



## Challenging Children Are Gifts from God, Too!

**Challenging children provide opportunities for you, your teachers and all your children to thrive!**

**Learning Objectives** - Successful learners will:

- Identify 3 pathways to challenging behavior in young children’s lives
- List 3 emotional supports children especially need when distressed and give an example of each
- Describe 3 groups of strategies that build children's capacity for emotional regulation

### 3 Pathways to Challenging Behaviors

1. Environmental Stressors (see [video](#) on toxic stress)

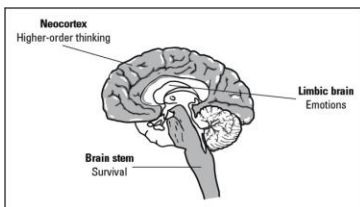
Stressors in the classroom or program can trigger challenging behaviors:

- High noise, light & activity levels
- Children unprepared for transitions
- Adult & child behaviors

2. Neurological or developmental differences

<b>ADHD</b>	Inattentive	Hyperactive	Impulsive
<b>ASD</b>	Communication & Social Interaction		Restricted or repetitive behavior patterns
<b>SPD</b>	Touch	Light	Sound
			Smells
			Tastes
			Movement
<b>Lagging Skills</b>	Flexibility	Adaptability	Frustration Tolerance
			Problem-solving

3. Emotional state - What Happens in the Brain during Distress?



We “flip our lids”!  
(See [Dr. Dan Siegel’s Hand Model of the Brain](#))

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**Helping Teachers Handle Challenging Behaviors in Their Classrooms by Supporting Children’s Emotional Needs**

Especially when distressed, children need...

The 1<sup>st</sup> “C” \_\_\_\_\_

Remind children that they are loved.

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**Ideas for Connecting with a Distressed Child:**

- Show pictures of the child being cared for
- Sing a soothing song the child knows

"I'll love you forever  
I'll like you for always  
As long as you need me  
Your helper I'll be."

(adapted from: Munsch, R. N., & McGraw, S. III. (1987). *Love you forever*. Willowdale, Ontario, Canada: Firefly Books)

The 2<sup>nd</sup> “C” \_\_\_\_\_

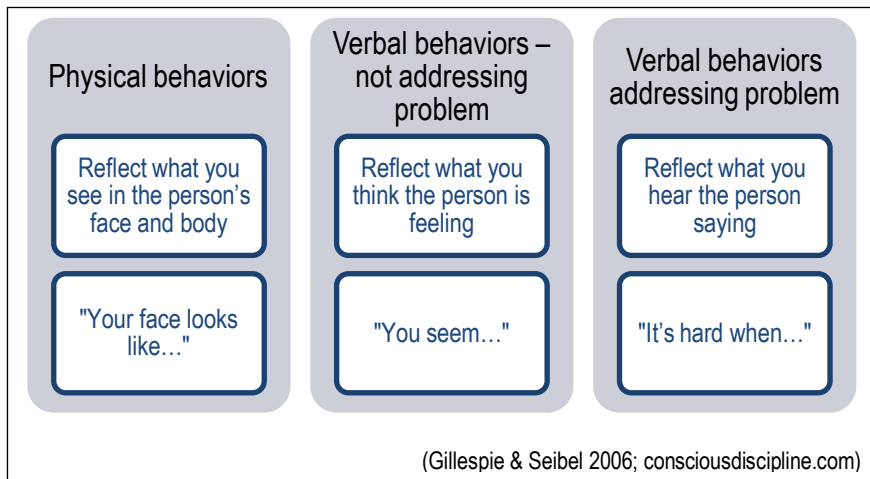
First, remain calm yourself, then help the child.

**Ideas for Calming**

- |                         |                           |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| Take deep breaths       | Think positive thoughts   |
| Be mindful of your body | Get curious, not furious! |

The 3<sup>rd</sup> “C” \_\_\_\_\_

First give *empathy* by reflecting what you see, hear, or think the person is feeling.



Then give *compassion* by expressing a desire to help DEAL WITH THE FEELING and by providing the help.

**Showing Compassion**

- “I want to help you”
- “I’m here to help”

***Because the relationship with the child is the most important factor in successfully managing challenging behaviors, the classroom teacher should be the one to handle these behaviors – with your support!***

## Helping Teachers to Prevent Challenging Behaviors by Building Children's Capacity for Emotional Regulation

The 4<sup>th</sup> "C" \_\_\_\_\_

Provide the 4<sup>th</sup> C only when children are calm.

### 3 Categories for Building Children's Capacity for Self-Regulation (Gillespie & Seibel 2006; Rice 2012)

#### 1. Indirect Teaching Strategies

***The most important way to prevent challenging behaviors is to establish and nurture responsive relationships with children.  
Encourage teachers to strengthen relationships with every child daily – especially the challenging children!***

Play connecting games that include: emotional warmth, close contact & playfulness. (adapted from consciousdiscipline.com; see my blog for ideas)

#### 2. Structuring the Environment

- Visual cues \_\_\_\_\_
- Safety signals \_\_\_\_\_
- Low noise, light & activity levels \_\_\_\_\_
- Developmentally appropriate materials \_\_\_\_\_

#### 3. Teaching Self-Regulation & Executive Functioning Skills

- Teach \_\_\_\_\_
- Coach \_\_\_\_\_
- Cue or prompt \_\_\_\_\_
- Provide Practice \_\_\_\_\_

#### Calming children

Smell the flower,  
blow the pinwheel



## RESOURCES

- Bailey, B. (2015) *Conscious discipline; Building resilient classrooms (expanded & updated ed.)*. Oviedo, FL: Loving Guidance, Inc.
- Bailey, B.A. (2000). *I love you rituals*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.
- Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University. (n.d.) Toxic Stress Derails Healthy Development. <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/toxic-stress-derails-healthy-development/>
- FtMyersFamPsych. (2012, Feb 29). *Dr Daniel Siegel presenting a hand model of the brain*. [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gm9CIJ74Oxw>
- Gillespie, L. G., & Seibel, N. (2006). Self-regulation: A cornerstone of early childhood development. *Young children*, 61(4), 34-39.
- Greene, R. (n.d.) *Walking tour for parents*. Lives in the Balance. <https://livesinthebalance.org/walking-tour/>
- Jsim924. *Sensory Processing Disorder*. [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-GPpbvtiwc0>
- Norman, L et al., 2015. Attachment-security priming attenuates amygdala activation to social and linguistic threat. *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience*, 10, (6), 832–839. <https://doi.org/10.1093/scan/nsu127>
- Rosanbalm, K.D., & Murray, D.W. (2017). Promoting Self-Regulation in Early Childhood: A Practice Brief. OPRE Brief #2017-79. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, US. Department of Health and Human Services. <http://fpg.unc.edu/sites/fpg.unc.edu/files/resources/reports-and-policy-briefs/PromotingSelf-RegulationInTheFirstFiveYears.pdf>
- Tominey, S. & McClelland, M. (2011). Red Light, Purple Light: Findings from a randomized trial using circle time games to improve behavioral self-regulation in preschool. *Early education and development*. 22. 489-519.

### Classroom resources:

- Bailey, B.A. & Harmon, M. *Songs for I Love You Rituals: Vol.1 & 2*. Available at <https://consciousdiscipline.com/>
- Goyette, C. (2017). *My Friend Eepworm*. Houston: Early Childhood Specialties. Available at [www.eepworm.com](http://www.eepworm.com)
- Goyette, C. (2020). *Eepworm's Emotional Day*. Houston: Early Childhood Specialties. Available at [www.eepworm.com](http://www.eepworm.com)
- Mind Yeti. (2017, Aug 25). *Hello, Breath with mind yeti*. [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j72bKqsOHA8&t=10s>
- Munsch, R. N., & McGraw, S. (1987). *Love you forever*. Willowdale, Ontario, Canada: Firefly Books

Thanks for all you do to welcome and support  
challenging children!