“Use the Force, Luke!”

Managing Number One, First!

&

Staying Motivated to Make a Difference!

Irving Plotkin
Adoptive Parent
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Understanding, Normalizing, and Learning from our Feelings

Think: “What must have occurred in this child’s life to get him or her to make me feel this way? Behavior is a message. No kid likes acting out. If I could put truth serum into any child who seriously misbehaves and ask: “Whom would you rather be? You, the kid who acts out a lot? Or that kid over there who has lots of friends, a great family and a bright future ahead or him/herself?” No kid would pick him/herself.

Typical Feelings and/or Traps

1. Angry
2. Frustrated
3. Out-of-Control
4. Disgusted
5. Guilty
6. Sexual
7. Furious
8. Afraid
9. Hopeless
10. Overwhelmed
11. Add your own

Influenced by:

- Personal baggage, limited resources, quality and quantity of supervision, training and temperament.
- Feelings: Yes
- Inappropriate Actions: NO!

All feelings are okay. Learn from them. They’re diagnostic.
“Check Your Baggage at the Door”

This is a reflective questionnaire about who you are and why you’re here. No one will see this document but you. It is given to increase your self-awareness about past experiences and how they can influence present day decisions, practices, and attitudes.

Were you raised in a happy home?

Did you receive enough attention from both parents?

What kind of limit setting did your folks employ? (e.g. spanking, yelling, logical consequences, punishment, etc.)

Were your parents physically affectionate to you?

What kind of values were taught and modeled?

Were there a lot of rules and structure in your home?

Did your childhood experiences influence your decision to work with kids?

What baggage should you check at the door?

What should come through?
The Observing Ego

“I’m REALLY ticked… I could just - it’s okay. Stay cool… ALL feelings are normal. Learn from this. I’m suffering a bad self-esteem injury, but in a little while it will heal. **Respond** instead of **React**.

*Use the Force, Betty!* ...I mean, Luke.”

Lack of support leads to punitive actions.

Self-talk to use in order to keep your cool:

1. Think about the principle of lack of support being related to punitive actions – and don’t go there. Think: *I can do anything for 90 more minutes!* Think: I have the audacity to compare…

2. Visualize yourself driving home or going to bed at the end of a brutal day with a BIG smile on your face thinking *I kept my cool today. I did good. I showed these kids they can trust me.*

3. Think about tomorrow: *If I respond instead of react to the end of the day, my relationships will grow stronger… and their behavior will improve.*

4. Think about a M.A.S.H. Unit: *When I’m at my worst, I need to give it my best!*


**Respond = The Golden Rule**

Don’t say or do anything to a child, youth or group that you wouldn’t want said or done to you.

Self esteem is fragile even when it’s good!
The Affect Scale

Key: Establish inverse relationship

As they get louder, you become more quiet
The Affect Scale

Inside the “feeling zone” there is room to model affect-laden content.

Said in a controlled, but somewhat expressive manner:

“John, I’m really upset about the choice you just made.”

“Mary, I’m angry about that decision...”

Key: If the youth escalates through the zone, the adult’s affect should grow more muted.
Content vs. Message

“You won’t be around next week?”

2 weeks later...

“You…won’t be around next week.”

Use “I” or “We” instead of “You” and start requests with “Please” and finish with “Thank you.” Proper language sends supportive messages.

Body Messages

“C’mon dude…let’s get it done, and then we can boogey. NBD brother.”

NBD = No Big Deal!

vs.

“You need to get it done now!”

Speak to youth at eye level or below. Approach them in a calm manner. Be careful about your pace, posture, tone, facial expression, hand movements and body position.
Pre-Talk Considerations

Number One Goal: Engage!

Listen, empathize, paraphrase, offer help, apologize, repeat, offer hope...HOOK ‘EM in!

• Don’t be defensive. Anticipate negative comments — don’t take them personally...

  “It’s an injury and it will heal.”

• Expect displacement (i.e. anger directed at you that is meant for someone else.)

• Assess your relationship and feelings toward the youth. Think PIE (i.e. everyone deserves an equal slice)

  “The kid who is pushing you away the most, is probably the one who needs you the most” (The Gus Chronicles I, Appelstein)

• Practice the talk in your head. Longer discussions generally have a beginning, middle, and end phase.

Other considerations:____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________
Core Strength-Based Verbal Interventions

Non-Judgmental Explorative Intervention

“What up?”
“What’s going on?”
“What’s happening?”

Supportive Interventions

"You seem really upset!“ “This stinks!” “How can I help?”

Repeating or Paraphrasing w/qualifiers

Youth: "I hate this place."
Foster Parent: “So you're saying you’re pretty upset with this place right now.” (Use qualifiers: yet, at the moment, right now, etc.)

Feelings Exploration:

"How do you feel about that?” “I’d be pretty angry if that happened to me.”

Sandwich Approach

“You’re really good at letting people know how you feel. But using that kind of language – swearing – makes everyone feel uncomfortable and I think we need to stay around the house for a while. But I'm really pleased about how you’re working this out with me.

Praise and Encouragement

“Way to go!” “That was fantastico!” “I like the steps you took to get this done” (praising the action versus the child. Tip: Be specific with praise). “Hey, you’ve done this before and you can do it now. Be the man!”

Humor

To a fifteen-year-old: “You’re acting just like a teenager!”

Apologizing

"I'm sorry for raising my voice to you.”

Reasoning Responses

"What if we let every kid....“

Connecting Statements

"It's not me against you. I'm on your side. I don't like having to keep you back.”

Empowering Interventions

"What could you have done differently?” "What do you think we should do?”
Surface Clarifications

"Let me make sure I know why you're upset.”
“What exactly is getting you upset?”

Explorative Response (psychological)

"You don't usually get this upset. Could something else be bothering you?”

Exploration of Control

“So what can you control?” “What steps can you take?”

Explorative Response (historical)

“Have you ever completed such a difficult assignment?”
“Have you ever got this angry and not hit someone?” “How have other kids got through this?”

Explorative (reflective)

“Is that behavior working for you?”

Plan Making

"Can we make a plan to handle this situation better next time?“
“What’s our plan for the rest of the day?”
The Eco Map
Rate Your Level of Support

Me
Support Quotient

Strong source of support
+3

The Support Continuum

Serious drain & lack of support
-3
13-17 years old = Second Phase of Separation-Individuation

In other words: "I'm moving on. I'm separating from my parents. I'm thinking about:
- Who I am?
- Where I'm going?
- What I'll be?
- Where do I fit in?
- Changes in my body?
- Sexuality?"