

Refrigerator Notes

Ideas to Keep Yourself and Your Family on Track

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The following is for professional Behavior Consultants that have more in-depth reference materials on the strategies below available to them from other sources. Children are generically referred to as “Learners.”

When doing Behavior Intervention Consultation, you can and the parent can become overwhelmed with the number of things that need change, and the issues that pop up unplanned.

It's always best to try to pull out one or two themes of your consultation session for the parent to practice, and to make a big, handwritten sign for the parent to put on the refrigerator. This stays up there for a week or so, and serves as a reminder of the skill they are supposed to practice. Parents can be easily overwhelmed by too much information and too many things to work on at once. They really appreciate these. Refrigerator Notes also go a long way towards maintaining consistency among Caregivers.

I've taken the liberty of choosing a few of our “favorites.” The actual ‘Refrigerator Note’ is the bold text. There are short explanations here as points of consultation, but you don't put those up on the refrigerator – *that has to be covered in much more individualized detail in the consultation process.* The explanations given here are far from adequate.

A lot of these techniques require practice, which is yet another reason to work on one thing at a time and to have a big sign on the refrigerator.¹

COOPERATION and TEACHING SKILLS or BEHAVIORS

Guided Participation Teaching (GPT)

These notes refer to specific teaching tactics we teach parents to do that are designed to:

- ✓ Reframe teaching as *guiding to reference points* that encourage the Learner to think and prompt him or herself. To reframe learning as learning how to find reference points and think, rather than comply, respond and otherwise follow directions and prompting.
- ✓ Help maximize the effect of teaching actions. These have to do with helping the Learner manage his or her attention, focus on key reference points; providing the conditions conducive to the Learner paying attention in a mindful way that maximizes the absorption of the words or lesson. Parents learn the difference between partial, poor quality v. mindful attention.
- ✓ Set limits and demands in ways that are most likely to encourage cooperation. This also involves teaching the parents the difference between “compliance” (which is not our emphasis or goal) and “cooperation (which is our goal).”

¹ This document does not explain the techniques, it merely references them. Explanations of the techniques are found elsewhere in our materials library. If you don't know, you should ask.

- **GPT: The Job of the Guide is to Help (the Child) Discover Reference Points**

This is both a defining philosophical feature of our methods, as well as a foundation and set of tactics emanating from it. We value teaching Dynamic Intelligence and Cooperation over Responding, Following Directions or Prompts and Complying. Neurotypicals usually don't have to be told what to do. Nor do they operate in the world by executing rehearsed behavioral or spoken scripts when certain cues are present. Rather, they respond to any uncertainty as to what to do or say or think by looking at available information – what we call “reference points.” A reference point can be any source of relevant information from the past or present.

Reference points can be tangible and observable (a long line at the cashier means a probable long wait; a frown indicates that someone is dissatisfied and some sort of change in behavior is called for; if others are cleaning up, then the activity is over [and helping is appropriate], etc.).

Very important reference points for socially and emotionally intelligent responding are often intangible (but often still observable). That is, our choices of interactive behavior usually depend upon our notions of what others are thinking or what they intend. We observe patterns in their behaviors and emotional expressions that give us clues to their ongoing and ever-changing thinking states and intentions. We look at context and history and previous or current patterns of behavior as reference points to understand people's current behavior.

Parents learn to rely less on guiding their child by giving directions and prompting, or otherwise telling them what to do. Instead, parents learn to examine the natural reference points *they use* and *the rest of us use* to know what to do, what is needed or to be able to solve problems. By reflecting on the reference points they and everyone else use, they are in a position to know where to guide their child's attention. As the note implies, if the job of the Guide is to help the Learner discover reference points, then the job of the Learner is to discover or search for reference points as the rest of us do.

Related tactics may involve simplifying, slowing down, enhancing, exaggerating reference points, stopping the action as a cue to look around and notice, indirect prompting (moving closer; moving salient objects or items closer; looking in the direction of a reference point; giving nonverbal [body language, gestures; affects] or prosodic feedback [tone of voice – exaggerated or isolated {without the words}] etc.). The emphasis of teaching shifts from directing and the emphasis of learning shifts from waiting for prompts or cues (that are usually added to and not indigenous to or naturally available in the environment) towards “figuring out” what to do by finding relevant reference points.

- **GPT: Noticeable, but Not Overwhelming: Helping the Child Discover/Notice Reference Points**

Exaggeration and **amplification** of reference points are tactics to get children to notice on their own. A sudden pause or break in the action can make a reference point noticeable, or function as a cue for the Learner that there is a problem to be solved or a change to be made and to search for a reference point.

We use the metaphor of a volume dial. For instance, if a child does something inappropriate, a slight gasp or look might be the kind of social cue they can expect – a reference point that some sort of change of behavior is needed.

But a subtle gesture such as that might not be noticeable to the Learner. They have little sensitivity to it in other words. So we say to parents to 'gasp' or provide a very exaggerated facial expression at "Volume 10" to make it noticeable. We use the companion metaphor that the Learner is "hard of hearing" when it comes to nonverbal communication.

Highly noticeable, "Volume 10" amplifications of normal social/emotional or environmental reference points train the Learner's antennae. Once the Learner discovers the connections (learns the meaning and associations), the parent can start "dialing down the volume."

On the other hand, if we exaggerate or amplify too much, we can scare or startle the Learner. We want to be noticeable enough, but not overwhelming, and our ultimate goal is to always "dial it down to levels he or she can expect in normal circumstances."

- **GPT: Let X (Child) do the Thinking:** See the paper entitled: "Give the Problem, Not the Solution"

Parents are often in the habit of thinking for the Learner and converting their thinking into prompts and directions. This puts the Learner into a passive mode where the choice is to try and comply or to resist. The child does not have opportunities to learn how to think.

Parents learn there is more than one correct response. When parents prompt and direct, there is usually only one way to do it. When the Learner thinks of a solution, they are thinking dynamically.

- **GPT: Proximity is Power**

Parents often give directions when they are outside the Learner's zone of attention, and their 'words don't count.' We teach then to move closer when distractions compete for the Learner's attention. If moving closer is still not enough, bringing objects, or even touching the Learner (hand on shoulder or forearm) can help the Learner make the switch of attention from their self-directed reference points to now start paying attention to the parent.

- **GPT: (Transitions) Eliminate the Competition**

Parents compete with visual clutter or noisy rooms; the Learner's ongoing actions; TVs, etc. and they have difficulty getting and keeping their child's attention. Sometimes, you are tuning their awareness to the fact that they are competing unnecessarily for their child's attention, or reminding parents that they should remove items or stop actions that interfere with their child's ability to pay attention to them.

- **GPT: Wait for Mindful Attention**

Parents often speak before the Learner is focused sufficiently for true listening and thinking. They learn to wait until the Learner stops attending to competing stimuli or reference points, and clearly demonstrates being settled and focused on what the parent is about to say or do. This ties in with using proximity; it makes words count; and it maximizes the percentage of what they say that is

actually absorbed by the Learner.

- **GPT: Don't talk to the Back of his Head (or) Don't Repeat Yourself (or) MAKE YOUR WORDS COUNT**

This is related to the subject of Mindful Attention. Parents are to communicate only when they know they have their child's full attention. (Many other tactics for facilitating optimal attention are listed below as well)

Parents tend to repeat themselves and to talk to the back of the Learner's head. Talking to the back of the Learner's head is not only something very commonly done by parents and professionals; it is a metaphor for wasted breath. Special needs children, need for the most direct and efficient routs to mindful attention. Parents that wait for, and consciously and deliberately arrange for moments of optimal child attention, generally experience the most success and satisfaction.

Parents are reminded to establish a visual, Joint Attention Triangle (JAT) whenever possible. The JAT includes the Learner, a communication partner, and an idea or point of view they share. This can be simple and concrete, such as two people sharing the same concrete reference point – a tangible object they're both looking at: both partners shift their gaze between the object they both are referring to in the conversation and each other's faces and actions.

Partners tend to check each other's faces just to see if the partner is actually looking at or referring to the same thing. We want to be sure that when we talk about something – we're both talking about the same thing. So we look back and forth at each other – not excessively frequently (unless where anxiously unsure), but generally *frequently enough*, so that partners can remain in sync as their conversation goes from one idea to another (i.e. one reference point or perspective point to another).

General Rule of Thumb for Repeating Yourself

Repeat only if you are reasonably sure that the Learner doesn't really know, or has forgotten what to do.

If the Learner is lost; is starting to become frustrated; has forgotten what she was doing, or does not have all of the skills needed to figure out what to do – you should do *something*.

Repeating a rule, direction or prompt is *one* way of doing it – but it does the thinking and remembering for the Learner and is therefore not ideal.

Giving slightly stronger hints; pointing out reference points for thinking; and other indirect guiding methods are better – because the Learner has the responsibility for figuring out what to do.

Adults can and should repeat rules, directions, prompts, etc. *when necessary*, but they tend to overdo it – to a great extent in most cases. So we first want them to be aware when they repeat and how many times they have repeated the same thing.

We want them to not only bring it to their awareness, we want them to consider whether or not the prompt was truly necessary.

MOST PROMPTS ARE TO HURRY CHILDREN UP

When parents and Consultants examine this closely, we almost always find that most prompting is for the purpose of speeding up a child's performance or to get an undesirable behavior to stop sooner.

When children are learning to think, we need to first – *expect that they do it and be responsible for it in some way*. But just as importantly – we need to give them ample time and opportunities.

PROMPTS AND REMINDERS ARE SIGNS THAT ADULTS ARE STILL DOING THE THINKING

Prompting can speed up a routine or get something to happen sooner because adults can use their memories and problem solving skills faster. It is easier for the parents to remember the sequences, the consequences, and everything else, and spit it out bit by bit in the form of continuous, unnecessary prompting. The child doesn't have to remember much.

The prompting therefore has a counter-effect: It relieves the Learner of any responsibility for remembering. When children are over-prompted, they habituate to the prompting and tune it out. They commit little to memory.

However, when they are forced to figure out what to do – to discover the reference points and make adjustments as necessary – they tend to remember more. This is because their minds are more involved.

The "50 Time Rule"

50 is just a number. It 'signifies' repeating the same things over and over. For instance, practically all of us we reminded at least 50 times to remember to say, "Please," "Thank you;" to wash our hands before eating, etc.).

After that, when we forgot, we would get "*the look*" from our parents. That look would prompt us to remember.

We encourage parents to replace direct prompts with indirect ones. One of the most indirect forms of prompts is simply a reminder to "think." You can demand, "think!" Or you can wait, or; you can give hints or looks or whatever scaffold you think will help the Learner think. What a parent seeks to avoid is taking over the thinking and falling back on prompting.

However, "The 50 Time Rule" is a refrigerator note that reminds parents to *expect* the Learner to think and remember. It is a reminder to not repeat themselves or prompt without thinking about it. "*The look*" is a handy device – but a facial expression is also a prompt.

That is why the best prompt is simply to pause. The pause is a sign that something didn't happen that should've happened; or it can be a sign that something that shouldn't have happened, happened.

- **GPT: Show Instead of Tell**

Parents often give instructions instead of simply showing or sharing and modeling the task. This is good when introducing Guided Participation Teaching with the parent in the lead, and a gradual transfer of responsibility.

This is also good for transitions (see 'X and Y' and 'Declarative Actions' below). Parents show the Learner what they want them to do instead of describing and giving a bunch of verbal directions.

This is also good when either the parent overuses words or verbal prompting or the Learner is dependent upon directions. The child learns to observe and discover reference points that indicate a need for thinking or action, rather than depending on the parent to point them out. Declarative actions often suggest action, reducing the need for artificial prompting.

- **GPT: Make Your Words Count**

We try to get parents to stop talking so much; to stop over-prompting. This encourages them to use more nonverbal communication, and, when they do speak, to wait for the Learner's mindful attention and to use phrases readily absorbed by their child.

- **GPT: It's Not What You Say; it's What (he/she) Takes Away**

A version of the above. Parents think that if they say something, the Learner either understands, or actually paid attention. This gets parents to focus not on what they say, but on how they say it, and to think very much about whether their child actually listened or understood what they've said.

- **GPT/ Floortime: Key into Your Child's Actual Reference Points**

This is a large lesson that includes teaching parents about how we typically use different kinds of reference points when we are uncertain about things. First, we remind them of typical ways they use reference points, so they get what we mean. We also clear up the confusion and tendency to conflate "referencing" with eye contact or looking at your face.

Once they understand what their reference points are, they learn to key into the ones their child uses. Often, they are the wrong ones. Sometimes, they don't look for any reference points, other and they either withdraw, protest, or wait for directions (all forms of avoiding thinking and developing dynamic intelligence).

- **GPT/Floortime: Violate Expectations**

In order to get that voluntary shift of attention towards us or towards a reference point, we engage a child in a regular pattern; or we join a child in an ongoing pattern or sequence of actions. Patterns help us anticipate what will happen next. The more regular or repetitive the pattern is, the less we actually pay attention to it. So we "violate" expectations when we do something unexpected. This usually causes a pause in the action and hopefully, the Learner responds by doing some thinking and searching for a reference point that will enable her to figure out what to do next. This is the gist of relationship-based teaching (RDI/GPT; Floortime)

- Floortime: **Follow and Help Fulfill Intentions**

Reminds parents to follow their child's intentions in Floortime, rather than try to provide new leads or to elicit preconceived skills or behaviors. The child's intentions are revealed in their affects, their actions, in their gaze direction, and if fortunate enough – in words. Adult interactions that are inconsistent or not congruent or antithetical to the Learner's intentions will result in loss of reciprocity (circles). The child will stop doing what she is doing and break ongoing interactive synchrony and reciprocity. Sometimes, the Learner will withdraw or get aggressive.

- **Watch and Then Join:** Some children are very rigid and there is little or no room for incorporating anyone else into their play. The stereotypical example is the Learner that lines up trains or that sets up complex visual tableaux that no one else can disturb or touch.

By sitting and watching for a while, you may notice that the setting up of the tableau follows the same pattern with little variation. By learning this pattern, the parent can join by becoming the "supplier" of the *next* item.

- **Be a Helper First:** The parent joins in a simple "Giver/Doer" pattern where the parent is the "Giver" and the Learner is the "Doer." The parent gets in the way of the Learner's access to the parts, and then hands them to the Learner in the "correct" order. From there, the parent can be playful and "make mistakes," which fosters communication. This can be easier than trying to join directly and add variations. Simply becoming the "Giver" is a major variation from the original play.
- **Be Jane Goodall:** Some kids won't let you even hand them their stuff. They are very anxious.

Jane Goodall, the noted primatologist, famously sat and observed in proximity a troop of chimpanzees. She barely moved a muscle and quietly took notes as the chimps got used to her presence. If she pushed any harder, the chimps would've rejected her or worse.

This is a metaphor for going very slowly and letting the Learner regulate their anxiety first. This is for parents that want to push, or that expect to "hit the ground running" with their extremely anxious or rigid child.

- Floortime: **Create Intentionality**

This may seem contradictory to the tactic of following and fulfilling intentions, but some children wander aimlessly and do not display intentional behavior beyond reaching and grabbing (if even that). Parents are reminded to use special Floortime tactics to create reciprocal reactions and intentionality.

- GPT: **Create Intentionality**

Most GPT activities provide a child with a simple role and role responsibility (see below).

GPT: So **What's New?** *What Did You Learn?*

Focuses parents on the goals of interaction. Interactions are not haphazard, and we don't work on new emotional skills only during contrived trials. The parent looks for the new products of interactions, becomes increasingly aware of them, and then is prepared to guide the Learner towards new outcomes in a systematic way.

GPT: The Emotional Resilience Trial (ERT)

Focuses parents on the mechanisms of creating motivation and cooperation in the Learner. New products (above), are the results of naturally occurring breaks in continuity or synchrony: moments of temporary uncertainty. The ERT is a way of conceptualizing and mapping them out. There are [accompanying documentation and forms](#).

GPT: **The Positive Outcome ERT:** Intentionally breaking the pattern results in creative thinking and problem solving. In the process, the Learner discovers something new.

In conversation and experience sharing, the focus is entirely on new products. One partner tells the other something he or she didn't know – even if it is just a comment or opinion on what the person is doing or not doing.

As Learners engage in regular minor breakdowns such as this, they develop skill sets. Studies by Tronick show that breakdowns comprise about a third of interact, and repairing another third – with only a third spent in harmonious synchrony. It is in the repair process that Learners try things and see what works and what doesn't work. Tronick maintains that we learn most of our social and emotional skills this way.

Because we learn from breakdowns and are supposed to learn from them and benefit – they build a sense of competence and confidence in the Learner that he refers to as “resilience.” “Resilience” has practically become an entire field of study.

GPT: The Negative Outcome ERT: Negative outcomes occur when the breakdowns go unrepaired and the Learner leaves with a sense of failure. Other negative outcomes occur when the Learner finds that coercive behavior works (it is reinforced), or the Learner responds by withdrawing and becoming risk-averse and inflexible.

Parents use the accompanying forms or the heuristic to analyze the new products of GPT interactions.

GPT: Little Jobs

As part of our Citizenship program, parents are encouraged – and we help them find meaningful roles to play in the daily lives of their parents and the rest of the family. These are Adult-lead activities, whether they are task or play oriented (as opposed to Floortime/Child-lead).

A '**social coordination**' is any activity in which two or more partners function as a unit in interdependent roles. Each partner performs a role that in some way depends on what the other partner does, has done, is doing, or is likely to do.

Roles have “role *actions*” associated with them. For instance, if I hold the bag open while you put potatoes in it, then my role actions might include acquiring the bag; opening it; adjusting the position of it, etc. *Your* role actions would be to get potatoes and put them in the bag. If I move or close the bag – you have to stop trying to put potatoes inside – so your actions depend on mine. If you stop filling potatoes, I might close the bag or ask for more – so my actions are dependent upon yours.

Social coordinations are not simply instrumental arrangements centered on performing tasks or getting things done. A conversation is a social coordination – where each partner performs roles associated with their roles as speaker and listener; sender or receiver, etc.

The next few refrigerator notes describe simpler types of social coordinations we call “Little Jobs.” They tend to be defined by simple tasks. These can represent a child’s first exposure to long chains of back and forth interaction because the roles – if chosen well, are fairly easy to teach and to perform. As a result, they are more likely to make the Learner and parent feel successful and motivated.

The simplest of all task oriented activities...

- **GPT: Filling Up and Emptying**

Children in their second year are fascinated with filling things up and emptying things out. It just so happens that many household tasks involve that very same thing. We consider putting anything inside something else (trash can; drawer; refrigerator; basket or tub), as well as putting anything on a shelf or in a cabinet, etc. to be a form of “filling up.”

Filling up can be very simple: such as putting items in a trash can or piling toys into a toy box. In this “filling up” mode, there is no particular order or organization to it – as long as the object goes in or on the container. This can also apply to filling containers up with liquids (pouring – which can also occur with rice, cereal, etc.), etc.

Some tasks require concepts of category or order, such as putting laundry away in the right places; putting objects in the right drawer; matching to sample – as in sorting eating utensils into a drawer-sorter; toys into different bins according to category (cars and trucks here; stuffed animals there, games and puzzles over there, etc.).

- GPT: “**Giver/Doer:**” This is the simplest ‘Social coordination.’ One partner gives, and the other does. Depending on the Learner’s capacities, the parent or child could function as either the giver or doer. These roles can be switched.

An example would be: the Learner takes groceries out of the bag and “gives” items to the parent. Here, the parent puts the items away, because that requires rule-based thinking (sorting and matching according to different attributes) that the Learner may not be ready to do yet.

- ✓ *The parent **gives** the Learner an item of laundry and the Learner **puts** it in the washer or drier.*

- ✓ *The parent **hands** forks one-by-one to the Learner and the Learner **puts** them in the fork slot in the drawer sorter. The parent then switches to spoons, and provides as little help (or none at all) so the Learner then puts the spoons in the right place (this could be an example of using a therapeutic pause and a noticeable change to allow an opportunity for thinking).*
- ✓ *The child puts books or toys on the shelf as the parent hands them to her*
- ✓ *The child tosses the toys to the parent during clean-up. The parent puts the toys in the box or wherever*
- **GPT: Delivering:** This is a form of Giver/Doer. This is especially helpful for children that have difficulty following through with or even in forming intentions (these children wander aimlessly, stim a lot or get distracted by everything and anything).

The child is asked to bring things to someone or to put items somewhere. This supplies him with an intention and clear, but short list of steps to follow. Because a location or person is usually part of the errand, it also involves thinking about those concepts.

- ✓ *“Go bring this to Daddy”*
- ✓ *“Put this in the trash”*
- ✓ *“Go get the [item]” [tacit: and bring it back here]*
- ✓ *“Where does this go?” (The verbal answer/response is not the point of this. The point is to send the Learner on the errand without telling him where to put it)*

Slightly more Complex Coordinations

- **GPT: My Turn/Your Turn**

Guide and child do the same thing, but take turns doing it. This involves not only imitating, but timing. Importantly – THE GUIDE TRIES NOT TO ANNOUNCE WHEN IT IS ANYONE’S TURN.

This is a form of social coordination, not a discrete teaching trial. In a discrete trial – the reference point for performing an imitative act would be the “prompt.”

The reference point that we emphasize in GPT will be different. Here, in a “My Turn/Your Turn” social coordination, the reference point is *whatever lets a partner know when it is their turn.*

It could be that the other partner has fully finished their turn. It could be a signal or nod.

Different activities will have different ‘conventions’ for signaling the end of one partner’s turn and the beginning of the other’s. Whatever that reference point is, that is what we want the Learner to discover. So we would somehow feature it more prominently at first, and then “dial it down” as the Learner learns to recognize it.

Examples might include:

- ✓ *Putting the next block or Lego in place*
 - ✓ *Trading lines in a song*
 - ✓ *Scooping ice-cream*
 - ✓ *Shooting from different angles at a basket*
 - ✓ *Taking turns in a game*
- **One Step at a Time:** The “My Turn/Your Turn” social coordination involves one partner doing the same thing, perhaps in imitation of the other. The child can be asked to imitate one step at a time.

So let’s say that the Guide teaches the Learner to make a sandwich, and they use the “My Turn/Your Turn” format.

- ✓ The Guide takes out a piece of bread
- ✓ The child takes a piece of bread
- ✓ *The Guide takes out another piece of bread*
- ✓ *The child takes out another piece of bread*
- ✓ *The Guide picks up the knife.*
- ✓ *The child picks up the knife*
- ✓ *The Guide scoops the peanut butter from the jar*
- ✓ *The child scoops the peanut butter from the jar*
- ✓ *And so forth and so on*

The child imitates the step as soon as she sees it and perceives when it is her turn to do it.

- **Multiple Step Models:** The above sandwich-making scenario consisted of single, turn-by-turn coordination. This requires the Learner to watch one turn and do one turn.

This can be done in as many steps per turn as appropriate. Sometimes, we are trying to challenge the Learner’s ability to pay attention to turns involving 2 or more different steps. An example would be to model making the whole sandwich, and then have the Learner take a turn making a sandwich. In such a case, each turn would be a few or more steps.

- **GPT: Complementary:** This is probably the most common one. Each partner has a role and role actions that depend upon what the other partner does. The ‘potatoes in the bag’ coordination is one example. Complementary actions can be performed by many partners – think of a bucket brigade or assembly line. Think of a team that has to develop something and various people play different roles and make different kinds of contributions.

Partners have to pay attention to changes in speed, position, materials, etc.; whether the other partner is ready or is waiting. You can’t fill the bag if the partner doesn’t open it, or if the bag holder has to make an adjustment for some reason.

The Guide manages his or her own role and teaches the Learner his or her role. As the Learner becomes more proficient, the Guide transfers more responsibility to the Learner or adds

complexity (additional actions) to the task or the Learner's role.

Here's another...

Teaching Narrative Experience-sharing

The child talks and the parent types

The parent talks and the Learner draws pictures

A New Skill

Daughter sprays the Windex and Mom wipes

Dad holds the broom and daughter holds the dustpan

We're making 25 cheeseburgers. I'm on pickles. You're on the cheese. Frank's doing the mustard and Lucia is putting the chips on the plate.

Brother washes and sister dries the dishes.

Teamwork

You're playing 2 on 2 football with your friends. You're the quarterback and your partner goes out for the pass.

You're the cook and she's the waitress.

She's the surgeon and you're the anesthesiologist.

Most Complex

- **GPT: Parallel:** This is complex because timing, continuous referencing and synchrony are necessary to do actions at the same time. A very good example of Guided parallel coordination is an aerobics class. The Guide would be the Instructor or leader, and the rest of the group does what she is doing at the same time.

The reason that this is the most difficult is that one must coordinate one's own actions while continuously monitoring and imitating.

Think about the aerobics class for a moment. There are several tools or "mediators" that people use. The following goes from the most mediated kind of parallel coordination to the least mediated kind.

- To stay together, someone in the group or the leader will **announce** an upcoming change ("OK, we'll shoot on the count of 3. One, Two, Go;" "Ready, Set, Go"). This is called an "announced" change. The announcement is often faded after they learn to synchronize and then they can do things together without having to do so much verbalizing.
- Partners use silent gestures to stay coordinated. They 'signal' upcoming changes in speed, direction, starting and stopping, etc.

- Partners just notice the changes and make the adjustments as they notice them.
- There is no real leader.

Parent and child walk together, staying together

Parent and child push a cart together or carry a large bag, basket or two-handled container together

Parent and child pull both sides of the sheet towards the end of the bed

Pouring out liquids together (each person takes a side of the container and the container has to be tilted in synchronized coordination)

Partners make a bed together and pull up the sheet from either side of the bed together

Partners fold a big sheet or towel; folding at the same time and in the same direction.

- **Reversed:** This is complex because the Learner learns while doing some other role action. For instance, in the simple coordination of broom and dustpan, the Learner may learn to perform the sweeping task while also observing and learning the role actions of managing the dust pan. At some point when the roles are reversed, the Learner must now perform the complementary role actions (i.e. switches from sweeping to managing the dustpan or, vice versa). Reversing role action is important to consider any time that the Learner has the capacity to do so. Role Reversal coordinations can include additional teaching and scaffolding.
- **GPT: Transfer the Responsibility, Little by Little:** Parents or Teachers remove the scaffolding “plank by plank.” The concept is similar to prompt fading, using a “Most to Least” prompt hierarchy, but is different in that it is a dynamic process. The level of scaffolding can go up or down depending on the situational needs. This is a refrigerator note because adults often help more than needed. They do this because they are in a rush (remember, most prompts are used to get kids to hurry up), so they do not allow time, space or opportunity for thinking and processing.

Refrigerator Notes for Facilitating Cooperation and Transitions

- Limits and Demands: **Concern, Empathy first, and then Help to Move On:** Refers to the “Three-Step Model for Dealing with Explosive Behavior.” Parents are reminded to break their habits of responding to opposition or cooperation problems by talking about what they want or insist upon. They tend to skip the steps of finding out what is bothering the Learner and empathizing so as to open up communication. The Concern and Empathy parts are the most important and most often skipped.
- Limits and Demands: **Focus on the Learner’s affect first.**

The “Show Concern” and “Empathy” steps are the most important components of the “Three-Step Model ...” By focusing on speaking to the Learner’s affects and intentions *first* – before addressing the behavior or asking for change (redirecting; setting limits or boundaries or; making new demands),

you move from an opposition state to one of mutual cooperation and alliance.

Parents often respond to behavior they don't like or want by asking or demanding a change. They find the Learner resists or digs in. When the Learner does this – it is a message to the adult that “You don't get what I'm doing.”

For instance - a child might resist making a transition. They might do it by ignoring you, or with some outright resistance. If they could only have the presence to say, “Please wait a minute, I need to finish this up first,” they would be sharing their intent in a way that would help you understand and modulate your demands accordingly. But it is difficult to do that if they get emotionally aroused quickly, or they simply don't have the language or perspective taking skills needed in order to do that.²

² **What is affect and how is it important?** *Affect* is the outward display of one's emotional state. It is the sum total of one's subjective state and the signals one sends about it through words, behavior and context. It is the key set of reference points we use to communicate our intentions to others and to develop theories about other people's intentions (we almost always experience other people's behavior *in a context we create* by making assumptions about their intentions).

Through a combination of various and unique “means of communication,” we *show* how we feel. We give others clues as to what we are thinking about and what we intend to do intentionally, and sometimes without our full awareness. We look at the totality of other people's behavior and words in light of what we think they're up to and to reassess the state of synchrony v. uncertainty of the moment.²

The theories we form about other people's intentions help us understand and anticipate their behavior. We make *educated guesses* as to what *another* person's affect is by paying attention to *their* nonverbal communication. We can only form theories about others; we can never be completely certain about future events or other people's behavior.

Nonverbal communication displays what one's subjective state is to others (e.g., such as gestures broadcast by the face, tone of voice and inflective emphasis on the words; the body's posture, position and actions, clothing, etc.). Human beings usually have considerable control over their outward affects, and we quickly learn to display affects that mislead others. We can choose to mask true emotions or manage their outward signs intentionally, in ways designed to send specific messages to others. These messages can be and often are contrary to true inner feelings, and are a social tool.

To use the tool, one has to have some ability to understand the contents of another person's mind – as evidenced by patterns and other clues. We look at where and *how* others use their attention to judge what they know or could know. We periodically monitor people's attention, affect, and behavior to reevaluate in an ongoing way, what we think other people's intentions are from moment to moment.

We look at the consequences of the person's behavior as another tool for deciphering someone's behavior. We track the effects a person's behavior produces in the environment and in the persons involved. We form dynamic and malleable hypotheses, “working models” or “theories of [other people's] mind as reference points for understanding other people' subjective states and their intentions.

Another critical tool is the ability to understand one's own behavior, subjective state, and how they relate to intentions, behaviors, and the consequences they produce. Knowledge of your own thinking is a key reference point for understanding what goes on in other people's minds. Knowledge of how your outward behavior communicates helps you understand the subjective and intentional states of others and helps you develop useful anticipations and preparations.

Adults easily forget to speak to the Learner's intention first – before they start directing or redirecting. This refrigerator note reminds them to address affect first and then go from there.

- Limits and Demands: **Give the Problem, Not the Solution**

Parents learn to elicit cooperative behavior through *declarative* statements rather than *imperative* directions, prompts, questions and commands. This goes with the document of the same name and the technique of using Declarative Statements instead of questions and directions.

- Limits and Demands: **Frame in Terms of Caring**

Used when limits and demands are tough to hear for the Learner. The parent learns to phrase limits and demands in terms of the Learner's interests, rather than as naked power. This goes with declarative statements (Giving the Child the Problem, Not the Solution). Ex. "*I don't want you to cut your feet*" instead of "*Put your shoes on.*"

- Limits and Demands: **Grant in Wish What You Cannot Grant in Reality**

The techniques listed above and below represent many ways to show the Learner that we are on her side – or at least not against her. We really make an effort to show that we 'get it.' Yet and still, we have a responsibility to teach Students to respect limits and boundaries and to meet higher expectations. This means that you will not always do what the Learner wants and conflict and temporary enmity from the Learner is inevitable.

Our job is not to avoid this – but to teach Students that relationships endure these temporary breakdowns. Our job is to model adulthood: the responsibility to be fair and yet maintain expectations that will ready the Learner for the world.

But there are some things that can help take the sting out of a difficult moment. One of them, which I credit authors Elaine Mazlish and Adele Faber in "How to Talk so Children will Listen and Listen so Children will Talk" (a classic), is to "*Grant in Wish What You Cannot Grant in Reality.*"

Words (verbal communication), and the dynamic elements of emotional inflection and stress on words, comprise an inarguable effect on interaction and the knowing of one's own and other people's minds. But words are by no means the whole story. Words are packages of meaning that require nonverbal tools to interpret correctly.

It is generally easier and better to work with the contents of someone's mind *as they are*, rather than to shift a person's focus to something he or she considers unimportant. As Guides, we have more mastery and control of *our* attention.² It is easier for us to join the child, (adults like it when they get to focus on themselves), than to try and convince the child how interesting something else is and how focused he or she *should* be. By joining the child's stream of thought and attention, you can enter the person's world and challenge it towards new or elaborated forms of thinking and problem-solving.

Even when you cannot follow your son's or daughter's lead, you can maximize your intimacy, reciprocal relating, and, you also maximize your child's capacity to profit from the experience. They'll remember more and generalize faster, because we work from an emotional perspective. Emotions add that extra weight, that catalyst that seems to be the key to learning and remembering. They decide what to "remember" or "forget" and for how long.

These are statements that show real empathy and usually start with “*I wish...*” or “*I can see...*” or “*I understand...*” and also include the inevitable “*...but...*”

- “*I wish you could have cookies now, but we have to eat our growing food first and then we can...*”
- “*I wish we could buy that. It would be so much fun to play with. But that is not why we came to the store.*”
- “*I can see how much fun it is to climb all the way up there. But you can fall and I cannot allow it.*”
- “That really sucks that they say those things to you. I wish I could stop them, but you know I can’t.”

Now it is **not enough to just grant things in wishes**. You usually have to help further. But these statements ease the suffering and open your relationship up to collaboration, helping, problem-solving or just providing a sympathetic ear. The technique does a lot to parry blame and/or aggression that could easily be focused on you.

- Limits and Demands: **Be a Solid Object**

The techniques and approaches listed here are far from coddling or spoiling. Children need adults to be adults. This encourages adults to be comfortable with their authority, but not authoritarian or harsh. Adults are empathetic and helpful, but they do not shy away from setting limits, boundaries and making reasonable demands. They are aware of the Learner’s capacities and obstacles; know the Learner’s zone of proximal development, and; they frame their demands in terms of caring. Solid Object adults pick and prioritize their battles, but will do what is necessary when necessary.

- Limits and Demands: **There’s No Joy in Ignoring or Defying You**

Often called, “**Boredom Therapy**,” we try to arrange the environment so that it is difficult to find pleasure in ignoring or defying. We often rely on removing things so that there is nothing else to do and the Learner becomes bored.

We sometimes refer to this technique as “Stopping the Action.” That is a term from RDI. It is also a term that includes techniques for skills teaching and we have handouts for both.

“*There’s No Joy in Ignoring or Defying You*” or “Boredom Therapy” are parent-friendly ways of explaining how to remove or reduce the reinforcement value of child actions that are not consistent or compete with parent limits and demands.

It may be unnecessarily or too confrontation (or even dangerous) to try to stop a child from doing something. We recommend intrusiveness only when absolutely necessary – usually for safety reasons. We never recommend physically making a child do anything.

What a parent *can* do is to sap the reinforcement value of the Learner’s inappropriate or competing actions. There are many ways to do this.

- They can stop any attention they give that somehow reinforces inappropriate or competing behavior.

- They can wait until the Learner wants something else, and make that unavailable until the Learner first does what he or she was originally asked.
- They can remove materials that allow the Learner to go on (this can be provocative – so be careful). But say for instance, the Learner is coloring... the parent can remove the rest of the crayons. The parent would not try to take the crayons out of the Learner's hand.
- Techniques may not just involve 'removing' anything. They can involve adding. If a child flops to the ground and waiting is not going to work, they can "bug" the Learner by talking too much, touching, doing things they know annoy the Learner – in other words, make it uncomfortable to ignore the parent. If the Learner is watching TV, they can turn on the radio. They can play with a toy the Learner doesn't want them to touch.

IMPORTANT: Since this is technically aversive, this should be a tactic rarely used, only by prescription, and mild. Adults use this tactic when time is a consideration, so the Consultant has to ask why slowing down and waiting are not feasible. All possible escalatory scenarios have to be thought of. Using declarative actions is a positive technique that works in most cases – so "bugging" the Learner (adding aversive consequences) should not be used if a more positive technique will work.

- Limits and Demands: **This Tantrum is Worth It:** Given the body of techniques and approaches listed here, adults are equipped to manage demands, limits and boundaries in the fairest way possible. The adult "covers these bases" first, but once satisfying him or herself that the demands and limits are fair and reasonable to expect.

Given that, children will still have problems accepting reasonable limits and responsibilities. They may be immature and have an immature worldview. They may not have developed impulse or behavioral control, or perspective-taking sufficient enough to take negative feelings into stride. They have to learn to do that by experiencing their negative feelings.

Imagine this scenario...

Mom comes home from the grocery store and puts the items away. Junior sees her putting the ice cream in the freezer and asks for some.

Son: *"I want ice cream."*

Mom: *"I know. You really like ice cream."* (Shows concern and empathy)

Son: *"I want it."*

Mom: "You want it now! (She helps him symbolize his feelings and shows him that she "Gets it.")

I know! I wish I could." (Grants in a wish what she cannot grant in reality).

Son: [Starts to whimper, which is a telegraph for worse - a possible tantrum or meltdown].

Mom: *"Oh I knowwww."* (She says this in a sympathetic tone. She sympathizes with the struggle)

"But we have to eat our 'growing food first, and then we can have our fun food." (She

frames in terms of caring ["growing food and fun food"]; she speaks in a developmentally appropriate manner [sequencing 'first; then']

At this point, Mom has covered all of the bases. She couldn't be more fair or appropriate in her expectations.

Now may be the time to allow her son to learn some of life's most difficult lessons: *You don't always get what you want, and/or; sometimes, you have to wait longer than you want to.*

The boy now has a tantrum or full on meltdown. Mom keeps him safe, but she does not try to fix things (see below). The breakdown, and the always ensuing repair and recovery allow the Learner to build resilience.

- **Allow the Learner to Learn to Tolerate Negative Feelings:** This is an investment in resilience. It is helpful to explain this to parents, especially if they have difficulty tolerating their child's tantrum or meltdown behaviors.

Here are some accompanying statements from a Consultant that may be helpful for parents...

- You love him, and your instinct when your child is in distress and pain is to do something. You've done everything you can and you'll remain emotionally available throughout. You will welcome his recovery, but he has to learn that life comes with these feelings.
- It is very painful to watch, but it is an investment in your child's resilience.
- If you respond to your child's distress by always doing something to alleviate it (e.g., giving in; fixing things; avoiding the situation by redirecting or "being clever" and trying to outwit the Learner, threatening, bribing or some other form of coercing, etc.) – your child will always hold you responsible for his happiness. He will expect to be happy all the time because that is the message you're sending, and, when he is unhappy, he will be angry at you.
- Your job is to meet your child's needs not wants. It is not your responsibility to make your child happy, nor should you send the message that your child should always be happy.
- When your child receives a diagnosis, it is always harder to know what is reasonable to expect. That is why I'm here. We do our best to figure this out.
- When your child receives a diagnosis, it is common to feel that "*My child's life is hard enough. She already experiences more than her fair share of suffering. I just want her to be happy.*"

Consultant: "I can totally understand that. *We are doing all that we can to ensure that what we ask is reasonable and fair and appropriate. But children need expectations and they have to live in a world where they cannot always be happy. After we've covered all of our bases, we help her work through these painful feelings by being available and **responding helpfully to any effort she makes to recover on her own.***"

- Limits and Demands: **Sympathize with (or at least respect) the Learner's Struggle**

Life is difficult. But as stated above, it can be a long-term mistake to try to fix everything or assume that problem-solving is always the best thing to do. When a child experiences a difficult moment, it is best to show understanding that the Learner is struggling. Let him know that you understand how difficult it is at the moment – in some way, not always verbally. Sometimes, your presence alone, or the sound of your voice, or the fact that you move on is ample demonstration of sympathy.

The following are statements, but these statements can be easily conveyed without words (e.g. “Awww;” body language and gestures showing sympathy, etc.)...

- “*I know, this is really hard for you...*”
- “*It’s hard to wait. I know.*”
- “*This really sucks.*”

In a highly agitated state – you may not be able to do *anything* right. The Student may respond to the above with “*Shut Up*” “*I hate you*” or some other invective. Don’t respond to this. Allow space. Just keep the Learner safe and do not allow escalation to harmful behavior.

- Limits and Demands: “**I will Help You**”

Parents and Teachers often overemphasize “independence.” But we learn most things interdependently, and for many Students, functioning in interdependent relationships is a skill they need work on. For others, engaging in a task that was previously expected to be performed independently, such as academic work, is best handled as a social coordination (see above), with correspondingly graduated transfers of responsibility. This is very different than standing over a Student and prompting to completion, or coercing performance with bribes or threats.

Especially when the reason for avoidance is anxiety, saying “I will help you” is reassuring. Perhaps, this merely means moral support. In other cases, it may mean doing 99% of the task *at first* (especially if there is a history of frustration and loss of control associated with whatever the challenge is), and then transferring responsibility as the Learner demonstrates readiness and lowered anxiety.

- Limits and Demands: Self-Regulation/Anger Management: **Preview, Do, Remind, Review**

Because this is a rehearsal technique, it is useful for situations in which a Student has difficulty in a particular way on a regular basis. Examples include: repeated difficulties with losing a game; walking away from fights; controlling anger; controlling impulses, etc. Ideally, the Learner understands the problem and has internal motivation to change. There should be some “buy in” or the technique is not likely to be successful. Also, the Learner should have some ability to anticipate and review (‘imagine’) behaviors and their antecedents and consequences (patterns).

- **Preview:** This occurs well ahead of time. It involves discussion: thinking about behaviors; feelings connected to them; what happens typically before and after, and; strategies to take place of problem behaviors.
- **Do:** Rehearse the situation if possible. The more the Learner gets physical motor experiences and real practice, the better prepared she will be. If possible (this is very difficult to do), encourage the Learner to try to feel the way she usually does. For instance, if anger is the

response she is trying to manage, than tell her to imagine the situation and to act and feel angry.

- **Remind:** Once the above steps have been taken, an “Advanced Organizer,” quick briefing, or reminder is good – just before the Learner enters a situation in which the behavior is likely to occur.
 - **Review:** Review afterwards without shame producing judgment. Treat failures as learning experiences and tomorrow as another day.
- Limits and Demands: Waiting: **Develop a Waiting Plan**

Waiting can be difficult for *anyone*. We want to teach Students waiting *strategies* – ways to occupy their minds and their time in a way that makes waiting easier. Much of the time, adults simply tell Students to wait – and the Learners have no idea how to prepare.

- **Waiting Reference Points:** First, it is important to think about how we handle waiting.

First, we typically want to know how long we have to wait and why. We may ask outright, or we may search for clues (reference points) – usually both.

Imagine someone just asking you to “Wait.” The first question may be “Why?” This would be true especially if you don’t have much idea of the steps involved.

“*Is dinner ready yet?*” “*No – wait.*” This would not satisfy usually. “Well, it’s a 24 pound turkey and it takes 7 hours to cook all the way through. I put it in at 10 am.” This satisfies. The answer gives a reason why waiting is necessary.

“*Go wait in the car.*” What if I asked you to do that, apropos of nothing? “*Wait? What for?*” “*Why in the car?*”

So the first task to teach parents how they use reference points to “appraise” waiting – in other words, how we estimate how long we have to wait. We usually do this first, and then we figure out what we should do while waiting. This keeps waiting from driving us insane.

The Restaurant

- ✓ We look to see how crowded the place is and how many empty tables there are
- ✓ We ask the Host/Hostess (if there is one) how long the wait will be
- ✓ We look at the sign up list and see how many names are ahead of us
- ✓ We watch to see how often people’s names are called

This is how we estimate how long we’ll have to wait for a seat at a crowded restaurant. We know from experience and context, that this estimation is fraught with potential error.

Importantly, we get irritated when we have to wait longer than we’ve estimated.

Once we sit down, we then estimate how long we will wait for our food or for the Waiter’s attention.

- ✓ We watch the Wait staff to see the patterns and we use that to help us estimate.

Here, it is helpful to realize that sit-down dining restaurants have waiting plans for us already. They are remarkably similar, no matter if it's a Coffee Shop or a fancy restaurant...

- ✓ They hand us the menus
- ✓ They ask if we want something to drink; this allows us to look at the menus
- ✓ They come back with drinks and ask if we want appetizers or if we know what we want
- ✓ They sometimes let us know that some meals take longer to prepare than others
- ✓ They bring us bread and salads or first courses
- ✓ They bring us our meals

As you can see from this sequence – they keep us busy. Otherwise, we'd be pestering them – much like children do when they can't estimate wait time or they cannot develop a waiting plan of their own.

Waiting for Mom to get off the Phone

We often have to wait for someone to get off the phone. We need to talk to them.

- ✓ We listen to hear the context of the conversation. If we have some ability to judge this context, we can estimate waiting time (e.g., calling to order a pizza v. talking to Grandma; leaving a voicemail v. waiting on hold with the phone company...)
- ✓ We hold up our finger and ask for a moment to ask how long we should wait
- ✓ If we are at a business and are waiting for say, a Receptionist to get off the phone, we hold up our finger as described above, or, if the Receptionist has the social skills to do it – she will tell you without you having to ask!

Life experience and episodic memory are the tools we bring to bear to build up abilities to make these kinds of estimates.

Children waiting for a Parent's Attention

Children have a special problem. Not only do they not have these skills, their survival depends upon availability of the parent. In school, immature or insecure Students also have anxiety about this. Many, who may have Autism or attentional or emotional disorders, cannot use the reference points (e.g., the usual patterns of Teacher circulation; seeing the Teacher busy and *with what...*)

This is a classic problem that you'll encounter over and over again. It has important characteristics shared by similar situations in which **a Student perceives that the adult's availability has changed**. In homes, young children usually have immediate accessibility to their parents – even if they are simply told to wait when they bid for attention. They can be expected to act up when you visit or call parents, because the Learner perceives a change in the availability of the parent. The child may not know how to estimate how long they'll have

to wait, much less than to be able to develop a waiting plan. What they do know is how to act up in order to get the parent to stop or get off the phone. They act like they've been perpetually starved for attention when in fact the opposite is true. It is often helpful to explain to parents and that you understand and expect this, and that it is not their fault. It is a sign that they do pay attention to their kids rather than the other way around.

Problems with the Toddler (or Immature Child's) Worldview

Toddlers don't have the experience necessary to use complex reference points to estimate wait time, nor do they have the perspective to defer to other's needs and wait gracefully. Immature children of any age are that way. The toddler's reference points are internal, self-referenced, and pretty simple...

- ✓ Things are supposed to begin when they get interested – waiting be damned
- ✓ Things are supposed to end when they lose interest or something more interesting comes up
- ✓ They cannot tell time or use time as a reference point. They cannot understand temporal words (“in 5 minutes”), sequence words (before, next, after) ordinals (first, second, third), or vagaries such as “soon” or “later.”
- ✓ Toddlers can understand when something is finished or “all done” (e.g., “When SpongeBob is over;” “When you're all done sleeping [to refer to something tomorrow]; “When bath is over...”

That's about it!

Waiting for the Teacher's Attention

This is very similar to the above. There is a Student in the class that demands more than her fair share of attention.

Note Before going On: The word “attention” is often referred to in the pejorative, especially in schools or in traditional ABA worldview. That's ridiculous. The problem is actually [either] in the inappropriate frequency in which the Learner makes bids for attention; the inappropriate ways the Learner bids for attention; the inappropriate types of attention the Learner might seek; when attention bidding is really an attempt to throw the Teacher off of demands or limits (that *is* inappropriate), etc. These are all addressed with different replacement skills and behaviors. “Waiting” has to do with inappropriate frequency of attention bidding.

The inappropriate frequency of attention bidding for a Teacher's attention can represent failure to use waiting appraisal reference points:

- ✓ What is the Teacher's usual pattern of allotting attention?
- ✓ What situations warrant Teacher attention?
- ✓ What is the Teacher busy doing and how long will *that* take (based on experience and knowledge)? This is especially unclear to many Students when the Teacher is engaged in helping another Student or is engaged with others.

- ✓ The Student may be only able to use the toddler reference points mentioned above.

Help Parents or Teachers understand what is involved, and this will change not only their attributions of the Learner's behavior and intentions, but will provide an inventory of waiting estimation skills and 'waiting planning' skills to teach.

- **Waiting Plans:** Once we form an estimate of waiting time, we find things to do to alleviate the boredom or anxiety associated with waiting. We should be able to do this for ourselves after a certain age, because we have the life experience, as well as the imagination and thinking skills to do so, and importantly – we take the responsibility for thinking of what to do while waiting.

Children lack the skills and life experience. They need help. They must rely on their parent's superior abilities to appraise patterns and waiting reference points in order to estimate waiting time. Over time, parents gradually shift or transfer responsibility to their children. We help parents and Teachers understand the dynamics and components of waiting estimation, and we help them develop menus of things to do as waiting plans.

When a child begins to act up out of boredom due to waiting, we teach adults to point out that, "*You are bored because we are waiting. We need to get ourselves a waiting plan.*" How that works depends on the Learner's capacities and the complexities of individual situations.

- Limits and Demands: Waiting: **Goodie Bags**

This is a particular type of waiting plan that is useful in restaurants or elsewhere in the community, or when visiting. Remember, children have limited capacity for conversation. If adults aren't available or willing to adjust to their child's conversation or relating needs (in other words, they cannot slow down or modify their language and relating style, or they are busily engaged with other adults), children will become bored and a problem. They will want to leave the restaurant as soon as they are finished eating. They will want to leave the game or movie when the popcorn runs out. They will want to leave as soon as they lose interest in their toy.

The "Goodie Bag" is a compilation of favored activities the Learner can bring with them when adult attention is not available. They can use them for restaurants, long rides in the car, or other activities where they may not be able to meet or assist in their child's attention needs. The important thing about the Goodie Bag is that it contains several alternatives – as many as necessary to accommodate both the time expected to wait, and the

Transitions – Another Type of Demand

- Transitions: **Expecting Transitions**

We forget that we hardly ever have to make or are expected to make *sudden* transitions, unless we're in the military or our house is on fire. Even when we simply announce or tell a Student to transition, they usually have to take a few steps before doing it, such as put their books away; save their work on the computer; push their chair in, etc.

If I asked you, another adult, to go from your present activity to something else, you probably would engage me in some co-regulation of the transition. I might tell you how much time we have before

the transition will occur, or you might ask. You might notify me (not really ask), that you must ...finish this email; save your work on your computer; make a quick call; turn off the stove; lock the doors or whatever. It is when Students cannot think of these things themselves that we prompt them through these steps (not good), and/or, we perceive the Learner as avoiding, dawdling or otherwise not cooperating.

- **Bookmarks and Parentheses/Negotiated Transitions:** We teach parents first that Students feel the same way they do. They need to put some closure on their current activity before moving on. They may not be able or willing to do that, but they need to find closure in some way if the transition is to occur with the least conflict possible.
- **Help the Learner find or make a Bookmark:** It is an unsafe assumption that Learners already know how to do this. In fact, not knowing how to segment and re-sequence their activities so as to be able to interrupt and return to them flexibly is often the problem.
- ✓ **Sequences:** These include activities that occur in a stepwise manner from a beginning to an end. For instance, the Learner that is swinging on the swings or shooting baskets is probably not involved in a sequence, whereas a Learner that builds something out of blocks or enacts a storyline with toys probably is.

Sequencing requires the Learner, by virtue of using visual memory and sequential processing (executive, visual sequential memory and working memory processes) to rework sequences in his or her mind like a “Chinese Puzzle.” This requires enough neuronal development in the frontal, executive thinking circuitry as well as the ability to activate visual memories at will for the purpose of thinking in the past, present and future (mental time travel). When this is difficult, we often turn to mediators or compensations such as schedule cards. I’ve already explained the possible pros and cons of this approach. Additional reasons not to use them include the fact that they are difficult to do on the fly (every transition situation or play sequence could/should be different), and it turns learning into a dependence on non-relationship devices when the skill should really be learned as part of a relationship and through observation of others.

Join: Don’t Command

Ideally, parents join the play for a moment and teach their child how to insert a bookmark, in classic Guided Participation teaching. The Learner may not know to “put the baby to bed for a nap while we eat” or to “finish this part so we can...” But the act of joining the play in itself shows the Learner that you respect what he or she is doing. It also teaches the segmentation of tasks and bookmarking. Through experience of bookmarking and returning, the Learner learns that the transition does not necessarily result in the end of play or the project they were working on.

“How about we finish this window, and when we’re done with bath, we can put the roof on.”

“Let’s finish this chapter, and then after dinner you can read Chapter 4.”

“Let’s put the animals in the barn so they can eat, and then we can eat.”

“OK, we’ll wait for a commercial and go to the potty. When you’re all done with potty, you can come back and watch...”

If visual thinking, as described above is a problem, then the adult can draw stick figure sequences to illustrate. But it is important to stop using this compensation eventually. Allow the Learner’s trust in you and his or her growth in visual thinking through experience, allow you to transfer responsibility for visual thinking and bookmarking to the Learner.

- ✓ **“No Replay:”** Video games have levels and natural “Game Over” opportunities for transitions. Allow the Learner to achieve closure, but do not allow restart of the game. Kids learn what “No Replay” means without a whole lot of teaching.
- ✓ **“Let’s Take it with Us:”** Taking an object from the play along with the Learner to the next activity is a way of helping the Learner with visual thinking and memory. It is a natural ‘mediator’ for visual sequential thinking.’

“Let’s take Goofy with us when we brush our teeth.”
“Pick your trains to take with you in the car.”

- ✓ **Non-Sequences: Use Mediators:** More difficult are the situations in which play or activity has no beginning, middle or end. As mentioned, sequential, stepwise activity is either accomplished through visual thinking or through rote experience. *Variable*, stepwise play emerges along with visual thinking. Scripted play or aimless or repetitive play is usually a sign of deficits in visual thinking and reliance upon rote repetition or associations.

To deal with these, you resort to mediators, such as counting or moving objects from one container into another to compensate for the Learner’s difficulties with understanding concepts of duration.

“OK, 10 more swings... 10,9,8,7,6...”

Move marbles or paper clips from one jar into another at intervals (regular or random). When one is empty, it is time to transition.

“When the big hand is on the 3, it is time to go.” (see precautions about timers below)

Before moving on, I would like to comment on the ridiculous use of clock time references with Learners that 1. Do not know how to tell time; 2. Even if they do tell time, they do not shift their attention back and forth and use it properly as a reference point, and 3; have little or no ability to estimate how much they will be able to finish before the timer goes off – and they show this by making absolutely no preparation by engaging closure actions. Nevertheless, we may never see the end of experts, Teachers and others that should know better, saying, *“OK, in 5 minutes...in 3 minutes, in 1 minute...”* to cue transitions.

The “Time Timer”™ is an exception. It has a shrinking red zone that functions as a dynamic reference. In other words, the child can actually see the duration shrinking. The device is similar

to an hour glass in this way.

- Transitions: Announcing Transitions: **The X and the Y problem**

'X' is what the Learner is doing or thinking about at the moment. 'Y' is what you want the Learner to transition to. Cuing a transition from 'X' to 'Y' using words alone is a very weak means of going about it. Too much of the Learner's mental capacity is devoted to their ongoing actions, and your words are asking them to recruit mental systems that are currently "off-line" or cannot be used in tandem because of a lack of working memory capacity.

Parents learn to use objects, visual supports, stopping or briefly pausing the Learner's ongoing actions, declarative statements or actions, and other means suggested in this document to increase the power and the "take-away" of their transition cues. The techniques are transition mediators. This is different than using schedules. Schedules tend to be fixed. They are not as portable or spontaneous as many of these other techniques.

- Transitions: Announcing Transitions: **Enter Their Eyes, not their Ears**

This is another version of making words count; showing rather than telling, etc. This is about using nonverbal, visual cues, rather than verbal prompts, questions (a form of prompting), declarative actions, "showing Y" instead of just talking about it (below)

Parents often do not realize how little children with autism actually use visual thinking. They don't realize that a majority of the meaning of words comes from the addition of affect and prosody (prosody enters the ears – so if you were working on teaching a child to understand how prosody influences meaning, it is better to make another sign: "**Sounds Instead of Words**")

- Transitions: Announcing Transitions: **Declarative Actions**

Parents will beg, threaten, cajole, repeat themselves or argue with a child that won't make a transition. They learn that this is a problem of 1. [The child] visualizing what the parent refers to (the 'Y' or next activity); 2. Being able to release attention from 'X' (their current actions or ideas); 3. being able to think about more than one thing (doing 'X' while thinking about 'Y,' or thinking about 'Y' while doing 'X'); or simply, being able to continue engaging in a preferred activity when expected to go to a non-preferred.

Declarative actions are especially useful for the Learner that says "No" before thinking about it. They cannot visualize, and they cannot project emotions from memory (do you remember how much you enjoyed that the last time..." [no, they don't; or, it's not enough to motivate transitioning]).

Parents practice "moving on" to the next thing so the Learner sees what's happening and makes a voluntary shift.

- Transitions: Cuing Transitions: **Mediators**: These are **tools** that help us think and remember. Some are better as temporary bridges and not as permanent compensations. Visual schedules are examples of these. While they may lower anxiety in the beginning, they can take the place of looking for natural cues and reference points that are found in typical environments and that keep up with dynamic change.

We always want to keep in mind whether we intend to use the tools as temporary or permanent; whether the tools can eventually become harmful replacements as in the visual schedules example above, etc. Below are examples of common mediators...

- Teaching Rules, Rubrics and Procedures
- Advanced Organizers
 - “What to Look for...”
 - “Remember the rule...”
- Embedded Prompts
- Schedules, Visual or Object based
- Helpful scripts or mnemonics to remember (“I after e except after c;”)
- Models and examples of finished products to emulate

Motivation Techniques

- Motivation: **Mastery is the Reinforcer**

This is another defining philosophical feature of our methods and foundation for techniques and tactics. We find that the use of “positive reinforcement” (*adding* motivators to the environment that are not naturally there or available) is less effective than introducing children to mastery experiences. This is not new: achievement, mastery, and an ever-increasing sense of competence and confidence has long been recognized as the most potent and enduring source of motivation. If we look at our own lives, we tended to try harder when we felt that achievement and competence were possible. We tend to gravitate towards activities in areas of strength and avoid those things that we are not good at or where we expect frustration and failure.

Feelings or more importantly – *anticipations* of mastery, competence and confidence certainly strengthen and maintain (reinforce) our motivation to do things. Of course, our anticipations have a lot to do with our *prior* experiences. These experiences can have a powerful shaping effect on our personalities. If we expect success in general, we are more willing to tolerate the temporary failures and frustrations involved in learning and we’re more likely to try new things.

On the other hand, if the aggregate of our life experience resulted in personality traits of avoiding failure, frustration and negative feelings, then this affects mastery motivation and the person tends to avoiding novelty and uncertainty. They will not seek new mastery experiences and will cling to those areas and actions they have already mastered.

Offering artificial incentives or motivators is a ‘work-around’ technique. Points, tokens, rewards, and even social praise help to focus the Learner on earning. This can help a child tolerate or submit to possible frustration because instead of coping with the negative feelings involved, they are focused on the unrelated rewards. The field of ABA has shown repeatedly that incentive systems can indeed facilitate the teaching of skills, the overcoming of fears, and other desirable effects. In a way, by focusing a child on acquiring rewards, we can end up in the same place – the Learner has done something he or she normally would not have tried, and we have subsequently introduced the Learner to the innate rewards that come from achievement and mastery. Once that occurs, most behaviorists will reduce or eliminate positive reinforcement. The internal feelings of competence and confidence replace the need for incentives so they are much less or no longer necessary.

In reality, achievement usually involves learning to cope with breakdowns, failures, setbacks and other sources of negative feelings. Most of us venture into new areas aware of these possibilities, because we have some confidence that we can deal with them or can find the resources eventually. We've had the experience that [continued and sometimes arduous] effort pays off.

The parent is learning to set up experiences and "little jobs" or, "scaffolds" so that the Learner experiences mastery. They gradually transfer responsibility. They find that once mastery experience sets in, the Learner begins pushing them out the way insisting [that] "I wanna do it!"

This gets them out of thinking that bribes and threats is where lasting motivation comes from. You must know enough about Relationship-Based Teaching in order to know how to do this.

- Motivation: **Put the Pot of Gold at the End of the Rainbow**

Reminds parents to put the most motivating activities at the end of a sequence rather than the beginning. E.g. watching TV after finishing getting dressed and ready for school; play after homework.

- Motivation: **Positive Affect is better than Praise**

Positive affect enters the eyes, not just the ears. We often work with Learners that do not shift their attention to nonverbal cues and subsequently are deficient in interpreting nonverbal communication. This is reason alone to get out of the habit of verbal praise.

Positive affects, delivered in nonverbal and prosodic forms engages the Learner in a Joint Attentional Triangle that verbal praise often does not. This is important because the child forms a correct map of what is being praised. Verbal praise provided out of view of the person delivering it (the person stands behind, or no shift of attention from object to subject is demanded or required) can result in the child not knowing what exactly is being praised.

Positive affects are read by different, more pivotal and resonant emotional neural circuitry. Verbal praise uses symbols, although the prosodic element reaches emotional circuitry.

- **Specificity of Praise:** Practitioners of verbal praise recommend that praise be specific to the actual products (“You got them all right. Good job!”), and not global (“You’re so smart”). This is true: specific verbal praise is better than global praise, but in the end – it is a tiresome and ineffective way of building motivation and self-esteem. Affects work much better.
- **Praise Effort, Not Products:** This is the only case where I think verbal praise is actually effective. That is, when the adult praises the Learner for the effort (“I see that you worked very hard on this.”). This teaches the child that success is not dependent upon being smart or talented; that there is a much higher probability of success coming from hard work than innate advantage.
- **Encourage Self-Evaluation:** Excessive praise dependence is a bad sign. When this is the problem, teach Parents and Teachers to respond with a question, “I want to know what you think?”

Vygotskians will add that it is important to give models of good work or performance and to encourage the Learner to draw comparisons with their work. This builds skill in self-evaluation as well as skill in recognizing and fixing poor work. Furthermore, the Student finds the mistakes, rather than you. That is better for your relationship in general and for the Learner’s relationship with herself.

Techniques Specific to Teaching Communication and Language

- Language Teaching: **Declarative Language to Elicit Language**

Parents have long ingrained habits of eliciting language by asking questions and prompting their

children to say things. Life is a series of questions, prompts and directions. This is especially true if this habit – usually the result of frustration getting their child to talk and the Learner's learned dependence, has been reinforced by ABA traditions of doing the same thing. They mistake performance with thinking.

Declarative Language is also our primary language modeling technique. It is the language of experience sharing (as opposed to imperative language, which is the language of static systems and following directions, and not of experience sharing). Children hear our models and have a chance to imitate. Sometimes, we're capitalizing on the Learner's echolalia, if echolalia happens to be of the 'developmental' variety...in other words, a means of learning and retaining.

- Language Teaching: **Recast to Expand**

Reminds them to use language recasting, rather than correcting their child's language or prompting them what to say.

- Language Teaching: **Separate Your Words and Enunciate:** "Over-articulate"

Reminds parents to slow down to accommodate slowness in auditory processing. Reminds parents that their child does not necessarily hear "sgedup" as "Let's || get || up" or "stimedayete" as "It || is || time || to || eat." Their children may speak unclearly because of these poor models – they are simply repeating what they hear. It's just snot right.

- Language Teaching: **Never Tell the Learner What to Say**

The most egregious mistake is when adults prompt language with "Say..." Many Learners will go around making statements like...

"Say milk please"

"I want to go outside yes"

That is because these Learners learn in a **Gestalt rather than Analytic** way. They cannot separate the unnecessary parts of a pattern from the necessary ones, and regurgitate the whole phrase.

Therapists and Teachers spend a great deal of time prompting and then as much time trying to get rid of the prompt – very inefficient teaching. Sometimes, the Learner's spouting of the prompt along with the salient parts of the utterance does not go away for years - if ever.

Declarative language techniques don't evoke this problem and make prompting to say things unnecessary. Yes, even typical Learners need hundreds of reminders for social graces such as Please and Thank You, but this is a different problem, and the Fifty Time Rule applies in these cases.

Refrigerator Notes Relative to Self-Help Routines

Morning Routine

- Morning Routine: **Zombies Can't Think**

Probably the most pervasive problem with morning routines is the Learner is under-aroused. It is a major source of prompt dependence and under-functioning. We have coffee – they don't. Parents concentrate on activities (e.g. wiggles, tickles, back-rubs, etc.) that get arousal to functional levels.

Consultants may also want to review bedtimes and naps in light of a Learner's true sleep needs. Consultants may also urge parents to discuss sedative side effects of medications and whether that is the problem or if there is anything that can be done about that if that is a concern.

- Morning Routine: **Manage Distractions**

Some Learners are too aroused in the morning. They are often aroused by the wrong things. They engage in play. It is often best to have the Learner dress in the bathroom, where there are no toys or TV, and where they are motivated to get out in a hurry.

- Morning Routine: **Is This Necessary?**

We engage parents in a thinking exercise to determine which routines can be jettisoned in favor of getting out the door. If a Learner is already slow and under-functioning in the morning, economy is the ticket. Here are some things that are questionable at the least to do in the morning when you have an under-functioning Learner on your hand...

- Showers and Baths? *Can this be done the night before?*
- Cleaning up or Making Beds? *Can this be done when you get home? Is there going to be an inspection?*
- Socks and Shoes? *Can this be done in the car if you're running late?*
- Food? Can food be sent along to school if the Learner is so slow she cannot find time to eat? Most Teachers are considerate of Special Needs families when it comes to this and will be flexible. Send the food along to school if parents aren't fond of eating in the car (eating in the car is a bad habit to teach).
- TV? Video Games? Toys? Parents often allow this when they need the Learner to be occupied while they do other things and attend to their other children. These can be effective as 'pots of gold at the end of the rainbow,' but more often, these can be real traps. First, they waste time and are rarely finished at the appropriate time (unless they're taken in the car, which interferes with conversation). Second, they lull Learners into attentional states that are not conducive to moving along. Finally, if the child is not ready and loses the privilege, it can start a fight that only delays getting out of the house. Consider alternatives.

- Morning Routine: **Think Portable**

Learners that are slow in the morning may need to finish up what they can in the car. Here are some things that parents can consider finishing in the car... (Be sure to collaborate and solicit parental

values when suggesting these things)

- **Eating:** Eating in the car is a bad habit and generally not recommended. But sometimes it is the best alternative. Parents choose non-messy foods to take along like 'Gogurts' 'Ensure' or Instant Breakfasts. Crumbly or particulate foods get between the seats (e.g. fries; raisins; cereals; granola bars; grapes, etc.)
 - **Dressing:** Some or all parts of dressing or changing can happen in the car – although this is not preferred. Shoes can definitely be done in the car, as well as changing out of pajamas. NEVER RECOMMEND THAT A PARENT TAKE A CHILD OUTSIDE THE HOUSE UNDRESSED. Many are tempted to do this as a threat or a tactic. This is inappropriate for many reasons. However, younger Learners can get into the car in their pajamas. They should not change in the school parking lot or wherever they can be embarrassed, stigmatized or humiliated for doing so.
 - **Playing:** We prefer that conversation and relating is the most valuable car activity – but in the morning, it can be lower on the priority list. Chances to see videos, play with toys or games can function as incentives and can alleviate the desire or demand to play them at home in the morning (“You can play with that in the car”)
 - **“Pick your Car Toys:”** The Learner can find arousal and motivation in picking toys to go in the car and placing them by the door. This can aid in transitions.
- Morning Routine: **Declarative Actions**

Parents can waste time standing over the Learner issuing prompts to move. This is related to the 'X and Y' problem described above (see). It is better to move on with declarative actions, to eliminate competition and distractions and to let boredom do its work, than to try to get motivation and action from prompting or nagging.

Eating

This is a very complex issue with evolutionary and emotional/psychological and developmental considerations too involved for discussion here. Refer to our other materials for a deeper understanding of the issues. Even though these issues are not listed here, they are important for parents to understand so their attributions of the problem and their subsequent behavior will change.

- Picky Eating: **We Enjoy Meals Together**

The first rule of treating picky eaters is to not make an issue over eating. Meals should be enjoyable moments for the family, not stress points. Parents give up begging, bribing, deal-making, cajoling, threatening and other tactics to coerce eating. Parents refrain from commenting on what the child eats or how much. (Sloppy eating and utensil use are other issues worth addressing - carefully).

- Picky Eating: **He/She Won't Starve**

The second rule of treating picky eaters is to let hunger be the motivator. The parent schedules three meals and two or three snack “opportunities.” If the child does not eat at one meal, another

opportunity will come along soon enough.

- **Picky Eating: One New Food at a Time**

Another rule of treating picky eaters is to introduce new foods slowly. The evolutionary precursors to under-selection have to do with infant mortality (briefly – 99% of our human history was spent in nomadic hunting and gathering. We were always entering new ecologies where toxic plants were trying to poison us. Predator animals were trying to eat us – so we never developed a taste for their meat. Children that ate unfamiliar foods ended up not passing their genes along to successive generations. Picky eaters were more likely rather than less likely to survive and pass on their genes. So we are phylogenetically biased towards being overselective rather than underselective about food).

- Parents pick one food at a time to introduce to the point of familiarity. They serve small amounts of it regularly and they do not mention it – whether the child eats it or not. In other words, if the child does not eat it – there is no negative comment or consequence. If the Learner does eat it, there is no mention either and no praise. Eating is for personal nutrition and pleasure – not for pleasing others.

Toileting

- **Toileting: Focus on Ancillary Behaviors first**

The reason for this is that parents can work on it whether or not the Learner is 'productive' in toileting. Here are some of the things that parents can work on in the bathroom, regardless of production in the toilet.

- Pants Up/Down
- Sitting on the Toilet: Caution: How (really – “when”) you teach seating on the toilet depends on whether you use a “Scheduling” (for lower functioning Learners) or “Rhythm” based (the Learner goes when the feelings of bowel or bladder fullness signal the need) methods.
- Flushing the toilet
- Wiping
- Washing/Drying Hands

- **Toileting: In and Out Log**

Parents utilize a record of feeding and elimination to determine the best times for toilet teaching. When using rhythm methods, you want to take the Learner when you know the bladder or bowel is full and 'wants to be' emptied. We have forms available for this. Parents look at patterns (rhythms) of eating and eliminating to prepare themselves for being highly vigilant. They cannot keep up high levels of vigilance for long, so the log helps them know when to be especially vigilant of signs the Learner is about to eliminate.

Directly below is a review of some of the most common techniques or methods of toilet teaching. The one selected should be a fit for the Learner and family, based on a number of biological, learning, and family routine components.

- **Schedule Methods**

These rely on a fixed schedule for taking the Learner to the toilet. This is the least desirable because trips to the toilet are often conflict ridden and unsuccessful because they make no effort to coincide with the internal feelings of bladder or bowel fullness. This can lead to mislearning and frustration on both parts – Parent and Learner.

Preschools do it this way because it is not possible to do rhythm methods unless there is a 1:1 assigned. It has the advantage of providing the child with role models. If the Learner goes to the bathroom on a schedule without other Students, than it is justifiable when other methods are not a good fit for the Learner (see next paragraph).

At home, it is a last resort. We recommend it when we think the Learner under-registers interoceptive signals from the bowel or bladder, or cannot shift attention from the internal to external stimuli.

- **Marathon Method**

Often called a “Potty Party” it is really a laborious and cumbersome method. It is sometimes necessary when other methods fail. Parents arrange with a host of other committed adults to watch the Learner in shifts.

- **Rhythm Methods**

We call these “rhythm methods” because they are in tune with natural patterns and [interoceptive] feelings of bladder and bowel fullness. These are ideal because it is easy to generalize to independent toileting – the child functions on internal rather than external cues. The “In and Out” Logs are very helpful in setting up a schedule for vigilance and teaching.

- **Look for Telegraphs**

Learners that are most ready for toilet teaching are already showing signs of awareness and motivation...

- ✓ They don't like being soiled or wet and want their diapers changed
- ✓ They go and hide behind furniture or a door. This is evolutionary in origin because we are most vulnerable to predators when engaged in the act of elimination.
- ✓ They stay dry for longer periods.
- ✓ They show interest in underwear (“big girl” “big boy pants”).

These telegraphs signal that these are the best moments to whisk the Learner into the bathroom. It is at these times that you can be fairly sure that interoceptive signals are going on and that you can make the proper associations between the internal feelings and the behaviors we're teaching.

- **“Working Without a Net”**

Our personal favorite and one of the most common methods used for typical and special needs Learners. Adults determine that the Learner is ready, and they allow the Learner to walk around

the house in underwear or no bottoms at all. This makes elimination very conspicuous to the Learner and to everyone else. When the Learner urinates or shows signs of defecation, adults take them and seat them on the toilet to finish.

- ✓ Parents may want to keep the Learner on tiled surfaces and cover areas that they don't want stained. Accidents usually happen at first.
- ✓ If the Learner stops eliminating (withholds) when this method is tried, then we may have a more serious problem. If the Learner withholds and then eliminates as soon as the diaper is put back on, then this is a sign of what we call "Diaper Dependence," a form of stimulus discrimination confusion (see below).

Problems Related to Bowel Withholding

The Learner refuses to eliminate for some reason – usually only until the diaper is put on (see 'Diaper Dependence' below). Learners withhold due to stimulus confusion or stimulus discrimination errors (what we call diaper dependence), or emotional/psychological issues. The emotional issues most common to young children have to do with individuation – allowing themselves to grow up and be independent. If the emotional or psychological issues are more complicated than that

This is a serious problem that can cause toxicity, bowel obstruction and distention and a whole host of other complications. Some Learners end up in the hospital due to bowel withholding. This is why it is very important to communicate with Supervisors or Doctors when this problem occurs.

Bladder withholding is almost never a problem. It is very hard to withhold urine, especially once you fall asleep.

- Toileting: Where We Are: **Diaper Dependence Elimination Program**

Many special needs Learners do not infer patterns and reasons from simple observation. They are "simple association learners," not easily taught with models, words, symbols, stories, or other methods commonly used to get children ready and inspire them for toilet independence.

We call these Learners "Diaper Dependent." They show a frustrating pattern of withholding until the diaper is put back on.

- **Cognitive Reasons:** This is because every day of their lives so far – every [at least bowel] elimination experience is associated with a diaper – the feeling of the diaper on the skin. When we remove the diaper, the Learner is confused and anxious. The Learner will usually eliminate as soon as the diaper is replaced. We treat this using the teaching steps below. They are designed to gradually reduce the power of the diaper as a stimulus and replace that with the toilet as a stimulus for elimination...

1. All changing and Dressing in the Bathroom: **The Bathroom is Where Poop Goes**

Parents establish and strengthen associations between elimination and the bathroom. They weaken associations between elimination in other places. They start by doing all changing and re-dressing in the bathroom. They no longer change the child on the bed or sofa or

carpet in other rooms.

At every step of the process, here and below, we assist the Learner in dumping the contents off the soiled diaper in the toilet and flushing it. The Learner also receives help and instruction for all of the ancillary behaviors listed above, including wiping. The Learner should learn to wipe while standing.

- a. At some point in the process, the Learner has to get used to wearing underwear. It is best to start now, although this means that there are two differences being introduced at once. This may present a slight problem for functional analysis (determining which particular stimulus discrimination confuses or upsets the Learner), but the Learner protests at different times – so it is pretty easy to tell what part of the process is objectionable.

Underwear is worn over the diaper through all but the last steps of the process.

2. Poop in the Diaper in the Bathroom

The next graduated step involves the child eliminating in the bathroom, while still allowed to wear the diaper. The Learner is not ready yet to eliminate without the diaper on, so adults place no pressure on the Learner to eliminate with the diaper off.

3. Poop in the Diaper in the Bathroom: Sitting on the Toilet

The third graduated step involves the child eliminating in the diaper, but now in a seated position on the toilet seat. This is an important and often difficult step, because this may be the first time that the Learner has made a bowel movement while seated. Many special needs children (as well as most children under two years) do not have the trunk/abdominal development necessary to have bowel movements sitting down. Toddlers often stand or lean on furniture while having a bowel movement. Learners who are hypotonic or that have cerebral palsy are also likelier to have a problem in this regard. This is not a reason to move forward, but it is a consideration that may need further evaluation.

Regardless of trunk/abdominal strength issues, pooping while seated is also a big cognitive difference. There may be a history of failed attempts at toilet teaching that have made the Learner averse to sitting on the toilet. Remember, these are Learners that may not understand why they are put through this process anyway.

4. Loosen the back of the Diaper

Once the Learner masters seated bowel movements, it is time to loosen the diaper just before seating on the toilet. The diaper will fall backwards, exposing the skin. The Learner eliminates while seated and with the diaper loosened in this way. This may be unsettling, but is usually one of the easier steps. An alternative is to cut a hole in the diaper prior to putting it on (this can result in soiled pants however).

5. Hold the Diaper

You can skip this step if the Learner doesn't need it. Often, the Learner has gone from a mere association to a conceptual understanding of the process and the expectations. If not, the following graduated steps can be used:

- a. The Learner keeps the diaper in his or her lap and eliminates on the toilet.
 - b. The Learner holds the diaper in his or her hands (there may be an emotional or psychological attachment to the diaper that does not fit into our typical logic system, but may still be important to the Learner).
- **Emotional or Psychological Reasons:** Many Learners understand the process and the expectations but still refuse. Like the diaper dependent Learner, they will only eliminate in the diaper. Some may refuse to enter the bathroom.

Very commonly, younger Learners, whether they learn typically or have special issues, see toilet independence as a final, scary step out of infancy. It is important to understand, and for you to educate the adults involved, that children at this age (or Learners functioning at that cognitive and/or emotional age), have their own logic system. It is common for young children to have a worldview based only on their experience, which includes these common notions:

- ✓ Parents exist only to take care of them. They often believe that parents were born or made after they were born.
- ✓ Parents control and are responsible for everything. Not only do they control forces such as the sun rising and setting, the weather, or when the stores open and close, etc., but also the child's negative moods (their bad feelings are the adult's fault; this is why it is so important to get parents out of the "over-fixing" mentioned in the above sections on cooperation issues).

But toddlers also realize that parents cannot control a few things that the child has control of: children can control what goes in (eating) and out (elimination) of their bodies. They can refuse to sleep and they can choose to be uncooperative.

And most importantly for this subject...

- ✓ Because parents only exist to take care of them, becoming independent means that parents will leave. They keep parents attached through their dependence. This leads to the Peter Pan problem below.
- Toileting: Peter Pan, "I Don't Want to Grow Up" **Reassure**

The key to overcoming this obstacle to individuation and independence is to constantly reassure the Learner that he or she will always be loved – whether he or she is in diapers or uses the toilet. (*"Mommy loves you if you're big or little."* *"Daddy loves you if you poop in the diaper or the potty."* *"I'm always going to be your Mommy, even when you grow up."*) The adults take pressure off of the Learner and allow him or her to make the decision.

Parents will often complain that their preschool is pressuring them, or that preschools won't take

their child unless they are toilet trained. Some children, especially boys, aren't ready until they are 4 or sometimes 4 ½ or older. This is a difficult issue, because rushing this child is counterproductive. It is best to try the reassurance for a while and then reassess.

Bathing/Showering

Problems in this domain come under a few categories:

- ✓ Cooperation (Learner doesn't want to bathe or shower)
- ✓ Transitions (Learner doesn't mind bathing or showering, but resists going into or leaving it)
- ✓ Skills and accuracy (Learner doesn't know how to do it or do it well)

Difficulties with cooperation and transitions may be due to the usual reasons cited above and handled accordingly, or they may have to do with sensory aversions to the tasks, or with not knowing the reason for hygiene. Sometimes, there's too much enjoyment of the sensory aspects (e.g., playing in the water or liquid soap).

Skills and Conceptual Issues

Because these skills are learned through a combination of imitation, verbal instructions, corrections for accuracy and eventual conceptualization of the task, it is not surprising that teaching special needs Learners these tasks is difficult. Special education/ABA techniques are usually indicated here, such as breaking tasks into small, teachable steps, modeling (often the least effective method), hand-over-hand guiding and fading of prompts, and corrective feedback.

It is important for you to know Andrew Meltzoff's hierarchy of imitative learning (Emulation → Imitation → Intention; [see materials](#)). The problem here is that Learners *emulate* – copying the gross shape of the action, but not the stylistic elements (force, speed, etc.). This results in too little pressure being applied and a seeming token effort. Some can "imitate," which includes the stylistic elements, but they still don't know if they've done a good job because they do not understand the intention of the task (to get clean).

Here are some tips that can be used as Refrigerator Notes

- **Teach the *Feeling of Pressure* First:** This is not hand-over-hand guidance! The Guide presses her hands directly on the Learners skin and pushes to demonstrate the force needed. The Learner experiences the feeling of the force. This is a good start.
- **Make it Clear:** Stimulus Enhancement: Factory workers spread sawdust on the floor to enhance the visual of where they've swept and where they've not. Spreading thick and sticky substances can show where the Learner has cleaned and where they've missed. They cannot get the stuff off without applying the correct force.
- **Spatula:** Prompt from the Elbow: By lifting the elbow and pressing down on the forearm, you create a force downward on the hand without actually putting your hands over the Learner's hand. When you place your hand over the Learner's hand, you run the risk of the Learner going limp and then you have a rag-doll that learns nothing or worse – becomes dependent on this.

- **Imitation Method:** This includes doing the motions outside the tub or shower with the Learner in the tub or shower. The Learner tries to copy both the shape and the stylistic elements of the action.
- **Hand-Over-Hand Guidance (HOHG) Method:** Where We Are

This is the least desirable method for teaching showering and bathing skills, but can be quite effective in teaching too and utensil use.

- **Full:** The Guide provides most of the motor force to the task by placing his hand over the Learner's hand. Watch for the Learner going limp – this is a very common side effect of this instruction and an indication that the teaching method may need to be reconsidered.
- **Partial:** When using HOHG, it is important to let up as soon as you feel the Learner supplying the energy and force needed. This is gradual letting up or “fading” of the full prompt. The more energy and force the Learner supplies, the less the Guide provides.
- **Shadowing:** Once the Learner is knowledgeable of the motion and applies the right force, the Guide just moves in close and parallel with the /learner
- **Non-verbal Guiding:** This can be guiding with gestures, index-finger pointing, eye or head pointing, etc.
- **Patterns:** Teach a chain for bathing that goes from head to toe. It is easier for the Learner to get this pattern quickly, rather than skipping around.

Teeth/Hair Brushing

Teeth and hair brushing carry along with them special sensory and psychological issues to consider. First of all, sensory nerves are especially sensitive in the mouth and scalp areas, and Learners with Autism and/or Sensory issues can experience brushing as painful. Soft brushes are indicated, as well as taking every precaution to go slowly, warn of the next move before doing it (“I’m going to brush over here”) and allowing the child to hold the brush. They may be averse to the sound of scissors and clippers and may melt down in barber shops. They may be very scared of water being poured over their heads.

Modeling can be especially effective and less intrusive rather than grabbing the brush. Mild HOHG can be very effective. Use mediators such as counting strokes to make sure the child has a pattern to follow (e.g. with teeth: left side 1-2-3, front 1-2-3, right side 1-2-3, inside left 1-2-3, inside front 1-2-3, etc.). A similar method can be used for hair brushing.

Refrigerator Notes:

- **Create an easy pattern** to learn and remember
- **Give the Learner as much control as possible:** help can be experienced as intrusive, threatening and scary
- **Go Slow and Warn**

Dressing

- Dressing: ABA Chaining Procedures are indicated in the teaching of dressing. The following chaining directions are usually best:
 - Putting on socks, pants: Backwards chain
 - Putting on shirt, shoes: Forwards Chain

Nighttime Routine and Sleep

- Sleep: **Deceleration**

High arousal states are not conducive to winding down for sleep. Arousal must be decelerated, so routines need to be predictable and include 'gradually lower key' activities.

It is helpful to think in terms of "down-shifting" as with gears – each activity more settling than the next. As in the next bullet below, this can be unique for different children – what winds one child down might rev another up.

Try to Avoid Revved Up Activities...

- ... Wrestling, tickling and horseplay
- ... Video games
- ... Jumping on the bed
- ... Obsessive Interests

These often work...

- ... Relaxing music or short videos
- ... Snacks
- ... Books
- ... Turning off lights, one by one, going from the hall to the bedroom and then leaving on the nightlight

It is best to follow a regular sequence that goes from the highest arousing of the list to the lowest.

- Sleep: **Daytime and Nighttime Toys**

Every child will be different. For some, books may be obsessive and arousing, while for others, they may be de-arousing. Parents take a mental inventory of what tends to rev their child up (daytime toys) and what tends to wind them down (nighttime toys). They make daytime toys available during the day, and nighttime toys available in the evening. Having separate tubs or toy chests for these helps.

While it is ultimately up to the parents, we are fairly liberal about allowing children to take toys or books to bed. This allows the child to fall asleep naturally. We cannot make a child sleep. We can

only facilitate the conditions best for that child's sleep.

- Sleep: Where We Are: Bed Dependence

Parents become aware of the conditions their child depends on to fall asleep. For independent sleeping, the parents must not be one of the elements. When parents must lay down with the child, allow the child to fall asleep in the car or on the couch or in their bed, rock the child to sleep, etc., these conditions will be required when the child wakes in the middle of the night.

Most people experience a phenomenon called "micro-wakings" through the night. We don't remember them. A micro-waking involves opening the eyes, looking around briefly, and falling back to sleep. This is an evolutionary adaptation from our nomadic hunter-gatherer days when we slept fairly exposed to the elements and predators.

When a child falls asleep under a set of conditions, they will become alarmed during the micro-waking if the conditions have changed. So if the parent was there when they went to sleep, or they fell asleep in one place and was moved while asleep to another location, then the micro-waking will result in alarm and full wakefulness. Parents may end up having to repeat the sequence of putting the child to bed – but now the child is less trusting. Also, parents may be barely awake and allow bad habits to develop, such as the child entering the parental bed.

Parents are encouraged to establish decelerating routine that ends up with some brief affection and a "Good night." They allow the child to have what she needs in order to get herself to sleep (e.g., toys, stuffed animals; books, whatever...)

- Sleep: Nighttime Dryness

The intervention involves trying to grow the bladder by encouraging the child to drink [non-caffeinated] liquids copiously and to space out trips to the bathroom ('holding it in') during the day and evening. Parents cut out salt after 4 to diminish the urge for drinking. The child is allowed to pee before bedtime to empty the bladder.

- **Hold it in; No Salt after 4 pm; No Liquids after 6pm; pee freely 1 hour before bedtime.**