



## Building Adult Capabilities to Improve Child Outcomes

“We know from science that it is never too late to help adults build up their core capabilities, and that we can have a life-long intergenerational impact if adults support the development of these skills in children.”

“We have been giving information and advice when we need to do active skill building through training, coaching, and practice”

Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University  
[www.developingchild.harvard.edu](http://www.developingchild.harvard.edu)

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## Five Ways to Help Build Life Skills

1. Practice with real life situations
2. Stop and spot triggers
3. Take a second look at stressors
4. Focus on personally motivating goals
5. Recall positive memories and build on small successes

<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/building-skills-adults-need-life-guide-practitioners/>

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## What types of strategies should we teach adults?

“Teach strategies for reassessing a stressful situation and considering alternatives. Such strategies, when practiced in the context of safe, supportive interventions, show potential for preventing automatic responses from undermining effective self-regulation”

“Teach strategies for recognizing and interrupting automatic responses to give more time to *activate intentional self-regulation in stressful situations* “

<http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/building-core-capabilities-for-life/>

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www.challengingbehavior.org




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### Five Critical Practices

1. Positive Climate
2. Predictable Comprehensible Consistent Routine
3. Routines within Routines within Routines
4. *Explicitly Teaching* Behavior Expectations
5. *Explicitly Teaching* Social and Emotional Skills

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Adapted from Prevent-Teach-Reinforce for Young Children (PTR-YC)  
 by G. Dunlap, K. Wilson, P. Strain, & J.K. Lee. Paul H. Brookes Publishing 2013

### 1. Positive Climate Starts with... Self-Awareness

- Recognizing that the lens that we are using to view a situation might not be contributing to the positive outcome that we desire
- Intentionally using different words/phrases to describe and interpret the challenge

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## 2. Predictable, Consistent, and Comprehensible Routines

- Maintaining an environment where children can predict what happens next is a highly effective strategy for addressing challenging behavior.
- A predictable schedule must be predictable to the children who follow the schedule - not only to the adults who create and implement the schedule.
- Pictures, drawings and stories can be used to help teach children what happens and what happens next.

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## 3. Routines within Routines within Routines

- For many children it is not enough to simply predict the order of major events/activities in the classroom.
- There also needs to be predictability and consistency built into each routine.
- Children are more likely to be successful when they know what to do and what to expect.

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## 4. Teaching Behavior Expectations and Setting Limits with Positive Language

- **When/Then** – *When* all the toys are put away, *then* we can have snack.
- **First/Then** – *First* we put our coats on, *then* we can go outside.
- Avoid starting with a negative - “We can’t play with the toys until after morning circle.”

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### 5. Explicitly Teach Social and Emotional Skills

- Many children come into our classrooms without having mastered skills to:
  - greet other children,
  - express interest in playing together,
  - express desire to play alone,
  - problem solve over use of space or materials,
  - manage complex strong feelings, and
  - respond appropriately to the feelings of others.
  
- There are many opportunities to teach, coach and scaffold the development of social and emotional skills throughout the daily routine.

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### Individualized Support

“Helpful feedback can open people up to noticing and responding to emerging opportunities, but a lack of feedback—or negative feedback—can undermine one’s sense of competency and increase negative feelings about the workplace”

“Instead of [caseworkers] taking a punitive stance that conveys stigma, a coaching style of mutual respect, genuine listening, and concrete advice and support should be used.”

<http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/building-core-capabilities-for-life/>

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“If we can find other ways for children to communicate and be successful then violence will be less successful.

I have never met a child in my life who would choose violence over feeling good about himself and getting along with other people if he actually knew how to do that.”  
- Travis Wright

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### Print Resources

- **Reflecting in Communities of Practice** by Deb Curtis, Debbie Lebo, Wendy Cividanes, & Margie Carter ( 2013)
- **Anti-Bias Education: For Young Children and Ourselves** by Louise Derman-Sparks & Julie Olsen Edwards (2010)
- **Prevent Teach Reinforce For Young Children** by Glen Dunlap, Kelly Wilson, Phil Strain, & Janice Lee (2013)
- **Don't Get So Upset!: Help Young Children Manage Their Feelings by Understanding Your Own** by Tamar Jacobson (2008)
- **Everyone Needs Attention: Helping Young Children Thrive** by Tamar Jacobson (2018)
- **Mindfulness for Teachers: Simple skills for Peace and Productivity in the Classroom** by Patricia A. Jennings (2015)
- **From Parents to Partners: Building a Family-Centered Early Childhood Program** by Janis Keyser (2017) 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition

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### Web Resources

- **Center on the Developing Child**  
<http://developingchild.harvard.edu/>
- **Center for Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation**  
[www.ecmhc.org](http://www.ecmhc.org)
- **Michigan Association for Infant Mental Health**  
[www.mi-aimh.org](http://www.mi-aimh.org)
- **Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention**  
[www.challengingbehavior.org](http://www.challengingbehavior.org)
- **Zero To Three**  
[www.zerotothree.org](http://www.zerotothree.org)

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