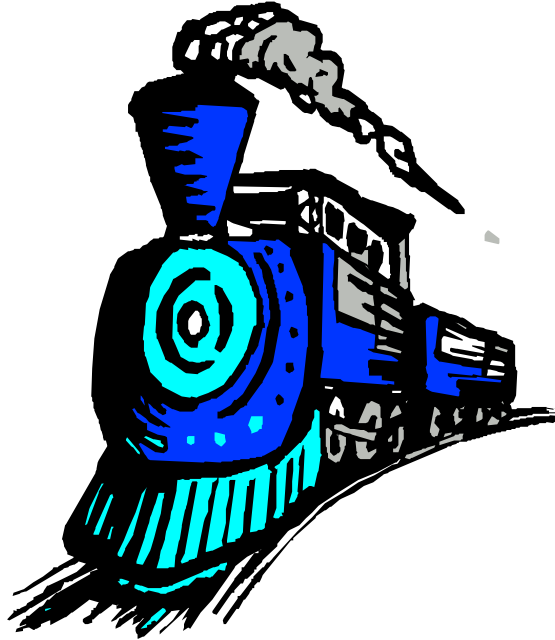


No Such Thing As a Bad Kid



Power of a Strength-Based Approach in Reshaping
the Lives of Children and Youth
with Emotional & Behavioral Issues

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The Power of a Positive, Strength-Based Approach

Strength-Based Practice: It's all about *Attitude & Actions*

Educators and professionals maximize student potential when they convey an attitude to each and every one that says:

I believe in all of you and I am *thrilled* to be part of your life.
And then, through their daily actions...show that they mean it.



Research has shown that a student entering high school with a history of violence, is not likely to commit further acts of aggression (at his/her school) *if* the student believes there is at least one educator at the school that thinks “I’m terrific!”

- James Garborino, Ph.D.

“I was successful because you believed in me.”

- Ulysses S. Grant in a letter to Abraham Lincoln

When youth feel better about themselves they are more likely to use and cultivate their strengths.

Genuine believing attacks self-doubt, makes students feel better about themselves, and provides hope... *Hope is Humanity's Fuel.*

“Self-doubt kills ability.”

-Degas

Excerpts from David Shenks' *The Genius in All of Us*:

But the new science suggests that few of us know our true limits, that the vast majority of us have not even come close to tapping what scientists call our ‘unactualized potential.’

With humility, with hope, and with extreme determination, greatness is something to which any kid-of any age-can aspire.

Most underachievers are very likely not prisoners of their own DNA, but rather have been unable to tap into their true potential.

“A smile is the face’s way of giving an emotional hug.”

Twenty years from now, the youth you currently serve won’t remember much of what you said to them, but they’ll all recall how you made them feel.

Children & youth with post traumatic stress disorder will shut down (i.e. become protective) when approached by an adult with a stern expression. (Fright, flight, or fight)

Have you ever watched an actor in a bad mood? If you’re in a bad mood, it might be prudent to fake that you’re not. Actors entertain for a few hours. Educators and Professionals save lives. A positive attitude sends the message: I want to be here. I care about you. I believe in you. You will make it. **2**

80 Questions that Mentors Can Ask their Mentees

1. Tell me the five best things about you?
2. If you could have the following superpower which one would you pick?
 - a. The ability to fly
 - b. super-strength
 - c. could turn invisible
3. If you were trapped on a deserted island and could pick one famous person to be with, who would it be?
4. If you could tell your parents to never to serve two vegetables again, which would you choose?
5. Who do you think your mother would prefer you become: an NBA ballplayer, the mayor, a famous explorer, or a movie star? Why? Which would you prefer?
6. Which of your friends do you like the most? Why?
7. If a genie could grant you any three wishes, what would they be?
8. What profession do you want to be when you're older?
9. Who was the best teacher you ever had? Tell me why.
10. What would the ideal teacher be like?
11. What college would you like to attend?
12. How much privacy would you like? What time of the day would you like to be alone, and why?
13. If you are feeling sad, what meal would be the one that would cheer you up?
14. Do you believe men and women are equally smart? Why or why not?
15. Do you ever have a dream that comes back over and over? If so, what is it like?
16. Is there anything you pretend you understand, but you really don't? What is it?
17. Which of the following choices do you think would be best, and why?
Dinner with everyone at the table and the TV on with your favorite program
Dinner in which everybody took what they wanted from the fridge and no one had the same thing
Dinner with the whole family together and no TV on
18. If a genie would give you only one wish, which would you pick, and why?
being world-class attractive being a genius being famous for doing something great
19. Are you afraid to fly?
20. Tell me who you think are the three greatest musicians in the world? Why?
21. If you could change three things about yourself, what would they be?
22. If you could keep your room any way you wanted, how would it look?
23. What kinds of lies do your friends tell their parents?
24. If you had to have a disability, which one of these would you pick, and why?
blindness deafness inability to walk
25. What are the qualities that make a good friend?
26. What was your favorite toy when you were little?
27. What do you say to comfort yourself when something scares you (like when a plan is bumpy, or when you are in a scary place)?
28. If you paid your bill at a restaurant and the waiter gave you too much change, would you tell him/her?
29. What do you think are the characteristics that make a good teacher?
30. Name the three movie stars you most admire.
31. Have you ever imitated something you saw in a movie? What was it?
32. Name a TV or movie star that you think is lame.
33. Do you think it's important to get physical education in school? Why or why not?
34. What is the most enjoyable thing your family has done together in the last three years?
35. What do you think is beyond the stars?

36. What is the nicest thing a friend has ever done for you?
37. Why do you, or don't you, like violent movies?
38. Name two things we should do for a fun activity?
39. Does the typical kid play video games too much?
40. What sport (that you haven't tried) do you think you would be good at? Why?
41. If you could visit any place in the world, where would it be?
42. Do you believe in heaven? If not, why? If so, what do you think it's like?
43. If you were going to have a weird, unusual pet, what would it be? Why would you want that pet?
44. If you could look like anyone, who would it be? Why?
45. Do you think "honesty is always the best policy"? Why or why not?
46. What have you done, in school or sports or anywhere, that you are most proud of?
47. Do you think girls look better with or without makeup? Why?
48. Do you think it's bad, okay, or good for guys to cry at movies? Why?
49. Which of your friends are you proudest of? Why?
50. Have you ever had a dream that really scared you? What was it about?
51. Can you describe the most beautiful place you have ever visited?
52. What kinds of things on TV and in movies make you laugh?
53. Tell me about your two favorite movies of all time and why you like them so much.
54. How do you describe me to your friends?
55. Do you feel you are as intelligent as most of your friends? Why or why not?
56. What is the scariest movie you've ever seen? Why?
57. Have you ever gotten really lost? If so, tell me about it. How did you feel?
58. How much TV a day do you think a kid should watch?
59. At what age, if any, do you think a kid should be able to watch any program on TV 60. Tell me what you think is good, or bad, about rap music?
61. What is the grossest thing you can think of?
62. What's your most embarrassing moment?
63. Is there anybody in history that you have read about that you would like to be?
64. What do you think is the right age for marriage? Why?
- 65.. Tell me three things you remember about kindergarten?
66. What kids are popular in your grade? What do you think makes a person popular?
67. What's the best thing you do?
68. If you knew a friend of yours had stolen something, what would you do about it?
69. If you were on a basketball team....would you rather score 50 points and lose or score 10 points and win?
70. What are the first three things you would do if you were elected President?
71. If you could trade lives with somebody you know, who would it be?
72. How do you think you would feel if you thought you were going to be the first person to meet someone from outer space? What would you say or ask?
73. What would you do if you were invisible for a day?
74. If you won 1 million dollars in the lottery, what would you do with the money?
75. What is the nicest thing you've ever done for another person, group, or animal?
76. If you could give 1 million dollars to a particular charity, which would you pick? 77. If you could be a cast member on any TV show, which would you pick?
78. Who do you think you are most like in your family? Why?
79. Who is the funniest relative in your family? Why?
80. Ice cream sundae or banana split? If split, what 3 flavors would you choose?

The Power of Motivation

As teachers, let us commit to learning why “unmotivated” kids are unable to find their drive and inspiration on playing fields, on skateboard courses, in poolrooms, in video arcades, on mall concourses...or at nine thousand feet. What do these settings provide that we do not provide in the classroom?

We constantly search for ways that we can “change the child.” Perhaps the first significant change should come from us. Perhaps we should first analyze and change our policies, procedures, and practices when dealing with hard-to-reach kids. -

Richard Lavoie, *The Motivation Breakthrough*, preface XIX

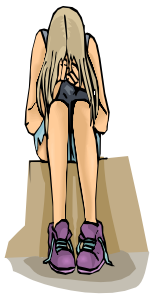
Most teachers and parents recognize that motivation is the key to learning. Reflect for a moment on your favorite teacher in high school. The chances are that he was an effective motivator. He inspired you. He was not merely a teacher, he was also a leader.

He did not necessarily make learning fun, but he made learning attainable and purposeful. Whether you serve children as a teacher, parent, coach, or instructor, you will multiply your effectiveness immeasurably if you learn how to motivate your charges and maintain that motivation throughout the learning process.

- Richard Lavoie, *The Motivation Breakthrough*, p.5

Strategies for Motivating At-Risk Students

- Greet each student with a smile
- Send positive notes home
- Call a student’s home and/or program after a good day or accomplishment
- Get to know the strengths and interests of each of your students. Take an interest in these strengths. (e.g. If a student likes NASCAR – get on the internet and learn about NASCAR) Do the same with their parents: “Ask your dad whether he thinks the Patriots can win the Super Bowl?”
- Use self-deprecating humor (e.g. *Don’t look at me if the Patriots lose on Sunday...*and then let them give you a hard time after a loss.
- Play a game (e.g. basketball, cards, computer, etc.) – try, but lose on purpose and pretend to be ticked off: “Don’t tell anyone that you beat me!”
- Ask their advice whenever possible (i.e. Empower!)
- Regularly post their work on a wall for all to see. Periodically celebrate successes.
- Let them know on a regular basis how much you enjoy working with them.
- Unexpectedly celebrate good days and/or accomplishments
- Keep things neat (Sends the message that you take the job seriously)
- Use humor liberally. Play music during free time and/or weave it into the content.



Gus on Pejorative Labeling



Look, I know some of us can be quite difficult. I was a hellion my first six months, considered quite obnoxious. But it was simply defensive posturing. (Can you say defense mechanism?) Kids aren't bad. They're just screwed up. The kid who's pushing you away the most is probably the one who needs you the most.

I think every residential center would be better off if they never used words as manipulative, lazy, un-invested, controlling, and obnoxious. They're pejorative adjectives. When you label one of us in such a way, you contaminate the waters and no one wants to swim with us any more.

"Manipulative kids aren't fun to work with."

"They're a pain in the ass."

"Boy, is that kid manipulative!"

Every time we get blasted for being "manipulative" (or any other such term), our self-concept suffers. We take on that word – we internalize a sense of badness. Yet the kid you call "manipulative" might have come to your facility with a history of manipulating his way out of getting beaten. So, maybe manipulating ain't so bad. Maybe it simply needs to be understood in the context of a child's situation. Maybe people don't need to use these words anymore.

P. 24 "I had been an excellent math student, but the day she told me I was "spacey" and unfocused was the day I stopped connecting to math."

Note: Throughout this handout will be references to the manuscript:
*Helping Traumatized Children Learn produced by Massachusetts Advocates
For Children www.massadvocates.org.*

Excerpt from *The Gus Chronicles*, Appelstein, 1994

Decoding Problem Behavior

Response to problem behavior: Understand > Reframe > Squeeze

Behavior is always a message

Pejorative Label

Positive, Hope-Based Reframe

Obnoxious

Good at pushing people away

Rude, arrogant

Good at affecting people

Resistant

Cautious

Lazy, un-invested

Good at preventing further hurts, failures

Manipulative

Good at getting needs met

Just looking for attention

Good at caring about and loving yourself

Close-mouthed

Loyal to family or friends

Different, odd

Under-appreciated

Stubborn & defiant

Good at standing up for yourself

Tantrum, fit, outburst

Big message

Learning disability

Roadblocks

Life isn't what you see, it's what you perceive!

When you change the way you look at a challenging youth ...the youth changes.

Reframing

Seeing and praising the positive, self-protective value in “negative” behaviors

1. A child who is always looking for attention:

R: I apologize to you for anyone who has ever put you down for looking for attention. I think it's great you look for attention – good or bad. It means you haven't quit on yourself. You probably haven't received enough attention in your life and you're looking for it now. Are there better ways to seek it? Sure, and we can talk about them. But I don't want you to spend another minute of your life thinking that there's something wrong with looking for attention!”

2. A youth who won't talk about his/her feelings:

R: You're a real loyal daughter. I think you hold everything in to protect your family and I think that's quite admirable. Your mom is very lucky to have a kid like you. But this isn't us against your family, we're on the same side (connecting statement –see page).

3. A youth who acts rudely:

R: You have an amazing ability to affect people! Or, “I think you're pretty good at giving to others what you've received.”

4. A child who makes funny noises at the wrong time:

R: You're a very creative kid. What range, pitch, resonance! These are great noises. How about saving them for the end of the day. You can put on a show for five minutes.

5. A youth who acts in a stubborn manner:

R: You're good at standing up for yourself and what you believe. Some of the greatest people in the world were quite stubborn about their causes: Martin Luther King, Mother Theresa. But the great ones all new when to give in a little.

6. A student who seems unmotivated:

R: You're pretty good at protecting yourself. If you don't try you can't be embarrassed. But you're a bright kid and if you just take it step by step you'll probably have success.

7. A youth who frequently swears:

5. **R:** You're very expressive! You've got words I never heard before. Might use a few at the Cowboy's game. How about saving the expressive language for times your alone with one of us, not in front of the other students. Thanks.

8. A child who's bossy with peers:

9. **R:** You've got great leadership skills. You're a natural.