CONNECTING AGAINST ALL ODDS

Creating Classroom Communities that Include ALL students!

-Rita Krugger-
Why are you here today?

THERE ARE NO BAD KIDS

ONLY HAPPY LITTLE CLASSROOM CHALLENGES
Why am I here today?
It is our job to make sure that everyone is provided an opportunity to learn in a safe and caring environment!

- We are expected to help all our kids become powerful learners and connect with the content, even when we know that many of them are not having their basic needs met.

- We have tremendous power to influence the day for all our students, especially the “tough kids”.

Special Education Teachers

What other teachers think I do.

What other students think I do.

What society thinks I do.

What the kids’ parents think I do.

What I think I do.

What I actually do.
What I **DO** know is “Tough Kids”

- ODD?
- ADHD?
- FASD?
- Autism Spectrum?
- RAD?
- OCD?
Some of them I know really well...
Spectrum of Intervention

Even this is just a small example of how people can respond to behavior.

A lot of PD focuses on the middle:

Specific Strategies for Specific Students...
Spectrum of Intervention

Today we are going to be mindful of our time, and focus on the interventions that **WILL** be impactful for **ALL** of your students.
Question:

“How Do You Want to Be Responded to When You are Upset?”
Brené Brown on Empathy
Importance of Empathy

Children and adults have the same brain – both have an instinctive need for Connection

Right Brain

V.

Left Brain

The Whole-brain Child- Daniel Siegel
How do we Connect?

- Remember the needs of the Right-Brain before you try to address, or reason, with the Left Brain.

- Acknowledge in a non-judgemental way

- Use a **Positive Physical Presence**: Get down to their level and watch to make sure they are not “outnumbered”

- Use a **empathetic and nurturing** tone

- Allow the child to “**feel felt**” and heard

- **Be aware** of your verbal AND non-verbal presence
Think:

What are your non-verbals saying??
What keeps you from connecting?

We know that showing empathy and building connections with our students will help us get to the **WHY** and can even reduce the number of incidences over time.

So, what keeps us from connecting this way?

- Fear of being judged by colleagues/administration/parents and community members
  
  “Why can’t you ‘control’ your student or classroom?”

- Worry that you will be reinforcing bad behaviors or bad choices.
  
  *The rest of the students will think it is ok!” and/or*
  
  “I don’t want to encourage attention-seeking behaviors!”

- We are overwhelmed by schedules, obligations, other students’ needs, etc.
  
  “We are supposed to be at the pool!” and/or “I just don’t have time for this right now!”

- We have not made sure that WE are regulated. We are tired, emotional, upset or angry!
  
  “I have had enough of this kid!” and/or “I am so tired of this!”
“Why can’t you ‘control’ your student or classroom?”

The better question is this:

“What can you actually “control”?”
Instead of control... co-regulate!

As an adult it can be tempting to gloss over certain events, particularly those that seem small to us (Don’t be mad, it’s okay, stop crying, you’re fine).

Instead allow the student to describe in their words what happened from their perception to cause an emotional meltdown and give them the words to label their emotions.
This helps the student calm their flooded right-brain and access their logical left-brain.

Never
In the history of calming down, has anyone ever calmed down by being told to calm down.

Calm down
“I don’t want to encourage attention-seeking behaviors!”
“The rest of the students will think it is ok!”

If you are confident that the behavior is attention-seeking...

You are more than halfway to solving the problem!
Targeted Ignoring

At times, it may be beneficial to ignore undesirable behavior (that is not immediately dangerous) as it removes the reinforcing value of attention.

Receiving **POSITIVE** or **NEGATIVE** attention for a specific behavior is likely to increase the chance of that behavior happening again.
Targeted Ignoring - continued

Watch for signs of behavior changing...

If behavior changes for the good...
Reinforce positive choices:
“I really appreciate you being able to…”

If it continues to escalate or become distracting...
Address the function of the behavior:
“Are you trying to get my attention?”
"I just don’t have time for this right now!"

If you take the time to find out WHY…

You will:

1. Build relationships
2. Teach patience & tolerance
3. Stand a better chance of preventing/redirecting the behavior in the future

Fewer incidents going forward will mean more time to learn and engage and participate in class.

---TAKE TIME TO MAKE TIME---

If you don't take the time to work on creating the classroom you WANT, you are going to eventually be forced to spend a LOT of time dealing with a classroom you don't…
When we take the time to allow children to experience their emotions it enables us to see their perspective and eventually help them understand that they can focus their attention on other aspects of their reality.

- **Discipline** is teaching
- **Teaching** requires kids to be receptive to learning
- **Receptivity** results from **Connection**
- **Connection** moves kids from reactivity to receptivity
"I have had enough of this kid!"

A Dysregulated Adult will never successfully regulate A Dysregulated Child

Keep calm to teach calm

It is easy to take a child’s behavior personally. Working with an especially tough student can be exhausting, and what worked yesterday might not work tomorrow...
At the end of the day, we are the adults...

Self-regulation can be difficult, but there is a prescribed path to follow if you want to lead your students to success using co-regulation...

Step 1: Regulate

Step 2: Relate

Step 3: Reason
Step 1: Regulate

They can’t even follow a Routine!!!
They won’t even take a Body Break!
They just need to take a Deep Breathe.
I just need them to be able to switch tasks!!!
They never seem to be calm!

Did I schedule enough Breaks?
Have I accessed all of my Supports?
Did I “Breathe Deeply 10x”?
Is my classroom a Calming Space?
When was the last time I Laughed?
Step 2: Relate

They don’t know how to be a Buddy!
I never hear them Laugh with friends.
They don’t have anything in common!
They always Leave others out!!!
They just can’t Get along!!

Do I have a Buddy Teacher?
Have I used every crisis to Attach?
Did I explain the “paths to success”?
When was the last time I Checked In?
- Do I understand their stressors?
Have I Discovered my student’s talents?
Step 3: Reason

Instead of Saying...

Success at School

Try Thinking...

They need to use Self-Talk!
They don’t even know how to Learn!
They should know what is expected by now!
They need to set their own learning goals.

Have I taught them transition skills?
Have I looked for resilience in my student?
Am I being fair and giving what is needed?
Have I dug deeper?
- are they lacking skill? Or will?
Have I modeled solving problems?
Once you sense that the student’s brain has settled enough that it can handle a left-brain logical approach, you can redirect by problem-solving with the student or make suggestions. In the beginning this might need to be identifying choices for the student as to how they can further self-regulate (i.e., Use a proactive preferred regulating strategy; take a walk, deep pressure, sensory objects).
Siegel and Payne Bryson offer several strategies to help R-E-D-I-R-E-C-T.
In disciplinary interactions adults often feel the need to point out what their kids did wrong and highlight what needs to be changed. Most kids already know what they did wrong and do not need a long lecture about their mistakes.

Avoid the tendency to talk too much. If you need to cover an issue more fully by asking questions and listening – Be Brief. Once you address the behavior and feelings behind the behavior, move on.

Strategy: Use Precision Commands
Using Precision Commands

A precise verbal statement made by staff to enhance student compliance.

The average student is compliant to teacher commands about 70 – 80% of the time. A problematic student is non-compliant at least 50% of the time.
Using Precision Commands

1. Give a polite, effective command:

   - DO NOT use an invitation format (even implied) “Let’s take our seats”
   - DO NOT use a questions format. “Isn’t it time to get your work done?”
   - DO NOT use a threat as part of the precision command. “You will not be in this class if you don’t learn to sit down”.

Using Precision Commands

2. Describe the **DESIRED** Behavior. – Descriptive Commands are more effective than ambiguous or general command.

“I need you to stay seated please, because standing while I am teaching is very distracting for me” is **better** than “Sit down”
Using Precision Commands

3. Use a firm voice but do not yell.

Yelling, cajoling or pleading reduces the effectiveness of a precision command.
Using Precision Commands

4. Keep a non-emotional stance – AVOID disparaging comments. “If you had listened to me in the first place, you wouldn’t have had to....”
Using Precision Commands

5. Allow the student three to five seconds to comply...

\[ \text{3 sec} - \text{5 sec} \]

**DO NOT** repeat the command or give a new command.
Using Precision Commands

6. Reinforce Compliance

“Thank you, you really helped me with that!!”

Good Job!
During redirection this means helping kids understand that feelings are neither good nor bad, they just are but it is what we do as a result of our emotions that determines whether our behavior is okay or not okay.

“You can feel whatever you feel, but you can’t always do whatever you want to do.”

Or simply- “It is an explanation, not an excuse!”

We want students to believe that even as we teach them about right and wrong behavior their feelings and experiences will always be validated and honoured.

**Strategy: Drop the BUT and add 3 BECAUSE**
How to disarm an emotional bomb?

For some reason, when someone is frustrated or upset, we find ourselves saying something along the lines of:

I know you are angry, BUT...

We might not be doing it intentionally, but this language dismisses their emotions, and will often trigger a defensive response when they feel the need to justify their feelings...
Drop the But and add Because(3)...

A little experiment??

IF I SEE ONE MORE KID FLIPPING A WATER BOTTLE

TeacherMemes.com
Students don’t need their teachers to tell them not to make bad decisions. What they need is for the teacher to redirect them, help them recognize the bad decisions they are making and what leads up to those decisions so they can correct themselves and change whatever needs to be changes.

**Instead of Commanding and Demanding**

*Put that toy in your desk!*

*Describe what you see.*

*I see that toy in your hand is distracting you.*

Why? – Avoids putting the child on the defensive
  
  - Puts the onus for deciding how to respond to the observation on the child, thus exercising his upstairs brain
  
  - Initiates a conversation to explain and gain some insight, come up with a solution or apologize if necessary

**Strategy: Where’s the B.EE.F.?**
Effective I-statements will include:

Behavior- non-blameful description
Explicit – how the behavior effected you
Effect
Feeling- I feel...

You are being very disrespectful!

When I get interrupted during my lesson, I feel frustrated because it breaks my concentration and I might forget something important!
Involving the student in the discipline does not mean forgoing your role as an authority figure in the relationship but research has shown that it does help the child feel more respected, buy into what the teacher is promoting, and that they are therefore more likely to cooperate and even help to come up with solutions to the problem that created the need for discipline in the first place.

- Helps students develop insight into their own actions and empathy for others.

**Insight**

“I know you know the rules, so I am wondering what was going on that led you to this?”

**Empathy and Integrative Repair**

“What do you think that was like for her and how can you make things right?”

**Instead of just giving the answer you consequence the upstairs brain by asking the student how they can help solve the problems they created**

Strategy: Using Think Sheets
Think Sheets

- Think sheets are very useful, especially in a busy classroom setting. Once students are familiar with the format and have had help filling them out a couple of times, many kids can fill them out independently and then you can refer to them when de-briefing a situation with your student!
When you have to decline a request it matters “how” you say no.

- No especially in a harsh, dismissive tone, can automatically activate a reactive state in an individual
- A supportive statement, even when not permitting a behavior turns on the social engagement circuits, making the brain more receptive to what’s happening and learning.

“There’s a lot happening today and tomorrow, so yes we can have extra gym time but it will need to on Friday when we have more time.”

“This activity is not a good idea for the classroom, but let’s think of something else we can do to burn off some energy.”

**Helps students practice handling disappointment and delaying gratification.**

**Strategy: First – Then**
First – Then Strategy

- Using a First-Then Strategy helps students understand what is required of them before they can get to their choice activity.
- It is VERY IMPORTANT that you set up First-Then cards that you know you will be able to follow through on.
Emphasize the Positive

Discipline does not always have to be negative.

Instead of focusing on the problem

“Stop whining”

Emphasize the positive behavior you want

“Ask me in your powerful big boy voice. That way I can really listen”

Catch the student behaving well and making good decisions.

“You two are really having fun – it’s great to see you getting along.”

“Thanks for remembering to raise your hand.”

Strategy: 4:1 Praise Ratio
Praise

Follow the “Four to One” ratio rule that seeks to provide four positive comments for every one negative or corrective statement.

Remember!

4:1
Positive : Negative
There is no one size fits all discipline technique to use in every situation.

- Humor is a powerful tool when a child is upset because the brain loves novelty. Introducing the brain to something it hasn’t seen before or didn’t expect engages the brain in thinking instead of reacting.

- A respectful sense of humor communicates the absence of threat which allows connection.
Believe in your ability to promote a safe, caring and respectful classroom environment.

Fill your discipline tool box with information from lots of experts (and non-experts), then listen to your own instincts as you pick and choose different aspects of different approaches that seem to apply best to the situation and the unique student(s).
Mindset tools help students understand that they don’t have to get stuck in a negative experience. They don’t have to be victims to external events or internal emotions.

You can use your mind to take charge of how you feel and how you act.
Mindset Tools:
The 3 Outcomes of Brain Based Discipline

1. **Insight** – Students learn to understand their own feelings and their responses to difficult situations.

2. **Empathy** – Students can learn empathy through practice reflecting on how their actions impact others.

3. **Repair** – Kids learn what they can do to make things right.
You can support a student through the problem solving process

“It must feel sad not to be playing soccer with your friends? I wonder why they are not including you? Have you thought at a way you could make this better?”
You can set limits and give consequences that help students understand the impact of their behavior on others.

Limit setting CAN create a healthy sense of shame which creates an internal compass to guide future behaviors.

Rules and limits applied effectively help build a conscience.
Breaking rules or pushing limits SHOULD result in consequences!

Natural consequences of choices are effective and students should experience these.

Eg. If you are a poor sport your peers might not let you join in their game next recess.

These are teachable moments to learn a new skill (being a good loser), finding ways to repair a situation (apologizing, offering to be “goalie” next time.)

Strategy: Good Rules
Good Rules

- Should be set by the school and classroom teacher **BEFORE** school starts
- Should have a **REASON** behind them
- Should clearly reflect expectations
  - Something you can **SEE**
  - Something you can **MEASURE**
- Should be stated in a **POSITIVE** way
- Aim for **5-6 rules**
- Should be **EASY** to explain and **UNDERSTAND**
Class Rules

Be Responsible
Follow directions
Be on time
Be Prepared

Be Safe
Follow directions
Walk, don’t run
Stay in your Seat
Keep your area clean

Be Respectful
Follow directions
Keep your hands & feet to yourself
Use kind words

Good Rules??

Ask yourself:

Does each rule have a REASON?

Can you see it?

Can you measure it?

Are they positive?

Are they EASY to understand?
Good Rules??

Ask yourself:

Does each rule have a REASON?

Can you see it?

Can you measure it?

Are they positive?

Are they EASY to understand?
Have a Rule Management System

- Consequences should be **DIRECTLY** tied to the rule.

- Have **pre-planned** consequences for rule-breakers

- **KEEP IT SIMPLE**

- Use **positive** peer attention
Limit-setting and setting consequences **SHOULD NOT** be done when the adult is emotionally dysregulated as it can result in an overreaction (yelling, sarcasm) which can cause humiliation which is a form of “toxic shame”.
Adults often feel the need to impose a punishment.

While giving a punishment for misbehavior MIGHT make the child think twice about engaging in the behavior again in the short-term, it does not always TEACH the skills they may need to regulate their behavior in the long-term.
The key to effective learning is logically linking the consequence to the behavior

- Making a mess with the classroom blocks means cleaning them up outside of instructional time.
- Disrupting the learning of others with too much socializing might mean working on their own in a private space.
- Not getting work done in a timely way (assuming the expectations are appropriate) may mean completing the task during a time when it should be a preferred activity.
Effective consequences give the student an experience of what it means to do things in an appropriate way.

- If a student is being disrespectful in their tone or words have her try it again and communicate what she is saying respectfully.

- If a student is mean to a peer you might ask him to find three kind things to do for him before recess.

**Strategy: Time Out**
What about Time-Out?

Researchers who have carefully studied time-outs have found out that they are most effective when used infrequently, as an intentional strategy where the teacher who has discussed this with the child (and their parents) beforehand, pauses a difficult interaction, offers a time-out for a brief period to allow the child (and sometimes the teacher) an opportunity to self-regulate.
A little goes a long way...

Instead of being used to create a teaching opportunity a part of an intentional, overall strategy to help kids to learn self-regulating skills, too often teachers make time-outs frequent and lengthy, and they become associated with humiliation, anger and punishment.
Consider a Calm Zone or “Chill Zone” instead...

Help create a “calm zone” that students can visit when they need time to self-regulate. Offer a choice and a place that helps the child self-regulate and down-regulate shifting out of emotional overload.

Used as a brain based strategy time-out can stop behavior (first goal) and invite inner reflection that builds executive skills (second goal)
A Few Final Thoughts About Brain-Based Discipline

It is important to

Respond Flexibly

- Sometimes we need to adjust our expectations and realize the students need more time for development to unfold while at other times we may need to realize the student is capable of more than we are asking of them so we can challenge them to take more responsibility for their choice.
Be aware of what you bring to the situation.

Depending on the student’s behavior you might require a moment to calm down. Discipline decisions must be made based on actual facts of the particular situation not on past expectation, experience, or future fears.

Adults must be open with the fact that they make mistakes and be willing to model for students what it means to own up to one’s errors.
Don’t confuse consistency with rigidity.

Consistency means working from a reliable and coherent philosophy so that students know what we expect of them. It does not mean maintaining or unwavering devotion to an arbitrary set of rules. At times you might make an exception to a rule, ignore a behavior or cut the child some slack.
Try not to get trapped in power struggles.

Try negotiation. “Let’s see if we can figure out a way to get what we need.” (Obviously there are some non-negotiables, but negotiation isn’t a sign of weakness, it is a sign of respect for your student and their decisions)

A power struggle collapses when you withdraw your energy from it.

— Gary Zukav
REMEMBER

One size does not fit all and there is no magic bullet!