

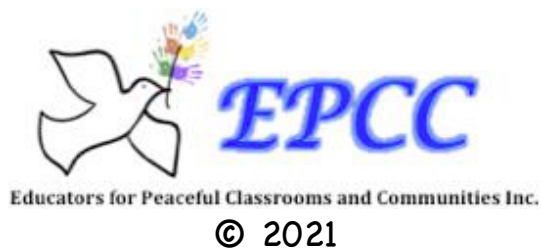
# A Toolkit for Educators

Intentional Strategies to  
Support Resilience



June 2021

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## Listen and Speak with your Heart<sup>1</sup>

### What would Mr. Rogers Do? Say?

Also referred to in education as attentive listening<sup>2</sup>, listening with your heart is listening to what is truly being communicated, not what is actually being said. We “listen” to the tone and the body language of the speaker.

When we are in a calm, present state of ourselves, we can more easily communicate what is in our hearts and minds. We can listen and speak with our hearts.

Children feel, respond and react to our energies, our anxieties, our inner turmoil. To support children, we need to speak from our hearts, and, in order to do that, we must be present, calm, curious, and connected.

<b>Examples to Support Teaching Listening and Speaking to Children</b> <b>What is the heart saying?</b>	
<b>Example</b>	<b>If you listened with your heart, what kinds of things might he/she be really saying?</b>
A puppy chews up everything in the house.	“Play with me! Play with me! Play with me! I am bored!”
A child pokes another child over and over and over.	“Talk to me. Joke with me. Hey, do you want to play?”
Sibling – “I hate you!”	“I am very angry right now. When you... that was very frustrating. I am hurt that you did that.”
Mom – “You are driving me crazy right now!”	“I feel sad/angry/upset when you _____ because I really want you to learn how to _____.”

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Lamm, Chris. *The Story of the Talking Stick*. Retrieved from <https://www.educatorsforpeacefulclassroomsandcommunities.org/resources/peace-tools/the-story-of-the-talking-stick/>

<sup>2</sup> Gibbs, Jeanne. *TRIBES: A New Way of Learning Together*. Santa Rosa, CA: Center Source Publications, 1994

## Talking to Children in a Time of Crisis

### **Provide relevant information**

One calm voice, one clear message is a good goal.

### **Take time to listen to children and understand their fears**

Children may have a limited understanding of what is going on.

### **Don't tell children that they should not be worried**

Help them deal with their uncertainty. Model strategies.

### **Restore a sense of predictability**

We can't tell children when the park will be open,  
but we can share when we are going to have lunch.

### **What if: I don't know how to communicate my feelings**

Remember when children are acting out it is often a child saying,

"I don't know how to communicate my feelings"

or

"I don't know what I am feeling."

## The Transformative Nature of Language: Covid-19 and Back to School

- ◇ We create our realities through language.
- ◇ Covid-19 was a hard time for us. (Unexpected changes can be hard).
- ◇ I don't understand it. I couldn't make it go away. I couldn't make it better. (I am worried about this. I want to talk about it. I want to understand it).

The more present we can be, the more careful we are with our word choice, the more aware we are with how our words might be interpreted. The more curious we are, the more likely we will communicate in an authentic way.

Communication has less to do with what is said, or what one meant to say. It has more to do with what is what is heard and what is received.

### Ask. Listen. Ask. Listen

Listen to the language of the children. Ask open-ended questions to understand. Brainstorm and explore together different ways of thinking about a word or a concept such as "vaccines" and what we do to "be safe" around others. Fear comes partially from the unknown and the unexplored. Power and transformation come from creativity, imagination, and communication.

If we all share our thinking as a community, we may create a new "meaning" of the word or concept for ourselves and our children.

### Our words can shape our reality. Our language shapes our culture.

How do we know what was communicated to the child, in their family, in their school/care environment, in the greater community?

Language is not just words.

Explore how "language" has changed with masks and develop strategies to support children in using other cues (body language, eye contact, etc.) to support communication.

## Open-Ended Questions about Covid-19 that Educators, Children, and Families Can Explore

- ◇ As adults, we help children create a positive, supportive culture and community.
- ◇ Brainstorm, Explore, Role Play, and Laugh Together
- ◇ Masks
  - Where and when do I wear my mask? Why? This can be confusing to me.
  - When someone is wearing a mask, how can we tell if they are smiling?
  - What does laughing with a mask look like and sound like?
  - How can you tell if someone wearing a mask is upset?
  - If you could design your very own mask, what would it look like?
  - What if people can't hear me when I wear a mask? What can I do?
  - What other ways I can communicate if words do not work?
  - What can you do if it feels like you can't breathe in your mask?

## Exploring and Making Agreements About Communicating

Consider what agreements you and your co-teachers might need to make about communication in general.

Then consider additional agreements that can be made to provide opportunities for open and trusting dialogue.

These conversations and agreements can be between staff members, between staff and parents, and between staff and children.

- ◇ Some agreements might be about the types of Covid-19-related topics that are and are not developmentally appropriate in front of the children in your program.
- ◇ Given there are variations between what people believe in the first place, there may be topics to explore together to understand where staff members are coming from.
- ◇ Staff can first explore ways to respond to this diversity.
- ◇ Staff can then make agreements about interacting with this diversity.

## Group Agreements

Everyone needs to feel comfortable, respected, and to be able to participate fully. It is important that we have guidelines upon which we have all agreed.

These agreements bind us together, create our group culture and set of norms. They are there to keep our bodies and feelings safe. They outline how we want to be treated by others.

When making agreements with children, they will often put agreements in the negative (they model what they hear: “Don’t do this,” “That’s not safe”). We try to reframe agreements positively so the child (and adult) know what to do.

When children participate in making agreements (and posting them in the classroom), they have more buy-in. They are part of the process and they will also take part of the responsibility for keeping the agreements. Children will even encourage their friends to “Go check the Agreements to see if that’s OK”.

### Examples for Children

- ◇ One person at a time on the loft ladder
- ◇ Touch bodies gently
- ◇ When you are angry stop and breath first
- ◇ Use your words
- ◇ Keeping masks on keeps everyone safe

### Adults also can use Agreements Successfully

Groups can take a few moments to discuss and consciously decide what culture it wants to create for itself. Here are some Agreements offered as a starting place:

### Examples for Adults

- ◇ Respect each person regardless of whether his/her view are the same as yours. Respect for the fact that we all come from separate realities.
- ◇ Raise your hand so that one person speaks at a time. Monitor your own contributions to be sure that everyone has an opportunity to contribute.
- ◇ Listen and be present for others. Put your own perspective in “brackets” so that you can hear what others are saying.
- ◇ Be honest in your speech and with yourself. The goal is finding a solution that meets the needs of everyone involved, you included.



## Classroom Meetings

**Overall Tone & Message:** Think Mr. Rogers... Everything is going to be okay. You are loved.

**Purpose:** To listen to children and support all children in feeling safe, heard, connected, and loved.

**When:** Regular routine in morning and spontaneously, as needed.

### Covid-19 Considerations to Support Resiliency in Response to Trauma and Stress and the Home/School Connection

- ◇ Children holding stuffed animals from home while meeting
- ◇ Specific focus on honoring, valuing, and processing fear and anger
- ◇ Help children build resilience by embracing conflict and challenge
- ◇ Empower children – let children lead in problem-solving, brainstorming.
- ◇ Behavior is a signal for teachers to tune in, connect, and provide extra love.
- ◇ Allow for response time – count to 9 slowly.
- ◇ “Sometimes things fall apart so that they can come together in a new way.”<sup>3</sup>

### Ideas/Suggestions

- ◇ Silly meeting names such as Mistake Mondays, Talk-it-Out Tuesdays, Whoops! Wednesdays, and Failure Fridays. Model embracing challenge, failure, and conflict and promoting growth mindset
- ◇ Promote problems as puzzles to be approached with curiosity, creative thinking, and light heartedness.
- ◇ Model Mess-ups. “Oh no! This is not what I wanted or expected!”
- ◇ Classroom word for STOP to brainstorm and think. Whoops!! What now?
- ◇ Use Restorative Justice techniques

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<sup>3</sup> Namka, Lynn. (2014, February 26). Lesson Plans for Teaching Resilience to Children. Retrieved from <http://lynnenamka.com/resilience.pdf>

## Classroom Meetings (Not Circle Time)

- ◇ A classroom meeting is led by our observations of the children.
- ◇ The meeting is set around the needs of the child or questions we have noticed the child ask.
- ◇ It is a moment to build community.
- ◇ You should hear the voices of the children and not so much the voice of the adult.
- ◇ It is a time to check in with each other and create a classroom culture.
- ◇ Allow children to choose a song they would like to sing.
- ◇ Allow the child to choose a book or maybe they bring a book from home.
- ◇ The conversation is very fluid. The meeting sets the tone for the day.
- ◇ Initiate a conversation with the children. (Children may respond to anxiety of parents, even if they don't understand what is going on).
- ◇ Great time to model coping techniques. Children are not able to learn if they are stressed.
- ◇ If you are wearing a mask, bring a photo of yourself showing how you feel (teachers).

## Planning a Classroom Meeting

### Before the meeting, ask yourself

- ◇ What have I noticed and observed lately that could be discussed?
- ◇ What feelings/emotions do I think we need help processing?
- ◇ Is there a challenge/conflict/issue that we could embrace & brainstorm?
- ◇ Do we need to revisit agreements and brainstorm revisions?

### Family Meeting Simple Routine & Structure

One way you know a classroom meeting routine successfully meets the needs and desires of the community, is when children can lead, or when a child notices a community concern and voices, "Uh, oh. I think we need to have a meeting."

We can handle this together!

#### Opening

Song, [Story](#), Persona Dolls, Mindfulness routine, Story from the child

#### Sharing


- ◇ What do you do when... (you feel scared or angry, your mom is upset, etc.)
- ◇ Yesterday, I noticed...
- ◇ Have you ever... (laughed so hard your belly hurt, cut in line at the swings, etc.)
- ◇ What would this problem look like from up in a tree (zoom out)?
- ◇ What are some ways we could (handle this concern)?
- ◇ What do you think we need to talk about today?
- ◇ What ideas do you have for our meeting today?

No idea is a bad idea. Silly solutions are welcomed, and humor is beautiful. Shutting down an idea can shut down creative, "outside the box" thinking. Embrace all ideas. Laugh.

#### Closing

- ◇ Affirmations: "I am sure that ...."
- ◇ Did you know that... (it is okay to be angry/sad, everyone gets sad sometimes, etc.)
- ◇ Gratitude/Wish Practice - Children share a wish, hope, or something that they are grateful for.
- ◇ Compliment Circle
- ◇ Song

## Family Meetings

We thought *everything* was going to be okay.  
Maybe something sad happened.  
Where and how did we find support?  
What did we learn about our family?  
You are safe and loved.  
Think - Mr. Rogers  
Listen with Your .

**When?** As a regular routine and whenever needed.

**Remember:** Keep it simple. Ask questions. Let children lead.

### Opening

- ◇ Compliment Circle
- ◇ Gratitude

### Sharing

- ◇ No idea is bad. Silly ideas are welcomed.
- ◇ Humor is important. Laugh.
- ◇ Shutting down an idea can shut down thinking and sharing.
- ◇ Embrace all ideas.
- ◇ After asking a question, thinking time (you can count to 9 in your head).

### Choose a Question

- ◇ What do you do when... (you feel scared, angry, or sad)
- ◇ Yesterday, I noticed... What are some ways we could (handle this concern)?
- ◇ Does anyone have any hurt feelings or upsets they want to share? Model this and model the language - Always start with "I"
  - I felt \_\_\_\_\_ when \_\_\_\_\_.
- ◇ What would this situation look like if we viewed it from up in a tree?
- ◇ Is there anything you think we should talk about today?

### Closing

- ◇ Message of love, safety, hug -
- ◇ "Everything is going to be okay" or "I am here with you. We will get through this together"
- ◇ Or...Each person can share a hope or wish.
- ◇ Or...Ask your children how to end! Hug? Song? Fun Handshake? Let them decide.

## Why should we have family meetings?

*To connect, to share information, to talk about feelings and solve problems.  
Family conversations can develop critical thinking, communication,  
and social emotional skills.*

### We all need to remind each other...

- ◇ Failure, Mistakes, Challenges, Problems are part of life and can often be gifts or puzzles that help us grow.
- ◇ As humans, we all have confusion, sadness, fear, anger. When we can learn to notice and name an emotion and not judge ourselves and others, we can be stronger and happier.
- ◇ Being resilient means being in the moment and adjusting ourselves by “rolling with it”.
- ◇ Anger is an important and normal emotion, if we notice it and reflect on it, we can learn a lot about what we think is important. Underneath, anger is sadness, frustration, disappointment, etc.
- ◇ Problems and upsets can be discussed with curiosity, creativity, fun and play.
- ◇ Adults can and should model mess-ups and feelings. “Oh no! This is not what I wanted or expected!” or “I am feeling angry. I am going to ... (breathe, go for a walk, close my eyes, etc.)
- ◇ Use/Invent a fun, positive family word for mistakes. “Whoops!! What now?”
- ◇ Unexpected behaviors are a signal for us to tune in, connect, and provide extra love.
- ◇ If we do not talk about things as a family, we can end up not being the family we want to be. Family meetings help shape our values as a family.
- ◇ Our energy is just as important as our words. Confusion, fatigue, trying too hard, tension, anxiety, sadness, disappointment can be felt by children. Model getting “present”, working together, helping each other, calming down, or stopping to take a breath before reacting and speaking.

## Activities That Build Resilience in Young Children: Covid-19 and Returning to the Classroom

Play and Dramatic Play	Activity Suggestions
<p>Observing children at play is key to building culture and community, developing curriculum, and supporting growth and social emotional learning.</p> <p><b>Covid 19 Suggestions</b> Add masks, emergency vehicles, nurse and doctor uniforms, doctor's kits, etc. to play stations.</p>	<p><b>Observe</b> What do you notice about what they see, hear, and say? What makes them laugh? What are they curious about? Where do they need more support? What causes upset and conflict?</p> <p><b>Ask Open-Ended Questions</b> "I wonder why... (the butterfly is flying that way, something is not working, etc.). What do you think?"</p> <p><b>Embrace Conflict without Judgement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◇ Support children in naming feelings, expressing hurt, and solving problems together.</li> <li>◇ Empower them to communicate and solve problems.</li> <li>◇ "Did you like that? Tell him/her."</li> <li>◇ "I felt _____ when _____".</li> <li>◇ "What do you think we could do to help solve this problem?"</li> </ul>

Stories and Dramatic Play	Activity Suggestions
<p><b>Covid 19 Suggestions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◇ Explore masks as a community. Provide images and books with masks to the classroom (not just the new face masks but masks in our culture such as for Day of the Dead and Halloween, as well as masks in our world, and in our history)</li> <li>◇ Explore the language of masks. How can we know what someone is feeling when they are wearing a mask? (eyes, body language, tone, stance, etc.)</li> <li>◇ Consider adding images of masks or actual masks to the writing center, library, dramatic play area, etc.</li> <li>◇ Use storytelling to explore and work out feelings (ocial Stories).</li> </ul>	<p><b>Storytelling</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◇ Listen. Children naturally tell stories. Record and share these stories.</li> <li>◇ Create a writing center that is enticing and inspiring. Make it beautiful.</li> <li>◇ Stapled blank pages with colorful paper covers...books ready to be filled.</li> <li>◇ Provide different models of homemade books to inspire children to create.</li> <li>◇ Ask aides and volunteers to support recording of stories.</li> </ul> <p><b>Puppets</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◇ Teach puppets as tools, not simply toys. Provide in the writing and storytelling area.</li> <li>◇ Use puppets to share social stories and conflicts and brainstorm storylines.</li> <li>◇ Consider that stuffed animals can be transformed into puppets by removing stuffing.</li> <li>◇ Children can make sock puppets to support storytelling.</li> <li>◇ Persona Dolls</li> </ul> <p><b>Role Playing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◇ Encourage role playing and play acting.</li> <li>◇ Provide a "stage", props, and costumes. Can be very simple...scarves, cardboard boxes, blocks, masks, play microphones. Ask the children how to enhance a dramatic play area.</li> <li>◇ Role play as a way for children to work out their thoughts and feelings, explore different perspectives, and communicate their ideas.</li> </ul>

Art	Activity Suggestions
<p><b>Covid 19 Suggestions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◇ Use art to explore feelings. Draw what your sad part looks like, angry part, etc.</li> <li>◇ Create masks of all kinds.</li> <li>◇ If your heart is broken, make art with the pieces.<sup>4</sup> – Help children use art in different ways to explore hurt and upset.</li> </ul>	<p>Compare masks to superhero capes or magical protection. Explore and create masks of all kinds. Explore masks in our culture.</p> <p>Discover how masks can be unique, creative, fun, silly. Masks can help you be playful and imaginative.</p> <p><i>Using Beautiful Oops</i> by Barney Saltzberg to transform “oops” into something beautiful.<sup>5</sup></p> <p><b>Questions to Consider</b></p> <p>Why do people wear different kinds of masks? (to play, to pretend, to dress up -- Halloween, to honor and celebrate -- Day of the Dead, to protect yourself and others – Covid19).</p>

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<sup>4</sup> Koyczan, Shane. (2013) Blueprint for a Breakthrough. TEDxYouth@SanDiego Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aV805a2XJgA>

<sup>5</sup> Saltzberg, Barney. (2010, August). Beautiful Oops. Workman Publishing Company. New York



Mindfulness and Brain Development	Activity Suggestions
<p><b>Covid 19 Suggestions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◇ Model treating your thoughts and your brain as your best friend.</li> <li>◇ Teach that our brains are like a muscle, growing and learning. Mindfulness helps our brains grow.</li> <li>◇ Model and practice mindfulness daily.</li> <li>◇ Yoga - <a href="https://www.cosmickids.com">Cosmickids.com</a></li> </ul>	<p><b>A Few Mindful Minutes a Day</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◇ Gratitude Routine - Everyone shares one thing that they are grateful for.</li> <li>◇ Finding our Calm Inside - What does our Calm Inside Part look like, sound like, feel like, where do we imagine we are when we are most calm?</li> <li>◇ What color is calm?</li> <li>◇ Where do you feel the calm part in your body?</li> <li>◇ Body Scans - Where in my body to do I feel that? What color is that? How big is it?</li> <li>◇ Breathing - Belly breaths, (place a stuffie on a belly and watch him rise)</li> <li>◇ Listening and Noticing our Thoughts - What did you notice today when we were breathing?</li> <li>◇ Brain as the sky or the ocean...thoughts are just clouds and waves passing by. Watch them pass. What did you notice?</li> <li>◇ Brain as best friend - When you think, "I can't" or some other negative thought, try to talk to yourself like your best friend. What would you say if your best friend said that? Let's practice talking to our brain like we would our best friend.</li> <li>◇ Intention Setting - What do you want to bring to our friends today? Joy, fun, kindness.</li> <li>◇ Model boundaries and expectations: It is okay to be upset, but it is not okay to be upset and hurt a friend. Model techniques for children: "When I am frustrated. I sometimes need to walk away."</li> <li>◇ Peaceful Place - a place for children to go when they are feeling big emotions or need to resolve a conflict. Soothing, relaxing, and welcoming.</li> <li>◇ Share a wish or hope.</li> </ul>

## Book Recommendations & Resources for Building Resilience

### *Puppy Mind* by Andrew Jordan Nance

Short and sweet with adorable illustrations, this book explores important resilient concepts. "My puppy mind can dig up memories, like when I got yelled at for not sharing my things...I don't always like the pictures that it brings." The boy begins to think of his mind as a "playful puppy friend."

### *The Rabbit Listened* by Core Doerrfeld

A book about the power of listening. A boy turns to animals for ideas when something sad happens, while the bear wants him to get angry and the chicken wants to talk, he is comforted by the rabbit, who just listens. Recommended by [resilienteducator.com](http://resilienteducator.com)

### *Beautiful Oops* by Barney Saltzberg

Embracing mistakes and upsets, this colorful book supports a resilient mindset, showing us, with beautiful artistic examples, how sometimes mistakes can be transformed into something beautiful.

### *An Awesome Book of Thanks* by Dallas Clayton

A fantastic book to support building a gratitude practice and supporting thinking of all sorts of things to be grateful for, including "those bumps and those bruises that turn couldn'ts to could's", "places to go when you want to cry", and, of course, "girelephants in silly hats skipping rope with jungle cats".

### *What a Wonderful World* by Bob Thiele and George David Weiss

Beautiful picture illustrating Louis Armstrong's classic song. A gentle reminder of beauty, wonder, and gratitude. Based on the song, "What a Wonderful World"

### *The Tales of Winnie the Pooh (and Tigger too...bouncy)* by A.A. Milne

We all need Tigger to remind us how to bounce back, Pooh to remind us how to be mindful, and Eeyore to connect with and make us laugh. Many valuable resilient lessons in these timeless tales.

### *Just Ask* by Sonia Sotomayor

Differences are compared to the flowers in a garden "and just like all of these plants, each of us has unique powers to share with the world and make it more interesting and richer." Invites children to explore differences, while also noticing what we all have in common. Recommended by [resilienteducator.com](http://resilienteducator.com)

*When Sophie Gets Angry, Really, Really Angry* by Mollie Bang

Powerful way to explore anger, normalize it, and brainstorm ways to calm down.

*A Day with No Crayons* by Elizabeth Rush

When Liza's mother takes away her beloved crayons, her world suddenly goes gray. How does the budding artist respond?

*In my Heart* by Jo Witek

A vibrant celebration of feelings, in all their shapes and sizes.

*Lots of Feelings* by Shelley Rotner

A face can tell you what someone is feeling.

*Resiliency: What We Have Learned* by Bonnie Benard

Published in 2004 by WestEd, this book describes many aspects of resiliency that are needed for people to be healthy and successful in their lives. Based on over a decade of research, Benard shows readers that resiliency prevails, especially when teachers intentionally support children's resilience.

*Growth Mindset* by Carol Dwek, Stanford University

This is a 2014 YouTube video of Dr. Dwek talking about her groundbreaking work, the power of "not yet", and how a motivated mindset leads to student achievement.

<https://youtu.be/hiiEeMN7vbQ>

*Failing Forward* by Ashley Good, Founder of the world's first failure consultancy

This 2014 YouTube video with Ashley Good as she describes how failure is used to sustain creativity, inform one's next steps, and evolve from failure experiences.

[https://youtu.be/t3\\_IT7N06f0](https://youtu.be/t3_IT7N06f0)

Post Traumatic Growth (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996)

This web-based article from the American Psychological Association describes new theory, based in positive psychology, that describes how people can experience transformation after trauma or adversity. This theory says that "people develop new understandings of themselves, the world they live in, how to relate to other people, the kind of future they might have, and a better understanding of how to live life" (Tedeschi, n.d).

<https://www.apa.org/monitor/2016/11/growth-trauma>

## Book Discussion Questions to Support Building Resiliency

### ◇ Empathy

- I wonder how they are feeling.
- What do you think?
- What do you think will help them feel better?
- What could we do to help them feel better?
- What would not be a good idea?

### ◇ Links to Own Life

- Have you ever felt this way?
- What did that feeling feel like?
- What did you do?
- Would you do the same thing the next time that happens to you?
- Does anyone have any suggestions or ideas for other things you could do to respond to this problem?

### ◇ Problem Solving

- How did (character) handle the problem?
- How do the other characters handle it? What would you do?

### ◇ Predictions

- What do you think will happen if...?
- What is possible for these characters now?

## Things to Build and Grow

**Building caring relationships: Fundamental in any relationship is caring and trust, whether with a child, family or co-worker.**

- ◇ **Child** – The presence of a responsive adult in a child’s life can help to reverse the psychological and physiological changes that are activated by stress, thus ensuring that the developing brain, body, and immune system are protected from damaging effects of physiological changes. Kids won’t always notice the people who are in their corner cheering them on. So when you can, let them know about the people in their fan club. Anything you can do to build their connection with the people who love them, including their group/classmates will strengthen them.
- ◇ **Family** – Rebuilding trust with your families is very important. You can be the place where they can come for information about their child, what to expect and look for during this transition time. You can be prepared with resources that are available in the community if they are in need.
- ◇ **Co-workers** – Build trust within inter-staff relationships. This is a time when everyone will be under stress and struggling. Trusting kind relationships, established ways of communication and problem solving are important so everyone feels heard and supported. Ensure there is a system in place.

**Basic Agreements: Social support, developed in the group atmosphere (classroom, workplace culture), is associated with higher positive emotions, a sense of personal control and predictability, self-esteem, motivation, optimism and resilience.**

- ◇ **Children** – In a group or classroom situation, it is not just the adults but other children who have influence. Building connections between children by promoting “working together” experiences help to create those emotional bonds and trust.
- ◇ **Workplace culture** – In building a group, classroom, or staff culture, creating a caring, inclusive group culture where everyone has something to contribute and is valued will build healthy resilient people that will come to each other’s aid.

**Building a sense of self-sufficiency and perceived control helps a child feel successful. Just think of the child who is successful dressing themselves or completing a puzzle for the first time and how they must feel.**

- ◇ Creating age appropriate opportunities to think and act independently is a key. That means as a care giver, you need keen observation so that you know how to scaffold the child to the next step or challenge.
- ◇ Let them know you believe they can succeed. You are their routing section and you can get the whole group involved.

**Interpret failure as an opportunity.**

- ◇ Failure lets us see what happened and where it could have gotten off course. How can we break a problem into little pieces, like a puzzle? You may have to try many ways before you find out what works.
- ◇ Help others build their positive self-talk by modeling how it works in problem solving. "I tried this, but it didn't work. What else can I try?" "What would happen if I tried this?" "What are other friends doing?" "What has worked before?"
- ◇ Encourage children to give ideas while you, listen, then follow up what they say with open ended questions. "What do you think would happen?"
- ◇ Let's say the problem is not a physical one but a psychological one. For example, the problem is, "What if I get scared at school without mommy? Validate the child(ren) first, then start giving them the problem-solving language without handing them the solution.
  - a. "You might miss her. It's normal to miss people you love. What do you think would help if that happens?"
  - b. "What would (an older sibling) do?"
  - c. "What sort of things do you do here that could help you feel safe or cozy?" Then listen, backing them up with, "I know you always have great ideas."

**Support staff members in the same way.**

- ◇ People come up with all kinds of answers to solve problems. Being open to new ways of looking at things, letting go of our preconceived notions and lending support builds trusting relationships.
- ◇ Listening is our most successful tool.

- ◇ Modeling optimism is easy if you truly believe that each person has the capacity to get things in their own time. Meet each person, child or adult, where they are, nurture a positive mindset.
- ◇ Let them know you trust their capacity to cope. Try to find positive ways of letting off steam and help them find answers to problems in their own time. Let them know you realize that everyone needs help and support sometimes, and you are there for them.

### **Provide opportunities for children to make their own decisions and think independently.**

- ◇ Giving choice means children have the opportunity to feel in control. Give encouragement instead of praise.
- ◇ Praise should focus on the opinion of another for validation. It gives little information. Encouragement gives information that a child can use in developing self-reflection and self-satisfaction. Praise can open dialogue by using descriptions instead of judgements.
- ◇ CAN SOMEONE GIVE AN EXAMPLE?

### **Social, moral and cultural contexts and traditions can be decided before any group is set up.**

- ◇ What will the agreements be about social and moral norms?
- ◇ In the classroom, children have lots to say about these things. Make sure they are part of the process.
- ◇ As a staff, basic agreements are just as important.
- ◇ WHAT WOULD BE ON YOUR LIST?

*There is a lot to say about the classroom and staff culture, enough for another workshop. Think of it as the foundation which keeps everyone safe, healthy and growing in a positive manner.*

## Ideas for Staff

- ◇ A signal for when you get to an emotional tip and you need some space.
- ◇ It's the little things you can do for each other. Simple as saying thank you, noticing and giving encouragement. Sharing observations about children together.
- ◇ Regular meetings to discuss feelings and issues. Safe time to express what your experience is, time to problem solve together.
- ◇ Conversations about how each of you personally recharge.
- ◇ When things get emotionally difficult or you reach a standstill with another person, what is one thing that you can ask of each other to be able to continue on with your day? How do you ask without making a demand?
- ◇ Sharing laughter
- ◇ Self-care in school and out of school
- ◇ When families are under stress, there are things we can help them with, we can observe, and we can provide information to support them.
  - a. Parents whose job has changed or ended experience stress. Staff need to be aware of how this stress is acted on by the parent.
  - b. Parents who have additional or new responsibilities in the family have additional stress. Staff need to be aware of how this stress is acted on by the parent.
  - c. Parents may now have opportunities to not be so cautious with Covid-19 precautions. Staff need to always remember that we are mandated to attend to the well-being of the child.
  - d. Having lists of community resources, such as local Mental Health agencies and programs for families and staff, already prepared can be helpful. They are at your fingertips when a parent may be in need.
  - e. As a last resort, remember your responsibilities as a Mandated Reporter. The child's wellbeing and welfare is most important.



- ◇ Be willing to risk – share your ideas, thoughts and feelings.
- ◇ Be responsible for your part in creating a safe environment for building trust.
- ◇ Confidentiality requires that sensitive and private information which is shared during group sessions does not get repeated outside the group.
- ◇ It is acceptable to pass if you wish.

## Praise vs. Encouragement

People use “Praise” as a positive expression. Praise can be manipulative or a way to use power over another. Praise can develop the habit of looking outward for validation rather than developing self-reflection and self-satisfaction. It is a form of judgement and for the recipient, feeling judged. It gives no concrete information about what is being praised and is closed ended.

Encouragement, on the other hand, moves out of the power issue and works to open the conversation. It gives information using descriptions, to encourage reflection and dialogue.

**Below are a few examples of Praise Statements and Encouragement Statements (written by Susan Hopkins for EPCC)**

*Which are effective statements (Encouragement)?*

*Which statements are ineffective (Praise)? Why?*

1. You remembered to bring your homework. That was good thinking.
2. I'm glad you remembered to go potty. I hope you won't forget next time.
3. for such a little boy, you did very well.
4. The room looks nice. You picked up all of the paper scraps, the backpacks are off the floor, and the books are put away.
5. (To a small child trying to get their pants on, but not managing) Boy, you sure gave those pants a workout. Putting your clothes on is hard. You tried to dress yourself this morning.
6. Well, now you look like a human being without the oatmeal in your hair.
7. I see you are taking turns on the bike with Ricky. That's a friendly thing to do.
8. You played quietly before lunch. Could you use your quiet voice now?
9. (To child who had just put away their trike) Thank you for putting away the bike, that was helpful.
10. (To child who has brought in a long slimy worm that disgusts her parent) Yes, Suzy, it is a pretty worm.

## Answer Key to Encouragement vs. Praise Statements

1. Encouragement, specific
2. Ineffective, and sounds like preaching: I hope you won't forget next time.  
(How would you change this?)
3. Ineffective, Judgmental: "Such a little boy," Implies that the job was not really satisfactory. (How would you change this?)
4. Encouragement, specific
5. Encouragement, specific (for trying not for success).
6. Ineffective, Judgmental: You really didn't look human (good) before. (how would you change this?)
7. Encouragement, specific
8. Encouragement in first sentence. Effective if it really is a choice to play quietly. If not a choice, then it is ineffective. (If ineffective, then how would you change this?)
9. Encouragement (Praises behavior, not person). Specific
10. Ineffective, Dishonest: The parent did not feel the worm was pretty.

See if you can invent a couple of situations this would apply with teammates or co-workers.

As adults, we have been trained to react to praise and often to even seek it.

How would being encouraging, instead of giving praise, change what support looks like?

## Tools for Resiliency in Children

### Build a sense of self-sufficiency and perceived control

- ◇ Establishing routines
- ◇ Modelling healthy social behavior
- ◇ Creating and maintaining supportive reliable relationships around them
- ◇ Providing opportunities for their own social connections

### Build feelings of competence and a sense of mastery

- ◇ Creative play, props for the classroom that reflect our Covid 19 world
- ◇ Exercise

### Give children opportunities to think and act independently

- ◇ If they disagree with you and tell you why you're wrong, there's a plus side - their executive functioning is flourishing!
- ◇ Provide opportunities for children to make their own decisions.

### Encourage a regular mindfulness practice

- ◇ Challenge negative explanations. Nurture optimism.
- ◇ Interpret failure as an opportunity. Teach children how to reframe.
- ◇ Encourage children to set their own goals. Facing fear - but with support.
- ◇ Encourage children to take safe, considered risks. Don't rush to their rescue.
- ◇ Meet children where they are. Let them know that you trust their capacity to cope.

### Build children's problem-solving toolbox

Self-talk is an important part of problem-solving. Your words are powerful because they are the foundation on which they build their own self-talk. Rather than solving their problems for them, start to give them the language to solve their own.

#### Some ideas:

- ◇ What would [someone who they see as capable] do?
- ◇ What has worked before?
- ◇ Say as many ideas as you can in two minutes, even the silly ones? Lay them on me. Go.
- ◇ How can we break this big problem into little pieces? "how" not "why".
- ◇ Let children talk. So say, for example, the problem is, "What if I miss you or get scared when I'm at Grandmas?"
- ◇ Validate children first, then start giving them problem-solving language without handing them solution: "You might miss me. I'll miss you too. It's

really normal to miss people you love, even if you're with people you love being with."

- ◇ "What do you think might help if that happens?" or "What would [Superman / Dad / big sister who is practicing to rule the universe] do?" or "What sort of things do you do here at home that help you to feel cozy or safe? I know you always have great ideas."