinctive act. It is an act of our hearts. We know that children are fragile. We give these warm lessons. Yet, some children are more fragile than others and the lessons are harder to learn. Their hearts are extremely delicate or even broken.

Where does this vulnerability or shattering of the heart come from? Some children are born with vulnerabilities and need more nurturing due to developmental disabilities. Particular vulnerabilities, such as difficulty in communication, severe mental retardation, autism, and schizophrenia, can make it hard for them to feel safe and loved in this world *even though they have been loved and protected*. They might have trouble understanding or communicating. They might have a hard time reaching out to others or even accepting our love and warmth. They might sometimes flee into their own world because they do not find meaning in our world or attack others out of fear. These children need to learn to feel that they are safe and loved. They *can be* safe and loved, but still *not feel* safe or loved.

Other children suffer from neglect and abuse. They form early memories that this world is not safe or loving. They develop fears that are hard to overcome without special attention. Their memories drive them to flinch when they see others, to bow their heads in shame, and to feel worthless. They need to be *made* safe and loved and *to feel* safe and loved.

This handbook is about mending broken hearts—whether due to developmental disabilities or later neglect. The focus is on children's feelings and how parents and teachers can help mend these hearts. The natural degree of love that most children thrive on is not sufficient for these children. We have to find ways to teach them the depths of these feelings.

We have to find a way to teach the children *four life-lessons*. The first lesson is "My child, when you are with us, you are safe. These hands will never hurt you. These words will not put you down. These eyes will look warmly and lovingly at you.." The next lesson is related to the first, "You are not only safe with us, you are loved! Our love is unconditional!". The third lesson is, "Learn that it is good to be with us, do things with us, and even do things for others!" And, the last lesson is, "Learn to be loving toward others!" Safe, loved, engaged, and loving are the cornerstones of emotional development. These lessons are what we have to teach. They are the foundation for all other learning.

Developmental disabilities can bring extreme vulnerability as well as tragic life-stories. A child with severe mental retardation can have a hard time understanding the surrounding world, expressing needs and feelings, and reaching out to others. This can make feeling safe and loved a hard task. Likewise, other children with tragic life-stories can have a difficult time. Having been beaten or neglected, they can have a deep-seated fear of others and a sense of worthlessness. Each child is unique. Some children have sad and traumatic life-stories abuse, neglect, moving from one care giver to another. Others have problems like mental illness or developmental disabilities. These can make it more difficult to teach what all children need to learn.

Most parents or surrogate parents have little trouble in teaching their son or daughter to feel safe and loved, but some have a lot harder time. Their child does not feel safe with anyone, flees from everyone, sometimes attacks, or often just wants to stay by him/herself and live a lonely and disconnected life. These parents need to focus more sharply on the very foundation of emotional development teaching the child to feel safe and loved, to feel engaged, and to reach out lovingly toward others.

Teachers also play a critical role in these children's emotional development. If they focus on reading, writing, and arithmetic, without centering on emotional connectedness, then the child with a broken heart will rebel or simply give up. Whether a parent or teacher, we have to find ways to teach the basics of emotional development.

With vulnerable children, we have to start at the beginning and spend intense time teaching or re-teaching them the feelings of being safe and loved, and then moving them toward engagement and loving others. These are the cornerstones of emotional development. Unless we teach these feelings, the only thing parents and teachers can do is control and punish children.

We have to look at our first tasks as the teaching of these life-lessons. They are the threads that will strengthen fragile hearts and mend those that are broken.

The Threads of Emotional Development He'll grow out of it. It's just a stage...

- Teaching children to *feel safe* is the first thread that has to be woven into a child's broken heart
- At the same time, it is critical to teach a child to *feel loved*
- Teaching *engagement* is the next thread that has to be woven
 - Good to be *with* us
 - Good to do things *with* us
 - Good to do things *for* others

- Teaching children to *love others* is the fourth thread

These four threads are essential to emotional well-being. They generally are taught by parents early on in life without parents giving them a second thought. But, some children are more vulnerable and need more intense and deliberate teaching. The older the child, the harder it is to understand these needs. It might be easier to look at their opposites.

Behavior problems do not mean that we are not protecting and loving parents or teachers. Remember, we are talking about how children feel, not how they are treated. We are looking at what we need to teach children to become, especially feeling safe and loved.

What is a Broken Heart?
Threads that are ripped...

- *Unsafe*—The child fears touch... flinches at our presences... rebels against our words
- *Unloved* The child feels shame and worthlessness... bows his/her head... gazes coldly and emptily at us
- *Disengaged* The child will not listen to parents or teachers... prefers to be alone... causes trouble... pushes away from us... is self-centered
- *Unloving* The child acts out against self or others... lacks respect of self or others...

Here is the tough part for parents and teachers. We love the children, but they respond with violence. They do not listen. They push us away. We feel horrible. We are trained to avoid reinforcing bad behaviors. We might feel that this is our fault. We might push ourselves, out of frustration, to control these children instead of teaching them to feel safe and loved.

In their search for meaning and identity, some children want nothing to do with us. We have to go back to the beginning and strengthen the feelings of being safe and loved. No stretching can occur without this strong foundation. The more the child feels safe and loved, the more we can stretch—moving the child to become more engaged with us and others and more loving toward us and others.

We have to always remember that some children are more fragile than others.

But Why Is it So Tough with My Child?

- Developmental disabilities can make the child more vulnerable, fragile, and delicate
- The child's life-story can make it even harder because there can be deep memories of distrust, fear, and even self-hatred

We have to keep reminding ourselves that developmental disabilities and life-stories can make it harder for children to learn this life-lesson. A child with autism is, by nature, more likely to be rigid and unaffectionate. A child with schizophrenia has to deal with ugly voices commanding her/him to hit us. A child with a life-story of beatings has no way to know that it is good to be with us. Somehow or other, we have to pierce through these conditions and give the child a memory that it is good to be with us.

How Parents and Teachers Mend Fragile and Broken Hearts

To help children with broken hearts, we have to understand how children learn to be moral beings. This development starts at the very beginning of life. Without us realizing it, we are teaching children to feel safe and loved through repeated acts of unconditional love. Our kissing, hugging, cooing, and gazing at our children gives them a deep memory of who we are and who they are. Our hands caress. Our words uplift and reassure. Our eyes gaze into theirs with warmth and affection. This makes children emotionally strong and prepares them for the world.

We are not merely modifying behaviors. We are actually teaching new feelings. Think of how children learn other things. The first grade child who is learning single digit numbers receives an explanation, "Here, this is how we add 2 plus two..." The teacher gives work sheets. The child does these over and over. Finally, one day, simple addition makes sense. It becomes internalized. It has been learned by heart. Teaching a child to feel safe and loved is quite like that process. We do not focus on, "No! That was a stupid answer!" or "No! You know better than that!"

When we teach a child with a broken heart to feel safe and loved, we take our time, give some personal attention, set a correct example, and repeat the lesson over and over again, "Shh, you are safe... I will not hurt you... I love you.... You are good!!!".

How children learn

There is nothing more lovely than the embrace of a mother...

- Repeated acts of love

- Creating a memory underneath a memory
- Of the meaning of feeling safe and loved
- Understanding the power of our touch, words, and gaze

For children with broken hearts, parents and teachers need to center in on teaching deeply rooted memories of their goodness through repeated acts of unconditional love. The first threads in mending broken hearts are the feelings of being safe with us and loved by us. We literally teach these feelings. Every time we gently touch a child, speak to a child, or gaze upon a child, we are teaching this first life-lesson, "When you are with me, you are safe and loved!"

Feeling safe means that we need to teach children with these needs that when we are present no harm will come to them. Our very presence become like a safe harbor to them, our words are felt softly, our touch is felt warmly, and our gaze is felt lovingly. This feeling of being-safe has to be taught to children with broken hearts. The opposite of feeling-safe is feeling fear not because we are mean, but because the child does not *know* what it means to be safe with anyone. If fear is not ruling the child, then meaninglessness is a deep and strong undercurrent. The child does not feel the meaning of human interdependence or connectedness. Feeling safe means that we need to see the children moving toward us with content anticipation because being with us is good.

By the time we figure out the fear or meaninglessness felt by these children, it is likely that they already have pretty set patterns of behaviors—withdrawing from human contact, fighting, hitting, or hurting oneself. A key strategy is to prevent behavioral problems while we are teaching, "When you are with me, you are safe!" We have to figure out ways to prevent behavior problems. Instead of dealing with behavior problems head-on, parents and teachers would do better to prevent them so that our focus can be on these more basic issues.

Feeling loved is critical. For children with broken hearts, we have to teach its meaning not because we do not love them, but because they do not know its meaning. When a child feels loved, he/she move toward his/her parents and teachers, wants to be with them, and feels self-worth. It is almost inseparable from feeling safe except it is even deeper. The child learns to feel, "I not only know that no harm will come to me when I am with you, but I feel a deep sense of peace when I am with you!" Again, we have to teach or re-teach this feeling to children with broken hearts.

There are two other life-lessons that we need to teach vulnerable children—engagement and loving others. Engagement is a hard lesson to teach because children with broken hearts are often self-centered. They become self-centered, not out of meanness, but out of survival needs. They look for meaning and only find it in themselves or in objects. We have to teach them that the main meaning in life is to be connected to others—feeling safe with and loved by a circle of companions. When children feel no connection with others, they make the world center on themselves.

Once a child feels safe and loved, the next thread that has to be woven into the heart is a feeling of engagement. This involves a three part lesson:

Engagement

Learning to be with and do for others...

- It is good to be with me
- It is good to do things with me
- It is good to do things for others

The first part of learning engagement is to teach the child that it is good to be with us few demands, almost an extension of simply feeling safe and loved. "It is good to be with us..." might mean that, while we do a task, we simply have the child near us and continue to express warmth. After a while, we begin to slowly involve the child in the activity with us. Once these steps have been taken, we then begin to teach the child that it is good to do things for others the start of moral maturity.

Many parents and teachers get stuck in the muck of obedience and compliance. The older children are, the harder it is for us to see the fear and meaninglessness in vulnerable children's hearts. We take a "Do this or else!" attitude.. You know better... I will punish you...". Engagement is a much different and deeper learning process. Its foundation is an abiding sense of feeling safe and loved. Once the foundation is set, children then leave the mother's arms and begin to explore the world. They are searching for their own identity, but always know that they are safe and loved. They are sure that they can always return to their mother's arms. Some children get stuck in this phase and push us away. We have to remind them of our love and help them re-connect with us through a process of engagement. This relates to a feeling of connectedness and trust. It helps the child break away from self-centeredness and move toward other-centeredness.

Finally, we need to teach the fourth part of emotional maturity loving others. Built on the other cornerstones, loving others means that we have to teach these children to reach out to others, to share, to be kind, and to feel empathy.

The Threads of Care Giving

All children need to be deeply rooted in these four key feelings *feeling safe, feeling loved, feeling engaged, and feeling loving*. The lack of one or more of these is the root cause or the underlying irritant of all behavioral problems. Without a strong foundation in all of these, children are plagued by deep fears or a sense of meaninglessness.

Parents and teachers are trained and encouraged to use this technique or that to get rid of bad behaviors. The trick is not

to get rid of behaviors, but to teach these feelings—aiming for the child's heart, not the head. As gentle parents and teachers, we mend the children's hearts with the threads of these basic feelings. Gentleness defines the child as passing through these four basic steps. No matter what age, life-story, or developmental disability, everyone needs to feel rooted in these essential feelings safe, loved, engaged, and loving. Those with broken hearts need to have these feelings taught to them. It is as if our role is to take these four essential threads and weave them into their broken hearts.

The steps the child goes through
While we gentle our way into their hearts...

- Feeling safe... moving toward... not fearing... feeling at peace...
- Feeling loved... accepting affection... not flinching... desiring it...
- Feeling loving... reaching out... sharing... having empathy...
- Feeling engaged... being with, doing things with and doing things for others...

Our Weaving Tools

We are menders of broken hearts. We are heart-weavers. We can mend children's hearts if we understand that we have three basic tools for teaching children to feel safe with us and loved by us *our hands, our words, and our eyes*.

Our Tools

Gentling our way into the child's heart...

- Our hands *to teach that the child is safe and loved*
- Our words *to uplift, encourage, and honor the child*
- Our eyes *to gaze into the child's heart and bring our love, understanding, and warmth*

How we use these tools depends on our values—how we see ourselves and the child in the world. Gentleness is a value that helps us see ourselves and the child as mind-body-soul. It gives us hope that the natural longing to feel one with others will be fulfilled. Gentleness is based on justice and non-violence. How we use these tools depends on us. Gentleness might seem like a loser when we come face-to-face with violence. This is the great paradox of good teaching and parenting. Unconditional love is the foundation. The story of the Prodigal Son is a good model for parents and teachers to use, "You get what you want. You return wasted and we give you love." Gentleness calls on us to go for the child's heart, not her/his head. It is not a matter of knowing better. It is a matter of feeling safe with us, loved by us, and learning to feel engaged with us and others.

Mom's, Dad's, and Teacher's Tools

Going for the heart...

Our hands

- Frequent, loving physical contact—hugs, kisses, pats on the back

Our words

- Frequent, loving words—uplifting conversation, words of pride and praise

Our eyes

- Frequent warm gazes toward the child

Our tools have to be used at the worst moments in the most loving manner possible. More importantly, they have to be used throughout the day, during bad moments and good. In fact, the more we focus on the child feeling safe and loved during all the good moments, the better the child will respond during the bad moments.

The parent or teacher who says, "I do this all the time!" is wrong. It might seem like it, but it is not enough. The most broken-hearted children need to develop a strong emotional-memory that requires thousands of hugs, words of love, and warm gazes. We have to pierce through old memories that say, "They are going to make me do something... They do not love me... I am going to be forced to do whatever..." We have to build new memories that say, "Here come my teacher. She will love me. She will help me. She will remind me that I am safe with her and loved by her."

This love-centered approach can be a hard row to hoe because it goes against the way we are taught to do things. It even goes against our culture. We live in a world built on reward and punishment. This is our knee-jerk reaction, "You do this and this happens no pop, no cookie, no movie tonight..." We live in a world ruled by "Spare the rod and spoil the child!" We

live in a world that says, "I was spanked as a child, so I spank others!" or "I had to deal with the school of hard knocks, so does everyone else!"

What We Need to Try Hard to Avoid
Coming down on our children...

- Do not hit, spank, slap, grab, hold down, restrain

Our hands are for affection

- Do not yell, scream, holler, cuss, curse, put down

Our words are for uplifting

- Do not look with disgust, impatience, frustration

Our eyes are for warmth

These three commandments are hard to live by. Yet, if we want to teach our children to feel safe with us, loved by us, and engaged with us, we have to overcome our own training, fears, and even cynicism. Gentleness asks us to take the road unknown where unconditional love is our guide and where we teach these feelings based on our own gentleness.

For some parents and teachers gentleness will be a major roll of the dice. Friends, neighbors, and relatives will mock us with common statements that seem to make sense.

Common Arguments Against Gentleness
"You're letting her get away with..."

- *"Stepping all over you..."*

Gentleness is kind, but very disciplined

- *"Manipulate you..."*

Gentleness involves giving in at the start so as to avoid provoking violence, but also calls on parents and teachers to teach engagement

- *"Getting spoiled..."*

Gentleness involves nurturing and the on-going expression of unconditional love

- *"Reinforcing maladaptive behaviors..."*

Gentleness is aimed at the heart, not the head and feelings are the foundation of all learning

Gentleness goes against typical ways to parent and teach. It requires another perspective than what we are used to. It also calls on us to be risk-takers assuming that the expression of unconditional love is our main parenting and teaching method.

Touch as a Tool

Touch is very important because it sends a direct and concrete message to the child that he/she is safe with us. At the start, the child might be scared of our touch or spooked by it. If we see this reaction, we should touch more softly as if touching the wing of an angel. We have to teach the child that our touch is good, beautiful, and loving. This calls for us to touch abundantly, over and over again, forming a physical and spiritual connection between the child and ourselves.

Touch as a teaching tool can bring up some difficult issues. Some children might misinterpret the touch in a sexual manner. Parents and teachers have to take some caution and make sure that this does not occur. A way to do this is to always link the touch with words that define its meaning, "We are friends. This means that we are friends..." And, if there is any hint of misinterpretation, the teacher or parent needs to try other less intrusive forms of touch, for example, a pat on the back instead of a hug. The age of the child also has to be considered. The older the child, the higher the possibility of misinterpretation. So, as children enter their pre-adolescence years, it might be necessary to back off on physical contact like hugs and replace them with milder forms like a pat on the back.

If physical contact is out of the question due to policy or misinterpretation, parents and teachers have to get exceptionally good with their words and eyes as tools. By the way, if touch cannot be used to teach feelings of being safe and loved, it should also not be used for physical restraint!

What Problems Might Arise with Touch?
Human sexuality versus feeling safe...

- Our touch is *to teach the child the feeling of being safe and loved*
- With any sign of *sexual misinterpretation* on the child's part, the touch should be changed to something less intense and always given with "This means you are good... I am your friend..."
- We also have to be vigilant for any type of pedophilia
- With any sign of *sexual exploitation* on the parent's or teacher's part, the appropriate authority should be notified

We have to make sure that all involved know why touch is an important tool and then watch out for the slightest hint of misuse or misinterpretation. The use of physical contact should be thoroughly discussed in the child's treatment or educational plan its importance, its use, its possible abuse. It is important because it is a quick way to teach a child to feel safe and loved. It is concrete and direct teaching. Its use is important among children with broken hearts. The best teaching is very concrete and direct. It occurs in the here-and-now. Children who do not know the meaning of being safe and loved can learn its meaning through our touch.

I'll Get in Trouble If I Touch a Child
Hands-off!!!

1. Discuss physical contact in the Individual Education Plan (IEP) -- why, when, how, by whom, problems to avoid, what to watch out for
2. Include it in the IEP as a methodology
3. Have the "team" sign the IEP
4. Be vigilant

Many children with broken hearts are scared of human touch. The nature of their disability can lead them to rebel against it or years of abuse can make them horrified of it. The use of physical contact has to be done cautiously with these children. They not only have to learn that it is good; they have to deal with years of old memories that mean that it is bad. Parents and teachers have to slice their way through these old memories and teach new ones.

When Children Fear Our Touch
Touch them like you are touching the wing of an angel...

- Lightly
- Quietly
- Slowly
- Without provoking any fear
- Explaining. "I will not hurt you... This means I love you..."

Our Words as a Tool

Our words are our second tool. When we talk to our children, we too often just use words of reprimand, "You know better than that!" or just words of behavior modifying praise, "Good job!". Our words are more important than to reprimand or even to praise. They need to be used to talk of our affection, how good the child is regardless of what she/he is doing, and how the child is safe with us and loved by us. All the time we converse, we should also use our hands to show the child what we mean.

Our conversation with children should be in the form of story-telling, not long winded stories, but short, love-filled ones. This is harder to do than you might think. So often, the child does not seem to care. It can feel like we are talking to a wall. However, the more we use our words to story-tell, the more the child learns that we are good and kind. The words themselves are important. But, the warmth conveyed within them is even more important.

To become a good story-teller, think of how you might converse with a baby or with someone who has just suffered a great loss. These images should conjure up warmth and love in the tone of our words, "Sh! I will not hurt you... You are good... Just know that I love you..."

Our Words as a Tool
Hush! Don't be afraid...

- Expressing unconditional love
- Bringing warmth, encouragement, and honor
- Expressed softly and slowly
- Telling simple, here-and-now stories of love

Our Eyes as a Tool

Our eyes are our most penetrating tool. We need to pierce through the fear and meaninglessness that so many children are caught up in. They say that the eyes are the window to the soul. We are not talking about the “Look at me!” eye contact that we sometimes ask for. No, we are saying that our eyes have to meet the child’s and give a message of warmth and love even when the child is not looking at us.

As strange as it may sound, our eyes are like our hands. They have to slowly and lovingly touch the child’s heart. Remember! Children with broken hearts fear us and see no meaning in us. When we look at them, they might look down or look coldly at us. Their eyes might dart back and forth. They see feel no connection with us. We need to use our eyes as strong and penetrating tools that reach into the child’s broken heart warming it and caressing it.

Feeling Safe

Our role as parent or teacher is to first mend the child’s broken heart. Sometimes the heart has been broken by the very nature of a disability. At other times, it has been broken by a life-story of abuse, neglect, inconsistent care giving, or the ravishes of poverty, poor schools, and bad example. Regardless of the cause, our task is to mend the heart.

Our society expects us to punish and reprimand children, to gain control over them, and to just deal with the behaviors we see. Gentle parents and teachers have to go much deeper. They have to go for the child’s heart the underlying fear of not feeling safe and the underlying meaninglessness of not having a place in the world.

The first priority is to teach every child to feel safe with us. Our hands will never hit, grab, or harm. They will reach out to the child as a clear signal of love and warmth. Many children will flinch when we reach out. We have to reach out more slowly and even cautiously. With repeated and gentle acts of touch, the child will gradually begin to respond with the feeling, “I finally feel safe. I do not have to fear any more.” The child will begin to lean toward our hands and eventually run toward us. The same will happen when we speak or look at the child. A deep and enveloping sense of being “at home” will surround the child.

Teaching The Goodness of Touch

To teach someone to accept our touch is a complex task. It is critical to teach because it is the clearest, most direct, and strongest pathway to a person’s heart. It requires authenticity and being well-grounded on the shared values we have discussed. It can be a most frightening experience to persons with a life-story of abuse and neglect, sexual exploitation, or inherent developmental problems that make it hard to accept or deal with physical contact. So, we need to teach it slowly, helpfully, repeatedly, and with ever-increasing degrees of complexity.

To teach child the meaning of our touch, we have to present ourselves in the following manner:

Our Touch

Teaching the meaning of our touch...

- Go slowly, softly, and peacefully
- Only do as much as you feel safe with
- Smile in a caring way—seeing the wholeness of the child and feeling the child’s sorrow and fear
- Speak softly, slowly, and lovingly about how good the child is, that you are not going to hurt him/her, and that he/she is safe with you
- If possible, touch the child, but softly, and linger as long as possible
- If there is any hint of fear or rejection of your touch, back off momentarily, but keep on talking and looking at the child
- As the child calms again, touch again
- Do not worry about getting something done
- Remember you are teaching the child to feel safe with you

We also have to deal with cultural barriers to human touch. Some hold that it is age inappropriate, others that it is not the person’s choice, and still others that we have to give everyone their space. Each of these may be true! But, they beg the essential question. Is it necessary and basic to teach those whom we care for the goodness of our touch? It is vital that we be willing to teach its goodness, and in most instances, the best time to teach it is right from the start. Yet, there will be times when this might not be possible.

We will have to teach safety through our words and countenance. But, generally, touch is the clearest and most concrete road to a broken heart.

More on Teaching the Goodness of Our Touch...

- Initial touch should be soft, slow, and gentle
- Types of touch should be calming, not exciting
- You have to decide where you touch—to the hand, arm, or, with much more difficulty, to the face
- You have to determine how softly, slowly, and gently to touch based on the child's response—attuning your touch to the person's reaction
- Linger as long as you can, but be ready to back off at the slightest twitch of rejection or fear
- If the child wants too much touch or inappropriate touch, gently back off. Then, you take charge of the manner of touch

There are many variables that we have to consider as we teach that our touch is good. Our capacity to teach it will improve with experience. If you are helping someone who is terrified of touch, take your time. Remember the slower you go, the faster you will get there. There is no hurry. Think of a child whom you are teaching to feel safe. The child rejects your touch by hitting self or you. At best, the child is oblivious to your touch as warm as it might be. You hear rationales such as a "tactile defensive" or requiring "space." You realize that touch is a clear and direct path to the person's heart. Our role is to teach that it is good and a strong symbol of both feeling safe and loved. So, we need some strategies for teaching this essential aspect of companionship. Fill out the questionnaire below to help you prepare a "methodology" for teaching that your touch is good.

Feeling Engaged

We have to weave this thread into these broken hearts so that the child learns it is good to be with us, do things with us, and do things with and for others. Engagement is something that every parent and teacher wants to see, but we often are caught in the trap of forcing children to do things and of focusing on compliance.

Our mothers called this obedience. Some professionals call it compliance. In parenthood, obedience arises out of the child feeling safe with us and loved by us. As easy as this might sound, there is a big problem that parents and teachers confront. Children with broken hearts often become stuck in the swamp of self-centeredness, a feeling in the child of "I'll do what I want, when I want, in the way I want, and when I am done I am out of here...!"

In normal childhood development, children learn to feel engaged with their parents and teachers in the pre-school years a feeling that it is good to be with us, do things with us, and even do things for us. Children with broken hearts are more vulnerable to getting stuck in the terrible two's because they are searching for life-meaning and do not find it. It is natural for a child who has suffered abuse and neglect to revert back to the self. When a child does not feel safe on this earth or loved, he/she defends her/his very self through ego-centeredness, "If no one gives me meaning, then I will find meaning in myself!" They must be feeling, "Your hands are used to hit me... Your words are used to put me down... Your eyes are used to make me feel worthless." The child creates a world that he/she can control and even find meaning in. When parents and teachers try to intrude, the child has a tantrum. This search for self is a normal developmental phase a search for identity and dominion. We have to help the children break through self-centeredness by teaching them it is good to be with us.

Engagement generally arises around age three. Our word engagement is really a normal stage of child development. We start to teach the child three new feelings built on feeling safe and loved: It is good to be with parent and teacher; It is good to do things with them; It is good to do things for one another. These three things together form a feeling of engagement.

Teaching Human Engagement

This process is difficult since it can arouse memories of demands being made. The person's fear of being made to do something can immediately trigger memories of dozens of other faceless care givers who have grabbed, pushed, pulled, and even molested. Or, more commonly, care givers who have tried to help with the best of intentions, but who, over the years, have taught the person that their touch and presence equate with force and domination. Over the years, our "physical assistance" or "hand over hand" help is like drops of water dripping on a rock. They seem like nothing, but over the years they wear the rock away. Remember that the purposes of human engagement are to teach the person that it is good to be with us, it is good to do things with us, and, only after these two processes, it is good to do things for us. The key word is *with*. The focus is not compliance or skill acquisition. These are secondary effects of engagement.

TEACHING ENGAGEMENT

- Make sure the child feels safe with you
- Figure out your degree of involvement
- For a few moments just be near or with the child.
- Avoid an indication that you are going to have the child do anything
- Talk, touch, look for a few moments.
- You start the activity and assure that you are not going to make him/her do anything
- Keep the activity to a minimum
- Avoid causing any fear or rebellion

- Encourage the child
- Do the activity with or even for the child.
- Keep a smooth flow
- Gradually withdraw the degree of your help

There are a few other tips that might be helpful to you to help decrease any sense of being forced to do anything and to continue to teach the person to feel safe with us. These are best put in the form of interactions to avoid. We must always remember that our purpose is to teach companionship, and that feeling safe is essential.

THOU SHALT NOT . . .

- Do not tell the child to do anything
- Do not give verbal instructions at the beginning
- Do not just sit and watch someone do any activity
- Do not worry about what the child wants to do
- Do not give “physical assistance” or do “hand over hand”
- Do not grab the child

Do not let these commandments put you in a bind. The trick is to find ways to do what you have to do, but still make sure the child feels safe with you. Instead of telling the child to do something, go ahead and start doing it. Sense a moment when you can draw the child into the activity. Instead of grabbing a child’s hand to get them to pick something up, simply insert the object into the hand or even just touch it to the hand and say, “Here, I will do it for you.” Or, “Look, we are doing it together. If you do not want to do it, I will!”. The issue of choice is more difficult. Of course, it is good to find things the child likes. But, our challenge at this moment is not to teach choice-making, but rather engagement. So, if the child refuses to do anything, go ahead and start doing something next to the child. If the child leaves, accompany him/her, but without irritating them.

THOU SHALL...

- Do the task for or the child
- Insert a part of the task into the hand, if necessary
- Talk about moral themes—safe, togetherness, sharing
- Keep the focus on engagement
- Look warmly throughout
- Touch lovingly throughout

Think of someone whom you are teaching to feel engaged. Ask yourself what method might you use throughout the day to teach this—in the ordinary unfolding of the day’s events as well as in more structured times when you sit with the child and focus in a more structured way on engagement.

As you do the kitchen table exercise that follows, think of the range of interactions that you have to use and write you ideas in a way that is highly flexible. Remember we are really doing four things at once—teaching safety, being loved, learning to show affection to us, as well as engagement.

QUESTIONS FOR TEACHING HUMAN ENGAGEMENT

- How should I present myself to the child?
- How should I have the task set up?
- What is the simplest way to arrange the task?
- How do I introduce the task at the start?
- How do I draw the child into the task?
- What do I do if the child refuses to participate?
- What do I do if the child gets up and leaves?
- What do I do if the child is obsessed on other things like food, candy, or objects?
- What do I do if the child is distracted?
- How and when should I touch?
- Any other variables to consider?

Teaching engagement, then, occurs within an envelope of helping interactions. Think about a child and ask yourself what range of interactions you should do in while you are teaching the child engagement. The envelope has various dimensions.

TEACHING DIMENSIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How and when we use our hands: timing, degree of lightness, manner • How and when we use our words: timing, degree of intensity, tone, rhythm • How and when we gaze: timing and intensity • The content of our dialogue: moral themes and linkage to engagement, safety, and unconditional love • The combination of each of the above: degree of emphasis

The teaching situation is too complex and fast-changing to have any set answer. Experience certainly plays a major role in the decision-making process, and some care givers seem more-adept at making the right decisions than others. Indeed, they are scarcely decisions that are made. They are more instinctive and based on our values. If in doubt, back off, be nurturing, and center all that you do on unconditional love. Do everything slowly, softly, and sweetly. Do not feel rushed! Remember what some of our central driving values are—ensuring deep feelings of safety, the use of nonviolent means in the face of violence, the nurturing of a sense of belonging, and the most powerful of all unconditional love.

It is also helpful to have someone work with you and observe your interactions, and then dialogue with you with constructive feedback. Another way to gain insight is to role play various situations and practice the decisions you will likely encounter.

Fill out the exercise below as a way to think about the fast-paced options you will have to deal with.

WHAT WILL I DO WHEN . . . ?
<p>Instructions: 1) Think of being face-to-face with a child who does not want to be with you or finds little enjoyment in being near you. 2) Think of everything that might go wrong. 3) List these out. What might go wrong:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1) • 2) • 3) • 4) <p>More instructions: Look at each of the factors below and jot down the range of things you will do regarding making the child feel safer, more engaged, and more loved through...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your bodily posture • Your touch • Your conversation • Your facial expression • Your degree and manner of help

Always recall that a major problem in teaching human engagement is dealing with self-centeredness. The child screams at us, "I will do what I want to do . . . When I want to do it . . . In the way I want to do it . . . And, when I am done, I am gone . . .!". Care givers must not give a feeling of invasion, "Do this, or else . . .!", but soft, slow, and gentle incursions into the child's self-isolating world.

In the beginning, we will be seen as nothing except someone who is going to bring force and domination, and the child will respond with domineering behaviors based on fear, rejection, or frustration. We have to minimize expectations and maximize our hope, increase our help and decrease our demands, and focus on generously giving unconditional love instead of seeking compliance. Even though at this point we are nothing to the child, we are going to teach that being with us is good. This involves moving the child beyond the self—from self-centered to other-centered. This is a reality in which we gradually teach the moral lesson that the "I" only becomes fulfilled in the "Thou"—a morality of connectedness that says, "The closer we are to one another, the more fulfilled we will be."

Engagement is the light, soft hammer that is used to chip away at the jagged edges of the self. For the marginalized, the world is centered on the self since there has been no reason to be with others, to share, and to reach out. The child has learned to protect and defend her/himself through self-isolation and only ventures out when there is something in it for the self.

SELF-CENTERED	OTHER-CENTERED
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Focus on the "I" 2. "I'll do what I want" 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A focus on the "Thou" 2. "Let's do it together"

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Lack of connectedness 4. Lack of self-worth 5. Little feeling of loving or being loved 6. Inability to share 7. Not caring about the other 8. Not responding 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Connectedness 4. Feels contentment 5. Fulfills the need to love and be loved 6. Wanting to share 7. Caring about and helping others 8. Responding to other
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In this process we help the child move from a world in which he/she lives an isolated life to one that is communal. In its smallest steps, it is seen in reaching out to others, a desire to be with and participate with others, and feeling what others feel. These are the initial steps in the formation of community, a community of response and caring—caring for and about each member and responding to their needs.

Parents and teachers need to think about the nature of a child's self-centeredness and other-centeredness because this dimension is what probably brings more violence to interactions than any other. If someone does not want to do something and the care giver wants it, the stage is set for a no-win situation. Each will become more insistent and more stubborn. Our role is to back off until we teach engagement.

Children Stuck in the Terrible Two

Tantrums mess up many parents and teachers. We get impatient and frustrated. They bring out the worst in us—yelling, hitting, putting down. We have to reflect on why some children have tantrums. Some children become stuck in the terrible two's, "I'll do what I want to do, when I want to do it, for as long as I want to do it...". At these loud and screaming moments, we do not know what to do. Do we deal with violence with more violence? Our option is to focus on engagement. This assumes that the child already feels safe with us and loved by us. Engagement then is like a stretching process. In the beginning, we have to give in to prevent more violence, but we always look for some little thing to get in return the child accepting our touch, giving a handshake, letting us do the "whatever" with him/her. We are gentling our way into the child's world.

So many parents and teachers have been trained in behavior modification and basic rule is, if you give positive attention while a child is acting out, then you increase the acting out behaviors. Our strategy is to go for the child's heart. This is a hard thing to do because we are almost all trained to "control" behaviors, to reward good behaviors, and to punish bad ones. Gentleness asks us to be heart menders rather than behavior modifiers.

We are teaching and giving care to children with broken hearts, not broken brains. The heart is what drives feelings of being safe and loved. By going for the child's feelings, we are focusing on the most basic elements of what it means to be human our feelings and connectedness with others. When we go for the head, we are placing what children do (their behaviors) over their feelings. So, we hear phrases like manipulation, attention-seeking, and knowing better. When we act on these terms, we are overlooking the child's heart that is broken. Our task is to mend the hear, to help the child learn to feel close to us and, eventually, to respond to our guidance.

When a child has a broken heart, the child seeks meaning elsewhere in food, drink, drugs, games, getting into trouble, disobedience, running away, and on and on. The search for meaning is a natural human act. When it is not found in us, the child has to seek it in things. We then start to focus on things "No. You cannot do this!", "No, you cannot have that!". We have to re-center ourselves and focus on the child's heart instead of behaviors.

Children with developmental disabilities, like autism, are more likely to get stuck in this muck of self-centeredness due to the very nature of the disability. They often have trouble feeling their own worth, let alone the worth of others. Once feeling safe and loved, these children need to learn the next life-lesson, a feeling of "It is good to be with my parents and teachers...." We have to teach this.

I'll do what I want...
The terrible two's...

- Feeling safe and loved
- But, wanting independence... a feeling of "I am somebody"
- Self-centered—looked for self, then eventually reuniting
- A normal developmental phase
- But, some stay stuck in it

Even when children feel safe and loved, they can get stuck in self-centeredness. Parents and teachers need a way to help the child move through this swamp through teaching engagement. In many ways it is easy to teach a child to feel safe with us and loved by us. These feelings call on us to give, give, give. Engagement begins to ask for things from the child, things like "Let me be with you... Let me do this with you... Can you do this for me..."

Some common problem arises too when we start to focus on engagement. We can look at the child as "knowing better" and expect that what we say goes. Or, someone might feel that we are letting the child get away with murder, or the child is manipulating us, or we are reinforcing bad behaviors by paying attention to the child who refuses to do something for us.

We have two options: 1) Control the child through force and punishment or 2) Teach that child engagement. The common way in many homes and classrooms is to try to control the child. Our way is to teach that it is good to be with us, do things with us, and even do things for us. But, we have to tolerate some critical comments.

Don't Be So Foolish Comments

It is all in the head...

- “*He knows better...* If you give in, he’ll be getting his way!”
- “*She’s a manipulator...* If you give in, she will always get her way!”
- “How will not learn *compliance* if you give in?”
- “My goodness, you’re *reinforcing* her maladaptive behaviors!”

These comments are typical. Our responses are simple. We are giving in. We are letting the child get his way. More basically, we are doing this while we are reminding the child that it is good to be with us. We are slowly stretching the child. Yes, the child is manipulating us, but we are teaching her to learn that it is good to be with us. Yes, children need to learn what people call “compliance”, but we are not focused on this. We are focused on teaching engagement. It is good to be with us, do things with us, and even do things for us. We teach this out of a spirit of love, not out of a duty to control. The whole issue of “reinforcing maladaptive behaviors” is a shallow comment. We are going for something much deeper: a sense of connectedness with us. We want the child to learn that when we are present good things happen. We want the child to have a memory of us as being good and loving. And, this is stronger than any sense of control.

Easier said than done! Teaching engagement is one of the hardest developmental steps to teach because we have felt love from the child, but she/he now rebels against us, sometimes our very presence. We have to go back to the beginning and always remind the child that he/she is safe with us and loved by us. Remember these are delicate threads. As we do this over and over again, we enter a process of gentling our way into the child’s world. In the toughest instances, we should be aware that even our presence can be seen as a major demand. The child sees us and knows for certain that we are going to make her/him do something. Our touch, words, and gaze can mean force, control, and punishment. The child does not see us as loving, but as controlling.

Parents and teachers need to reflect on two basic rules at this stage:

Two Rules to Live By for Parents and Teachers
Gentling our way into broken hearts...

1. Do not provoke violence
2. Evoke peace

We have to be aware that just moving toward a child or opening our mouth to say even beautiful words can provoke violence. Some children have such deep fear that they know for sure that we are mean. Engagement requires a slow stretching process in which we give a lot and get little. We even have to give in to avoid any form of violence. The child screams, “I want a cookie!” and we give it. But, more importantly, we indirectly “seek, even steal something in return, “Where is your smile?... Here, you go, give me a hug!” This begins to evoke peace.

What do we do???

Gentle our way back into the heart...

1. Deepen sense of feeling safe and loved
 2. Give in a lot.. Without giving up
 3. But, start to ask/expect a tiny bit
 4. Teach three key feelings:
- It’s good to be with me
 - It’s good to do things with me
 - It’s good to do things for me

Teaching engagement is one of the toughest things to do. We have to give in a lot while getting a tiny bit in return. We have to give in a lot to avoid provoking violence. But, while giving in, we have to seek a little bit in return. The child might be screaming for a cookie and we give it. At the same time, we ask for a hug, a smile, or a word of love. This sounds like very little giving the child much more than we receive in return. The trick is to understand that for a while we are teaching the child that he/she can trust us. This is a feeling of “It is good to be with us...”

Even while doing this, parents and teachers begin a stretching process moving the child ever so slowly from self-centeredness to other-centeredness by getting them to a little for us. While the child eats the cookie, the parent or teacher might ask for a hug or kiss between each bite or might do a puzzle, asking for the child’s help. The tiny bit that we get in return is the hug or kiss. The stretching continues until one day the child learns the hard life-lesson, “it is good to be with us... do things with us... and even do things for us and others...”

Many parents and teachers might say, “Hold on! If we do this, we are reinforcing his/her bad behaviors!”

My goodness! We’re reinforcing maladaptive behavior...

We're going for the child's heart...

- In normal child development, it is common to go through the terrible 2's
- We give a lot to get a little
- We give in to avoid exceptional tantrums
- We re-assure and ask a little
- We don't get stuck in the tantrum
- We show love of others is stronger than anger

We need to understand normal childhood development to understand the terrible-two's. We cannot forget that this search for an identity is normal in childhood development. What we call a tantrum is child's way of saying, "I am somebody!" Our task is to teach her/him that our beautiful identity is not found in the self but in the other, "I am somebody because I am with you.. I am somebody because I am doing things with you... I am somebody because I am doing things for you..." The child is really trying to find self. It is human nature to fall into self-centeredness when we are not sure of who we are and what our role is on this earth. We all need to feel some control in our lives and when we do not find it in others we search for it in ourselves or in objects like coolies. It is also normal for children to explore their limits, a feeling of "If I do this, can I get that?". This is not deliberate; it is a hunger for meaning. We have to teach the child that meaning is in us and the limits of life are found in feeling safe, loved, engaged, and loving.

Why the tantrums?
I am somebody...

1. The child is trying to define self
2. The child is exploring limits

In a strange way, there is a normalcy to the tantrum stage. It is a twisted search for life-meaning. Every child enters into it. Most work themselves through out. Children with tragic life-stories or developmental disabilities can get stuck in it. We have to help them move through it. We all need to feel that we are somebody. It is good to define ourselves. Most children pass through this with ease. Children with sad life-stories or developmental disabilities can have a hard time with this. Because they do not know who they are, they turn inward, "I'll do what I want...". They unwittingly push us away. Their personal boarders are their hands that push us away, their words that scream at us, and their eyes that look upon us with hatred. We have to teach these children a new memory. They find their goodness and their self in being with us and reaching out to us and others.

Most children go through this with ease. They have a strong foundation of feeling safe and loved. They explore a little. They push us a little, but quickly learn that the self is nothing without trust of others.

As parents and teachers, we must always remember that we have the tools to teach engagement. It is hard for us to give a hug or word of love to a child who is pitching a fit. Yet, this is what they need at that moment to remember the feelings of being loved and safe. There can be no stretching toward engagement until and unless the child recalls this. We have to have enough faith that love is stronger than hate. We have to fight violence with non-violence. We have to use our hands, words, and tools to do our teaching.

The "giving-in" part of teaching engagement is hard. Some will say, "You are spoiling the child. He knows better and is just manipulating!" We have to ground ourselves in the meaning of nurturing giving unconditional love even at those moments when the child is getting her/his way. Plus, we are not simply giving in. We are seeking to draw out a little bit in return without provoking violence. Spoiling is different. It is giving in and giving up. It is over-protective and directionless. It leaves the child with nothing but self-centeredness. Nurturing arises out of human interdependence wherein parents and teachers recognize that engagement is a developmental process that has to be taught.

Spoiling or Nurturing?
If I give in, my goodness...

1. Give in to give yourself time to teach engagement
2. Spoiling is just giving in with no future direction
3. Nurturing is teaching engagement while keeping a feeling of safe and loved

Teaching engagement requires our total concentration. It takes some one on one time. Parents and teachers alike have to make time to teach it. It can unfold surprisingly quickly if we dedicate some time and energy to it. The main techniques during the one on one times are fairly easy to understand.

Our rules for engagement are to avoid provoking violence and make sure that we evoke peace. Our movements have to be slow and deliberate. The quieter we are, the calmer the child. Spend the first few moments just enjoying being with the

child. Talk about how you love the child and that you are not going to make the child do anything. Start the activity for the child and downplay any need to have the child do anything except accepting your presence. When the moment seems right get the child to participate a little bit, maybe asking something like, “Can you hand me that....?” Once this occurs, you then seek increasing participation. Of course, the main thing is to always use your hands, words, and eyes to continue to deepen the sense of being safe and loved. You gradually add on the life-lesson that it is good to do things together.

Teaching Engagement

Being face-to-face with the child...

- Talk quietly and slowly
- Move quietly and slowly
- Focus on making sure the child feels safe and loved
- Don't ask, say “Now we are going to...” and start the activity
- Stay with and interact with the child a brief time before asking for anything
- Don't use verbal or physical prompts, start the activity *for/with* the child
- Save your words and touch for honoring the child
- Remember, in the beginning, activities are just a vehicle for teaching the child that it is good to be with us and do things with us
- After you leave and the child is engaged, return to the child to praise and help every now and then
- Use your other children as helpers
- Have good seating arrangements
- Think of ways to prevent problems

Give in unless dangerous or harmful... while getting a tiny something in return

Do the activity with, even for, the child because the first step is to teach that it is simply good to be together

You are teaching engagement, not obedience

Parents and teachers should think using other children as their helpers, their “little professors” of engagement. In this way, we start to teach all children that the purpose of education is to learn to live together. We have to use our heads to make sure that everything works out alright. Also, consider what things you can do to reduce the odds that bad things might happen. Seating arrangements are important. Have the child positioned so that minimal disruption occurs. Seat face-to-face so that you can make the child feel safe and loved. Keep the focus on engagement, not compliance.

Feeling Loving Toward Others

The forth important thread that needs to be woven into these broken hearts is a feeling of loving others. We all want our children to kind, to share, and to help those who are less fortunate. This sense of loving others is also a basic aspect of child development. We have to teach it by setting up many opportunities for each child to learn to respond to others with love.

Teaching Feeling Loved And Being Loving

Of course, a feeling of being loved and loving others is taught concurrently with feelings of being safe and engaged. The four pillars are not a step by step sequence, but unfold in various dimensions—some having more importance at various moments and others less, but each and all occurring in varying degrees throughout the process. We need to teach some persons what it means to be loved and to love others. This too is a task as complex as teaching someone to feel safe and engaged, and it is intertwined with these two other pillars.

To be loved is to feel that you are somebody in the eyes of a small group of others, connected to them, uplifted by them, and content to be with them. To love others is to reach out to them, share feelings, lift them up when they are down, and deepen your feeling of connectedness. Love is to respond to the other. It is unconditional. And, it is the center of community.

TEACHING A FEELING OF LOVE

- Make sure the child feels safe with you
- Make sure that there is at least a minimal degree of engagement, even the acceptance of your presence
- Begin to draw out acts of love from the child
- Use your hands, eyes, and words to elicit touch
- Keep warm visual contact throughout the process
- Keep a sweet flow of words that uplift the child
- Communicate moral rules related to being loved and loving others
- When you communicate these moral rules, give the answer. Repeat it in various ways

Some basic questions to help you think about how you might teach the feeling of being loved and loving others are contained in the following exercise. Remember that you will have to deal with a range of strategies as in teaching engagement. Think of someone whom you want to teach a feeling of love and answer these questions:

QUESTIONS FOR TEACHING A SENSE OF LOVE

1. How secure do I feel in showing love?

1. To what degree do I see the child as an object of my love?

1. How will I use my hands, words, and countenance to teach love?

1. What moral rules will I talk about?

1. What signs of love can I teach the child associated with love, friendship, and companionship?

1. What related activity can I be doing with the child as I teach these rules?

1. What do I do if the child rejects my teaching?

Teaching Sharing

As the child learns to accept a small circle of care givers, the next step involves bringing others into the circle. This not only avoids over dependence, but begins to expand the child's world and enter into the formation of community. Sharing is a first step in this expansion—being willing to be with a larger number of others and even to give of yourself to them. This moral phenomenon is taught.

TEACHING SHARING

- Make sure the child is exceptionally safe with you.
- Bring another into your tiny circle—two becomes three, then three becomes four.
- Assure that each is safe.
- Sit between each.
- Initiate a shared activity as a vehicle to keep the small group together.
- Give warm help to each in the activity as needed.
- Give loving attention to each as needed.
- Share touch with one another
- Talk about moral rules:
 - *It is good to do things together.*
 - *This means we can become friends.*
 - *Let's shake hands as a sign of love.*
 - *We call this sharing.*

- Keep the focus on the loving relationship.
- Keep the task going smoothly

This teaching process can be very complex. Whomever you bring into your circle needs to feel safe with you. You are the teacher of companionship to others. They might not even like each other and have rivalry with one another. So, it is critical that you give some thought as to how you will teach bringing people together. The complexity of teaching sharing is compounded twofold because the care giver has to teach feelings of being safe, engaged, loving, and loved to each individual at the same time as well as these feelings toward one another.

The care givers involved in this need to have already developed feelings of safety and engagement with those who are going to form the circle. They should realize that this process is much more complex than the earlier face-to-face relationships that we have discussed. In the beginning, there could easily be some rivalry for attention, difficulty in finding something to do together, and each vying for attention. Do the next exercise to clarify your method.

Little Professors' Movement

We all need help. Parents cannot do this alone, nor can teachers. Our biggest resource is all the other children at home and at school who feel safe and loved. Make gentleness part of the culture of growing up by expecting other children to be "little professors". Teach the other children what it means to have a broken heart and how lucky they are to feel safe and

loved. Tell them how they can help this child or that child to feel safe and loved. Make this part of the school's curriculum and the home's way of being. Children can become involved in peace-making, child advocacy, forming friendships, and tutoring. This would be the best civics lesson possible teaching all children to learn to live together.

Starting a Little Professors Movement
All children learning to live together...

1. Children helping children
2. Friendships
3. Companionship
4. Tutoring
5. Peace-Making
6. Advocacy
7. Pairing in the classroom

When you feel that no one is supporting you, do not fixate on this or use it as an excuse to give up. Gentleness calls for cultural change and starts with our values. Set a good example and gradually encourage others to be gentle people.

I Am Gentle, But Others Aren't
Stay gentle... Encourage others..

- You have to be even more gentle to make up for love denied
- Visit those who are not
- Work with them—make them feel safe
- Avoid arguments
- Set a good example and try to show them hands- on what you mean

All change takes time. In the beginning, do not worry about others and what they do. Worry about your own values and actions. Our example has to be strong and consistent. Gradually, you will others follow your example. Take your time.

Dealing with Special Issues

There are a ton of variables that touch on and even confuse what we are trying to do. Some relate to us and our values, others relate to child-centered questions. The following are some major issues that we will likely confront and our responses to them.

What about autism?

One developmental disability that raises many questions is autism. And, this area is important since so many children with autism are subjected to punishment and restraint. Our task is to gentle our way into their broken hearts in spite of their disability that seems to militate against a feeling of companionship.

Autism Is...

We want the child to run toward us as a child runs toward his/her mother...

- Tactile defensiveness
- Rigidity
- Stereotypy
- Difficulty in showing affection
- Hard time with change in routine
- Parallel play
- Little sense of danger

The big issue is always posed as "She has tactile defensiveness..." and our response is that we will find a way to teach that our touch is good and a sign of love. We even have to focus on teaching the child to reach out to us. Part of the dislike of touch seems to be related to difficulty in sensory integration, the other part seems to be that the child with autism does not see the affectionate meaning in physical contact. Our initial attempts should be slow and soft, watching for any slight sign of fear. When fear emerges, back off, go more slowly, and more softly.

When the child is in isolated and isolating play or routines, we have to gradually insert ourselves into the child's world

softly and slowly, sometimes just being near the child for a while before trying to do anything with the child.

The same holds true with teaching the child to show signs of love reaching her hands out, throwing a kiss, smiling. All has to be done with delicate care. The secret is to teach all these variables over and over again. They are at the center of all learning.

General Teaching Rules

Teaching Against the Signs of Autism...

- Teach that our touch is good
- Give tons of affection without provoking violence
- Insert yourself into isolated play
- Teach the child to reach out for affection
- Use communication that relates to safe and loved

What about the Child Who Know Better?

This is probably the question that, if unresolved, brings the most punishment and physical management. The basic response is that we going for the child's heart. The question of intellect complicates fear and meaninglessness. But, the answer to the child's needs are in her/his heart, feelings, and way of seeing self and others.

We need to teach new moral memories that we are good, the child is good, it is good to be together, and unconditional love is at the center of what it means to be human. This requires repeated acts of unconditional love toward the child. We have to prevent what we can and tolerate much. Parents and teachers have to remember that we are dealing with affairs of the heart, not the head. We need to always base our decisions on those four thread of feeling safe, loved, engaged, and eventually loving.

What About Drugs?

The use of drugs is fine if done appropriately. They should be used to treat a defined mental illness, not control behaviors. Parents and teachers should the exact diagnosis and should understand the meaning of the mental illness as it relates to feelings of companionship and community.

Drugs are a tool... They can help... They can hurt...

- Make sure drugs are based on a psychiatric diagnosis
- Make sure the dosage is as low as possible
- Avoid using many drugs
- Drugs are not for "behaviors"
- See your psychiatrist often

Starting Out

Where do we begin? The tasks are clear. We have to find ways to reflect on our own gentleness and center our parenting and teaching on companionship and community. The children under our care need to learn what it means to feel safe with us, loved by us, engaged with us, and loving toward us. Then, we have to help them spread this feeling outward toward others until there is a circle around each child strong enough to enable them to feel the beauty of human interdependence. The only thing that we can control in the beginning are our own interactions. This is the place to start our sense of gentleness, our values, and how we can express these in the most loving way possible.

We end with two tools that we can use to look at our own degree of gentleness that we should see as a life-project. What might seem gentle today will hopefully look differently tomorrow since we should always be deepening our values and skills in its expression. The first tool is a Self-Assessment for Parents and Teachers a way for us to look at ourselves, question the degree of our own gentleness, and try to deepen our sense of gentleness. The second tool that we offer is An Assessment of Our Children a way to look at the children who are in our care from the perspective of how they respond to us and others based on feeling safe, loved, engaged, and loving. This tool should serve to help parents and teachers define where they have to start teaching a sense of companionship and community.

SELF-ASSESSMENT FOR PARENTS AND TEACHERS

Purpose

To analyze our own teaching interactions from the perspective of how the vulnerable child sees us, to pinpoint our beautiful acts, and our points of weakness. This assessment is for parents and teachers who want to have a framework to assess their own gentleness.

Instructions: read each variable, think about it, and score yourself on each scale. At the end, look at the factors that you are weak in and try to improve them.

WARMTH 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 COLDNESS

WARMTH: YOU FEEL THAT YOUR INTERACTIONS TRANSMIT A FEELING OF UNCONDITIONAL LOVE WHENEVER YOU ARE WITH THE CHILD OR TRYING TO HELP THE CHILD. YOU ARE WARM IN YOUR EXPRESSIONS. YOU STOP FOR A MOMENT EVERY TIME YOU SEE OR GO BY A CHILD TO GREET. WELCOME, PRAISE, OR ENCOURAGE.

YOU EXPRESS A LOT OF WARM AND LOVING PHYSICAL CONTACT—HANDSHAKES, EMBRACES, PATS ON THE BACK. YOU PRESENT YOURSELF CALMLY AND LOVINGLY. YOU WORRY ABOUT MAKING SURE THE CHILD FEELS SAFE. YOU TALK SOFTLY AND SLOWLY. YOUR TONE IS NURTURING. YOU ARE AWARE OF YOUR NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION AND MAKE SURE THAT IT CONVEYS WARMTH. WHEN THE CHILD IS NERVOUS OR STRESSED, YOU REASSURE AND SOOTH. WHEN DOWN, YOU ENCOURAGE AND LIFT THE SPIRIT UP.

COLDNESS: YOUR INTERACTIONS ARE SEEN AS MECHANISTIC OR BOSSY SUCH AS IN ORDERING THE CHILD TO DO SOMETHING, GRABBING SOMEONE’S HAND TO “MAKE” HIM/HER DO IT, OR JUST PLAIN LOOKING IN A DISTANCING OR UNINTERESTED MANNER. YOUR WORDS DO NOT SEEM TO CONVEY FRIENDSHIP OR CARING. YOU TALK VERY LITTLE OR JUST SAY PHRASES LIKE, “GOOD JOB.” YOU SELDOM TOUCH LOVINGLY. MOST OF YOUR INTERACTIONS ARE TO CONTROL OR SIMPLY GET THE “JOB” DONE.

CHECK ANY FACTORS THAT APPLY:

- VERY LITTLE WARM PHYSICAL CONTACT SUCH AS HUGS
- VERY LITTLE LOVING CONVERSATION
- VERY LITTLE WARM GAZES AT THE CHILD
- A FEELING OF, “I DO NOT WANT TO BE WITH THIS CHILD!”
- VERY LITTLE TAKING TIME TO GIVE EACH CHILD ATTENTION
- GRABBING THE CHILD
- ORDERING THE CHILD AROUND
- ANGRY AND SHORT-TEMPERED AT THE CHILD
- BRUSQUE, LOUD, OR FAST PACED INTERACTIONS
- MORE CONCERNED WITH SCHEDULES THAN WITH FEELING SAFE

2. WARM PROTECTION 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 RESTRAINT

WARM PROTECTION: IF YOU HAVE TO PROTECT THE CHILD OR OTHERS FROM HARM, YOU DO THIS SO THAT YOU DO NOT USE FORCE, DO NOT IMMOBILIZE, AND DO NOT MAKE THE CHILD MORE FEARFUL OR ANGRY. EXAMPLES OF WARM PROTECTION REVOLVE AROUND BLOCKING HITS WITH YOUR FOREARM INSTEAD OF GRABBING OR YELLING AND “SHADOWING” SELF-HITS WITH YOUR ARM OR HAND.

RESTRAINT: YOUR INTERACTIONS LEAD TO MORE ANGER AND FEAR, EVEN IN THE NAME OF CALMING A CHILD DOWN. THIS MIGHT BE DUE TO YOUR DESIRE TO ORDER THE CHILD AROUND OR A FOCUS ON SHEER OBEDIENCE. OR, IT MIGHT BE THAT YOU LACK THE SKILLS OR EXPERIENCE TO PREVENT OR DECREASE HARMFUL SITUATIONS WITHOUT THE USE OF RESTRAINT. EXAMPLES ARE ACTIONS SUCH AS GRABBING A CHILD’S HAND, YELLING AT THE CHILD, OR RESTRAINING THE CHILD THROUGH PHYSICAL OR ENVIRONMENTAL ARRANGEMENTS.

CHECK ANY FACTORS THAT MAY APPLY:

- GRABBING HANDS OR ARMS
- REPRIMANDING
- YELLING TO STOP
- USE OF ANY FORM OF RESTRAINT
- USE OF ANY FORM OF SECLUSION
- PHYSICALLY “ESCORTING” THE CHILD
- USE OF CHEMICAL RESTRAINT

3. DEEP INSIGHT 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 SHALLOW AWARENESS

DEEP INSIGHT: YOU HAVE A SHARP UNDERSTANDING OF AND SENSITIVITY TO THE NEEDS OF THE CHILD. YOU CAN DEFINE IN PRACTICAL TERMS WHAT THE CHILD’S FEARS AND TALENTS ARE. YOU CAN PREDICT FROM MOMENT TO MOMENT THE DEPTH OF THAT FEAR. YOU KNOW WHEN TO BACK OFF OR CHANGE STRATEGIES TO AVOID ANY AGGRESSION, SELF-INJURY OR WITHDRAWAL.

SHALLOW AWARENESS: YOU REACT TO THE CHILD’S BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS. YOU HAVE DIFFICULTY READING EMERGING PROBLEMS OR YOU BLAME THEM ON A DIAGNOSIS, “HE HAS AUTISM . . . SHE HAS

SCHIZOPHRENIA . .

CHECK ANY THAT APPLY:

- VIOLENT REACTION TO YOUR PRESENCE
- YOU BECOME INSISTENT WHEN THE CHILD REFUSES TO DO SOMETHING YOU WANT
- YOU WITHDRAW
- YOU USE CHOICE AS A WAY OF AVOIDING THE CHILD

3. UNCONDITIONAL 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 EARNED LOVE REWARD

UNCONDITIONAL LOVE: YOUR WORDS, GESTURES, AND PHYSICAL INTERACTIONS ARE SEEN AS ACTS OF LOVE NO MATTER HOW THE CHILD IS INTERACTING. YOU CONTINUE TO GIVE LOVE TO THE CHILD WHEN THE CHILD IS AT HIS OR HER WORST MOMENTS. YOU ARE NURTURING AND EXPRESS LOVE IN YOUR EVERY MOVE. AT THE MOST VIOLENT MOMENTS YOU BECOME MORE LOVING.

EARNED REWARD: YOU ARE SEEN AS ONLY INTERACTING IN A PRAISING OR 'GIVING' MANNER FOR GOOD DEEDS DONE. YOU WAIT FOR THE CHILD TO EARN YOUR PRAISE OR ATTENTION. UNLESS THE CHILD HAS DONE SOMETHING THAT YOU WANT, THERE IS OFTEN DEAD SILENCE.

CHECK ANY THAT APPLY:

- USE OF REWARD/PUNISHMENT PROGRAMS
- USE OF TOKEN ECONOMY
- USE OF BEHAVIOR CONTRACTS
- LITTLE INTERACTION UNLESS PROBLEMS ARISE
-

4. ELICITATION 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 NO INTEREST OF LOVE

ELICITATION OF LOVE: YOU SEEK TO GET THE CHILD TO RESPOND WITH LOVE TOWARD YOU THROUGH THEIR WORDS, GESTURES, OR PHYSICAL INTERACTIONS. YOU TEACH THE CHILD TO REACH OUT TO YOU.

NO INTEREST: YOU MIGHT GIVE MUCH POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT, BUT YOU DO NOT FOCUS ON THE RELATIONSHIP AS AN ACT OF LOVE. YOU SEE YOUR ROLE AS CHANGING BEHAVIORS. YOU ARE THE GIVER; THE MARGINALIZED CHILD IS THE RECEIVER.

CHECK ANY THAT APPLY:

1. SELDOM ASK FOR A HANDSHAKE
SELDOM REACH YOUR HAND OUT AS A SIGN FOR CONTACT
SELDOM FOCUS OF DRAWING WARMTH FROM THE CHILD'S FACE
SELDOM ASK THE CHILD TO SHARE FEELINGS

5. COMPANIONSHIP 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 BEHAVIOR PROBLEM

COMPANIONSHIP: YOU REGARD THE CHILD AS YOUR FRIEND, YOUR EQUAL, AND AS FILLED WITH GIFTS AND TALENTS. YOU SEE NO DISTINCTION IN VALUE DUE TO DIAGNOSIS, BEHAVIORS, OR HISTORY. INDEED, YOU RECOGNIZE THAT THEIR VERY ALONENESS BECKONS YOU TO REACH OUT AS A COMPANION.

BEHAVIOR PROBLEM: YOU VIEW THE CHILD AS SOMEONE TO BE 'TREATED', 'MODIFIED', OR 'PROGRAMMED'. YOU SEE THE CHILD AS A PROBLEM, A DIAGNOSIS, A BEHAVIORAL SITUATION. YOU REFER TO THE CHILD AS CONSUMER, CUSTOMER, OR CLIENT. YOU USE NEGATIVE WORDS TO DESCRIBE THE CHILD SUCH AS "A RUNNER," A "SPITTER," OR A "RETARDED CHILD". YOU USE GESTURES, FACIAL EXPRESSIONS, AND TONES OF VOICE THAT ARE CONDESCENDING OR AUTHORITARIAN. YOU SUPERVISE MEALS INSTEAD OF EATING WITH THE CHILD OR HAVE A "STAFF" PARTY AND A "CLIENT" PARTY.

CHECK ANY THAT APPLY:

- USE OF ANY LABEL—CLIENT, CONSUMER, CUSTOMER, ETC.
- SEGREGATED "STAFF/CLIENT" ACTIVITIES
- SELDOM SHARING OF MEALS
- HOMES THAT LOOK LIKE OFFICES, CLASSROOMS, OR DUMPS
- TALKING DOWN TO THE CHILD
- TALKING ABOUT THE CHILD AS IF HE/SHE WERE NOT PRESENT

6. ENGAGEMENT 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 DISENGAGEMENT

ENGAGEMENT: YOU DO ACTIVITIES, TASKS, AND DAILY CURRICULUM EVENTS WITH THE CHILD. ALTHOUGH YOU ALSO SEEK TO MAINTAIN OLD SKILLS AND TEACH NEW ONES, YOUR PRIMARY FOCUS IS NOT ON SKILL ACQUISITION OR BEHAVIORAL CORRECTNESS, BUT ON MUTUAL PARTICIPATION. EXAMPLES CENTER ON YOU SITTING DOWN AND DOING THINGS WITH THE CHILD OR EVEN DOING THINGS FOR THE CHILD WHEN THEY REFUSE. YOU DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO PREVENT ANY ANGER OR FRUSTRATION

DISENGAGEMENT: YOUR CENTRAL POSTURE IS SEEN AS ONE OF GETTING THE CHILD TO DO THINGS FOR THE SAKE OF DOING THEM, TO DO THINGS CORRECTLY, TO OBEY YOU, OR TO BECOME INDEPENDENT OF YOU.

CHECK ANY THAT APPLY:

GIVING ORDERS

PREFERRING NOT TO BE WITH THE CHILD

BEING GRUFF

CARING MORE ABOUT COMPLIANCE THAN BEING SUPPORTIVE

CARING MORE ABOUT THE SCHEDULE THAN THE CHILD

CARING MORE ABOUT SKILL ACQUISITION THAN WARMTH

7. WARMLY HELPING 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 COLDLY HELPING

WARMLY HELPING: YOU MAKE THE FLOW OF THE DAY AND ALL THE TASKS OR ACTIVITIES WITHIN IT FLOW. IT MEANS THAT THERE ARE ALMOST NO INTERRUPTIONS IN ACTIVITIES OR THE FLOW OF THE DAY. YOU QUICKLY GIVE HELP AT ANY MOMENT TO KEEP THE FLOW SMOOTH AND EASY. WHEN THERE IS EVEN MOMENTARY FRUSTRATION, YOU KEEP ON DOING THE TASK FOR OR WITH THE CHILD. EXAMPLES ARE: THE CHILD STOPS FOR AN INSTANT AND YOU PICK UP THE SLACK WITHOUT HESITATION OR THE CHILD REFUSES TO PARTICIPATE AND YOU SAY, E.G., "THAT'S OK I'LL DO IT FOR YOU".

COLDLY HELPING: YOU WAIT AN INSTANT TOO LONG FOR THE CHILD TO INITIATE AN ACTIVITY OR CONTINUE TO PARTICIPATE OR YOU GIVE INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE CHILD TO DO SOMETHING THAT HE/SHE INTERPRETS AS A DEMAND. YOU KNOW THE CHILD BECOMES NERVOUS WHEN THERE IS A TRANSITION OR SCHEDULE CHANGE, AND YOU DO NOT SMOOTH THE PATH.

CHECK ANY THAT APPLY:

SELDOM SIMPLIFY THE ACTIVITY TO FOCUS ON ENGAGEMENT

SELDOM WORRY ABOUT WHERE I AND THE CHILD SITS OR STANDS

SELDOM PREVENT BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS FROM OCCURRING

ATTITUDE OF, "IF THE CHILD LEAVES, I STOP"

ATTITUDE OF, "IF THE CHILD ACTS OUT, I BECOME FLUSTERED"

- ATTITUDE OF, "THE CHILD CHOOSES NOT TO BE WITH ME"
- BRUSQUE START AND FINISH TO ACTIVITIES
- FOCUS ON CORRECT-INCORRECT RESPONSES INSTEAD OF ENGAGEMENT
- WHEN THE CHILD IS STUCK OR STOPS, YOU WAIT TOO LONG TO GIVE HELP
- ASKING THE DISENGAGED CHILD, "DO YOU WANT TO . . .?" INSTEAD OF TILLING THE SOIL AND THEN ENGAGING THE CHILD

8. FLEXIBILITY 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 RIGIDITY

FLEXIBILITY: YOU ACCEPT THE EBB AND FLOW OF INTERESTS AND ATTENTION, YOUR INITIAL CHOICE-GIVING IS "WIN-WIN", "DO YOU WANT TO DO THIS OR THAT?". IF THE CHILD DOES NOT RESPOND TO YOU, YOU SIMPLIFY THE TASK AND BEGIN DOING IT FOR HIM/HER. YOU ARE WILLING TO BACK OFF AT THE SLIGHTEST HINT OF FRUSTRATION

RIGIDITY: YOU FEEL THAT THE CHILD HAS TO DO WHAT YOU WANT THEM TO DO, WHEN YOU WANT THEM TO, AND IN THE MANNER YOU WANT.

CHECK ANY THAT APPLY:

- A "DO WHAT I SAY!" ATTITUDE
- INSISTENCE ON COMPLIANCE
- RUSHING THE CHILD
- ESCALATING VIOLENCE BY NOT BACKING OFF OR GIVING MORE HELP
- FOLLOWING A SCHEDULE AS IF GIVEN BY GOD TO MOSES
- ACCEPTING BEHAVIOR PLANS WHEN THEY CALL FOR RESTRAINT

9. AUTHENTICITY 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 PHONINESS

AUTHENTICITY: YOUR INTERACTIONS ARE FILLED WITH POSITIVE REGARD TOWARD THE CHILD, WARMTH, NATURALNESS, AND SPONTANEITY. YOU FEEL AT EASE IN YOUR HELPING AND TALK. YOU EXPRESS YOURSELF, YOUR FEELINGS, YOUR THOUGHTS, YOUR EMOTIONS, AND YOUR INTERESTS TO THE CHILD. YOU BRING A SENSE OF JOY AND CONTENTMENT.

PHONINESS: YOUR INTERACTIONS ARE A ROLE BEING PLAYED AS IF FOLLOWING A PROGRAMMED PLAN. YOUR PHYSICAL MOVEMENTS, YOUR WORDS, AND YOUR GESTURES ARE ROBOT-LIKE, CONDESCENDING, OR PATERNALISTIC.

CHECK ANY THAT APPLY:

- CONSTANTLY USE PAT PHRASES SUCH AS, "GOOD JOB!"
- TALKING IN A CONDESCENDING MANNER
- COMMENTING NEGATIVELY ABOUT THE CHILD
- GOSSIPING ABOUT THE CHILD IN MEETINGS
- HAVING SEPARATE RULES AND SPACES FOR YOURSELF AND THE CHILD
- MAKING FUN OF THE CHILD
- SOMETIMES A "FRIEND," SOMETIMES A "BOSS"

10. NEW MEMORIES 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 OLD MEMORIES

NEW MEMORIES: EVERYTHING YOU DO IS FOCUSED ON CREATING, ENABLING, AND BRINGING ABOUT A FEELING OF COMPANIONSHIP WITH NO FOCUS ON DISTANCING BEHAVIOR OTHER THAN TO PROTECT THE CHILD OR OTHERS FROM HARM. YOUR ON-GOING FOCUS IS TO TEACH THE CHILD TO FEEL SAFE, ENGAGED, LOVED, AND LOVING. ALL YOUR INTERACTIONS BEGIN WITH, CENTER ON, AND LEAD TO UNCONDITIONAL LOVE.

OLD MEMORIES: WHAT YOU DO IS GEARED TO COMPLIANCE, GETTING RID OF BEHAVIORS, OR JUST GETTING THROUGH THE DAY YOU MIGHT NOT INTENTIONALLY REINFORCE OLD MEANINGS, BUT TRIGGER THEM NEVERTHELESS.

CHECK ANY THAT APPLY:

- DUMPY HOME OR CLASSROOM SETTING
- SEGREGATION, TIME-OUT ROOMS
- LITTLE ENCOURAGEMENT OF FAMILY OR PEER RELATIONSHIPS
- USE OF RESTRAINT AND PUNISHMENT
- LOUD SETTINGS
- A LOT OF YELLING AND GRABBING
- USE OF MATERIAL OBJECTS AS "BABY-SITTERS"
- LOCKED DOORS AND DOOR ALARMS
- INSTITUTION-LIKE DRESS, GROOMING, DECORATIONS

11. HARMONY 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 DISHARMONY

HARMONY: YOU BECOME WARMER, MORE LOVING, AND HELPFUL WHEN ACTS OF AGGRESSION, SELF-INJURY, OR WITHDRAWAL OCCUR. YOU MOVE SLOWLY AND SOFTLY. YOU BECOME MORE NURTURING, THE MORE SCARED THE CHILD BECOMES. YOU MIGHT NOT KNOW WHAT TO DO AT ANY GIVEN MOMENT, BUT YOU CONVEY A SAFE PRESENCE.

DISHARMONY: YOU BECOME NERVOUS, EXCITED, OR UPTIGHT WHEN PROBLEMS BEGIN TO OCCUR AND RESORT TO FORMS OF RESTRAINT, CONTINGENCY, OR BRIBERY. OR, YOU JUST GIVE UP.

CHECK ANY THAT APPLY:

- TALK MORE LOUDLY AND MOVE MORE RAPIDLY
- STOP EXPRESSING WARMTH, BECOME DEMANDING, NERVOUS
- FACIAL EXPRESSION BECOMES COLD OR TENSE
- YOU WITHDRAW OR START TO BRIBE, "IF YOU DO NOT DO THIS, THEN . . ."

12. DIALOGUE 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 MONOLOGUE

DIALOGUE: YOU EXPRESS YOUR OWN THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS, TELLING STORIES RELATED TO FRIENDSHIP AND INTERDEPENDENCE, AND EVOKING SIMILAR THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS FROM THE CHILD—

IN A GENUINE, ON-GOING FLOW—NO MATTER WHAT THE CHILD IS DOING. IT IS THE DEEPEST WAY TO EXPRESS UNCONDITIONAL LOVE. YOU KNOW THAT DIALOGUE IS NOT JUST YOUR WORDS, BUT THEIR TONE AND RHYTHM, YOUR MOVEMENTS, YOUR TOUCH, YOUR GAZE, AND YOUR WARMTH.

MONOLOGUE: YOU CARRY ON A CONVERSATION THAT IS NOT PERSONALIZED TO YOUR OWN REALITY NOR TO THE CHILD'S. IT OFTEN JUST RELATES TO THE TASK BEING DONE AND OFTEN OCCURS ONLY WHEN DEEDS ARE ACCOMPLISHED. TO A CHILD LISTENING IT SOUNDS STILTED AND EVEN PHONY. CHECK ANY THAT APPLY:

- TALKING TO THE CHILD AS A STRANGER OR AS OF LESSER WORTH
- TALKING LITTLE ABOUT LOVE, KINDNESS, AND WARMTH
- TALKING LITTLE ABOUT MY OWN HOPES AND FEARS
- TOUCHING AS A STRANGER WOULD TOUCH
- LOOKING WITH DISINTEREST OR DISDAIN

13. SPIRITEDNESS 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ALOOFNESS

SPIRITEDNESS: YOU BRING A FEELING OF PLAYFULNESS, JOY, AND EMPATHY TO YOUR INTERACTIONS.

ALOOFNESS: YOU SEEM TO LACK INTEREST IN THOSE WHOM YOU SERVE. YOU SEE YOURSELF AS BETTER. YOUR ROLE IS TO CONTROL. YOU GIVE LITTLE SENSE OF JOY AND SELDOM EXPRESS WARMTH IN YOUR WORDS, TOUCH, OR PRESENCE. YOU OFTEN FEEL THAT YOU WOULD RATHER BE SOMEWHERE ELSE.

CHECK ANY THAT APPLY:

1. A FEELING OF BEING BETTER
2. A FEELING OF DISINTEREST
3. SELDOM INTERACTING AS IF WITH A FRIEND
4. MY ACTIONS SAY, "I WOULD RATHER BE SOMEWHERE ELSE!"
5. SELDOM TOUCHING, TALKING, OR LOOKING LOVINGLY
1. AN ATTITUDE OF NOT WANTING TO GET DIRTY
2. AN ATTITUDE OF REACTING TO PROBLEMS INSTEAD OF PREVENTING THEM
- 3.

14. CIRCLE OF FRIENDS 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 CLINGING

CIRCLE OF FRIENDS: YOU CREATE A FEELING OF CONNECTEDNESS BEYOND YOURSELF AND TEACH THE CHILD TO FEEL SAFE AND SECURE WITH OR WITHOUT YOUR IMMEDIATE PRESENCE. YOU DRAW OTHERS INTO YOUR RELATIONSHIP AND HELP THE CHILD REACH OUT TO OTHERS.

CLINGING: YOU CREATE AN OVERPROTECTIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHILD AND DO NOT EXTEND IT BEYOND YOURSELF SO THAT THE CHILD ONLY 'INTERACTS WELL' IF YOU ARE PHYSICALLY PRESENT.

CHECK ANY THAT APPLY:

1. YOU ARE THE ONLY CARE GIVER WHO CAN "HANDLE" THE CHILD
2. SELDOM TRYING TO DRAW OTHERS INTO THE RELATIONSHIP
3. RARELY DISCUSSING TEACHING THE CHILD TO ACCEPT OTHERS
4. LITTLE ENABLING OF COMMUNITY INCLUSION

15. CONGRUENCE 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 INCONGRUENCE

CONGRUENCE: YOUR CARE GIVING IS CONSISTENTLY LOVING ACROSS PEOPLE AND SETTINGS. YOU EXPRESS WARMTH DURING GOOD TIMES AND BAD. YOU ENCOURAGE AND UPLIFT EVERYONE.

INCONGRUENCE: YOUR CARE GIVING/TEACHING IS CHOPPY —LOVING TOWARD SOME, NOT SO LOVING TOWARD OTHERS. OR, YOU ARE SOMETIMES GENTLE, OTHERS TIMES OVERLY FIRM. OR, GENTLENESS IS FINE WHEN/IF IT WORKS.

CHECK ANY THAT APPLY:

1. THIS MAKES SENSE SOMETIMES
2. IF IT DOES NOT WORK, I WILL GET TOUGH!"
3. REALLY! GET REAL! SOME PEOPLE HAVE TO BE TAUGHT A LESSON!"
4. I AM TOUGH ON MY OWN KID! WHY NOT WITH THIS CHILD?"
- 5.

Now that you have looked at yourself, pick out two or three of the factors that you feel that you can improve. These then becomes your goals over the next few weeks. Remember, we are just starting with ourselves. Do not worry about anyone

else. If we can deepen our own gentleness, we will find ways to spread it outward.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

Take your time with changing these areas that need improvement. As you enter the process, you will find yourself gaining insight into how to deepen and spread your own gentleness.

Looking at the Child

Now is the time to also look at how well each child with a broken heart fares in relation to feeling safe, loved, engaged, and loving. This analysis should help us develop teaching goals and objectives that can be written in concrete (and measurable, if you wish) terms for Individual Education Plans. Remember, we hold that these feelings are the foundation of all teaching-learning. So, it is critical that we define where each child stands and then make any areas of weakness a basic part of educational planning.

Read through each of these factors and indicate where each child stands. The major areas of need should then be translated into goals and objectives.

ASSESSMENT OF OUR CHILDREN

INSTRUCTIONS: 1) SIT DOWN AT THE KITCHEN TABLE. 2) TALK ABOUT HOW SAFE, ENGAGED, LOVED, AND LOVING THE CHILD FEELS. 3) CIRCLE THE NUMBER ON EACH RATING SCALE THAT SEEMS TO BEST FIT. 4) JOT DOWN THREE FACTORS THAT ARE THE MOST ESSENTIAL TO TEACH THE CHILD.

1. RESPONSE TO TEACHERS' PRESENCE

FEARFUL 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 WARM

FEARFUL: THE CHILD SHOWS FEAR UPON SEEING THE TEACHER AND REACTS WITH BEHAVIORS SUCH AS YELLING, HITTING SELF, CURSING, HITTING OTHERS, TOSSING OBJECTS, DEMANDING FOOD, DRINK OF OTHER MATERIAL POSSESSIONS.

CHECKLIST:

- LOOKS TENSE, SCARED, OR DOWNTRODDEN
- SEEMS SAD, TEARFUL, OR LOST
- KEEPS EYES AND HEAD CAST DOWNWARD
- HITS SELF
- HITS OTHERS
- THROWS OBJECTS
- HORDES POSSESSIONS
- ACTS OBSESSIVELY
- LOOKS DISCONNECTED
- RUNS AWAY

2. RESPONSE TO TOUCH

FEARFUL 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 WARM

FEARFUL: THE CHILD RECOIL FROM TOUCH OR GIVES A FEELING OF DISCONNECTEDNESS.

CHECKLIST:

- HITS SELF
- HITS OTHERS
- MOVES AWAY
- LOOKS FEARFUL
- FLINCHES

- SELF-STIMULATES

WARM: THE CHILD RELAXES UPON BEING TOUCHED AND SHOWS AN ACCEPTANCE OF LOVING PHYSICAL CONTACT.

CHECKLIST:

- STAYS WITH THE CHILD
- SMILES UPON BEING TOUCHED
- GAZES LOVINGLY
- TALKS OR COMMUNICATES SWEETLY

3. RESPONSE TO TEACHERS' WORDS

FEARFUL 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 WARM

FEARFUL: THE CHILD RECOILS FROM WARM COMMUNICATION AS IF IT WERE INEVITABLY A DEMAND OR FAILS TO RESPOND AS IF DISCONNECTED.

CHECKLIST:

- REACTS TENSELY—LOOKS AWAY, BECOMES NERVOUS
- SELF-STIMULATES
- MOVES AWAY
- HURTS SELF OR OTHERS
- DOES NOT RESPOND OR OBSESSES
- CURSES, SCREAMS, MOANS

WARM: THE CHILD LISTENS TO TEACHER, RELAXES UPON HEARING THE TEACHER'S VOICE, AND RESPONDS WITH A SENSE OF CONTENTMENT TO IT.

CHECKLIST:

4. RESPONSE TO COUNTENANCE

FEARFUL 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 WARM

FEARFUL: THE CHILD MAINTAINS A SAD, EMPTY, OR DISCONNECTED FACIAL AND VISUAL EXPRESSION UPON SEEING THE TEACHER'S PRESENCE,

CHECKLIST:

- FROWNS
- APPEARS DISCONNECTED
- ACTS ANXIOUSLY
- BOWS HEAD
- CRIES

WARM: THE CHILD'S FACE LIGHTS UP UPON SEEING THE TEACHER AS SEEN IN RELAXED SMILES, WARM GAZES, AND CALM BODILY POSTURE.

- SMILES
- LIFTS HEAD UP
- RELAXES BODY POSTURE
- LOOKS LOVINGLY
- SLOWS DOWN PEACEFULLY

5. ACCEPTANCE OF DOING THINGS WITH TEACHERS

REJECTION 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 DESIROUS

REJECTION: THE CHILD REBELS AGAINST ANY INDICATION THAT SOMETHING IS ABOUT TO BE ASKED, EVEN WHEN A LOT OF HELP AND WARMTH IS GIVEN. THE CHILD YELLS, HITS, RUNS, OR CURSES AT ANY POSSIBLE REQUEST OR EVEN AN INDICATION OF ONE.

CHECKLIST:

- RUNS FROM TEACHER OR WITHDRAWS
- SCREAMS OR CURSES
- THROWS OBJECTS
- HURTS SELF OR OTHERS

DESIROUS: THE CHILD SHOWS INDICATIONS THAT HE/SHE WANTS TO BE WITH THE TEACHER AND PARTICIPATE.

CHECKLIST:

- STAYS WITH TEACHER, RELAXES, LOOKS CONTENT
- SMILES AT TEACHER
- STAYS WITH TEACHER
- TAKES TURNS

6. ACCEPTANCE OF DOING REQUESTED THINGS ON ONE'S OWN

REJECTION 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 AGREEABLE

REJECTION: THE CHILD ACTIVELY REFUSES TO DO ALMOST ANYTHING HE/SHE IS CAPABLE OF DOING ON HIS/HER OWN OR WITH WHATEVER DEGREE OF HELP NECESSARY SUCH AS DOING TASKS, PLAYING WITH OTHERS, TAKING TURNS, SHARING.

CHECKLIST:

1. ABSOLUTELY REFUSES
2. WITHDRAWS
3. ACTS OUT
4. BECOMES NERVOUS
5. INSISTS ON SOMETHING ELSE
- 6.

AGREEABLE: THE CHILD INITIATES TASKS ON OWN, ACCEPTS WHATEVER HELP MIGHT BE NECESSARY, OR ACCEPTS THE REQUEST TO DO CLASS WORK, SELF-CARE AND OTHER ACTIVITIES.

CHECKLIST:

1. CARES FOR SELF
2. HELPS OTHERS
3. DOES CLASS CHORES
4. DRAWS OTHERS INTO ACTIVITIES
- 5.

7. ACCEPTANCE OF DOING THINGS WITH PEERS

REJECTION 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 DESIROUS

REJECTION: THE CHILD REFUSES TO BE WITH PEERS AND PARTICIPATE WITH THEM IN ACTIVITIES.

CHECKLIST:

1. REFUSES TO BE WITH PEERS, MOVES AWAY, WITHDRAWS
2. HITS PEERS OR SELF

BECOMES JEALOUS
CLINGS TO TEACHER

8. ACCEPTANCE OF ACTS OF LOVE

REJECTION 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 DESIROUS

REJECTION: THE CHILD ACTS IN A DISCONNECTED OR REBELLIOUS MANNER WHEN PRAISED, GIVEN AFFECTION, OR GIVEN ENCOURAGEMENT.

CHECKLIST:

1. REJECTS LOVING TOUCH
2. REJECTS WARM GAZES
3. REJECTS KIND WORDS
4. REJECTS HELP
- 5.

DESIROUS: THE CHILD RESPONDS IN A PLEASANT MANNER TO ACTS OF AFFECTION, PRAISE, AND ENCOURAGEMENT.

CHECKLIST:

1. SMILES UPON BEING SMILED AT
2. REACHES OUT UPON BEING WARMLY TOUCHED
3. MOVES TOWARD TEACHER UPON BEING APPROACHED
4. LINGERS WITH TEACHER
5. COMMUNICATES WARMLY TO TEACHER & PEERS
- 6.

9. GIVING LOVE TOWARD OTHERS

AVOIDANCE 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 GIVING

AVOIDANCE: THE CHILD RARELY SHOWS ACTS OF AFFECTION TOWARD OTHERS SUCH AS SMILING, HUGGING, SHAKING HANDS, OR GAZING WARMLY. OR, THE CHILD IS MORE INTENT ON MATERIAL OBJECTS SUCH AS FOOD, DRINK, CIGARETTES, OR HOARDING THAN ON INTERACTING.

CHECKLIST:

1. SEEMS EMOTIONALLY DISCONNECTED
2. SELDOM REACHES OUT
3. SELDOM SMILES
4. SELDOM COMMUNICATES LOVINGLY
5. SELDOM PEACEFULLY SHARES FEELINGS
- 6.

GIVING: THE CHILD FREQUENTLY PERFORMS ACTS OF KINDNESS, SHARES POSSESSIONS, TALKS/COMMUNICATES ABOUT SORROW AND HOPE, AND SHOWS CONCERN FOR OTHERS.

CHECKLIST:

10. SELF-ESTEEM

POOR 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 GOOD

POOR: THE CHILD SEES SELF AS WORTHLESS AS SEEN IN POOR GROOMING, DIRTY CLOTHING, SELF-DEPREICATION, HURTING SELF, OR WITHDRAWAL FROM SOCIAL CONTACT.

CHECKLIST:

1. POORLY GROOMED
2. POORLY DRESSED
3. OBLIVIOUS TO DROOL AND ODORS
4. TALKS IN A DISCOURAGED WAY
5. COMPLAINS
6. HURTS SELF
7. IRRITABLE
8. EATS TOO MUCH OR TOO LITTLE
9. SLEEPS TOO MUCH OR TOO LITTLE
10. OVERLY VIGILANT
11. ISOLATES FROM HUMAN CONTACT
- 12.

GOOD: THE CHILD TAKES PRIDE IN SELF THROUGH BEHAVIORS SUCH AS PERSONAL CARE, ACTS OF LOVE TOWARD OTHERS, DECENT COMMENTS ABOUT SELF, OR PRIDE IN ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

CHECKLIST:

1. CLEANLY DRESSED AND GROOMED
2. COMMUNICATES HOPE
3. TAKES PRIDE IN ACCOMPLISHMENTS
4. TAKES DAY IN STRIDE
- 5.

11. KINDNESS

SELF- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 KIND
CENTERED

SELF-CENTERED: THE CHILD SEEMS NOT TO CARE ABOUT OTHERS AS SEEN IN THINGS SUCH AS DEMANDING EXCESSIVE ATTENTION, REFUSING TO COOPERATE, NOT SHARING, HOARDING, UNWILLING TO PLAY OR WORK WITH OTHERS.

CHECKLIST:

. HORDES POSSESSIONS
OBSESSES

KIND: THE CHILD FOCUSES ON THE WELL-BEING OF OTHERS BY OFFERING TO HELP OTHERS, GIVING TIME OR POSSESSIONS TO OTHERS, PLAYING OR WORKING TOGETHER, WAITING TURNS, AND SHARING.

CHECKLIST:

1. WAITS TURN AND SHARES
2. HELPS OTHERS AND SHOWS WARMTH TO THEM
- 3.

12. MORAL DEPTH

SHALLOW 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 DEEP

SHALLOW: THE CHILD APPEARS DISCONNECTED FROM OTHERS, ACTS FRIGHTENED, REBELS AGAINST INTERACTIONS, BECOMES CONFUSED OR NERVOUS ABRUPTLY.

CHECKLIST:

1. APPEARS DETACHED AND DISENGAGED
2. APPEARS SELF-CENTERED
3. REBELS AGAINST REQUESTS
4. FEARS PHYSICAL CONTACT
5. SELDOM REACHES OUT
- 6.

DEEP: THE CHILD EXPRESSES, THROUGH WORDS OR DEEDS, A SOLID MORAL SENSE THAT, "I AM SAFE WITH YOU. IT IS GOOD TO BE WITH YOU. I FEEL LOVED AND LOVING!".

CHECKLIST:

1. SHOWS COMPANIONSHIP
2. THINKS ABOUT OTHERS
3. SHARES
4. WANTS TO HELP
5. ENCOURAGES OTHERS
- 6.

13. EMOTIONAL STRENGTH

VULNERABLE 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 STRONG

VULNERABLE: THE CHILD HAS SYMPTOMS OF MENTAL ILLNESS SUCH AS HALLUCINATIONS, DELUSIONS, MANIA, BOUTS OF CRYING, OR OBSESSIONS. OR, THE CHILD HAS OTHER EMOTIONAL OR INTELLECTUAL DIFFICULTIES THAT MAKE HIM/HER EMOTIONALLY VULNERABLE.

CHECKLIST:

1. SEES FRIGHTENING BEINGS
2. ACTS IN A MANIC, RUSHED, EXAGGERATED WAY
3. FIXATES

4. REACTS VERY SLOWLY
5. CRIES OUT OF THE BLUE
6. OVERLY ANXIOUS
7. HAS FEW DAILY LIVING SKILLS
- 8.

STRONG: THE CHILD SHOWS ORDINARY SIGNS OF EMOTIONALITY SUCH AS HAPPINESS, SADNESS, PATIENCE, FRUSTRATION THAT DO NOT INTERFERE WITH DAILY LIVING.

CHECKLIST:

1. COMMUNICATES FEELINGS AND SHOW TOLERANCE
2. FEELS CONNECTED TO OTHERS
3. ACTIVELY PARTICIPATES IN LIFE DECISIONS
- 4.

14. COMMUNICATION OF NEEDS AND FEELINGS

UNABLE 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ENABLED

UNABLE: THE CHILD HAS TO REVERT TO ACTING OUT OR WITHDRAW TO COMMUNICATE FEELINGS.

CHECKLIST:

1. ACTS OUT OR WITHDRAWS TO COMMUNICATE
2. SELF-STIMULATES, GAZES INTO DISTANCE
3. CLINGS, STAYS IN "SAFE" SPOT
- 4.

ENABLED: THE CHILD IS ABLE OR HELPED TO EXPRESS NEEDS AND FEELINGS IN A MANNER THAT PREVENTS FRUSTRATION, ANXIETY, OR HOSTILITY.

CHECKLIST:

1. COMMUNICATES FEELINGS CONSTRUCTIVELY
2. HAS A WAY TO COMMUNICATE FEELINGS
3. EXPRESSES MORAL RULES
- 4.

15. COMMUNITY INCLUSION

EXCLUDED 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 INCLUSIVE

EXCLUDED: THE CHILD WITHDRAWS INTO HIS/HER OWN WORLD, REFUSES TO PARTICIPATE IN HOME, SCHOOL. OR COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES, OR ACTS

CHECKLIST:

1. PREFERS TO STAY IN BED OR REFUSES TO LEAVE HOME
2. DEMANDS EXCESSIVE ROUTINE
3. ATTENDS SEGREGATED SCHOOL OR WORK
4. HAS NO CIRCLE OF FRIENDS IN SCHOOL OR COMMUNITY
5. DOES NOT ATTEND COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES
6. BECOMES ANXIOUS OR OBNOXIOUS IN THE SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY
7. ACTS OUT IN THE SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY
8. IS CONSIDERED A THREAT TO THE SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY
- 9.

INCLUSIVE: THE CHILD ACTIVELY ENGAGES IN SCHOOL AND COMMUNAL ACTIVITIES AS SEEN IN BEHAVIORS SUCH AS RECREATING WITH OTHERS, HAPPILY GOING TO SCHOOL OR WORK, TAKING PRIDE IN ACCOMPLISHMENTS, AND TAKING PRIDE IN FRIENDSHIPS.

CHECKLIST:

1. GOES TO SCHOOL WITH CHILDREN WITHOUT SPECIAL NEEDS
2. PARTICIPATES IN COMMUNITY LIFE
3. HAS A CIRCLE OF FRIENDS

4. ACTIVE IN FAMILY LIFE
5. CELEBRATES SPECIAL EVENTS
- 6.

16. DEGREE OF SUPPORT NEEDED

SIGNIFICANT 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ORDINARY

SIGNIFICANT: THE CHILD NEEDS MAXIMUM STRUCTURE AND SUPPORT TO MAINTAIN AND DEEPEN A SENSE OF COMPANIONSHIP AND COMMUNITY. IF NOT GIVEN, THE CHILD WITHDRAWS OR ACTS OUT.
CHECKLIST:

1. REQUIRES A WELL PLANNED AND STABLE DAILY ROUTINE
2. REQUIRES 1:1 TEACHER-CHILD RATIO MUCH OF THE TIME
3. NEEDS CONSTANT HELP IN SELF-CARE
4. DANGER TO SELF
5. DANGER TO OTHERS
- 6.

ORDINARY: THE CHILD INITIATES ACTS OF COMPANIONSHIP AND COMMUNITY LIVING ON HER/HIS OWN WITH LITTLE NEED FOR GUIDANCE OR DIRECTION.

1. MANAGES OWN SCHEDULE AND DAILY ROUTINE
2. REQUIRES MINIMAL TEACHER SUPPORT
3. TAKES PRIDE IN SELF AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

17. TOLERANCE

RIGID 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 TOLERANT

RIGID: THE CHILD CANNOT HANDLE EVEN MINIMAL CHANGE SUCH AS CHANGE OF ROUTINE, SEATING, OR ACTIVITIES.

CHECKLIST:

1. IRRITABILITY
2. MOODINESS
3. REBELS AT SLIGHTEST CHANGE
4. INSISTS ON INFLEXIBLE ROUTINE
5. OBSESSIVE
6. COMPULSIVE
- 7.

TOLERANT: THE CHILD IS ABLE TO HANDLE CHANGES.

CHECKLIST:

1. CALM AND PEACEFUL
2. ACCEPTS CHANGE IN STRIDE
3. QUESTIONS CHANGE WITHOUT HOSTILITY
4. SHOWS KINDNESS TO MORE NEEDY
- 5.

NOW THAT YOU ARE FINISHED:

1) LOOK AT HOW YOU HAVE RATED THE CHILD. 2) THINK ABOUT WHICH FACTORS ARE MOST BASIC TO HELP THE CHILD LEARN OR DEEPEN A SENSE OF COMPANIONSHIP AND COMMUNITY. 3) PLEASE WRITE DOWN THE 3 FACTORS THAT SEEM TO BE THE MOST BASIC AND URGENT FOR THE CHILD'S SENSE OF COMPANIONSHIP AND COMMUNITY:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

SAVE THESE IDEAS! SEE HOW YOU CAN USE THEM TO WRITE A PLAN TO HELP THE CHILD DEVELOP A

DEEPER SENSE OF COMPANIONSHIP AND COMMUNITY.

INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATIONAL PLANS (IEP)

The Child As a Whole Being

Once we have assessed where we are at and where the child is at in terms of companionship, we are ready to develop an IEP for the child. Of course, this should involve the teacher, aides, parents, and other friends of the child. The ideal situation is when all come together as a circle of friends around the child. Of course, we have to see this as an evolving process. Sometimes, the "circle" might be very small, even just one person such as the parent or teacher. Do not worry. Take your time. Do your part. Look for ways to expand the circle and remember that all need to feel safe and loved.

The idea is to focus on the child's feelings of safe, love, engaged, and loving. What we think of as curriculum has to go to these more basic things. For a while, the three R's serve as a vehicle for teaching companionship. You can use the typical curriculum, but it plays a secondary role during this time period. If anyone thinks that this cannot be done, remind them, if this is not done, then much time will be wasted in trying to control the child. Instead, use this time to teach companionship.

A major mistake that we make is to concentrate their efforts on the negative. We busy ourselves and hold seemingly endless and fruitless meetings worried about how to get rid of behaviors. The challenge is not to get rid of behaviors, but to find ways to teach the person what we want him/her to become. If we do this, the negative behaviors will disappear, dissipate, or more tolerable.

HOW TO PLAN

The IEP planning process should be straightforward. We need to gather around the child friends and deal with the factors that follow:

PLANNING STEPS

- 1) DISCUSS EACH CHILD'S GIFTS
- 2) ANALYZE EACH USING THE *ASSESSMENT OF THE COMPANION SCALE*
- 3) SUMMARIZE MAJOR COMPANIONSHIP NEEDS
- 4) DESCRIBE A PLAN FOR TEACHING SAFE, LOVED, ENGAGED, AND LOVING
- 5) DESCRIBE WHERE YOU HOPE THE CHILD WILL BE IN 3 MONTHS
- 6) DESCRIBE WHAT YOU WILL BEGIN TEACHING AS OF NOW
- 7) DESCRIBE WHAT YOUR METHODOLOGY WILL BE
- 8) DESCRIBE HOW YOU WILL LESSEN ANY BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS

You are ready to write An IEP that focuses on the child's feeling of companionship. Keep it simple, clear, and concrete. Use your own words

IEP PROCESS

I. GIFTS:

STATE THE CHILD'S GIFTS AS YOU SEE THEM:

- PERSONAL QUALITIES AND CHARACTERISTICS
- UNIQUE WAYS OF INTERACTING
- SPECIAL TALENTS
- DEEP RELATIONSHIPS
- ACTS OF CARING AND KINDNESS
- UNIQUE WAYS OF COMMUNICATING
- HOBBIES
- RELIGIOUS BELIEFS
- RESPECT FOR FRIENDS AND FAMILY
- SPECIAL WAYS OF CARING FOR SELF

II. ASSESSMENT OF COMPANIONSHIP NEEDS:

DESCRIBE THE MAJOR NEEDS THAT YOU FOUND IN THE *ASSESSMENT OF THE COMPANION*. USE THE LIST BELOW AS A WAY TO ORGANIZE WHAT YOU FOUND:

- NEEDS RELATED TO FEELING SAFE

—

- NEEDS RELATED TO FEELING ENGAGED
-

- NEEDS RELATED TO FEELING LOVED
-
- NEEDS RELATED TO LOVING OTHERS
-

III. GOALS:

IMAGINE THE DEGREE YOU THINK THAT THE CHILD CAN GROW OVER THE NEXT THREE MONTHS. RESPOND TO THESE QUESTIONS AS THEY APPLY. NAME WHAT THE CHILD WILL BE DOING ON A DAILY BASIS THREE MONTHS FROM NOW THAT WOULD INDICATE THAT HE/SHE:

- 1) FEELS MORE SAFE WITH TEACHERS, PARENTS, PEERS, OR COMMUNITY MEMBERS
—
- 2) FEELS MORE ENGAGED WITH TEACHERS, PARENTS, PEERS, OR COMMUNITY MEMBERS
- 3) FEELS MORE LOVED BY TEACHERS, PARENTS, PEERS, OR COMMUNITY MEMBERS
- 4) FEELS MORE LOVING TOWARD TEACHERS, PARENTS, PEERS, OR COMMUNITY MEMBERS

2. NEEDS—STATE THE PERSON'S NEEDS IN RELATION TO THEIR INTERACTIONAL SKILLS, MOST ESPECIALLY AS THEY RELATE TO FEELINGS OF COMPANIONSHIP.

IV. INTERACTIONS TO TEACH RIGHT NOW:

IT IS TIME TO GET DOWN TO BUSINESS. WHAT SPECIFIC INTERACTIONS ARE YOU GOING TO START TEACHING THE CHILD RIGHT NOW AS A WAY TO MOVE TOWARD THE GOALS THAT YOU DESCRIBED ABOVE? THESE HAVE TO BE VERY CLEAR, SPECIFIC, AND CONCRETE. IN A WAY, WE HAVE TO INITIALLY DECREASE OUR EXPECTATIONS, BUT INCREASE OUR HOPE. IT IS HERE THAT YOU WILL BEGIN TO SEE THE CHILD LEARN INTERACTIONS LIKE FREQUENT SMILES, HUGS, DOING THINGS TOGETHER, AND STAYING WITH PARENTS, TEACHERS, PEERS. AS WE TEACH THESE, OUR EXPECTATIONS WILL ZOOM BECAUSE OUR HOPE WILL BE STRENGTHENED.

USE THE *ASSESSMENT OF THE COMPANION* TO REFRESH YOUR MEMORY ABOUT WHAT THE CHILD NEEDS. GO FOR SMALL STEPS. FILL OUT THE SPACES BELOW IN THE AREAS THAT APPLY.

* FEELS SAFE:

* FEELS ENGAGED:

* FEELS LOVED:

* FEELS LOVING:

V. METHODOLOGY

THIS SECTION ASKS YOU TO DESCRIBE HOW YOU ARE GOING TO TEACH THE INTERACTIONS THAT YOU OUTLINED IN NUMBER IV ABOVE. STOP AND THINK ABOUT HOW THE CHILD WILL REACT, WHAT VARIABLES YOU WILL HAVE TO DEAL WITH, AND HOW YOU WILL USE YOUR TOUCH, WORDS, COUNTENANCE, AND PRESENCE. PICK OUT 1-3 ACTIVITIES TO USE AS A VEHICLE TO KEEP YOURSELF ENGAGED WITH THE CHILD:

- WHERE YOU WILL BE, WHEN, AND FOR HOW LONG
- WHAT ACTIVITIES WILL YOU USE
- HOW WILL YOU SIMPLIFY THEM
- WHAT SEQUENCE WILL YOU USE IN THE TASK
- HOW MUCH WARM HELP WILL YOU HAVE TO GIVE
- HOW WILL YOU CARRY YOURSELF
- WHERE WILL YOU SIT OR STAND IN RELATION TO THE PERSON
- WHAT WILL YOUR MORAL THEMES BE
- HOW WILL YOU TOUCH THE CHILD
- WHERE WILL YOU TOUCH THE CHILD
- HOW WILL YOU TALK TO THE CHILD
- WHAT WILL YOU TALK ABOUT
- HOW WILL YOU TAKE AWAY THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ANY OBSESSIONS
- HOW WILL YOU REACT IF THE CHILD ACTS WITH VIOLENCE
- HOW WILL YOU USE YOUR FACE AS A TOOL
- WHAT WILL YOU DO IF THE CHILD LEAVES
- HOW WILL YOU PREVENT ANY BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS
- HOW WILL YOU LESSEN THE IMPACT OF ANY PROBLEMS
-

To make sure that everyone is going in the same direction, fill out the tool below for a more concrete design for your methodology. We have to be certain that everyone in the circle is going to use the same approach—each in her/his own way and authentically, but within the parameters of the circle's decisions. Remember, there are no easy or pat answers. But, if we know where we are headed and why we want to arrive there, we will be able to at least convey an approach that is not confusing to the child nor contradictory. This is a major way to also help the person feel safe among us.

QUICK METHODOLOGY			
CHILD HELPED: _____ PRIMARY CARE GIVER: _____ CARE GIVERS: _____ TEACHING TIMES—FOR _____ MINUTES ____ TIMES PER DAY PEERS INVOLVED, IF ANY: _____ WHERE: _____ WHAT SEATING ARRANGEMENT: _____ WHICH ACTIVITIES OR TASKS: _____			
EXPRESSION OF LOVE	TASK SEQUENCE	WARM HELPING	PREVENTION
TOUCH:			

DIALOGUE:			
COUNTENANCE:			

EXAMPLE OF A PERSONALIZED INTERACTIONAL PLAN

The following is an example of an IEP to help give you a clearer idea of what a plan might look like. The rules are: the simpler, the better; the more concrete, the more acceptable; and, the more focused on what we want the person to become, the more hopeful. This is a plan about a child named Timothy. He has autism and a range of behavioral difficulties: self-injury, distractability, tactile defensiveness, hitting, biting, and screaming. He has spent the last several years with his arms in tubes to prevent his self-aggression.

TIMOTHY'S PLAN

I. Gifts

- * Occasional warm gazes
- * Playful laughter
- * Some reaching out
- * Doing activities with trusted care givers
- * Staying with care givers when stressed
- * Acknowledging care giver
- * Demonstrated love toward mother and father
- * Mother's concern and love for Timothy
- * Playful when relaxed
- * Some responsiveness to care giver warmth

II. NEEDS RELATED TO FEELING:

- * **SAFE:**
- * Rejects touch when stressed
- * Refuses to leave his home
- * Shows fear when asked to do an activity
- * Becomes fearful during transitions
- * Yells incongruent words
- * **ENGAGED:**
- * Has extreme trouble doing activities
- * Is easily distractable
- * Hits self if pressured
- * **LOVED:**
- * Rejects touch frequently
- * Pushes care givers away by hitting self
- * **LOVING OTHERS:**
- * Difficulty reaching out
- * Difficulty in showing affection

III. GOALS IN RELATION TO FEELING:

- * **SAFER:**
- * Will leave home without fear
- * Will transition well in activities
- * Will accept loving touch from care givers
- * **ENGAGED:**
- * Will spend 40-minutes at a stretch on activities
- * Will go from task to task easily
- * Will do activities with three other peers
- * **LOVED:**

IV. INTERACTIONS TO TEACH STARTING RIGHT NOW:

- ACCEPTS CARE GIVER TOUCH TO HANDS, ARMS, AND FACE
- REACHES HAND OUT WITH CARE GIVER HELP
- PARTICIPATES ON TASKS FOR 20 MINUTES AT A TIME
- GAZES WARMLY AT CARE GIVER
-

V. METHODOLOGY

- * WHEN: 8 times per day for 20-minutes sessions
- * WHERE: Classroom at school and kitchen at home
- * ACTIVITIES: Simplified games—e.g., give and take
- * WITH WHOM: Mother, teacher, teacher aide
- * PREPARATION: Seating, materials
- * EBB AND FLOW SEQUENCE: The following lists the events that care givers will take as they encounter Timothy in an ebb and flow manner—sometimes more, sometimes less . . .
- a) Present self slowly and loving.
- b) Make no demands initially, other than your presence.
- c) Spend a few moments near him nurturing him.
- d) If possible, start the task with him.
- e) If not, start it yourself.
- f) Throughout, give continuous touch to hands, arms, and eventually the face—softly, slowly, and gently
- g) Throughout, speak about what a good person he is and how doing things together means friendship—softly, slowly, gently,
- h) Throughout, keep your face within his gaze even when he looks away.
- i) If he leaves, get up with him, accompany him slowly, and place less demands on him. If possible, continue to touch him lightly and talk lovingly to him.
- j) When he stops, try to reintroduce the activity—standing or sitting, but do not make him feel pressured
- k) If necessary, forget about the task for a while, and just be with him—touching, talking, and gazing warmly.
- l) If he tries to hit himself or his care giver, shadow his hands to protect him, but say nothing about it. Continue to talk and touch lovingly.
- m) Remember to keep a smooth flow throughout the interactions, give as much help as possible, avoid touching him to get him to do the task, instead, either continue doing it yourself or simply insert it into his hand and then take it out.

Timothy's Community

To give you an idea of and feel for the methodology, look at the Quick Methodology tool that follows. Think about yourself and your involvement with someone whom you are trying to teach a feeling of companionship. You have to bring your own personality, gifts, and vulnerabilities to the teaching situation, but still reflect the culture of the community. Timothy's care givers' followed this simplified methodology after thoroughly discussing their approach above:

CHEAT SHEET			
PERSON HELPED: TIMOTHY PRIMARY CARE GIVER: ANA CARE GIVERS: ANA, JOE, JOHN TEACHING TIMES: 20 MINUTES DURING 8 TIMES PER DAY WHERE: CLASSROOM AT SCHOOL AND KITCHEN TABLE AT HOME SEATING ARRANGEMENT: CARE GIVER FACE TO FACE AT TABLE TASKS: VARIABLE. KEEP SIMPLE.			
EXPRESSION OF LOVE	SEQUENCE OF TASK	WARM HELPING	PREVENTION
<i>TOUCH:</i> * HANDS, FACE, ARMS VERY SLOWLY & SOFTLY * LINGER AS LONG AS YOU CAN <i>DIALOGUE:</i> * TALK ABOUT HOW	<i>TIPS:</i> * GIVE AS MUCH HELP AS NECESSARY TO KEEP A SMOOTH FLOW * DO NOT TELL HIM OR PHYSICALLY HELP HIM TO DO THE TASK * INSERT A PART OF THE TASK INTO HIS	<i>TIPS:</i> * ALL TOUCH IS FOR SHOWING WARMTH * ALL WORDS ARE FOR MORAL DIALOGUE <i>EBB & FLOW:</i> 1) GO FROM MAXIMUM HELP TO LESS BUT AT	<i>TIPS:</i> * NO ORDERING OR EVEN ASKING. JUST SAY, "NOW WE'RE GOING TO..." * NO GRABBING OR HAND OVER HAND HELP. INSERT OR DO IT FOR HIM

<p>YOU WILL NOT HURT HIM, HE IS GOOD, & IT IS GOOD TO BE TOGETHER</p> <p>FACE: KEEP FACIAL CONTACT EVEN WHEN HE LOOKS AWAY, SMILE WARMLY HANDS, FACE</p>	<p>HAND AND THEN TAKE IT OUT AND DO THE REST FOR HIM * IF NECESSARY, JUST DO THE WHOLE THING FOR HIM * THEN FIND A WAY TO DRAW HIM IN * THIS WILL GO IN AN EBB AND FLOW</p> <p>SEQUENCE: 1) MATERIALS AT YOUR SIDE 2) START TASK WHILE TALKING TO HIM 3) DRAW HIM IN 4) YOU PICK UP FIRST PIECE 5) IF POSSIBLE, HAND IT TO HIM 6) TAKE IT FROM HIM AND COMPLETE THE STEP 7) GRADUALLY</p>	<p>ANY MOMENT, GO BACK TO MORE 2) IF NECESSARY, THE MOST HELP IS TO DO IT FOR HIM 3) KEEP THE FLOW SMOOTH, NOT A MOMENT OF HESITATION</p>	<p>* IF HE STARTS TO: — ROCK — LOOK NERVOUS — HIT SELF BACK OFF. GIVE MORE HELP. STAY PEACEFUL * IF HE TRIES TO HIT, SAY NOTHING ABOUT IT, KEEP TALKING LOVINGLY, TOUCHING WARMLY, BUT USE YOUR HAND OR ARM TO SHADOW THE HITS * AT THE SAME TIME, TRY TO KEEP THE TASK GOING SMOOTHLY BY GIVING MORE HELP * IF NECESSARY, GO FOR A SHORT WALK OR BREAK</p>
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By now, you should have a fairly good grasp of how to design a plan to teach a feeling of companionship. These should be done by the child's circle of friends and presented by them at team meetings. Their successful outcome will depend largely on practice making perfect. The more you interact from a companionship perspective, the more you will develop the necessary teaching skills. So, take your time and persevere.

You will also need the courage and skills to explain/defend them in formal meetings that approve/disapprove of plans. The greatest assets that you have are your values based on gentleness and justice and the fact that you are working with and teaching the child in a hands-on way. Do not be bashful in reminding others of this. The second asset is that you wrote the plan as a circle of friends. Each has her/his role to play and all are focused on teaching companionship and community.