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ABSTRACT

This document is a handbook for helping children develop self-esteem through encouraging creative behavior in after school day care. The handbook is meant to be a resource for after school day care providers. Each chapter is structured to describe a creative behavior concept or strategy, explain how and why it works, and when it can best be applied. Twelve chapters cover the following topics: (1) the need for creative behavior in after school care; (2) understanding creative behavior; (3) preparing a safe physical environment; (4) setting limits and explaining consequences; (5) dealing with heckling and teasing in the classroom; (6) mistakes as tools for learning; (7) integration of experience; (8) planning the curriculum; (9) preparing for transitions; (10) team teaching; and (11) communicating with parents. The last chapter offers conclusions, questions, and exercises to encourage self-esteem through developing creativity. The document also includes background information on creative behavior techniques and strategies. (Contains 61 references.) (JW)

TEACHING CHLDREN SELF-ESTEEM

A Creative Behavior Handbook for After-School Child Care

Anne Read Smith

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A Creative Behavior Handbook

for After-School Child Care

"I'll tell you a secret. You're my friend."

TEACHING CHLDREN SELF-ESTEEM

A Creative Behavior Handbook

for After-School Child Care

by

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by

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To my husband, Charlie,
who has given me so much so I could write this book.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PHOTOGRAPHIC ILLUSTRATIONS

FOREWORD

WHY I WROTE THIS BOOK

When I was in third grade, my mother, Katherine Read Baker, became the Head Teacher at the Oregon State Laboratory Nursery School. Every day for four years I ate lunch at the nursery school with my mother, the children, and the college students who were learning to become nursery school teachers. This was the beginning of my work with children.

The nursery school lunch area was set up so there were several small tables. A college student would eat at and supervise a table with three or four children. When I was in fifth grade, I started supervising a table of children by myself. Mother would often place at my table a child who was having a hard time interacting with others, or one who was difficult for adults to handle, because I liked this kind of child and they gravitated to me.

I was observant and watched how my mother worked with children. I listened to her tone of voice and the way she used words. I learned to interact with them the way she did—treating each with respect as an individual, a whole person. I also helped correct the multiple-choice tests that she gave to the college students in her nursery school classes. It was a wonderful way to learn about children and teaching.

However, not all the early experiences that led me to teaching were positive or happy ones. One of the most important reasons for me to write this particular book for teachers of children in after-school day care comes from my own experience as a latchkey kid.

I knew my mother had to work because my father died when I was very young. Through the third grade I went home to a babysitter. From the fourth grade on, I took care of myself after school.

I hated coming home to an empty house. When I walked in the door, I felt the emptiness surrounding me. I would get something to eat and a book to read. By the

end of seventh grade I felt that I had read almost every single book in the children's section of the library.

If something exciting happened at school, I had no one to share it with immediately. If something ordinary happened that I thought was a disaster, I had no one to help me get perspective on it. When I had a fight with a friend, I felt that I had to cope with it all by myself. If I had a problem understanding or relating to the teacher, I did not ask for help. I felt I was helping my mother when I took on a lot of responsibility.

I do not want children to experience the kind of loneliness and depression that I went through when I came home from elementary school. I want them to have something that I would have loved to have had—a child-care teacher with Creative Behavior skills.

If a children's center staffed with Creative Behavior teachers had been available then, I would have had a safe place to go with someone to support me in my growth. I would have had people to share my day with and learn from so that all the responsibility for my well-being did not have to fall on my mother—or me. I believe that as a result I would have reached my potential earlier in life, made friends more easily, overcome my perfectionism, and learned how to be independent but at the same time ask for help when I needed it.

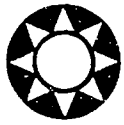
In my second year of teaching I had an extremely difficult child in my group whose parents were very antagonistic. They were inconsistent when they dealt with her and blamed others for the way she behaved. One night as I was talking with a friend, I happened to mention the problems I was having with this student. My friend suggested that I take a Sonoma State University extension class with Juanita Sagan. This was my introduction to my longtime mentor, Creative Behavior, and the Sagans' Institute for Creative and Artistic Development (ICAD). Since 1971, I have been a part of the ICAD community, as a student and then as a teacher, studying in depth the Creative Behavior process.

When I first began working with children, I felt I was a good teacher. But as I began to learn about Creative Behavior, I became even better. I was accustomed to taking care of others and helping them feel good about themselves, but I didn't know how important it was to take care of myself in the process. This is something I learned when I worked with the Sagans. By using Creative Behavior strategies and techniques, I can now authentically teach children to be aware of and appreciate what skills, characteristics, and talents they bring to a learning situation. This means they are in touch with what they know as a solid base from which to incorporate something new.

Being a teacher is not easy but I have loved it and found it very rewarding. It takes a lot of time, dedication, knowledge, skill, and hard work. The more I teach, the more indebted I feel to my mother for the beginning work I did with her. That was the foundation for the work I am doing with Juanita Sagan. Writing this book is not only a celebration of my mother's, Juanita's, and my own professional lives, it is also a

way to acknowledge the many skills and gifts that I have been given by many different teachers, students, colleagues, and friends. I can keep these gifts alive by passing them on to others. As Malvina Reynolds says in the song "Magic Penny":

"Love is something if you give it away, you end up having more."



To The Reader

When I began to learn about Creative Behavior, I had the support of a beginning-teacher training class. We met twice a month and every fourth meeting we were joined by the advanced class, a group of teachers who had used Creative Behavior techniques and strategies for a number of years. Having the support of others enhanced the quality of my learning. I hope that you too have a safe and caring environment in which to learn about Creative Behavior.

I suggest that you read the chapters of this book in consecutive order because there is a sequential connection between the concepts and the practical applications. Each chapter is structured to describe a Creative Behavior concept or strategy, explain how and why it works, and when it can best be applied. I have illustrated the concepts with examples of children's behavior, suggested one or more ways to interact with children, given samples of children's responses to the concepts, and offered activities to help you integrate the material. Integration is an important concept. It will be explained as the reader proceeds.

Instructions and Exercises

There are questions and activities at the end of most chapters to help further your understanding of Creative Behavior. Some of the activities are for you to do by yourself, some with other adults, and some are for you to do with children. The children's activities can be used with individuals or small and/or large groups.

If you don't have the time to do all of the activities at the end of a given chapter, choose the ones that you think will be the most valuable for you. While you may do an assignment by yourself, it is extremely important to share your response—either your writing, your thinking, or your drawing—with at least one other person. The sharing of these activities facilitates your own understanding and integration of Creative Behavior concepts and techniques. If you are using this book as a text

in a class, you can share with the other students. If you are not in a class or group, I suggest you find a friend who is willing to listen to your responses. This way you will be able to take credit for your thinking and ideas, integrate what you have learned, and derive more benefit from doing the exercises.

Before you use any of the activities with children, it is important that you as a teacher first have the experience of doing the activity yourself, as a student. This sensitizes you to the activity and gives you a better appreciation of how a child learns and how he or she might be feeling.

Instructions for the adult's and children's exercises are similar. This is so you will experience the same process of learning as the children. It means that when you give instructions to children, you will be better prepared to handle the children's responses in a supportive way.

My instructions for all the activities include the words "If you are willing . . . ," which mean students have a choice—to decide exactly what they are willing to do. This option is important to maintain the authenticity of a response. The words imply that you are invited to decide whether you are willing to do the assignment or not, and if you are not willing to do the assignment, that is all right. You will not be judged, thought of as a bad person, or held in any less esteem because of your decision.

However, children—and adults—need to take responsibility for their choices. If they don't want to do an assignment, it doesn't mean that they can automatically go do something else. It means they have to look for an alternative. If my students decide not to do an assignment, I provide an appropriate alternative, such as drawing a picture of themselves unwilling to do the assignment, writing about why they are unwilling to do the assignment, or writing about what they would rather be doing and why. Children may be willing to do an assignment, even though they may not want to do it, because they may not like the alternative or the feeling of being left out when other children are talking about the experience.

In some of the exercises, I ask you to do something out of the ordinary. For example, I ask you to think of questions that *would not* be helpful in planning a program, as well as questions that would be helpful. If you know what it is you don't want to do, you often can become much clearer about what you do want and why. You can understand your reasons for making a decision. It establishes your rationale for why you do what you do. Also allowing yourself to think of the absurd, ridiculous, or impossible often frees you to think of strategies that are more appropriate or more usable, so you end up with far better results than if you had limited yourself to thinking of only what you might do.

If my instructions say "Discuss, draw, or write," I decide which *one* of those actions I am going to present to the children. I don't present all three at the same time and expect the children to decide which one to use.

Often Creative Behavior teachers give the following instructions at the beginning of an assignment, "Get in a comfortable position. Close or hide your

eyes. Pay attention to your breathing. Do not change it in any way, just be aware of its rate and depth. Use your breathing to get in touch with your pacing." By listening to your rate of breathing, you can learn if your body is especially speedy or sluggish. If you are hurrying to reach your goal, you frequently ignore your anxiety. If you slow down, pay attention to your breathing, and become aware of your anxiety, you may find it is appropriate or inappropriate. This knowledge can govern the pace at which you work. Breathing helps you look at your anxiety. It also may help you feel more secure because you are more aware of what is going on.

Some Cautions

I present the theory and ideas in this book so that you, as reader, will understand what has made a profound difference in my life and in my teaching. You can then decide if you think Creative Behavior might work for you. However, I would like to offer a word of caution. If you decide to pick and choose and use only some of the key concepts and elements presented here, you will not get the same results because the concepts are interrelated.

For example, you might use the concept of margin of error in an art lesson or a ball game, but decide that you don't have enough time to use the concept of integration. By using margin of error, you would help children to feel more comfortable about making a mistake in that particular lesson. But if you don't use the concept of integration, the way children felt about making that mistake might never get incorporated fully enough for them to apply it in other situations.

The same caution is true for the way you phrase your words. You will begin to recognize certain phrases as you read this book. If you are unwilling to use these phrases and you change not only the wording but the meaning of the words, you may be changing the results you get when you work with children.

It is very important to make your statements positive. I can't emphasize this enough. For example, if I ask a question and I don't get the answer I expect, my first response is often to say, "No, that's not right." Instead I have learned to say something like "That's good thinking." The idea is to remove the word no from your vocabulary as much as possible when giving instructions or responding to children's ideas. Don't remove the word entirely however because you need a loud and clear no for enforcing limits.

What Else You Need

One of the most important things to do while you are learning about Creative Behavior is to feel comfortable by being aware of your pacing and resistance. This means when you feel you have had enough, you should stop reading and do something else, such as complain as much as you need to about what you don't like about the effort of reading or understanding this book. In my experience, discussing what you have read and experienced with a friend adds immeasurably to the learning process.

You will probably find certain concepts or techniques that you easily relate to or that you readily understand. I recommend using these as a starting point and working from there on the parts that feel more difficult. Building self-esteem is a long-term, often invisible, process because it involves changing first how you think and then how you act. You may not see immediate changes in yourself or in others, but keep looking and keep working on understanding and using Creative Behavior and eventually you will recognize differences—in both your students and yourself.

I hope that, in addition to the hassles and frustrations that come with learning and understanding something new, you will also experience a sense of exhilaration and anticipation as you read this book. I use Creative Behavior because it works. I feel good about what I am doing and I am thrilled with the results I get. Creative Behavior can work for you too and I hope you enjoy learning about it as much as I have.

Now, on to the learning!

What Should We Call Ourselves?

There are many names used to describe the adults who take care of school-age children during their out-of-school hours: caregiver, teacher, adult leader, staff member, aide, and child-care professional. In some states, staff are not allowed to be called teachers unless they are also credentialed teachers working in a public school.

Being considered professional is extremely important both for our morale and for help in getting the respect and encouragement we deserve from the general public. Caregivers are not babysitters or custodial-care providers. I feel strongly that although we are not teachers in the formal academic sense, the building of self-esteem that we can do is a vital part of the curriculum. We teach children a variety of important skills. Thus, I have decided to use the word "teacher" in this book when referring to people who are working with children in the after-school day-care setting.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many people contributed to the writing of this book and I would like to express my deep appreciation for their help.

My mother, who started me on my career many years ago by sharing her exceptional skills as a teacher, suggested I write this book. She knew there was a need for a quality textbook to train after-school child-care teachers how to promote self-esteem in school-age children. She encouraged me throughout the writing process with her comments and support.

After letting her idea simmer and thinking about the pros and cons of being an author, I began to write in 1985. I would like to thank Judy Bess and Jim Miller for their editing help in the beginning stages.

In 1990 I took a year's leave of absence from teaching to write on a full-time basis. It was at this time I began concentrated work with Alice Boatwright, a freelance editor. I was the student in my work with Alice, and I have learned a tremendous amount from her. What I didn't realize is that we would learn from each other and that's what has made this such an exciting and rewarding relationship. Alice has understood what I wanted to say and has been able to take my ideas, ask me questions, and make suggestions so that my excitement and delight come through along with increased clarity. She has made careful, considered, and often humorous comments throughout the many versions of this manuscript. If I could put her name up in lights in this book I would.

Another person who needs particular recognition is my special friend, Margot Biestman, who is also an author, artist, and teacher. Margot has listened patiently while I struggled with the writing process, made suggestions for improvement, and helped me celebrate my accomplishments. She gave me the kind of support that forced me to acknowledge and take credit for the fact that I was writing this book and that, even though I was asking for and receiving editing help, the writing was still my responsibility. This is a very special kind of support because she could have taken over and made me feel that she, or someone else, was writing the book for me.

Juanita Sagan has been my educational advisor, teacher, and caring friend over many years. She has carefully listened while I read these chapters to her and has been kind and understanding in her willingness to explain concepts by telling me stories, and helping me better understand Creative Behavior and where it came from. She patiently helped me sort out the message I wanted to present. If she had not developed the Creative Behavior process, this book would not have been written. I would like my book to be a best-seller just so that other people could have the chance to learn about her work and the process that has made such a tremendous difference in my life.

My fellow students and teachers at the Institute are an extremely important support group for me. They have read chapters, listened to me read, given me feedback, supported my celebrations, and insisted that I integrate my accomplishments. I would like to express my special thanks and appreciation to George and Sydney Buice, Carole Deitrich, Lynne Hofmann, Richard Janopaul, Marilyn Jensen, Margaret Jordan, Patricia Pothier, Kenley Stallings, and David and Jane Stern.

Special thanks go to Diane Hume, of Scholars Research Book Production, for helping me get my manuscript into camera-ready copy. She has shown considerable patience and cheerfulness in the final process of publishing this book.

Particular gratitude goes to Jean Berlfein for her contribution of all the photographs. Her sensitive professional illustrations capture my ideas and do much to enhance my book. Jean took the photographs at McKinley School Children's Center, Santa Monica, California. I give my appreciation to the children, parents, and staff for their cooperation in this project.

I would also like to express my real indebtedness to my family for their sustained support and encouragement. My husband Charlie is recently retired so we have been home together this year, and it has been wonderful. He knows how important this writing is to me, and his gift of time and nurturing for it has been invaluable. We have worked together as team partners in caring for each other and the house. I also appreciate the help that my sons, Jay and Greg, and my daughter-in-law, Sandy, have given to me. When I have had a question about using the computer, Greg has been most willing to answer it in detail and in such a way that I can understand what to do to correct the problem. The discussions that I have had about concepts and strategies with Jay, an MSW, have been most stimulating and valuable.

I also want to acknowledge my gratitude to my teaching colleagues, the classified staff, and the administration of the Albany (California) Unified School District for their assistance and encouragement.

One of the important components of my successful daily writing plan was my early morning lap swimming. My physical exercise was enhanced by the camaraderie of the staff, swimmers, and diving club at the Albany Pool and I appreciate their support.

Finally I would like to thank all of the children with whom I have worked over the past 25 years for the many, many things that they have taught me. One of the joys I find in teaching is realizing how much I learn from my students.

Some of my students may recognize names or incidents described in this book. That is because I have used real-life examples but the names and circumstances have been changed to protect the privacy of those whose learning experiences I have shared here.

CHAPTER 1

THE NEED FOR CREATIVE BEHAVIOR IN AFTER-SCHOOL DAY CARE

THE NEED FOR QUALITY AFTER-SCHOOL CHILD CARE

In the 1940s, fifties, and sixties, fathers worked and the majority of mothers in the United States stayed home and cared for their children. In the seventies roles began to change and some fathers stayed home to care for children while mothers worked. By 1979, the balance of women in the work force had shifted and, for the first time, more mothers worked outside of the home than were full-time homemakers.

When both parents or a single parent work outside the home, the result is the same—someone else is needed to care for the children. If parents can't find adequate, affordable child care, they may feel they have only one alternative—to leave their children without adult supervision before and after school.

According to the Children's Defense Fund there are six to ten million children age 13 and under who are latchkey kids, caring for themselves while their parents work.[1] This has created a tremendous need for after-school day care that is currently unmet by either the public or the private sectors. Only about five percent of the country's major employers offer help with child care.

The future vitality of our nation depends on *all* children reaching their full potential to become positive, contributing members of society. For many children this goal can be achieved only by getting quality care before and after school. There

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[1] Deborah Burnett Strother, "Latchkey Children: The Fastest-Growing Special Interest Group in the Schools," *Journal of School Health*, 56: 1 (January 1986), pp. 13-16.

is a connection between leaving children unsupervised after school and social problems such as teenage pregnancy, juvenile delinquency, and the use of drugs. Latchkey children are twice as likely to use alcohol and drugs as children who receive pre- and after-school adult care.

The problem of after-school child care is not a new one. As early as 1943 the American Association of School Administrators expressed concern for latchkey kids.[2] Now there are articles, books, and even movies on how to prepare your child to stay home alone with proper survival skills and self-care. The very existence of these materials suggests that it is acceptable for a child to be home alone. Granted there is value in learning independence and responsibility, however, the risks out weigh the advantages. Our society should be able to give children sufficient opportunity for learning responsibility without exposing them to the potential dangers of being unsupervised after school.

Even the use of the term "self-care" is a misnomer and evasion of social responsibility. It implies care being given when in fact there is no one there to care for the child. There is a vast difference between a school-age child occasionally being unsupervised and the same child regularly being home alone.

Many people feel it is all right for the older school-age child to be home alone, and it is true that the needs of 5- and 6-year olds are very different from those of 11- and 12-year olds. Older children are clearer about what to do in an emergency. They can find phone numbers more easily and know what to do if a stranger appears at the door. However, such training legitimizes neglect of a child of any age when it is perceived by parents as a good substitute for a responsible, nurturing adult. Older school-age children need quality after-school care programs too.

There is both social and emotional harm done to latchkey children. They are made responsible for themselves—and sometimes for younger siblings—often before they have the maturity to handle such an obligation. This premature granting of accountability produces undue stress with a characteristic response of overall anxiety. Coping with premature responsibility increases the chances for later social and emotional problems.

A study by Long and Long[3] found that latchkey children, compared to supervised peers, suffer considerable fears and often have stunted social development. Although the children felt fear, they seldom communicated it to their parents. Latchkey children also described intense loneliness because they were restricted to their homes and not allowed to have friends over.

Lack of money and excessive cost are cited as reasons for federal, state, and local governments to withhold financial support from child care in general. and

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[2] Nancy P. Alexander, "School-Age Child Care: Concerns and Challenges," *Young Children*, (Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children, (November 1986), pp. 3-10.

[3] Thomas J. Long and Lynette Long, *Latchkey Children: The Child's View of Self Care* Urbana, IL, ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education, pub. no. ED211 299, 1982, p. 6.

after-school child care in particular. Many people still seem to view these programs as "extras." But look at the statistics.

During one day in the lives of America's children:

2,795	teenagers get pregnant:
689	babies are born to women who have had inadequate prenatal care;
67	babies die before the age of one month and 105 more die before their first birthday;
10	children are killed by guns and 30 more are wounded;
211	children are arrested for drug abuse;
437	children are arrested for drinking or drunken driving;
1,512	students drop out of school;
1,849	children are abused or neglected;
3,288	children run away from home;
1,629	children are in adult jails;
2,989	children see their parents divorced; and
34,285	people lose their jobs.[4]

Somehow our priorities are wrong. The yearly cost of keeping one person in California prisons is $20,500. The yearly cost of educating one child in our public school system is $4,000.[5] For what it would cost to keep a person in prison for less than two years, that person could have received a good education *and* quality after-school care throughout elementary school.

We can't solve all of the problems in the world today by providing quality child care but we can solve a significant number of them by directing dollars to this area. We would also save money in the long run through lower costs in social service interventions if we provided care now to the children who need it. Child care needs to be seen as a preventive, proactive service, saving our children from such problems as drug use, alcohol abuse, and juvenile delinquency that can arise as a result of not having a safe, caring place to go before and after school.

THE NEED FOR SELF-ESTEEM

Few people question the fact that a healthy self-esteem makes a fundamental difference in the quality of an individual's life. Children with low self-esteem are

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[4] *Children 1990: A Report Card, Briefing Book, and Action Primer* (Washington, D.C.: Children's Defense Fund, 1990), p. 4.

[5] Jackie Speier, "Children Today" (keynote address delivered at California School-Age Consortium. 9th Annual Conference at Cañada College, Redwood City, California. February 1991), p. 3.

no less handicapped than children with a serious physical limitation. When self-esteem is low, the ability to be successful in learning and human relationships is severely reduced. Yet, there remains much work to be done to ensure that a good, solid, healthy self-concept is developed in all children so they grow up into productive members of society. The California Task Force to Promote Self-Esteem and Personal and Social Responsibility has defined self-esteem as "appreciating my own worth and importance, and having the character to be accountable for myself, and to act responsibly toward others."[6]

Child psychologist, Stanley Coopersmith, in his research on self-esteem, found that there were significant statistical differences between people with low and high self-esteem, as shown in the chart below.[7]

Behavior	Self-Esteem	
	Low	High
Found it easy to make friends	12%	47%
Found it easy to be independent	11%	65%
Were above average in effective relations	24%	64%
Had above average grades	29%	52%
Had marked, frequent emotional problems	60%	12%
Exhibited destructive behaviors	60%	12%

Studies have shown that self-esteem is not related to family, education, wealth, social class, neighborhood, ethnic background, or parent's occupation. It comes from the quality of relationships that exist between children and those who play a significant role in their lives. It is a feeling of being worthy coupled with the recognition of self-respect and self-confidence. A positive self-esteem gives children a sense of value and responsibility and helps them go beyond a focus on themselves to the wider perspective of community, society, and the world.

Coopersmith[8] shows that self-esteem is the best predictor of academic success or failure. Consequently it's necessary for teachers to focus on building self-esteem before they focus on academic achievement. This is where you, as an after-school child-care teacher, can play such an important role. Since you are not tied to an academic curriculum, all of your energy—your whole curriculum—can be devoted to building self-esteem in children.

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[6] California Task Force to Promote Self-Esteem, and Personal and Social Responsibility, *Self-Esteem Definition* (Sacramento, CA: Department of Education), p. 2.

[7] Stanley Coopersmith, *The Antecedents of Self-Esteem* (San Francisco: W.H. Freeman), 1967, pp. 51, 54, 68, 128, 135, 137.

[8] Ibid, p. 29.

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO HIGH SELF-ESTEEM

No one is born with high self-esteem. It is taught and learned through countless daily interactions between parents and children, siblings, family members, teachers, and friends in a child's life. If these interactions are generally positive—reflecting a positive attitude toward the child's behavior, personality, and other attributes—the child will feel valued and competent. If children feel competent in areas valued by their significant others, their self-esteem increases. They will also reflect that positive attitude back toward others.

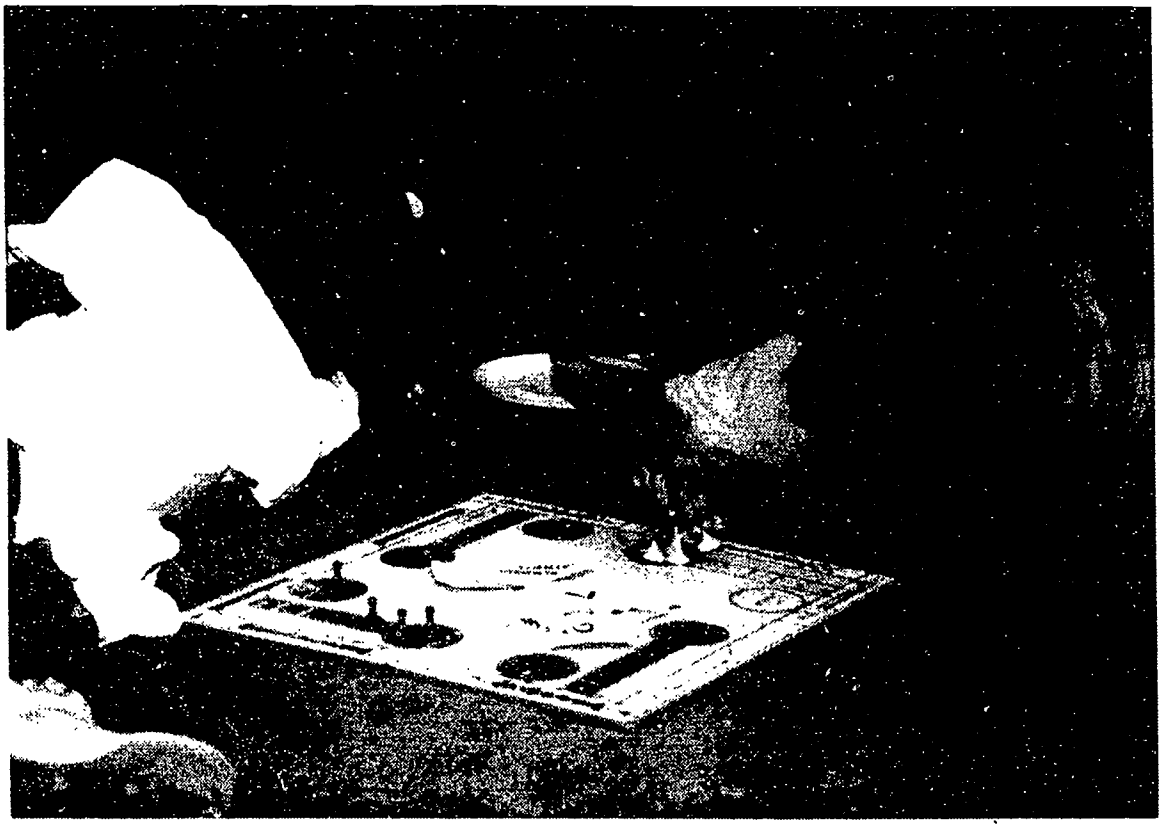
As a teacher you can influence children's self-esteem by giving authentic positive feedback about their attributes, skills, accomplishments, and behaviors in school or in the center. You can offer corrective comments, or requests for improvement, in a caring way that helps children grow. If you appreciate and respect their differences in values, physical characteristics, and rate of learning and help them set realistic expectations for themselves, their feeling of competence and sense of self-worth will increase.

You can also contribute to building self-esteem by accepting a child's feelings, being consistent in your words and deeds, reinforcing positive behavior, listening before accusing, and respecting a child's opinions. Another way to build self-esteem is to plan activities in which children can be successful. With each success they gain more confidence in their ability to understand and so look forward to the next step in learning. Thus strengthening a child's self-esteem is built into your curriculum.

CREATIVE BEHAVIOR BUILDS POSITIVE SELF-ESTEEM

Creative Behavior builds self-esteem by validating the thoughts and feelings that each person brings to the center. When children come to my room with negative feelings about themselves, I look for their positive characteristics, such as a sense of humor, willingness to make friends, ability to lead, and/or enthusiasm. I identify these characteristics for the students and reinforce them whenever possible. This helps the children begin to focus on their assets rather than their shortcomings—and eventually they see more pluses than minuses.

When children know they are seen by others as an asset to the group, their self-image changes. They feel good about themselves, they want to share their pleasure and excitement and cooperate rather than compete. They want to share their happiness. They feel like smiling—which can be contagious.



The curriculum of an after-school program can concentrate on building social skills and self-esteem.

Children Change When They Are Brought Into A Creative Behavior Environment

When children work with a Creative Behavior teacher they go through many changes. Usually over the course of the year I see a lessening of competition and an increase of cooperation, a decrease in defensiveness and an increase in appropriate assertiveness, as well as more openness and trust. As the children begin to take responsibility for their own actions and learning, they become more willing to take risks, try new things, and share ideas. As they learn to care about themselves, children also develop empathy and compassion for others; consequently in a Creative Behavior classroom there are fewer fights or disruptive behaviors. The atmosphere in the room has a contented, comfortable, welcoming feel to it.

TEACHERS CHANGE TOO

When teachers begin using the Creative Behavior process to help their students change, they change too. They become clearer about setting appropriate limits, both for themselves and the children, and about following through with immediate, reasonable, consistent consequences. They have more empathy for children because they have a clearer understanding of their own and others' behavior. They are more open and trusting of their feelings, more willing to learn from mistakes rather than putting themselves down for making them, and they are clearer about cause-and-effect relationships. These teachers become more comfortable and confident in their jobs, and best of all, they begin to like themselves better so their own self-esteem increases.

The end result is that all participants in the process—teachers and children—develop personal authenticity, or believable, genuine behavior appropriate to the occasion, which provides a solid, long-term base for learning and growth.

CHAPTER 2

UNDERSTANDING CREATIVE BEHAVIOR

Thirty-six boys and girls, aged seven to twelve, were slouched at their desks in front of me. Their facial expressions ranged from despair to contempt and defiance. Having been identified by their teachers or parents as math failures, they saw themselves not only as math failures but also as human failures, right to the core of their beings. It was summer and instead of playing ball or learning how to swim, they were assigned to a special class that combined math with Creative Behavior. It was my job, as part of a team of three not only to teach math but also to use the Creative Behavior process to help these children begin to change their self-image. The plan was for us to work with the group for three hours a day, five days a week, for four weeks.

When the children arrived each morning, we asked them to write in journals, answering questions to an integration assignment such as what they liked and didn't like about school or math, how they felt about making mistakes, being laughed at, or working with a partner. Those who wanted to shared their writing with the whole group. We then worked in two groups where all the children used math manipulatives. Each child had a partner who was at or near his or her level of ability in math. They would either work together sharing equal responsibility for solving each problem, or work separately and correct their partner's work. At the end of the morning they had another integration lesson, specifically related to what had been done in class, that was either an art lesson or another writing assignment. Every night we, the teachers, took all the journals home and wrote extensive comments in each one.

At the beginning of the program both the parents and the children were skeptical. They didn't really believe these kids would ever be anything but "math failures." But the program worked! The children improved their math skills,

decreased their fear of math, and, best of all, they began to look at themselves as worthwhile individuals, capable of experiencing success in areas that had previously been full of frustration. The following fall we got some feedback from the therapist of one of the children who had been in our class. He said that our class had done more with four weeks of Creative Behavior and journal writing to increase this child's self-esteem than had been accomplished in a year's worth of therapy with him.

The secret to our success was that our program incorporated the Creative Behavior process into every math lesson. Creative Behavior is a theory of learning that fosters the development of self-esteem and can be applied to any learning situation, from solving interpersonal disagreements to mastering hopscotch or advanced calculus. Creative Behavior is especially applicable in a day-care program because this curriculum is focused on building self-esteem.

Creative Behavior is the result of a dynamic collaboration between two psychotherapists, Juanita and Eugene Sagan. Juanita, who is also an educator, discovered through talking to her colleagues and observing her students that she was able to do consistently something that many other teachers couldn't do—she could make learning exciting and worthwhile for her students.

The Sagans set out to try and identify what made Juanita's teaching style unique and found that it grew out of ideas from Gestalt therapy and the disciplines of education, psychology, drama, art, and movement. Essentially it was different because she engaged all the children in the learning process thus making it satisfying and effective for them. Going beyond the ordinary curriculum, she asked her students to discover the learning possibilities in a myriad of everyday events and to articulate their feelings about what they were learning, as well as recite facts and figures.

Creative Behavior, as they came to call their theory of learning, stresses the importance of a safe, consistent structure that takes into account the student's academic, emotional, and social growth, and the relationship between the student and teacher, as well as the content of the lesson. This technique facilitates learning in such a way that knowledge becomes an integral part of the student's self-concept and is retained over a long period of time. Another unique characteristic of Creative Behavior is its acceptance of a student's resistance to learning or change and its technique of making these negative feelings a part of the lesson.

Creative Behavior Concepts

The Creative Behavior process is based on five major concepts. They are the ability to develop: 1) **a safe environment**, where children can feel protected, emotionally as well as physically; 2) **a nurturing environment**, that encourages learning by having reasonable limits with consistent, immediate consequences;

3) the child's capacity to **integrate,** assimilate, and make sense out of ideas and experiences; 4) positive relationships with **significant others** such as parents, teachers, peers, or other adults; and 5) the awareness of **resistance to learning and change**, and the management of these inevitable feelings.

A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

The term "safe environment" does not mean simply one that is free of hazards and physical dangers. While this kind of protection is essential for the child's well-being, the term is used here to characterize an environment where children's emotional well-being is safeguarded through trust and respect.

Trust

Each child who comes to your center will have a different level of trust, depending on his or her past experiences with parents and caregivers. Children are very vulnerable; they have to rely on adults for protection and care, but this doesn't mean they will automatically trust you to provide it. You must establish an atmosphere that creates basic trust and respect between you and your students and amongst the students themselves.

There are several ways you can build an atmosphere of trust in a center. One is to be consistent in the way you treat all children. This also means being clear about limits, rules, and enforcing consequences without playing favorites. If any child oversteps the boundaries and misuses a limit—such as by breaking up a game to get attention—it is important to immediately enforce the consequences.

Trust is also created when you are authentic or genuine in all your communication. This way children will believe what you say and not assume, for example, that when you say something positive, you are just trying to flatter them.

Knowing what is going to happen gives children a sense of security and control over their lives. Consequently one way to build trust is by maintaining a consistent structure in your daily program. For example, your program might always begin with time to play. This might be followed by group time, snack time, and a period of either doing homework or quiet time before going home. If changes in the structure or schedule occur, if possible you should warn the children first so that they can prepare themselves for the change.

On an individual level you can establish trust by letting children know that you are paying attention to their individual needs. They will know that they are cared for and valued if you listen to them, show that you know their likes and dislikes, and, where possible, provide them with alternatives in situations where you know they have difficulty.

One way to foster respect is for a teacher to acknowledge a child's appropriate interaction with animals

Respect

The most basic, all-encompassing rule for any center is "Treat yourself, others, and the environment with respect." Creating a feeling of respect within the group is important for the same reason that it is important to build trust: students can then rely on the fact that each person's uniqueness and commonality will be valued, and their personal physical and psychological space protected. They will be appreciated for who they are and receive consistently accurate assessments of themselves without being humiliated. In an atmosphere of respect children feel secure enough to explore new areas, try new things, and put energy into growing and learning.

Teaching respect requires that you begin with yourself. By modeling behavior that expresses a sense of personal worth you teach it to children. When we respect ourselves, we can then respect others. Your interactions with them—including your expectations of them—will show children how to treat each other—and you—respectfully.

One way to further develop this atmosphere is by honoring children's privacy as well as your own. Another is by giving children choices, whenever it's appropriate, and accepting their decisions even if you don't agree with or like what

they have decided. By consistently supporting each child's ability to make choices, you make it clear to the entire group that you care about each and every child.

A third way to foster respect is by listening to the children's ideas and feelings. For example, if there is disagreement between children, you make it clear that all the children involved will be allowed to say everything they want to say before you make a judgment or decision. The child who speaks second or third will get just as much attention and consideration as the child who talks first. There is no need for interruptions because you will listen as long as anyone has something to add. In this atmosphere of mutual caring, children learn to appreciate others, as well as come to know themselves.

A NURTURING ENVIRONMENT

After trust and respect are established, the next step is to create a nurturing environment where learning can take place. The change from a safe to a nurturing environment takes place when an individual feels secure enough so that he or she can begin to explore the environment. A nurturing environment has two essential components: 1) appropriate limits and specific consequences and 2) a curriculum that is relevant, sequential, and developmental. These components apply to all children in the group.

A room may be full of learning possibilities such as interesting large-and small-muscle equipment, a variety of games, and an exciting science table, but until a child feels safe and secure, it is not yet a nurturing environment for that particular child. Until children know the behavioral limits, have support for their feelings, know the choices they have, and understand how to use the equipment available, they will be afraid to risk or explore the possibilities.

Appropriate Limits and Specific Consequences

Appropriate limits with immediate consequences are essential to a nurturing environment because they protect everyone from disrespect, invasion of privacy, and harassment by others, adults and children alike. If specific consequences are applied immediately when a limit is overstepped, and applied in a way that is not demeaning to the child, everyone feels protected. For example, consequences in my room usually mean the child writing me a note explaining what happened and describing an alternative behavior to help stay out of trouble another time. This system sets up the possibility for risk taking or exploration and creates an atmosphere where children can learn and grow.

A Relevant Curriculum

A child-care curriculum will emphasize interpersonal relationships and how to function in a group in an appropriate manner. A relevant curriculum for child care will be based on an understanding of what each student already knows about social interactions and what the next step in the learning process is.

Teachers learn where children are in the social continuum by observing them. The teacher's job then is to help children move forward. Are some children shy? Do they need help entering a group, or do they need time and space to observe activities before they can feel comfortable? Are some children unable to share? Do they need time to realize toys or equipment will not be snatched from them before they are ready to give them up? Are some children aggressive? Do they need help learning to take suggestions? Are some bossy? Do they need help learning to value other people's opinions? Do they have difficulty valuing their ideas and need help in recognizing their worth?

Learning is like a staircase with a new concept on each step. If teachers try to help children go up the stairs by skipping steps, they do their students a disservice, because there will be gaps in their knowledge. The children may "fall back down and have to start over," get discouraged, and think of themselves as poor learners. They may blame themselves for not being able to learn when in reality it is the teacher's fault for pushing them too fast. A relevant curriculum is designed to be both sequential and developmental at each child's functional level allowing students both to experience success and feel challenged.

Developing the Capacity to Integrate

Integration, as the Sagans define it, means to incorporate new experiences, concepts, and skills into the self-system so that the whole self is made greater, stronger, more desirable, and/or more valuable. When you integrate an experience, you assimilate the important emotional and intellectual aspects of it into yourself, turning what you have learned into a source of energy.

Digestion is a metaphor for the process of integration. When food is consumed, some of the energy it provides is used right away, some is used slowly, and some is stored away for later. Just as with food, information is put to immediate use or stored away. And not all information is used. Some is discarded or forgotten. Integration of information is an on-going process. It can occur almost immediately or several months after an experience, when the learning is applied to a new situation or decision. According to the Sagans, there are specific skills that aid integration: learning to give and take credit; learning to share experiences with an important friend, teacher, or parent; and using what has been learned in a new problem-solving situation.

For example, Elizabeth had a problem with grabbing toys from other children. If one day she asked for a toy instead of grabbing it, and she shared her pleasure at her changed behavior with her friend Annie, Elizabeth would be integrating by taking credit and sharing. If a teacher saw what Elizabeth did and gave her credit by sharing her own pleasure and telling Elizabeth she had done a good job, the teacher would further strengthen Elizabeth's integration. If Elizabeth observed Kevin grabbing a toy and labeled Kevin's action as grabbing and inappropriate, Elizabeth would continue to integrate by applying what she learned to another situation.

Inappropriate integration can occur when a person internalizes a remark or mistake as 'I am bad' and looks at the mistake with self-deprecation. When this happens a child needs support from the teacher to see the mistake as an opportunity for learning. Another type of inappropriate integration can occur when a person internalizes an experience as 'I'm the best in the world.' This omnipotence does not allow the person to make a mistake or to give credit to others for their hard work or cooperation. This child needs caring, authentic feedback as a reality check.

Sometimes integration occurs naturally. But, according to the Sagans, it is too important a part of learning, maturation, and the development of self-esteem to leave to chance. This emphasis on integration is one of the characteristics that distinguishes Creative Behavior from other programs that are aimed at promoting positive self-esteem.

SIGNIFICANT OTHERS

Jerold Heiss defines *significant others* as persons who are, for you, in a position of power and influence.[9] They are the ones who control the rewards and punishments that are important to you. Members of the nuclear family are most likely to be significant others in a child's early years. Teachers and peers become significant others as the child grows older.

According to Juanita Sagan, children value approval more when it comes from a significant other. Children are also less likely to test limits and are more willing to follow directions when instructions are given by a significant other because trust and respect have been established. For these reasons it is very important to help students develop a positive relationship with you, the teacher. If you are a significant other for them, and they feel that you care about them, they will be more willing to listen to you, learn from you, and emerge from a relationship with you with a stronger, more positive self-concept.

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[9] Jerold Heiss, "Social Roles," In *Social Psychology: Sociological Perspectives*, ed. Morris Rosenberg and Ralph H. Turner, (New York: Basic Books, 1981), p. 113.

Because this teacher is important to her and makes her feel valued, he is supporting the growth of her healthy self-esteem.

Working With Resistance to Learning and Change

Everyone has experienced—or encountered—resistance to change. In a day-care setting resistance often occurs when children are tired or need a change of focus. They can also feel resistant if they think they have to be right, can't fail or make a mistake, or if they are scared of trying something new for fear of being laughed at. As a result they do not want to attempt what they are being asked to do. They resist.

Creative Behavior teachers don't try to eliminate resistance. They recognize

that it often means students have not had time to integrate a new skill or experience into their self-concept, so they are not yet ready to move on to the next step. Rather than punish a resistant child, they try to help students label and use their resistance appropriately or give them an immediate integration assignment.

People who are able to accurately label and describe their resistance can use it in a positive way for their own healthy functioning. Often children and adults need to say "No, I don't want to do this" or "No, I can't do this," before they are able to choose to begin a task. By acknowledging their resistance, students can pace themselves and move forward. When the elements of trust and respect are in place, simple techniques, such as inviting the student to write about the feeling of resistance, can help prevent the student from becoming blocked or immobilized.

Of course there is also unhealthy resistance. This can occur when there is a lack of basic trust in a child. Perhaps all the positive elements of a safe and nurturing environment are present in the center, but the child is not able to take advantage of them because he or she has not yet learned to trust anyone at the center and feel safe. If trust has not yet been developed, teachers need to continue to work on building it. When basic trust is lacking at home, children and their families usually need professional counseling to deal with the problem.

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS OF CREATIVE BEHAVIOR

Creative Behavior has four unique or separate characteristics. First, the focus in all experiences is on the **process** of teaching and learning as well as the acquisition of skills or achievement of a particular goal. The end product is important—children need to take pride in what they produce—but Creative Behavior helps them value the process as well as the product. If children appreciate the process of painting a picture, they can get pleasure and learn from the experience of painting rather than feel they have do a better job than another child in producing a good product.

Consistency is a second characteristic of the Creative Behavior process. Teachers work toward consistency in their treatment of all children. They respect all of the people in the center. No one knows if teachers have a favorite student, because each child feels special. If a schedule change is made, teachers explain why; if a limit is not enforced, they explain why not. If teachers set limits and expectations, provide alternatives within an activity, and carry out consequences in a consistent manner, children feel secure because they can predict immediately succeeding events. They know what will happen if they choose to stay within the boundaries or choose to go beyond the limits. In this atmosphere, children learn to feel safe and to control their own behavior.

A third characteristic is the focus on **authenticity** and the ability to

differentiate between authentic and inauthentic behavior. In this book the term authenticity is synonymous with trustworthy, sincere, believable, or genuine. It is crucial for teachers to model a sincere but positive response when they make comments about children's behavior or work. If teachers feel it is necessary to make a negative comment, it needs to be worded very carefully so as not to be demeaning. The comment also needs to be given to a child in private so as not to embarrass or shame anyone.

Inauthentic communication uses positive feedback for flattery and manipulation and may or may not be believable. If the student can detect insincerity or falsehood, not only does the teacher lose credibility, but previous, authentic positive statements may be discounted. When teachers are authentic, what they say is believable, and children are able to form a realistic view of their performance.

The fourth characteristic is **individualized learning in a group experience.** Individuals are encouraged to grow at the pace that is most appropriate and healthy for them. This means children are not pushed so fast that they experience failure, nor are they moved so slowly that they experience frustration. By exploring how their experiences are similar or different, children learn to evaluate their own progress rather than just compare themselves with others. This emphasis helps them understand that there is more than one way to accomplish a task; it also fosters cooperation rather than competition.

Terms Used in Creative Behavior

The following section discusses some of the terms that are used in Creative Behavior. It is important to understand the definition of these terms because they provide the underpinnings of the theory and sometimes they have a specific meaning for Creative Behavior teachers. The terms are presented in alphabetical order.

Accurate labeling

Accurate labeling is critical to help children recognize reality and can be one of the biggest gifts you give them. So often they get mixed messages from adults because the adults themselves are confused about how they feel or what is going on. For example, you can make sure children know that they are "mad," not "bad," when they're angry; "working within their margin of error," not "dumb," for making a mistake; and "strong," rather than a "trouble maker" or "selfish," when they stand up for themselves.

If children's behaviors are mislabeled, they become confused—unsure if

their perceptions and feelings are accurate. They put themselves down for responding to situations in ways that may be totally appropriate. By labeling behavior accurately, you help children match their feelings with reality and build confidence in their actions and responses.

ALTERNATIVES

"There's more than one way to skin a cat," as my grandmother used say. Creative Behavior builds flexibility into the learning process. Children learn there is no right way to do something with all others being wrong; there are many appropriate ways to solve a problem. Looking for alternatives helps to develop initiative.

APPROPRIATE AND INAPPROPRIATE

Behavior is labeled appropriate if the action promotes a positive, respectful feeling in all participants. Behavior is labeled inappropriate if it makes even one person feel bad about him or herself. If I take care of myself without hurting others, I am behaving appropriately. If I am mean to myself or someone else, then I am behaving inappropriately.

CANCEL

Webster's definition of cancel includes "to destroy the force, effectiveness or validity of; annul." To understand how this term is used in Creative Behavior teaching, think about the following situation. You have just finished a difficult task, but instead of taking credit for your hard work by saying "I have done a good job and I need to celebrate," you say to yourself or a friend "It's no big deal. I didn't do very much. Anyone could have done it." By saying these words you cancel your accomplishment and, in effect, put yourself down, destroying or denying the good work you have done.

CELEBRATE

Celebrations acknowledge that something special is happening. A celebration can take the form of sharing a credit-taking statement with a friend such as "I loved swimming my laps today. It felt so good moving through the water"; signing a large

piece of butcher paper as a group birthday card; bringing a treat for the entire group to mark a momentous occasion; taking a group or individual bow; or accepting a pat on the back. Celebrations are one way to take credit and assist integration.

Choice

Whenever possible, you should give students a choice and allow them to make their own decisions, but don't offer them a choice unless you are willing to accept what they decide. This strategy helps children take responsibility for their actions and be independent. For example, children may be able to choose how they want to use colored paper at the art table, but they may not choose to resist doing a journal assignment by continuing to play outside. The consequence of this second choice would be that these children are immediately brought inside. However, the teacher can acknowledge their need to resist by giving them an alternative writing or drawing assignment, such as exploring their reasons for resistance. This way they learn there are limits to the choices they can make.

Some children may need your help in defining the range of appropriate choices. Their choice is not acceptable if it means they will infringe on another's rights, make others feel bad about themselves, misuse equipment, or misinterpret an instruction.

Competition, Healthy and Unhealthy

We live in a very competitive society. Many situations are set up so there is only one winner, one person who can feel good about him or herself at the end of an event. There is only one gold medal.

Competition can be healthy or unhealthy depending upon how a person uses it. If Alison learned that Jake was a better handball player than she was and she said she was never going to play handball again, this would be an unhealthy use of competition. If, in the same situation, Alison said to herself "That's all right. I don't have to be the best handball player in the world. If I want to improve I can watch Jake, see what he does, and practice. The more I play, the better I'll get." This would be a healthy use of competition.

Complaints

Creative Behavior teachers listen to complaints with the focus on just listening. They know there is value for the learner in complaining, getting problems out in the open so they can be dealt with and acceptable solutions found. But

complaints can also be cover-ups. Often it is easier for a person to complain than to take credit, so the complaint is really a roundabout way of taking credit. If the complaint is truly a credit, then the teacher can label it as such and help the person integrate it. For example Aaron has done an exceptional job making a clay rabbit. He is really proud of himself, but instead of coming up to me and saying "See what a good job I've done," he says, "I don't like the way the clay looks here. It sticks out all funny." My response to Aaron might be "Aaron, you have made a wonderful rabbit. The way his ears stick up looks very realistic. I think you need to show your rabbit to three more people and see if they agree with me." This way I am listening to Aaron's complaint and helping him take credit by suggesting he show his rabbit to more people.

CREDIT TAKING

Credit taking is the process of giving yourself the recognition you have earned for an accomplishment. Credit taking is more effective when it is shared—done in the presence of a person who is really important to you, a significant other. That special person validates or reinforces the positive credit.

Credit taking internalizes and integrates the pleasure and knowledge that you have done a good job. By integrating the good work you have done or the important skill you have learned through credit taking, you make that work or skill your own so that you can use it another time in another way.

"When I first came into this room, I thought I was bragging if I told what a good job I'd done on the soccer team. Now I know that's really taking credit." This was one of Todd's statements in a discussion about the difference between bragging and taking credit. The difference may lie in the motive or the style in which the credit taking is done. A person who brags may be trying to belittle someone else and build him or herself up at another's expense. With credit taking, the purpose is to strengthen yourself but *not* at the expense of others.

It is important to acknowledge negative actions or statements as well as positive ones. For example, if I were unkind or sharp to Larry while he was with a group of children, I might say to the group "I realized I was not kind to Larry the other day. Sometimes I am mean but not very often. And when I get over being mean I take responsibility for my meanness. I've already apologized to Larry privately, and I've told him I would tell you about my apology."

Feedback

Feedback is a written, verbal, or physical response to an event or experience. It can be positive or negative. Feedback is related to credit taking and integration because by asking for and receiving feedback, a person becomes more readily able to take credit for what he or she has accomplished.

Many people require some kind of feedback to validate their own feelings. When Jomo paints a picture, he wants other people to tell him they like the picture before he can feel really good about what he has done. He is not strong enough internally to know when he has done a fine job. When Jomo shows his picture to a group of people, he often gets unsolicited feedback from them through the expressions on their faces, by the side comments they make to one another, and by the direct comments they make to him.

The fact that children show their artwork or read their writing does not mean they want verbal feedback. Many shy children need to start out by *only* showing or telling before they can either ask for or hear a response.

When children give feedback, I have them limit their comments to positive statements. It is extremely difficult to give suggestions for change in a way that is not detrimental to the person receiving the information. I tell students that if they have negative feedback that is hurtful, and they simply have to tell it to someone, they are to tell it to me privately. This way the statement gets made, but not in a way that hurts anyone.

Fuzzy Contract

Often people will make an agreement to work together or share a task. If one or the other or both are not clear about their own expectations they can be in the position of assuming that the other person's thinking is similar to their own. If they do not state their expectations clearly, they have made a fuzzy contract. For example, I might expect a fellow teacher to clean up the art table at the end of the day just because I had asked her to supervise the art project while I talked to a parent. I could be very unhappy if I found a mess left for me to clean up. However, if I had not made it clear that cleaning up was included in supervision, the clean-up would be my responsibility. People usually set up a fuzzy contract because they are not clear themselves, or they feel the other person might not like them if they ask for too much.

"IF YOU ARE WILLING"

I use the words "if you are willing" when I offer a choice. Often people say, "Do you want to?" when they really mean "You had better do this." By using the words "if you are willing," both the speaker and the listener are aware a choice is being offered and a decision needs to be made. This option is important to maintain the authenticity of a student's response. If a student says no, he or she is unwilling to do what I ask, I provide an alternative. I use the words "if you are willing" *only* when I am willing to accept a no.

"LIKE, DON'T LIKE, AND WHY?"

In Creative Behavior teaching, the questions "What do you like, what don't you like, and why do you feel that way" are asked over and over. By thinking about a particular event or experience in terms of what you like and why you like it and what you don't like and why you don't like it, you promote integration. You also become clearer about what is important to you.

Some people will take the position that they like everything or dislike everything about something. For example, if I ask Roberto what he likes about school and he says "nothing" I know his general feeling is one of dislike, but I also suspect there has probably been something he has liked at some point. When I ask Libby what she likes about school, she will say, "Everything!" This also is not realistic.

If you know what you like about an experience and why, you have something to anticipate and take pleasure from. By becoming clear about the answers to these questions, you are able to make decisions based on what you want, not what someone else wants or what everyone else is doing. This is also the basis for developing good analytical thinking skills.

MARGIN OF ERROR

A margin of error is a percentage or number of allowable mistakes. If I have decided to allow myself a certain number of mistakes, I don't need to get angry or upset with myself each time I make an error. This makes it easier to respond to a mistake as part of a learning experience. A margin of error can be used to measure progress toward a goal as well. For example, Jenny may set her margin of error at missing five balls in any kickball game. After awhile, she may want to change her margin of error to reflect her improved skill. The margin of error takes conflict and anxiety out of making mistakes. Those feelings are destructive because they demand attention, so no other learning can take place.

Negative Voices

Negative voices can come from different internal characters. Their main goal is to criticize as well as delay or stop growth and change. They also want to negate any good feeling you might have about yourself.

Following is a statement a colleague made about negative voices.

> *The purpose of negative voices is to rob me of my pleasure. They are pleasure robbers. They make me feel I haven't done enough or done it well enough. They take the perfectionist point of view. Sometimes I feel they're like chameleons. They're always changing direction or focus. I think I have one identified and another one pops up in another area. I constantly have to be on guard. I feel I'm quite susceptible to their insinuations. The slightest comment or glance from someone can set them off. If I feel I don't have approval, they grow in size. They definitely are pleasure robbers.*

> *The only things I've found that can counteract my negative voices are really knowing I have a margin of error and taking credit. If I'm clear about my margin of error and if I can take credit, then I can get my negative voices under control. Writing them down helps too. Then I can see how irrational they are, and I know I do not have to listen to them.*

Not-Hypothesis

The **not-hypothesis** is a term developed by Eugene Sagan. His conjecture is that people are often unsuccessful because they are under a lot of pressure or are afraid of making a mistake. Because some people internalize making a mistake as a self-accusation—'I am no good'—he suggests that the goal be changed to *not* succeeding at a particular skill. For example, if a coach were to use the not-hypothesis in baseball practice, he or she would instruct the batters to not hit the ball when it was pitched to them. When children are told they are not to succeed at a task or skill that they were anticipating to be difficult, their first reaction is usually relief. They know they can be successful at not hitting a ball. In the wake of their relief, they let go of their fear and recognize that they can become competent.

If a person's eventual goal is to hit a baseball a long way, it is often easier for that person to begin by trying to miss the ball, first swinging just below it, then swinging just above it, as it goes over the plate. Besides being successful at missing the ball, the player will also have the experience of finding out how to judge the location of the ball in order to miss it. This is valuable information for later on when the emphasis is changed, and the goal is to hit the ball. At some point, in trying to

miss the ball the person makes a mistake and hits it. Aha!—the person has the experience of delight!

Another way to use the not-hypothesis is when children are having trouble identifying what they like about a picture they have drawn or a story they have written. When this happens you can ask them first to tell you what is not good about what they have done. This is often easier for them to define than what is good. For example, Erica might have trouble taking credit for a picture she drew, but she can tell me all of the things she did wrong, in her opinion, in the drawing. When she uses the not-hypothesis either she will begin to see the humor and the ridiculousness of what she is saying or she will run out of negative things to say. In either case she will be freed to take appropriate credit.

OVERLOAD

Overload occurs when a person takes in too much information at once or has too many different experiences without time to assimilate or integrate them. It's like going to a buffet dinner when you are not very hungry, but taking some of everything because it all looks so tempting. You end up with an overflowing plate and a stomachache. It is also like turning on so many appliances that the circuit becomes overloaded and shorts out. By denying or resisting the need to integrate, or by not acknowledging the work that has been completed, people can get overloaded very quickly. They lose track of what pace makes sense for them. They take in much more than they can sensibly use.

A person who is overloaded can often be out-of-sorts, short-tempered, heckling, or rude. Creative Behavior teachers try to watch for signs of overload in their students and in themselves. Overloaded people may have unfocused or glassy eyes, talk nervously or in excess, nod in constant agreement no matter what is said, or put themselves or the group activity down. The best cure for overload is integration.

PACING

Pacing is the internal rate at which it makes sense for you, as an individual, to learn. It is important for teachers to recognize the pace that is comfortable for them and to help children appreciate their own pace of learning. Some children learn to walk at eight or nine months. Others learn at fifteen months. Some children learn to tie their shoes when they are five-years old. Others learn when they are seven or eight. When students know their own individual pace of learning they can take credit more easily for what they *can* do rather than trying to do too much too fast and so becoming anxious.

Price Raising

Price raising is a way to cancel and not take credit. It is the internal voice that says, 'Well, if I'd done it this way, it would have been better.' or 'I should have talked to Vu's parents when they came to get him. It doesn't matter that two children were arguing and I was helping them. I *should* have talked to Vu's mom.' By listening to the voice saying you should have done more, you deny yourself the chance to take credit and integrate the fine job you have done. For the price raiser, the glass is always half empty, never half full.

Put-Down

When someone makes a derogatory remark, laughs in a mean way, or looks at you with contempt or ridicule that person is trying to put you down. Since the purpose of Creative Behavior is to build a positive self-concept, put-downs are not allowed. They are labeled, and there is an immediate consequence for putting someone else down.

Self-Styles

One way of describing the complexity of an individual is to say that each of us is made up of many internal characters, and these characters can present themselves in different situations. An example of this would be a child who acts the class clown when in front of a group but is a goody-goody when meeting new people.

Just like characters in a play, two or more self-style characters can be on stage at the same time. The various characters also relate to each other in different ways. For example, they may conflict, compete, cooperate, negotiate, or ignore each other. Some of these characters are positive forces, some are negative forces, and quite a few of them are neutral, taking on positive or negative aspects depending upon the situation. All of the characters are necessary to the performance of the play. It is important to identify and acknowledge both our positive and negative characters. While we each like to think of ourselves in positive terms, we are doing ourselves a disservice if we deny our negative aspects because we need to take responsibility for all of our actions. By learning our important characters we can choose which ones to use rather than be controlled by any one of them.

To help you get started thinking about these characters, or self-styles, here is a sample of some internal characters with generic names. There are many others you can identify. Thinking up names for your own internal characters can be fun.

- *Traitor* or *Troublemaker* is the character who gets a great deal of pleasure out of getting into trouble or making trouble for others. Traitor has an internal voice that tries to persuade you to make a choice that will probably get you into hot water.
- *Angel* or *Good Guy* is the character who helps you make appropriate decisions so you feel good about yourself and what you do. This character does not expect perfection from you.
- *Spoiled Child* wants you to get your way all the time.
- *Approval Seeker* wants constant reassurance that whatever you do is all right.
- *Poor Me* wants people to feel sorry for you.
- *Perfectionist* wants everything to be perfect and promotes the feeling of self-criticism. If anything is wrong or not to the Perfectionist's satisfaction, then no credit can be taken.
- *Victim* presents you as a helpless person and makes you vulnerable to bullies.
- *Bully* has a low self-esteem and compensates by ordering other people around.
- *Resistance* does not want you to begin an activity. Resistance keeps finding other things for you to do, questions to ask, anything to keep you from doing the task at hand. The positive aspect to this character is that you are helped to go slowly and so prevented from getting overloaded.
- *Playful Child* enjoys life, but this character sometimes has a negative part that supports resistance and avoids any work.
- *Omnipotence* always knows the right way, has all the answers, and does not want to be questioned about any decision.
- *Put-Down Artist* does not want anyone to take credit and is excellent at denigrating or depreciating both you and others.
- *Con Artist* tries to talk you (or someone else) into doing or getting something you don't want.
- *Canceler* does not want you to take credit for anything. The Canceler will try to figure out a way to make you negate all the good things you have accomplished.

Using the idea of self-styles allows you to ask, "What character was out when you got in a fight?" The child may say: "Bully." Then you can respond: "You're right. What can we do so that the next time you're in a similar situation, you can keep that character under control?" In a situation like this, labeling the internal character as making a poor choice allows children to recognize there are other internal characters to choose from. They don't have to choose the negative character to be on stage all of the time. For some people this makes it easier to accept responsibility for their own behavior but not label themselves as a bad person.

Sharing

Sharing is a crucial part of integration. When children share with a significant other, they have the experience of feeling satisfaction or pleasure. This validation helps them in taking a risk and moving to the next step in learning. If children are being asked to share in a group, it is important to give them an opportunity to say no to sharing and accept their decision. They may not be ready to share because they are afraid of feedback and forcing them would cause embarrassment and have a negative effect on their self-esteem.

Support

In Creative Behavior teaching, students and teachers are encouraged to ask questions and ask for help when it is needed. The idea that you should have to do a task or project all by yourself in order for it to be valuable is discouraged. On the other hand if children choose to work alone or try something by themselves, this is acceptable.

For example, Libby may feel shy about trying to swing on the bars by herself but if Bri goes with her, she feels more comfortable. As Libby uses the bars and gains more experience, she may still want Bri's companionship but not need her support as much as in the beginning.

Unaccustomed Hand

Students in a Creative Behavior class are often asked to consider using the technique of drawing with their unaccustomed hand—the hand they do not normally use. The untrained or unaccustomed hand is more in touch with feelings and thoughts—a person's primary response—without any editing from what they have learned. Both teachers and students can thus become aware of what is happening to the artist internally, how he or she is feeling or perceiving things. Writing can also be done with the unaccustomed hand with the same results.

Steps in Developing a Creative Behavior Lesson

There are four steps to planning a Creative Behavior lesson.

➨ In the first step, the students have a common experience and **respond** to it. The **response** may be verbal, written, drawn, or movement,

depending upon what is appropriate to the activity and the students. In an after-school day-care setting the common experience can be anything from eating a snack to a fight in the yard, from listening to a story or watching a movie to playing a game.

- In the second step, students **describe their response** using a different medium. For example, if the response was to reading a story, in this step the students might describe that response by writing or drawing a picture depicting how the story made them feel.
- In the third step, students **share** their descriptions from Step 2 with another person or group of persons. This enables them to **identify with their response** and have the experience of liking or not liking what they have done.
- In the fourth step, the students **take credit** for what they have shared and **integrate** the sharing into their self-concept as new learning. They can take credit verbally, take a bow, have a pat on the back, or receive applause. Learning can be information about feelings, or cognitive or physical skills.

Step 1 and Step 4 are crucial for every lesson. Step 1, having a response, happens automatically because of the student's involvement in the experience. Step 4, integrating the response, needs to be built into the lesson. Many times the steps are not clear cut but overlap because sharing and credit taking are part of integration. In order to illustrate how this process works, I will describe a typical Creative Behavior lesson, breaking it down into the four steps.

A lesson plan can be used with the whole group of children. It also can be used with small groups of children or individuals.

Step 1. Experience and Response

When the children come to the center after the first day of elementary school I have them think about how they felt when they walked through their classroom door for the first time. I ask them to close their eyes, if they are willing, and get in a comfortable position. This helps them focus on my questions, the experience, and their response. Then I ask a series of questions to help them remember the experience, directing them to answer the questions silently to themselves. I give them time to think between each question because their thinking is the most important part of the whole exercise. My questions might go like this: "How were you feeling when you got up this morning? Did you go to school by yourself or with another person? How were you feeling before the school bell rang? How were you feeling when you walked through your classroom door for the first time?"

Step 2. Description of Response in Another Medium

After the children have had some thinking time, I ask them to choose *one* color of crayon that best represents how they felt when they came into the room. I instruct them to draw a picture of their face showing how they felt as they came through the door for the very first time. Limiting the crayons to one color puts the focus on drawing a feeling statement rather than making a photographically perfect likeness. The children don't have to struggle over what color to use for their hair or skin.

Step 3. Share with Others so as to Identify with the Response

Most children get so excited they want everyone to see their picture immediately. This informal sharing serves a purpose in that it allows children, particularly shy children, to look around and see what others have done. This way they can decide whether they want to share or not in the formal, group sharing time. They can decide whether they like or don't like the picture they have drawn. Eventually they will learn to articulate these feelings. By having to answer questions about what they like and don't like, the children learn to be more discriminating and develop critical thinking skills. I always give the children the choice of sharing or not sharing their picture with the whole class, respecting their refusal, if that is what they decide. If children choose to share, they may get feedback in the form of comments or noises of appreciation such as "Wow!" Children may only give positive feedback. Negative feedback is a put-down with a consequence.

Step 4. Taking Credit and Integrating

I give an integration assignment, often the next day, to talk about how they felt about going to school on the first day, how they felt drawing their picture, and/ or how they felt sharing or not sharing their picture with the group. I ask the following questions: "What did you like about the experience and why? What did you not like about the experience and why?" Asking the children to give reasons to support their statements is essential because it strengthens their clarity and discrimination, which in turn helps to develop their critical thinking. I give the children some time to think about my questions and then give them an opportunity to share their thinking with a friend. If anyone wants to share with the whole group, I provide that opportunity.

One of the consequences of teaching and learning through the Creative Behavior approach to teaching is it provides a way of looking for the extraordinary in ordinary everyday things. As you explore yourself and your experiences, you become aware of how rich they are. As you learn to articulate what you know and

what you like or don't like, the world becomes much more clear and specific—you can find interest and see beauty in simple things.

Creative Behavior makes you more self-aware and less self-centered. You learn to know who you are—how you think; how fast or slow you like to learn, work, play, change plans; what you need to feel comfortable, and what you feel or think about things. This yields two results. One is that as you integrate this information about yourself and you are able to see the same characteristics in others. This leads to a more compassionate respectful view of them. It also makes it possible to see clearly. When you are afraid all the time, your eyes are turned inward. When you stop being afraid and know who you are, you have time to see a lot more of the world around you.

Questions and Exercises

Do these exercises only if you are willing. If you are not willing, please provide yourself with an alternate assignment or write about why you are not willing to do the exercises.

The adult activity marked with ☆☆ is appropriate to do with children. However, if you do the activity with children, it is important that you, as a teacher, first have the experience of doing it yourself.

Note to the person giving the first exercise:

- This lesson has five parts that can be completed in one day or done on different days. If you take two days to do this lesson, save the pictures until the lesson is completed.
- Say the instructions slowly. Pause at the (Pause) to give students time to think about your questions. Provide or ask students to bring large crayons. They are less likely to break when students are drawing with their eyes closed and unaccustomed hand.
- Allow about 15 or 20 minutes for the students to do their writing in the third part.

Materials needed: large crayons, 12" x 18" paper for drawing, and writing paper.

☆☆ Exercise 1

a) Get in a comfortable position. (Pause) Close or hide your eyes. (Pause) Think about a time you have been in trouble. (Pause) It doesn't have to be a lot of trouble, just a little bit of trouble. If you can't think of a time when you have been in trouble, imagine what you might have done to get into trouble. (Pause) How did you feel while you were getting into or making trouble? (Pause) What was fun about getting into trouble?
Assume that you do have internal characters. Think about what your troublemaker character might look like. (Pause) Is he, she, or it very big? (Pause) Very small? (Pause) What shape is your troublemaker? (Pause) What colors?
When you have an idea of what your troublemaker might look like, decide on one color that best represents your troublemaker. Open your eyes. Choose the one color of crayon that best

represents your troublemaker. If you can't find the color you want, choose the color that is closest to it.

When you are ready, and if you are willing, put the crayon in your unaccustomed hand, close your eyes, and, using as much of the paper as you are willing to, draw a picture of your troublemaker. Open your eyes when you are finished with the picture. Do not add anything to your picture after you have opened your eyes. (If you are not willing to close your eyes and/or use your unaccustomed hand, draw a picture of your troublemaker with either your eyes opened and/or using your accustomed hand.)

Be sure you sign, date, and label your picture.

b) Get in a comfortable position. (Pause) Close or hide your eyes. (pause) This time think about a time you have not been in trouble or you have stayed out of trouble. (Pause) How did you feel while you were staying out of trouble? (Pause) What did you like about not being in trouble?

Think about what your angel might look like. (Pause) Is he, she, or it very big? (Pause) Very small? (Pause) What is the shape? (Pause) What colors?

When you have an idea of what your angel might look like, decide on one color that best represents this character. Open your eyes. Choose the one color of crayon that best represents your angel. If you can't find the color you want, choose one that is close to it.

When you are ready, and if you are willing, put the crayon in your unaccustomed hand, close your eyes and using as much of the paper as you are willing to, draw a picture of your angel. Open your eyes when you are finished. Do not add anything to your picture after you have opened your eyes. (If you are not willing to close your eyes and use your unaccustomed hand, draw a picture of your angel with your eyes opened and your accustomed hand.)

Be sure you sign, date, and label your picture.

c) Write a brief description of the experience of drawing your troublemaker and your angel pictures. Include a statement about what you liked about the experience and why and what you didn't like about the experience and why. The experience can include thinking about your internal characters, drawing them, and/or writing about what you have drawn.

d) Share your pictures and your writing with a partner. Listen and look while a partner shares his or her picture and writing with you.

e) If you are willing, share your writing and/or your pictures with the whole group. (If there is a time constraint you may have to limit sharing to one or the other but not both.) Ask for feedback if you want it.

☆ Exercise 2

Begin to think about your own internal characters.

a) Make a list of three to five of your own internal characters. Choose one of them. Write a description of the internal character you have chosen. You might include physical characteristics as well as the kind of behaviors this character promotes.
b) Draw a picture of the internal character you described in a).
c) Share your list, your writing, and your drawing with a partner. Discuss what is the same and what is different about your characters. Discuss what you like and why about the assignment and what you didn't like and why not .
d) If you are willing, share your list, your writing, and/or a part of your discussion with the group. Ask for feedback if you want it.

☆ Exercise 3

a) Write a letter to a friend describing this book. Explain what you are learning to your friend. Describe what you don't like about the book so far, what you do like about the book, and why you feel that way.
b) If you are willing, share your letter with a partner.
c) If you are willing, share your letter with the whole group. Ask for feedback if you want it.

☆ Exercise 4

Consider resistance. Think about some activities or projects that you would like to put off or not do at all. What are some of the things that you do or say to yourself so that you don't complete an activity? What are the consequences of not completing the activity? What would happen if you did complete the activity?

a) Discuss what you have thought about with a partner.
b) Share your discussion with the class.

☆ EXERCISE 5

For the next writing assignment, begin your writing with "I don't want to do this" or "I hate this assignment." Write these words or a variation of them three, four, or more times. Then list all the reasons you should not do the assignment or list all the things you would rather be doing. If you spend all of the time on this part of the assignment, it is all right.

a) Your assignment is to write your own definition of resistance, describe some of the things that you resist doing and how you feel when you are resisting. (Give yourself 10-15 minutes to do this part.) Bring your writing to a close.

b) Think about the experience of writing your resistance first. How did you feel when you were writing "I don't want to do this" or "I hate this assignment"? Did you feel gleeful in any way? Did you enjoy writing "I don't want to..."? Did you feel you should be getting on with the assignment? Take the next 10-15 minutes to write about how you felt while you were writing about your resistance.

c) Share your writing with a partner.

d) If you are willing, share your writing with the class.

e) Discuss what happened when you wrote about your resistance first as opposed to when you try to do something without acknowledging this feeling.

CHAPTER 3

PREPARING A SAFE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

'Let's see. Should the couch go there or over here? If the couch is over there, will it be too close to the art table? But if it's over here, where's the block corner going to be?' As I set up the environment that I will teach in, I talk to myself, move things around, draw pictures, and make lists. Preparing the center for the children's arrival is a big task. How I set it up or arrange my activity areas, equipment, and furniture will greatly influence the quality of my program.

THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Imagine yourself arriving at these two after-school day-care centers. One center is warm and welcoming. There's a hum of conversation and laughter. The children are involved in activities. Low shelves and cupboards delineate different areas yet allow for visibility so adults can adequately supervise the children. Noisy activities are separated from quiet areas. There's storage for all the equipment so that when children are finished using an art material or playing a game, they can put them away so they're readily available for the next child. Traffic patterns are established so children naturally walk around an area rather than rushing through the middle. The cooking area is close to a sink. Exits are easily seen and kept clear for swift access in case of an emergency.

The other center has a completely different atmosphere. All of the shelves are against the walls so the room is not divided up, and there are no

specific play areas. There are tables in the room, but they are in the corners, leaving most of the room wide open. Children take a running start and slide from one end of the room to another. There's no place for children to go who want to be by themselves. Children who want to read or do their homework have to contend with the children playing games. The blocks get mixed up with the art materials. The staff at this center spends most of their time dealing with arguments or fights; reminding children they're to walk, not run inside the building; complaining about how noisy the children are; and not enjoying the teaching experience at all.

Which center would you want to teach in? Which one would you want to attend as a child? As you can see, the way you set up the physical environment makes a huge difference in the quality of the program you have.

The first step in creating a safe, nurturing environment is to make the best possible use of the physical space you have. Even if you have to share your space because your program is located in a classroom, school cafeteria, or church hall, your program will be more successful if you try to incorporate the following in your space planning:

- The **arrangement of space** should allow you to observe all parts of the room. The easier it is for you to supervise an area, the more likely it will be that you'll be able to anticipate and so prevent problems. Both you and the children will be more comfortable.
- Try to **create separate areas** for quiet and noisy, neat and messy activities. Breaking up the space gives children a feeling of variety and of having choices about what they will do. The way you arrange furniture also affects how children will act—if there are long thoroughfares they will be more likely to run than if the space is broken up.
- **Colorful displays** of the children's work will help make them feel at home and encourage them to feel ownership in the center. No matter what kind of space you have you can all take pride in how you use and take care of it.
- The **atmosphere** you create and quality of interaction you have are more important to the success of your program than lavish facilities.

Nevertheless it is pleasant to imagine what the *ideal* center would be like.

An Ideal Center

I have taught in many different kinds of environments—none of which has

been completely ideal. But if I could set up a center exactly as I chose, it would include the following areas:

Entering areas

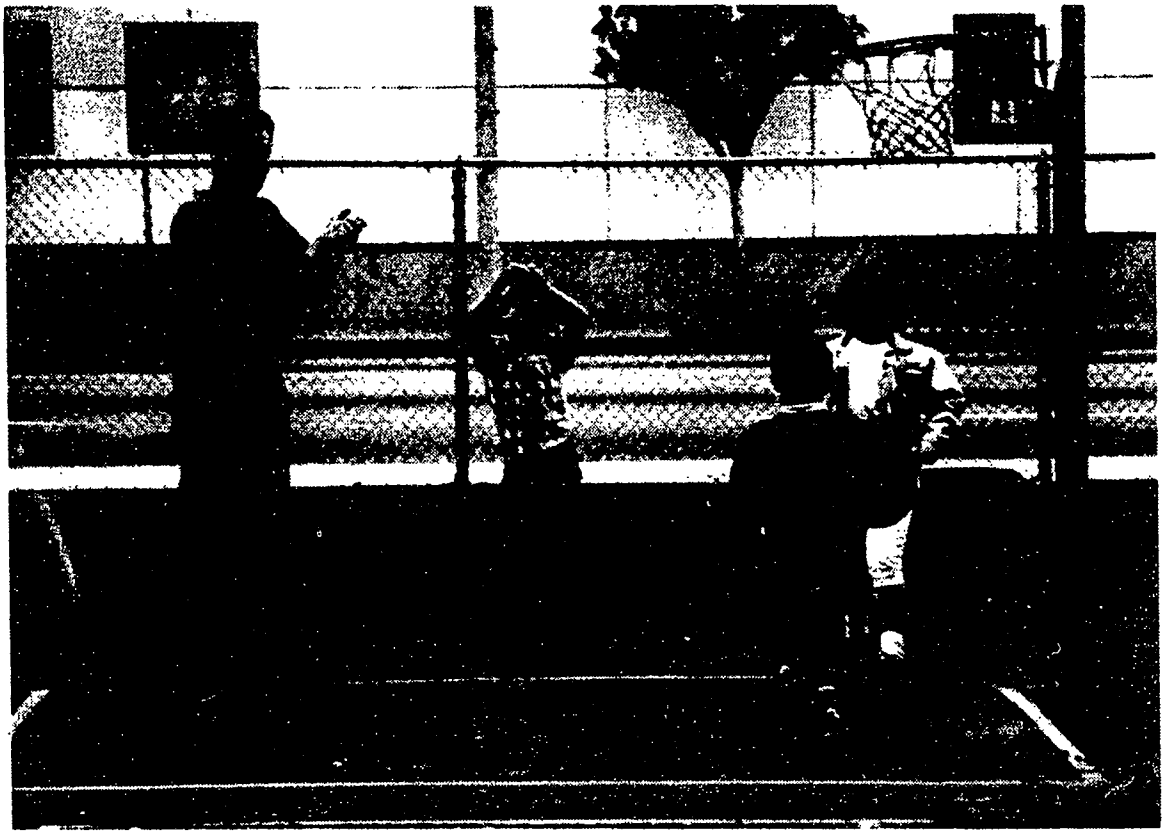
- A cubbie area where children can store their belongings—art work, backpacks, and homework. It's important to have an area where children can put their work, have a sense of privacy, and know their things will not be disturbed.

Active areas

- A game area that includes playing and storage space. Remember, children like to play games on the floor as well as on tables. Accessible shelves can help reinforce the idea that putting the game away is an important part of using it.
- An art area with ample storage for both individual and group activities.
- A block building area large enough so that construction is not limited only to tall structures. This too needs to be away from traffic patterns so that structures don't get accidentally knocked down by someone going by.
- A dramatic play area. This can include dress-up clothes, a housekeeping area, and puppets—both finger and hand puppets.
- A cooking area for preparation of snacktime food as well as individual or group cooking projects.
- A hands-on science, nature, and gardening area. In order for this area to be accessible to all children, the table or work area needs to be fairly low. If you have animals such as hamsters, guinea pigs, or rabbits, they need to be in a quiet area so they won't be frightened by noise.
- A music area with rhythm instruments and records with space for movement and dance.

Quiet areas

- A group area, that's big enough for all of the children to sit comfortably without crowding.
- A quiet area with carpet, soft chairs, and books. This area needs to be away from doors, traffic patterns, and activities that might intrude on children when they are reading, wanting to daydream, or snuggle with a stuffed animal or blanket.
- A homework area that is not distracting so children can focus on their work.



An area for large-muscle activity is important for children who need to let off steam after the long school day.

Outside areas

- A construction or carpentry area with appropriate size tools that are real tools, not toys.
- An outside area for large-muscle activities, preferably with some grassy areas, as well as sand and water.

Storage area

- A lockable storage area for supplies and equipment, as well as the staff's belongings.

Adult areas

- A staff area with a reference library; a bulletin board with emergency procedures, staff information, and schedules; and staff mailboxes for communication purposes. If you're very lucky you'll have an area for coffee, as well as room enough for a bed to rest on.
- A parent area with sign-in/out sheets, mailboxes, and a bulletin board.

ACCOMMODATING CHILDREN OF DIFFERENT AGES

Children of different ages have different needs from the environment. If kindergarten children come to your program, they are there each day for a long period of time. If you have space, plan for a half-hour rest period, or a one-hour nap time for those who sleep. This not only benefits the children but allows teachers a period when they don't have to be so intensely focused on the children, just aware of what's happening. If napping is impossible, at least have the children sit down and rest while someone reads quietly to them. Starting school and getting used to the activity in kindergarten is physically and emotionally stressful for children.

The needs of older children are quite different from kindergartners through second graders. It's helpful to provide a space exclusively for the older ones. I have found a separate room is the best solution, but if this is impossible, set up a corner of your room and make this area off-limits for younger children.

CREATING AN EMOTIONALLY SAFE ENVIRONMENT

Besides creating a physically safe environment, it's important to provide an emotionally safe one as well. Your curriculum planning will also contribute to helping the children feel safe.

MAKING IT SAFE FOR YOURSELF

If you are comfortable, your anxiety level will be lower, and you will be a better teacher. To prepare the environment for yourself, think about what you need so that you will feel safe. I like familiar books, bright colors, and a few stuffed toys around me. I like a feeling of openness and space, but I also like a quiet corner where I can find comfort if necessary. I need to be clear about my limits so that I know I'm protected by them.

I need to be realistic in my goals, setting ones that need effort on my part but are also achievable so that I can feel good about myself after I've accomplished a goal. I also need to be prepared for the unexpected. Crisis, real or imagined, has to be dealt with immediately and in such a way that children feel good about themselves.

MAKING IT SAFE FOR THE CHILDREN

Most of all, in order for children to feel emotionally safe, they need friends.

They need to know that someone values them, cares about them, respects them, and trusts them. Secondly, they need to know they will be protected by the limits of the center and that when someone oversteps a limit, there will be consequences. If these conditions are consistently met, then children are usually able to feel safe in almost any physical setting. If the children don't trust the people around them, don't feel respected, and don't feel protected by the limits and consequences, they will not feel secure emotionally no matter how safe the physical setting is.

Time alone is as important to growth as group activity.

In addition, children need opportunities for both socializing and being quiet and private. They need time and the freedom to make some choices about how they will spend that time. Responsibility is important too, because it is a reflection of the fact that they are valued. They need food and rest—which may be just a change in pace from the school day. Finally, they need you, as a caring, respectful adult who is there to enforce limits and consequences, listen with caring to their credits and complaints, and if advice is asked for, offer suggestions for handling problems.

I love being a teacher. When I have set up my environment carefully and worked hard on my planning, I expect the children to learn. However, if I have prepared well, then I can also look forward to us all having a good time. Anticipation is half the fun.

Questions and Exercises

Do these exercises only if you are willing. If you are not willing, please provide yourself with an alternate assignment or write about why you are not willing to do these exercises.

☆ Exercise 1

Think about a center in which you have been either a student, observer, or teacher:

a) Write three questions that teachers might ask themselves that would be irrelevant in setting up the physical environment.
b) Write three questions that teachers might ask themselves that would be helpful in setting up the physical environment.
c) After you have thought about a) and b), choose a partner. Discuss how your questions would or would not be helpful to a teacher.
d) If you are willing, share your discussion with the group.

☆ Exercise 2

Imagine that you are a first-year teacher at a center.

a) Write three statements about what would make you feel uncomfortable at the center and explain your reasons for being uncomfortable.
b) Write three statements about what would make you feel comfortable at the center and explain your reasons for being comfortable.
c) Share your lists with a partner. Discuss how they are similar and different.
d) Share your list and/or the results from your discussion with the whole group, if you are willing.

☆ Exercise 3

Think back to a childhood classroom or group that felt safe and comfortable. If you did not have this experience or cannot remember being in this kind of classroom or group, fantasize about what that kind of a classroom or group might have been like.

a) What are three things that you especially liked about that classroom or group?

b) What preparation do you think the teacher had to do in order to provide those experiences?
c) Share one of your favorite experiences or an activity that you enjoyed in this safe classroom or group with a partner.
d) Listen as your partner tells you about his or her favorite experiences or activities. Do you have any favorite things in common?

☆ EXERCISE 4

Draw a picture of yourself when you were in the classroom or group you thought about in #3. Draw yourself doing one of your favorite activities in that room. If you are willing, draw the picture with your eyes closed, using your unaccustomed hand (the one you do not usually use to write with).

a) Share your picture with a partner. Discuss what you liked and didn't like about the drawing experience.
b) Share your picture with the whole group, if you are willing.

CHAPTER 4

LIMITS AND CONSEQUENCES

WHY SET LIMITS?

"Larry, you mustn't do that. . . . L-a-r-r-y, please stop doing that. . . . Larry, I've asked you not to do that. . . . LARRY!!!!!" Most teachers experience such a one-sided dialogue at some point as they work with children. As I find myself arguing about limits rather than enforcing them, I sense that children feel I am angry at them, when in reality I am angry at their behavior and at myself for not being clear about my limits.

A center with no clear limits is like an intersection where the stoplights have failed. Some drivers bully their way through, while others hold back, waiting and hoping for a break in traffic. My first experience working with 9-,10-, and 11-year olds was like this. The children were verbally and/or physically mean to themselves, to me, and to each other. They bothered others and laughed at the discomfort they caused. They made snide remarks just loud enough to be overheard. No child had the strength to object when his or her privacy was invaded.

The children and I survived despite the difficulty of these circumstances, but as a result of this experience, I began to put together a set of limits and consequences that would build peace and safety out of disorder. I began to understand that, in order for children to acquire knowledge, the environment had to be safe and nurturing so that they could make mistakes, ask questions, and take risks without fear of being ridiculed while they learned and changed. I discovered that clear, reasonable limits with consistently enforced consequences allow this environment to develop.

Recognizing Your Own Attitude Toward Limits

There are two opposite needs that influence your ability to enforce limits: the need to be liked and the need to have control. It is important that you examine how you feel about limits, which need you tend toward more strongly, and then use this self-knowledge to work toward a balance between the two.

The Need to be Liked

Some teachers have real difficulty setting limits and following through on consequences because they want to be seen as a friend first, and then as an advisor or teacher. They have a great need to be liked by their students and will focus on doing what pleases the children. They do not want their students ever to get mad at them. As a result they look upon setting limits and enforcing consequences as a distasteful job.

Children in this kind of center have a lot of power. They know if they want something and make a big fuss, the teacher will give it to them. But children can become frightened when they know that they can manipulate the person who is supposed to be in charge. They feel they are not safe because there is no one to protect them from their own or someone else's actions.

The Need to Have Control

The situation is equally destructive when teachers are afraid that their students will misbehave, and they will lose control. These teachers usually set many limits to show the children who is boss. They believe in "coming down hard" on the children in the beginning of the year. This way the children will start by being intimidated and so, supposedly, the teacher will have fewer problems as the year progresses.

When children become fearful of breaking the rules, stepping over the line, or making a mistake, one of two things usually happens: 1) they become afraid to take risks and try new things and this decreases or slows down their learning; or 2) they become discipline problems by always testing limits.

A Nurturing Environment

The teacher is the one who has the responsibility for maintaining the safety of the group. According to Juanita Sagan, a safe environment is one where children

know they can trust the teacher to respect them and to protect them from themselves and others. With the establishment of appropriate limits and specific, immediate consequences, the safe environment becomes a nurturing environment. Children and teachers feel secure enough to take risks, make mistakes, change, and grow. Learning is actively fostered.

APPROPRIATE LIMITS AND IMMEDIATE, SPECIFIC CONSEQUENCES

Appropriate limits protect everyone—adults and children—from disrespect, invasion of privacy, and harassment. Children need to understand that if the limits are exceeded there will be immediate, specific consequences. When children know that limits and consequences will be enforced, trust is built.

Teachers in day-care centers do not have the same kind of discipline problems or continual testing of their authority that elementary school teachers face, because the children in centers have more independence. They are free to move inside or outside as well as to choose an activity once they are there. However, children do get angry. They disobey. They say mean things. They act in a disrespectful way. When this happens, children need to know someone cares enough about them to stop their behavior. They need to know someone will protect them. Although setting limits sounds like just making rules and enforcing them, the process provides a rich opportunity for you to interact with and teach children.

For example, Meredith sticks out her foot and deliberately trips Lynne as she walks by. I see Meredith do this. If I do nothing, then Meredith gets the message that it is all right to trip people. She may not only continue to trip others but may accelerate this kind of behavior, bothering more and more people with more and more aggressive behavior. She sets out to find out exactly when I will stop her. What does she have to do before I set a limit? In trying to find an answer to this question, one consequence may be that Meredith will become labeled a problem child.

The alternate scenario—in a center where I have established clear limits—might go like this: Meredith sticks out her foot and deliberately trips Lynne as she walks by. I see Meredith do this, so I start a dialogue by saying:

"Meredith, why did you trip Lynne?"

"I didn't trip her," says Meredith innocently.

"Why did you put your foot out so Lynne would have a hard time getting by?"

"I didn't know Lynne was going to be walking by."

"Meredith, it is important to me that people in this room do not get hurt. I don't want you to be hurt and I don't want you to hurt others. Do you think you can keep your feet out of the way or do you think you need to move?"

By giving Meredith the choice of stopping her behavior or moving, she learns that I am willing to set limits to protect everyone as well as make sure the

limits are enforced. Often it is enough simply to ask her what she is going to do and then expect her to do it. No further consequences are needed unless she continues to misbehave. Then she would have no choice but to move.

Of course, as teacher, I also have the option of simply telling Meredith to stop rather than using the above dialogue. However, there are many advantages to using a dialogue: 1) I have given Meredith the message there is a limit, a prohibition against repeating that action. 2) By giving her a choice to move or to stop, I have given her the power to choose what to do next. If she chooses to stay but also chooses to continue tripping people, then I need to take her right to choose away from her and either move her or impose another consequence. If she chooses to stay and stops tripping people, I would do well to acknowledge her improved behavior. 3) By engaging her in a dialogue instead of simply giving her an order, Meredith learns that I respect her ability to make decisions. 4) She also learns that I have seen what she has done and am going to stop her, but that I will also listen to what she has to say. 5) I may also learn something about why she is stepping over the limits. 6) Most important, I am building trust. I am teaching Meredith that I will listen, most of the time.

Fostering Respect

Respect for the teacher or the person who enforces the consequences is the best motivator for children to control their behavior. Knowing the rules will be enforced by an admired adult, children have a choice: to break the limits and accept the consequences, or to work within the rules. Either way, the kind of interaction they will have is their choice. This framework will also help children internalize the limits and consequences so that they are not dependent on other people to stop their inappropriate behavior.

You can expect that all children will start out with a certain amount of respect for the position of teacher (depending on the values of their family), but after that it is up to you. You will earn your students' respect by being authentically or genuinely warm and caring; by consistently—but not rigidly—following through on limits and consequences; by admitting your mistakes and by maintaining the attitude that mistakes are a normal occurrence and provide good opportunities for learning; by being honest about your feelings and not manipulative, coercive, undermining, or attacking; and by expressing your genuine enjoyment and excitement with the learning process.

Finally the best way for teachers to *earn* respect is to demonstrate that they respect and care about the needs of their students, as well as themselves. Perhaps more than most people realize, children crave respect. They have a strong need to have their feelings, independence, and individuality recognized. This mutual respect between the teacher and each child is necessary for a nurturing environment.

When a teacher says, "I really want to hear what you have to say," and listens carefully to all children, respect is expressed.

HOW TO SET LIMITS

If children are to accept limits, they need to know that you like and respect them even though you are setting limits on their behavior. Children sometimes say to me, "But Anne, how can you like me if you don't like what I do?" I explain that each one of them is made up of many different parts: feelings, thoughts, actions, and responses. Some of these parts are more likable or suitable to me, and some are less likable, but all are important and all the parts make up the whole. I use the metaphor of a many-course dinner that is very delicious. The soup, the salad, and the main

dish are scrumptious, but the dessert is not chocolate, so I don't like that part. My not liking the dessert does not mean that I didn't like the whole dinner. I just didn't like that one part of it, because I love chocolate. That same dessert may be someone else's favorite part.

I explain that it is the same with people. You may have a friend who has one or two mannerisms that bother you or who does some things you don't care for. This doesn't mean you are going to stop playing with your friend. It means you recognize there are some things about your friend that you really like and other things that you don't like very much.

Behavior is similar. One infraction of the rules does not mean that a person is always disruptive or completely unlikable. It is particularly important that children who overstep boundaries are helped to see this distinction because often they think of themselves as bad and believe that nobody likes them.

It took me five years as a teacher of older children to refine the way I set limits with a clear system of consequences and rewards. Now my system works well as long as I am willing to use it.

If the limits are exceeded, I give my consequence: the child's name is first written on a piece of paper as a warning. The child then has a choice. If the child chooses to stop the behavior, that is the end of the matter. If the child chooses to continue to exceed the limit at any time during the rest of the day, that consequence is to write me a note explaining what happened and what he or she can do in the future so it won't happen again.

There are many unclear areas in enforcing limits. For example, at group time, I allow children to do a certain amount of heckling, excessive talking, and moving around before telling them it is time to be quiet. I make this allowance for several reasons. There are some children, who, for one reason or another, heckle more than others. I could spend my entire time trying to set limits for these children and the situation could easily degenerate into a war of wills. Instead I prefer to wait and enforce the limits when their actions are more inappropriate than just making noise or being slightly bothersome. This way I am not always disciplining them, and they learn that they can get away with gray-area annoyances. There is a definite level of behavior I will not tolerate, however, such as fighting, teasing, invasion of privacy, or making fun of others in a way that is hurtful. When these actions occur I immediately remind children of the limits and enforce the consequences.

As the year progresses, I know that I grow more lax about enforcing the limits. I realize this when the inside noise in the center has gone beyond my tolerance level. Then I tell the children that I am feeling uncomfortable with the sound. I tell them I will be enforcing the limits more stringently than in the past. This alerts them so that they can take care of themselves as they choose, by following the limits or paying the consequences.

For example, when Arturo played handball and was out, he wouldn't leave the court. I spoke to him several times. Finally I said, "This is your warning. You

have a choice to leave and nothing will happen or continue and face the consequences. It's up to you." He left, but the next time he was up, he didn't leave after he was out. "Arturo," I said, "we need to talk."

"Anne," he said. "You're always picking on me. You never stop Aaron and Alison when they do it."

"I'm sorry you feel that way, Arturo. I don't think I'm picking on you. I like you very much."

"No you don't, otherwise you wouldn't ask me to stop all the time."

"I ask you to stop because I care about you. I see you needing help in following the rules. When I ask you to stop, you don't. I do like you and I want other people to like you too. When you're out and don't leave the handball court, Alison and Aaron get mad at you. I'm concerned about that. What do you think is going on?"

In this dialogue, I have told Arturo that I like him and care enough about him to enforce limits. I have pointed out that one consequence of not following the limits might be the diminishing of a friendship. If I felt his comment that I play favorites with Aaron and Alison needed some follow up, I would pursue it later in order to keep the two issues separate.

Choice of words can be crucial in motivating children to adhere to limits. It is common to hear a teacher say, "Do you want to do this?" and the child reply, "No." The teacher is then stuck because what really was meant was, "Do this now." If you want a specific behavior from a child, you need to state it clearly because then the child has no option.

Most authors of books on discipline or classroom management say that *every* limit has to be enforced with *every* child *every* time. This sounds good on paper and is definitely something to work toward, but it is harder to put into practice than to talk about. You may be involved in a discussion with some children or an explanation at the art table when a child disrupts another activity. You have three choices: 1) you can ignore or tolerate the behavior; 2) you can give the child a look that says 'You'd better stop that or else!' and say the child's name in a sharp tone of voice; or 3) you can walk over and stand next to the child, and/or put your hand on his or her back. Proximity is often enough to control misbehavior.

It is very important to treat all children the same way. If you give the children who continually misbehave or act up a look, then you need to give the well-behaved children a look when they misbehave. Don't look at one child but ignore the others. Consistency is the important thing here for maintaining classroom control and building respect.

Behavior Problems

Some children look on any limit as an invasion of their right to disrupt. They want to make it as difficult for teachers as they can. They view limits as restraints to be broken, not as something they need or want. If caught, they usually pout and refuse to accept the consequences. When you encounter such children, your first instinct may be to clobber them with a two-by-four. But these children especially need a safe environment with a few, clear limits and immediate consequences that they can respect. You will get well acquainted with these students, because they need a lot of caring, limit setting, support, and appreciation. They can be very demanding, but they also can be extremely rewarding to work with.

Children can frequently think of very creative ways to challenge classroom limits. For example, paper is in the art cupboard, and children are allowed to help themselves. However, what happens when two children start making and throwing paper airplanes? This may make you feel uncomfortable or it may be all right until the airplanes start hitting others and bothering them. You can stop it, because you are in charge of the group.

"But, you said that we could do what we wanted!" complains one of the children. Then you must explain: "You are bothering me and others by misusing the airplanes. One of the limits is that I have to feel comfortable. I am not comfortable with airplanes hitting people. Do you want to find another activity, or do you want to take your airplanes outside?" If they don't go outside but rather continue to fly the airplanes in the room, it is time to take the airplanes away from them. Then they can write about *why* flying airplanes inside the center is so important that they are not willing to go outside. When they have finished writing, they will have to find another activity. Using paper will be off limits for awhile.

Some children are so difficult to handle that you need to enlist their parents' help in finding a reward system that will work. Brandon was not responding to my attempts to control his behavior, so I talked to his parents. We set up a plan whereby he wrote a daily note, which I checked, telling his parents about his behavior in the center. The notes went home, Brandon's parents signed and returned them, but his behavior did not change. Brandon continued to verbally demean other children and disrupt their play by running through their games or destroying their game boards. I called his parents to see what was happening and asked what the consequences were when he brought home a note saying he had misbehaved. His mother said they removed his Lego set so he could no longer build with it. I thought for a minute and then suggested removing TV privileges. I knew that while Brandon liked his Lego set, he was extremely interested in watching TV. Sure enough, the next day he came to the center and said he was going to behave. He didn't want to miss TV.

Yes, of course, I get exasperated when children misbehave. I want Brandon to behave without having to contact his parents. I want Arturo to leave the handball court immediately once he is out. I know their behavior has improved tremendously

in my group but on difficult days I can put myself down for not being a good teacher because I cannot make all children behave perfectly all of the time. I have to remember to give myself a margin of error when setting and enforcing limits.

A child who is difficult to handle can make it harder for you to take credit for your skill as a teacher. Consequently it is crucial to have a structure or support system for yourself so that you do not lose sight of the good things you do with the children by focusing on day-to-day problems that are always there. Frustration is inevitable for a teacher. Children's behavior never will change to the extent you would like it to. That is another reason why it is extremely important to have consistent center limits and consequences. It helps for you to take credit for how the children have progressed, rather than blame yourself for how much farther they still have to go.

FINDING APPROPRIATE LIMITS

I make a distinction between limits and rules. I see a rule as a regulation that applies to the whole center or involves safety: walk when inside the center, don't throw food, no fighting, etc. Limits are the boundaries that I set up within my room. If anyone goes beyond them, I am uncomfortable. I believe limits and rules should be stated in a positive way whenever possible. My limits, which may be different from another teacher's, include my need to respect each individual's self-esteem by identifying and stopping put-downs; to have the children quiet at certain times of the day; and to respect the privacy of each person's physical and psychological space.

When I first began teaching primary-age children I solicited limits from my students. I wrote them on a big piece of butcher paper and posted them, so they would be readily available for reference. Of course every child wanted his or her pet peeve on the list, and I accepted them all.

When I began teaching older children, they were more sophisticated, adding new dimensions. My list of limits was *huge!* At one point it had up to 27 items, all expressed positively, including such things as:

- Take responsibility for your own actions or accept the consequences.
- Respect other people's property and quiet time.
- Leave weapons, toy or imaginary, at home.

My supervisor suggested that I cut down on the number of items but at that time I felt I was being a good teacher by allowing so much input from the children. I did not recognize I was allowing the children to walk all over me and do whatever they wanted. By giving my students so much authority over what was allowed in the center, I was abdicating my responsibility as a teacher. The children began to feel

if they wanted a new limit, they would get it. The new limit might or might not be appropriate. The children were in control of the room. I was also setting myself up to spend most of my time refereeing disputes. Since most of the suggestions came from the more vocal children, I was not protecting all the students. My room was not as safe as it could have been.

In the summer of 1982 I had an experience that changed my thinking. I taught in a Creative Behavior Math Summer School working with children who had been identified as math failures either by their teachers, their parents, or themselves. The program director insisted on no more than five limits. I was flabbergasted! Furthermore, we made the limits and posted them so the children would see them when they arrived.

"We need a structure to take care of *us*," he explained. "We need to be clear about the limits and what is important to us, *then* we can deal with the children."

If there are too many limits, children begin to get picky about defining them. Arguments ensue over whether or not an action is on the list. The end result is that the teacher ignores enforcing some of the limits, and the children begin to step over more and more boundaries—just as in my room.

I learned that, with a minimum number of limits, the structure was clear, simple, and straightforward for both me and the children. Later I adapted and reworded the summer school limits to this form for my own use:

- Treat yourself, others, and the environment with respect; this includes no put-downs.
- Allow others to work without interrupting or heckling.
- Take care of yourself first.

In my parent letter and in center discussions, I explain that Limit #3 means taking care of yourself by following the center rules and limits; by being ready to do an activity the best you can and asking for help if you need it; by using appropriate alternatives if you are angry, such as writing a note to a teacher, writing in your journal, or getting the blanket kept available for comfort, rather than disrupting the group; and by asking for or giving yourself a pat on the back if you have done a good job.

Children have pointed out to me that Limit #2 and Limit #3 could be part of Limit #1. This is true. I guess I am not yet ready for just one limit. This is one way I follow Limit #3.

I continue to believe, however, that children should have an opportunity to help develop the limits, so that they will have more of an investment in following them. Therefore at the beginning of the public school year I ask them to write down three limits and consequences that have helped them in the past. In this way each child begins with what is familiar from previous experiences. This also gives them a sense that they are participating in this room. When we discuss what the children

have written, I ask if their limits fit under one of mine or if we need a separate category. So far everyone has agreed that their limits fit under my original categories so no new ones have been needed.

CONSEQUENCES

My consequences for overstepping limits have stayed fairly uniform throughout my last nine years of teaching. However, my willingness to enforce them has changed, from being not at all consistent to being quite consistent. The limits and consequences I have set work for me and the children I teach; I present them here as a guideline. You will need to develop your own based on what is appropriate for you and the children you work with. The important thing to remember is that consequences should be immediate, specific, and based on mutual respect. It helps if the punishment fits the crime, so to speak, but that is not always easy to do.

For example, if children disrupt a handball game by running through the court, it is belittling to make them sit down for an hour and stare at the wall. It is courteous to talk to them privately about their actions and ask them what alternative behavior they might use next time. If this were the first time they disrupted a game, the talk alone might be an adequate consequence. If this is chronic behavior, then something more is needed, such as sitting down in a quiet place for five to ten minutes, not being able to play outside, and/or writing about why it is fun to disrupt a game and what might be more appropriate behavior.

These are my consequences:

- *Warning:* A child is cautioned and his or her name goes on my list. If the inappropriate behavior stops, there are no further negative consequences.
- *Continued inappropriate behavior after a warning:* We talk privately about what happened and discuss alternative behaviors for next time. Then the child writes this information in a note to me before going home.

I have found that writing a note is a deterrent for most children. They would rather say the problem is solved than to write about it. Also, I keep the notes and give them periodically to parents. This means the parents are kept informed about their children's behavior, and the children and the parents can take credit for how many or how few notes have been written.

Teachers usually prefer one consequence over another. Some teachers like to use a system called time-out, which means that the child is removed from all activity and expected to sit in a specific spot for a set period of time. If you assign

children to time-out, be sure that there is a way for them to know when their time is up. You don't want to leave them sitting there all afternoon. Other teachers prefer removal of a privilege which is important to that child. This method works best when the lost privilege is logically connected to the misbehavior.

It may be important to try a variety of consequences, in different combinations, so you can find out what you feel most comfortable with and what works for you. It is also important to have several options open to you because each child can respond differently.

Sometimes children complain about a consequence. I tell them I am most willing to discuss the issue with the group and, if the majority decides that a particular consequence is too harsh or unfair, I am willing to consider alternatives Occasionally I adopt their ideas; however, I do not change the consequences if the majority of the children feel safe and feel the structure is fair. I have noticed that children often want to set consequences that I consider too harsh or inappropriate. In these cases I tell them my reasons for disagreement and stick with a procedure that feels comfortable to me.

Examples of Children's Responses to Limits

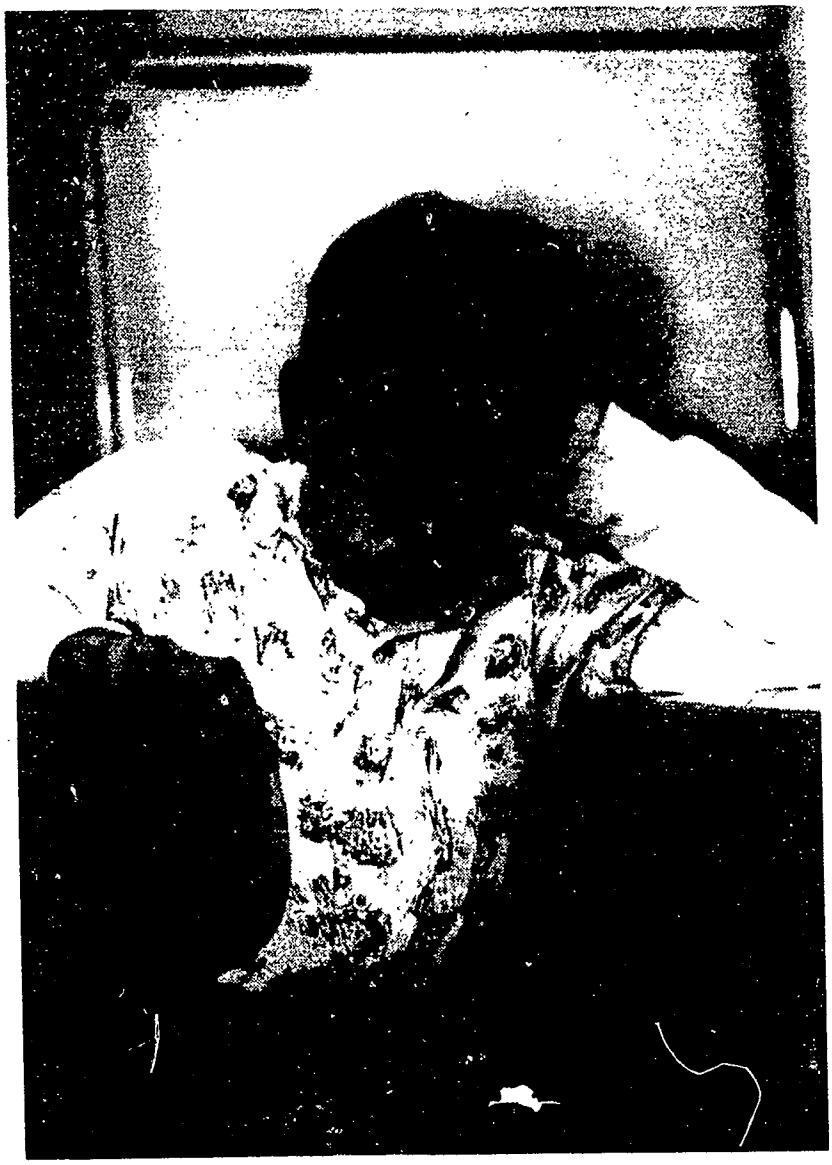
The following are examples of notes some of my students have written as a result of overstepping a limit.

> *I laughed when Heather was playing a game of chess and made a mistake. I hurt her feelings. So it won't happen again, I won't laugh when she makes a mistake.*
>
> *I kept talking when it was Anne's turn. To not let it happen again, I can stop talking when I get a warning or not talk in the first place.*
>
> *Dear Mom, This is the third time my name has been on Anne's list this week. Today I bothered Roberto as he was painting. I am very, very, very, very sorry and I won't ever do it again.*

Resistance

Many teachers look at all resistance, in children and in themselves, as something that they have to stamp out or get rid of. When a child says, "No! I don't want to!" their first, internal response is, 'I am going to make this child do what I've said.' They overlook the fact that sometimes resistance is a healthy response. Not all resistance is unhealthy.

It is important to give space for people to voice their resistance. Then you can decide if their resistance is because the person isn't ready or is just testing the limits.



HEALTHY RESISTANCE

Healthy resistance occurs when children are not yet ready to move on to the next step. Their internal pace is going more slowly than the rate at which the information is being presented. They may not yet have internalized the new concepts, skills, or experience. This resistance is appropriate because children need time to make the information their own—part of their foundation for future learning. Children who are exhibiting healthy resistance need help to identify their internal state and choose a more appropriate task.

Children in an after-school program have been sitting in school all day. It is appropriate for them to have a lot of energy. They are full of resistance to following directions and being made to do certain tasks. Sometimes it's difficult to handle all the energy generated by 8-, 9-, 10-, and 11-year olds. Often their resistance toward school overflows into your program, which is something you then have to deal with. They need outlets for their stubbornness such as large-muscle and art activities, a friend to talk to, or knowing that you will listen to their complaints. When they get to the center, it is important to give them something different from what they have experienced at school. They don't need more regimentation.

Children will sometimes say that they do not want to follow my limits. If we are at the art table, I might say, "That's fine, you can go somewhere else. You don't have to stay here. However if you do stay, you may not splatter paint on others. The choice is up to you."

In other circumstances, such as at group time, children resist instructions. I smile and say I can appreciate their not wanting to join the group, but this time they do not have a choice. Often having the chance to say they don't want to be there is enough to get them settled. If they continue to resist I offer the suggestion of saying "I don't want to do this" softly to themselves. Sometimes I will have several children whispering "I don't want to do this." I laugh and, depending on my mood, every so often we all join in. Then I quiet them down and go on with group time.

It is remarkable how much is accomplished by a little complaining or resistance at the beginning of an activity. Acknowledging such resistance enables students to follow through with the task at hand.

When children continue to resist a direction, I usually have them write about what they would rather be doing and why. Another strategy is to have them write about what they would need in order to stay within the limits. This way I find out how they are feeling. Sometimes what they want is more appropriate for them than what I am offering.

You may feel you are opening up Pandora's box by allowing resistant children too much control when you say to them, "If you're not willing to follow my instructions, write what would be appropriate for you to do." It is true that some children may think this assignment is the time to play "Get the Teacher," but if that happens, they do not have any more choices. Give them a direction and expect them to follow it. Both you and the child will have learned from the experience. You have learned the limits to which the child will push you, and the child has learned that you will not be pushed beyond certain limits.

Children may also resist limits as a way to test teachers and see if they care enough to follow through with consequences. If limits are enforced in a respectful, caring way, then the center is a safe place to be and they can learn to trust the teacher.

UNHEALTHY RESISTANCE

With unhealthy resistance, the child may mean, "Try and make me do the assignment. I can be more stubborn than you." When you feel there may be a confrontation, it is important to try to avoid a head-on battle of wills, so try phrasing what you say in a way that gives the child a face-saving way out of the dilemma.

I had a student, Jody, who hated to clean up after snack time. He simply could not stand it if it was his turn to get the sponge and wipe off the table. His resistance would be verbal, loud, and strong. If he started to argue, I would quietly walk over to him and stand beside him. I had learned that if I put my hand on his back, he would angrily shrug it off. I would ask him which parts of the clean-up job he was going to do. This meant he did not have to do the whole job, but he knew that he was responsible for some of it. I knew that getting into a confrontation with Jody would take too much time and energy away from other activities. It was not worth my effort.

Once in a while, I would give Jody the choice of cleaning up or writing about why he did not want to clean up and what would have been a better assignment for him at that time. This meant Jody could focus on something that might help him and give me more information about him.

Such a compromise is a judgment call you have to make as a teacher: when to hold a child to a task or a limit and when to bend the rules. Occasionally children will ask why Jody doesn't have to clean up the snack table like everyone else. I smile and say that everyone is different. I explain that I have a special arrangement with Jody about snack clean-up. Usually that explanation is enough and the children go off about their business. An exception is when a limit involves a child's safety or well-being, including emotional well-being. In those circumstances I do not alter or change it.

WHEN IT'S APPROPRIATE TO *NOT* GIVE A CHOICE

I am not suggesting that you always compromise with unhealthy resistance. When children are defiant or rude, they need to be removed from the group until they can return and behave appropriately. You can send them to a special area that has been designated as a time-out spot, or to the hall, or an office.

Sometimes you may need help in removing a child. If the child refuses to move, you should not hesitate to ask for assistance from another teacher or your supervisor. When you decide to remove a child, it is important to keep your instructions minimal. Be explicit about what you are doing and why: "Kevin, because of your behavior, you are to go to time-out now." If Kevin succeeds in engaging you in a dialogue about why he has to leave or where he has to go, he takes away some of your power as a teacher. Keep the interaction clean and sharp. Later

you can talk privately with Kevin about what happened.

While I want the children to know that I will give them choices about many things, there are some things about which they have no choice. If there is a fire drill or an emergency, I don't want to discuss what we should do. I want the children to react immediately. I want them to walk quietly out the door without talking. I do not want them standing around trying to decide if they want to walk in front of or behind Stacy. I also do not want them to run screaming from the room. With practice they can learn to respond quickly and effectively to such situations, because they know the behavior I am requiring of them is for their safety.

Growing With Limits

When children feel safe, respected, and cared for, they know your limits will protect them no matter what their mood. When children are happy they usually don't need anything special from you, other than your acknowledgment of their happiness and your pleasure at how they are feeling. If they are feeling angry or are being disruptive, it is important to have a special area where they can go to take appropriate care of themselves. These alternatives must be supportive rather than punitive so that the children do not feel denigrated. For example, you might have pillows, blankets, and stuffed animals in one area. Giving a child who is unable to stop talking a stuffed animal or a pillow to hold acknowledges a need for attention without denigration. If a child is unhappy and wants some privacy, you can invite him or her to curl up in a soft chair, holding a pillow or stuffed animal for comfort. If a child is angry or upset, I offer large crayons and newsprint with the instruction to scribble hard and long. I let the child know it is all right to tear the paper. In my room the children know that these alternatives are available; sometimes they ask for them, and sometimes I suggest they use them.

For example, one afternoon Jenny stalked into the room. Her face was contorted from trying to control her tears. She went straight to the paper drawer. For five minutes all I heard from her were muffled sniffs and the sounds of scribbling and paper tearing. Then she blew her nose, stuffed the papers into the wastepaper basket, and said she was ready to talk. Since I was involved with a small group of children, I asked her to go to a table and either write or draw about what had happened. I said I would be with her in a few minutes. When I went over to her, Jenny explained that one of the older boys from school had been teasing her on the way to the center. We talked about what she would like to do to that boy—such as sock him in the face and then hit him in the stomach—acknowledging that she would not really do such things because that would get her into trouble. Then we talked about what she could do: write a note, speak to him by herself or with a friend, talk to his classroom teacher by herself or with a friend, etc. By dealing with her anger directly, Jenny was able to come to a decision about her next step. She was

then able to put her anger aside and focus her attention on her own activity.

Once in awhile I lose my temper and without warning send a child out of the group. Later, I explain that I have certain things that make me very upset and at those times I am not willing to give a warning. I want them to realize that excluding a child is not necessarily a punishment but comes from my need to preserve the group.

It was Yasuhiro's birthday. We were in the middle of singing "Happy Birthday," when Todd began to make strange noises, taking the focus away from Yasuhiro. I did not give Todd any warning. I simply told him to leave the group. I told Todd he could return when he was ready to let Yasuhiro have center stage. After Todd left, we continued with Yasuhiro's celebration.

When I exclude children, I remind them I will welcome them back as soon as they are able to join in quietly. It is their decision when they are ready to return. However, if they disrupt again, I send them away from the group or out of the room, and this time I am the one who decides when they can return. They have lost that privilege since they misjudged their willingness to follow the limits.

Later I talked with Todd, explaining the reason that I got angry at his disruption. Using a soft, respectful voice I asked, "How do you feel if it's your turn to get attention and someone else makes a lot of noise so everyone looks at him instead of you?" Todd does not want others to disrupt his turn. This helps him to be more considerate of others.

FINDING ALTERNATIVES TO BEHAVIORS, RESPONSES AND/OR ACTIONS

These are some excerpts from children's writing describing an unacceptable behavior with suggestions for a different behavior next time. They are followed by the kind of questions and comments I might make to myself about how to handle the problem.

> ***Brandon:*** *I don't like it when people pick on me. They're always picking on me. I don't do anything. I just stand there and look at them. I will try and stay out of trouble.*

When Brandon gets into trouble his immediate response is to deny any responsibility, yet he encourages people to tease him. He may feel that getting negative attention is better than getting no attention at all. My task is to help him see that his behavior contributes to his being picked on. Just saying, "Brandon, you're asking for it" is not enough, because he won't believe me. I have to show him the kind of behavior people are responding to when they tease him. Sometimes this can be done by talking or by a roleplay at a later date. It will definitely take time but it will be easier because Brandon wants to have friends.

Erica: *I'm always following Carmen around. I know she doesn't like it, but I like to tease her. She tells me to stop, but I don't listen. It's just a game we play. I guess if I told somebody to stop, I'd want them to stop. I'm willing to stop when Carmen says stop.*

Erica may very well be one of the people who bothers Brandon as well as Carmen. It will be easier for Erica to stop teasing if she gets positive reinforcement for her behavior when she is *not* bothering someone. Erica too may be looking for attention and wanting friends. Saying she is willing to stop is a hopeful sign. With help she will be able to make a change in her behavior.

Annie: *Yasuhiro came up to me at recess. I knew he was going to hit me. So I hit him first. My mother has told me to stand up for myself and not let other people push me around. After you had us talk, Yasuhiro said he wasn't planning to hit me at all. Next time I'll wait. I'll not hit him first, because I was the one to get in trouble this time.*

Many parents are like Annie's mother. At some point in their lives they have felt intimidated and thus humiliated. They do not want their children to be subjected to these same dreadful feelings. Both Annie and her mother need reassurance that I like and respect them and that I will not allow Annie to be intimidated. Some people have a chip on their shoulder. They feel a slight where none is intended. It is important to find out if someone was really trying to bully her or if Annie just assumed this was going to happen. Annie may need some extra help in learning how to talk through a situation. If she can use her communication skills before she takes retaliatory action, she may decide she does not have to hit out at the world. It is also important that Annie and her mother are clear that if she does hit someone, she will be held responsible for her actions. There are alternatives to hitting, if she chooses to use them.

Accepting Responsibility for Actions

Often in the beginning of the year the notes that children write about their behavior read something like this: "I didn't do anything. Anne is making me write this note for no reason. She's mean." When I see this kind of a note I know the child does not want to take responsibility for his or her actions. We sit and talk. I say, "Erica, I never put anyone's name on my list without a reason and without asking at the time if they know the reason. This afternoon when I asked you if you knew why your name was on my list you said yes. Can you remember what you were doing when I put your name on my list?"

When we identify the behavior, children will usually acknowledge their

responsibility. I ask what they might do another time so that their name will not get on my list again. Often they are able to give me an alternative. If they cannot, I suggest options until I find one they are willing to use.

Erica's second note might read like this: "I'm writing this note because I kept making noises while Anne was talking. Another time I could wait until she's finished or tell her I need to leave the group because I can't stop myself from talking."

HELPING CHILDREN LOOK AT LIMITS AS A POSITIVE EXPERIENCE

Following are lessons in art and journal writing that help children understand and accept the need for limits. They are most successful when used a week or two after the program starts and the children have become familiar with the system. Children are usually much more willing to draw than to write. While I have worked with some children who love to write, most are resistant. It takes real commitment on your part to give a writing assignment. You may or may not be willing to make that commitment.

Art lessons: I use art lessons to help students comprehend the importance of the class limits, so that they begin to look on them not as a punishment but as a protection. For example, I ask the children: "Think about what might happen in a center with no limits. Where might the children be and what might they be doing? Where are the teachers? What might they be doing?" After a few minutes of thinking time, I ask the children to draw two pictures, one of a center where there are no limits and the other of a center with our limits.

After they draw, the children share their pictures with each other, describing what is happening. We discuss what it would be like to be in a room without limits. I ask how they would feel being in such a room. Children will find aspects to like and not like, but most of them will become aware that they really do want some limits to protect them and help them feel safe.

Journal writing: I ask the children to write about what they like and don't like about our limits, giving reasons to support their statements. Some sample responses follow:

> *I like having limits because if someone bothers me then Anne will make them stop if I can't.*
>
> *I like having limits because I've learned how to say "stop" to someone who is bothering me so I can take better care of myself.*
>
> *I don't like the limit of not teasing because I like to tease people.*

In another journal writing assignment, which I give two or three times throughout the year, I ask children to imagine they could change any limit they wanted. Which one would they change? They are to write about why they would change that limit, how they would change it, and what would be the result. This activity gives children a chance to think about alternatives that may or may not work. As they try to predict consequences, they begin to learn that for every action there is a reaction and that these reactions are behaviors that need to be taken into consideration.

Rewards

When I first began using a system of rewards, I thought, 'Am I really rewarding the children, or am I just bribing them?' Then I decided, I was not bribing. Adults have their daily jobs to do, and they get compensated. There is no reason children can't be in the same position. It is a child's job to go to school, learn, and try to do as well as he or she can. After school, their job continues. Children have to persist in taking care of themselves. If they are able to do this appropriately, then they have earned a reward.

I try to set up my reward system so that every child has a good chance of success. I don't expect children to be perfect. I expect them to behave inappropriately once in awhile. If it seems to me a child is having a difficult time earning a weekly reward, I discuss the matter privately with the child and make some adjustment in what I expect from him or her. I want all children to experience authentic success.

If children know they have not earned the reward but get it anyway, the prize loses merit in their eyes and is no longer valued. If the prize seems unattainable, they will not strive for it. Erica, for example, may have an extremely hard time controlling her behavior. It may be necessary to talk with her and together decide what is possible and what is practical for her to do in order to earn a reward. Children know they are individuals. As long as you treat each one with respect and caring, they understand when there are different standards for behavior. Their standards can change over the year as their behavior changes.

I set aside some time every Friday afternoon to celebrate appropriate behavior. I arrived at these rewards by trial and error. At first I gave everyone in the group a treat or prize, and those who had not heckled or put anyone down could also participate in a special activity. However, this system had a gigantic flaw in it: the children who were supposed to be doing regular projects just stood around watching those having the special time. I realized that everyone was participating in special time whether they had earned it or not. I needed to find an alternative.

I also struggled over an appropriate treat or reward. For awhile I gave jelly beans as a treat, and the noise level increased considerably after their consumption.

As I became more aware of the effects of sugar on children and had more and more parents bringing healthful snacks to celebrate birthdays, I realized that I needed an alternative to sweets.

I like my solution: Children who earn a reward receive a credit slip. Sometimes the slips are used as a way of earning points toward a particular field trip or a certificate at McDonald's, or they can be exchanged for prizes. Children can turn in their slips for a variety of prizes from my prize box, such as stickers, pencils, plasticine, or erasers. Some save their slips so they can get many items at once. Some hoard the slips and never use them at all. For these children it is enough to receive the recognition of earning the credit slip. This internalization of their good work is a teacher's ultimate goal, making external incentives unnecessary.

I suggest you post your reward system on a bulletin board next to your limits and consequences, using language such as follows:

> *To earn a Friday prize, you have to follow the group's limits. This means you have not had privileges withdrawn or written any notes because of inappropriate behavior.*

One day a colleague complained, "But Anne, setting limits and following through with consequences is never ending. I set limits with Libby and then Erica needs different ones. If it's not them, then I have to talk to Bill because he's overstepped a limit, and I have to follow through with him on consequences. When will it ever stop?" I laughed and responded: "I know what you mean. Sometimes I feel like I'm weeding in my garden. I get a patch weeded, turn around, and there are more weeds to pull up."

Limits are not easy to set and it is even harder to follow through with consequences. And on top of that, you have to be consistent too! You will need to give yourself a lot of credit for the work that you do in this area. But rewards of using Creative Behavior are great; although it is true that you will always have to be setting limits, you will be pleased to find that you will not have continual discipline problems all day long.

Questions and Exercises

Do these exercises only if you are willing. If you are not willing to do them, please provide yourself with an alternate assignment or write about why you are not willing to do the exercises.

The activity marked with ☆☆ is appropriate to do with children. However, if you do use the activity with children, it is important that you, as a teacher, first have the experience of doing it yourself.

☆ Exercise 1

Think back to your childhood experience as a participant in a group.

a) What limits, consequences, and rewards did you have?
b) Describe one example of each that you would like to keep for your group when you are a teacher.
c) Describe one example of each that would you like to change. Give your reasons.
d) Discuss your answers to a), b), and c) with a partner. Look for similarities and differences in your answers.
e) If you are willing, share your similarities and differences with another set of partners.

☆☆ Exercise 2

Draw a picture of yourself teaching in a room without limits and/or draw a picture of yourself teaching in a room with limits.

a) Discuss your picture(s) with a partner. Tell what you do and don't like about being a teacher in those rooms.
b) Share your picture with the whole group, if you are willing.

☆ Exercise 3

Imagine that you are a teacher in a children's center. It is summer and you have just taken your group on an all-day field trip.

a) Write a description of an event you would plan for your group to reward their good behavior on the trip.
b) Share your description with a friend. What do you like about this reward? Give your reasons.
c) Share your reasons with the whole group, if you are willing.

☆ EXERCISE 4

Think about limits that would not be enforceable at a center and limits that would be enforceable.

a) Write down three limits that you would not want to or would not be able to enforce in a center. Explain why you couldn't enforce them.
b) Write down three limits that you would be willing or would be able to enforce. Explain why you could enforce them.
c) Share your writing with a partner. Discuss your reasons, looking for similarities and differences.
d) Share all or part of your writing with the whole group, if you are willing.

☆ EXERCISE 5

What have you learned from thinking about these limits?

a) Share you thinking with a partner.
b) Share your thinking with the whole group, if you are willing.

☆ EXERCISE 6

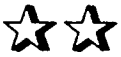
Think about consequences that would not be enforceable at a center and consequences that would be enforceable.

a) Write down three consequences you would not want to or would not be able to enforce. Explain why you would have difficulty enforcing these consequences.
b) Write down three consequences that you would be willing to or would be able to enforce. Explain why you could enforce them.
c) Share your writing with a partner. Discuss your reasons, looking for similarities and differences.
d) Share all or part of your writing with the whole group, if you are willing.

☆ EXERCISE 7

What have you learned from thinking about these consequences?

a) Share you thinking with a partner.
b) Share your thinking with the whole group, if you are willing.



Activities to do with Children

☆☆ Activity 1

This limits and consequences review is an activity for the second or third day of school after limits have been set and discussed. You can use Activity #1 and Activity #2 on different days; however it is important to include all the steps in the order given or the benefit of the activity may be lost.

a) Before class begins, cover up or hide the list of limits so that children rely on their memory for doing this lesson.

b) Ask the children, "Who remembers one of the limits or consequences we talked about the other day?" Children usually respond by raising their hands or answering directly. If no child responds, you might remind them, "You don't have to remember everything, just *one* thing we talked about." Usually someone is willing to start the discussion, if they are reminded they don't have to remember all the limits and consequences.

c) As you solicit your list of limits, write them down on a chalkboard or a piece of butcher paper. Discuss with the children what each limit means to them. Ask questions such as, "What does 'mistreat' mean to you? How might you mistreat yourself? How might you mistreat a friend? The teacher? The equipment?"

☆☆ Activity 2

This writing/drawing activity may be done separately or as continuation of the discussion above. Before doing this activity children must discuss and understand the process of asking for and giving feedback.* It is important, in these activities, to give children "thinking time" between your questions so that they can make critical choices and decisions. (Pause) in the plan below means to pause a few moments—long enough to count to 10 or 15—before reading the next sentence.

a) Teacher: "Think about the limits we've talked about for this room. (Pause) Think about which one will be the easiest for you to break or the easiest for you to get in trouble with. (Pause) Why would it be easy for you break that limit? (Pause) What might you be doing if you broke that limit? (Pause) Which limit will

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* See pp. 127-130 for specific feedback procedures.

be the easiest for you to keep? (Pause) Why would it be easy for you to keep that limit? (Pause)
"Choose either the easiest limit to break or the easiest limit to keep. (Pause) On your paper, draw a picture of yourself either breaking that limit or keeping it. Write the name of the limit you are drawing a picture about. Write how you are breaking or keeping it. Write about why it is easy for you to break or keep that limit. If you finish before others, add more detail to either your writing or your drawing. You will have an opportunity to share afterwards."

b) Give 15-20 minutes writing and drawing time.

c) Teacher: "You have the option of sharing your drawing and your writing, sharing just your drawing, sharing just your writing, or saying you don't want to share. If you would like feedback, ask the specific person from whom you want it if he or she is willing to give you some feedback. I am also willing to give you feedback if you ask me."

During the sharing period remind children to make statements such as "I like the way you have drawn the people in your picture because you draw well" or "I like it when I look at your picture because it makes me feel good inside" or "I like what you said because I have an easy time breaking that limit too. I know how you feel." These statements avoid hurtful criticism and help to eliminate long involved personal stories.

CHAPTER 5

HECKLES, PUT-DOWNS, AND OTHER FACTS OF LIFE

HECKLES

As a teacher you will probably run across as many different types of misbehavior as you have children. This is one of the surprises of teaching and what keeps things interesting! It is easy to recognize that you need to take action to stop the behavior and provide consequences when children are fighting or being disruptive. In a Creative Behavior classroom, however, the emphasis is on emotional as well as physical safety and this means you have to teach your students to refrain from emotionally abusive behavior as well. The two most prevalent kinds of behavior that fall into the emotionally abusive category I call "heckles" and "put-downs."

DEFINING HECKLES

Just about everyone from parents to store clerks to politicians has had the experience of both heckling and being heckled. One reason it is hard to get children to acknowledge that heckling is not OK is that it is so much fun—for the heckler. But it is annoying, and it is usually an invasion of another person's physical or personal space. It is not OK.

One year my group made a list of heckles—actions that annoyed them and that they didn't like—and they came up with thirty-six! The list included:

- not listening to me when I talk
- kicking my chair when I'm trying to concentrate
- taking the ball away when I'm trying to get it
- knocking off my hat
- drawing on my paper
- hiding my pencil so I can't find it

Making this list and discussing it helped the children to recognize that heckling is not really that funny and should require a consequence. As a teacher it is important for you to be aware that heckling often stems from a need for attention, resistance, or an inability to express feelings more appropriately. While these reasons are not excuses, examining them can help you understand why this behavior persists despite your efforts.

Stopping the Heckles

When a child is annoying someone, the teacher needs to take time to identify the behavior, label it as heckling, and provide a face-saving alternative, so that the heckler can stop.

Leo, for example, likes to talk to himself as he does his homework. Tony sits next to Leo and does not like the noise. The dialogue goes something like this as Tony says:

"Anne, Leo is bothering me."

"Have you asked him to stop?"

"Leo, stop bothering me."

"I'm not bothering you."

"Yes, you are."

"No, I'm not."

When I hear this I might say, "Tony, have you told Leo exactly what he's doing that bothers you?"

"Leo, your talking bothers me. I can't concentrate on my homework."

"Oh."

At this point I find it helpful to intervene and ask Leo directly if he is willing to stop his talking. I label his behavior as heckling, give him a warning and a choice. If he wants to stay where he is, he will need to be quiet. If he wants to continue to talk, he can move to an area where his talking will not bother anyone. This way Tony is able to have quiet, and Leo knows he has alternatives. If Leo chooses to stay and continues to talk, bothering Tony, it is necessary to give him a consequence for heckling.

"Anne, Leo is still talking. He won't stop."

"Leo, you're continuing to heckle. You said you'd stop, but you didn't. Now

you need to go to time-out. When you're ready to tell me what you can do another time, let me know."

If Leo goes to time-out, that is the end of that discussion. If Leo becomes defiant, the conversation might go like this:

"I'm ready to tell you now."

"No, Leo. When you weren't willing to stop heckling Tony, you showed me you need some time out. Take five minutes to think, then come see me."

"But I don't want to go to time-out."

"Leo, I'm not going to argue with you. The more you talk, the longer you stay there. I will start timing you when you're in time-out and thinking, not before."

Usually at this point, Leo will go to time-out, albeit reluctantly.

Labeling children's behavior is important because it helps them take responsibility for their own actions. It also allows them to become clearer about what is their responsibility and what is someone else's responsibility. So often children feel it is all someone else's fault, like Tony wanting Leo to quit making noise without his directly telling him to stop. Or they may feel it is all their fault if something goes wrong; they think something is wrong with them, that they are somehow to blame. By labeling behavior, you help children see the relationship between their behavior and someone else's. Labeling does not always stop negative behavior, but it does put the responsibility in the proper place.

SUGGESTIONS FOR WHAT YOU CAN DO

Labeling heckles and put-downs is important for learning so I try always to use a calm voice, one without blame or accusation. It is important for children to know I am not angry at them even though I do not like their behavior. If children choose to continue to heckle, I label the behavior and give a warning. This is their "free heckle" and if they stop, there is no further consequence. When I label behavior as a heckle, I ask if they understand why. If they don't, I tell them I am labeling their behavior so they will know that if they choose to use that behavior another time, they will be heckling again and there will be a consequence.

Children often deny to themselves, as well as others, that they have stepped out of bounds, particularly if they are doing something like touching someone who walks by. When this happens, I am particularly careful with my explanation, clarifying what they have done.

The dialogue might go something like this:

"Larry, you know Arlene doesn't like to be touched. Why did you touch her when you went by?"

"I didn't touch her."

"You may not have realized that you touched her, but I saw you put your hand on her head, and I saw her react to being touched."

By labeling behavior in a respectful way, the teacher helps this child take responsibility for her actions.

"But I never touched her."

"I'm concerned because you did touch her, and you're not aware of it. It is important that you know what you're doing so you can take responsibility for your actions. This is your warning. Do you think you need something more to help you become aware of what you're doing?"

At this point Larry may decide he doesn't need anything more or he may come up with a suggestion for something that might help him in the future. In any case, the important thing is that children know they have an opportunity to make a suggestion.

When I warn children, I write their names on my list to remind me that I've

given them a warning. Once they have been warned that this heckle is their free heckle, the children have two choices. They can stop heckling or bothering for the rest of the day, in which case, nothing further will happen as a consequence. Or they can continue to heckle and I will put a check after their name. This indicates to me that we need to talk about why they chose to heckle and that they need to write me a note describing what happened. The talking helps them become clearer about why they made the choice they did and, hopefully, helps them decide if they want to make the same or a different decision another time. The note is a way for them to take responsibility for their actions. In this way children can learn from their experience rather than put themselves down for misbehaving. During the first few weeks with a new group of children, I make a statement clarifying these choices, but after that, simply labeling, giving a warning, and then writing the name on my list is enough.

Many times I will label behavior as a heckle, but not say "You're heckling and this is your warning." Until I warn a child, he or she can continue to heckle without consequence. I do this because some children heckle ad infinitum and I would be constantly trying to enforce the limit of heckling. I might not have time to do anything else. If children continue to do a lot of heckling, then I warn them because I have learned that they are not able to stop the heckling by themselves. Whatever consequence you decide on for yourself, it should not cause children to lose face with their peers. It should also require them to think about their behavior.

Teaching Children To Say No Effectively

As professionals working with school-age children, you are asked to help them say no to many things. It seems to me that a necessary first step is to help children say no or "stop it" when another person does something that bothers them. Once you teach children effective skills for protecting their personal space and setting their own limits, they can then later apply these skills to other issues like taking candy from strangers, getting in a stranger's car, drinking alcohol, taking drugs, dealing with peer pressure, or smoking. There are many programs or kits to help children gain self-esteem, so that they can prevent someone from doing something that bothers them. Jane Stern, a principal in the Vallejo, California Unified School District, has written an excellent program for helping children develop social skills, among them the skill of saying no. I have adapted it and use it with my group.

There are two techniques that make a child's no more believable and that are very easy to teach:

- Look direct'y into the eyes of the person to whom you are speaking.
- Use a firm, strong voice when you speak.

I begin the lesson by discussing with the group different ways that you can

undermine yourself when you say no, such as using a whining voice; using a soft voice so the other person can't hear you; looking down at the ground as if you are apologizing; telling yourself you are not worthwhile before you speak; just standing there and expecting people to stop without your having to say anything; acting helpless; playing "poor me" by expecting the other person not to respect your response; feeling like you are a nobody; handling the situation without anyone else for support; standing with slumped shoulders; crying or acting like a cry-baby; and/or trying to bribe the person into stopping with offers of friendship or gifts. I point out that combining one or more of these techniques will make it even less likely that you will get someone to stop.

Next we discuss strategies that you can use to support yourself when you say no, such as bringing along a supportive friend; standing up tall to look someone in the eye; meaning what you say and being clear that you really want the person to stop and are not just asking for attention; expecting the person to stop when you say "stop"; feeling you are worthwhile; and/or being aware of your own self-respect. After the discussion, the best way to really get the lesson across is to have the children roleplay some of these situations.

I ask the children to pick a partner, choosing someone they feel comfortable saying no to. I explain that each person is going to have the experience of being the one who heckles as well as the one who says no to the heckler. The person being heckled first tries to stop it in an ineffective way, such as talking in a soft or whiny voice and not looking at the heckler. Then I repeat the exercise—only this time the person being heckled stops the heckling by speaking with a firm, strong voice looking directly at the heckler. Experiencing the contrast between these two positions is important. One nice thing about this exercise is that children (and teachers) find it enjoyable as well as educational.

First I demonstrate all four situations, choosing a child with whom I have good rapport as a partner. Then I have the rest of the children do the roleplays in groups of two. I remind them they are to take turns so each child gets the experience of being in all four roles.

Usually after practicing their roles, children will want to share their roleplay or dialogue with the whole group. I encourage this. The sharing is very valuable because it helps children integrate the process or clarify and take responsibility for their own beliefs. Also, it puts the group into hysterics as they see their friends try to stop a heckler in an ineffective way.

After they have experienced saying no and having no said to them, I ask the children to write down what they liked about the experience, what they didn't like, and why. Writing helps to further internalize the process. If you use this writing assignment, I suggest you first have the children put their heads down and close their eyes so that they can focus on what they remember from the roleplays and think about what they will write. The following are excerpts from writing my students did after this exercise:

Lamoya: I loved heckling Rosa when she was doing the part where she couldn't stop me. I didn't know heckling could be so much fun.

Jomo: I didn't like it when Jody wouldn't stop heckling me. It didn't matter that I wasn't looking at him. I wanted him to stop. I felt like hitting him when he didn't.

Aaron: I learned I could stick up for myself.

Yasuhiro: I didn't like when I had to act like a bully because I'm not.

Zach: I learned that I am as scared as I thought I am when I get up in front of the group. I felt like I left my stomach back on the rug.

This entire process helps children understand others and develop tools for dealing with their differences. Often by hearing others say no, shy children are more able to say no when they are being bothered by someone. Also having the experience of saying no in a contrived situation gives them a pattern to fall back on in a real-life situation, when they need to say no to someone who is bothering them.

Frequently the experience of being heckled and not being able to stop it immediately is an eye opener for children who tend to be bullies. It does not always eliminate their bullying behavior, but it does give them an opportunity for insight into how it feels. When a shy child can deliver a direct and firm no, a bully—even one who has not shared the group roleplaying experience—often responds by stopping. The shy child feels greatly empowered.

PUT-DOWNS

While heckling is wearing and bothersome, put-downs are downright destructive. If you can teach your students to overcome the habit of putting other people down to make themselves feel better, you will have done them a lifelong service. Of course, the put-down is most harmful to the person receiving it, but in general this kind of negative interaction is bad for everybody. In an atmosphere where teasing, snide remarks, and sarcasm are acceptable no one can feel safe, free to take risks, or let their honest feelings show. Consequently, in a Creative Behavior center, it is essential to label put-downs clearly and provide immediate consequences.

Defining "Put-Downs"

In order to define put-downs, I ask the children to make a list of remarks or interactions that have at some time made them feel bad about themselves. Their lists may include items such as:

- when someone laughs at me when I do something wrong;
- when someone calls me dumb or stupid (or implies that I'm dumb or stupid);
- when someone looks at me as if I were dirt;
- when someone says "That was *so* easy" about an activity that was hard for me.

Then I ask the children to share their list with a friend and talk about which items are the same and which are different on the two lists. If they are willing, they can share part or all of their list with the whole group. This sharing can expand into a discussion of the reasons that people put one another down. During these interchanges, I ask children to give examples without mentioning anyone's name so no one will feel threatened by exposure. Children often have very good insights about why put-downs happen.

For example, Arturo heard a boy in his class put another child down by laughing at his spelling error. He recognized what was happening, labeled the laughing as a put-down, and described this exchange to our group.

In the discussion Vu asked, "Why did the guy laugh?"

Arturo replied, "He was probably scared himself. He probably thought someone would laugh at him if he made a mistake, so he did it first."

"How d'you figure that?"

"Because I used to laugh at people all the time when they made mistakes. And I think the reason I don't do it now is I'm not so scared. I don't worry about my making mistakes so much, so I've stopped laughing at others."

At this point, I gave Arturo a lot of credit for his courage to share an old, negative behavior and acknowledge the change that had taken place in him.

Consequences for Put-Downs

Put-downs are real killers of positive self-esteem. Often children being put-down do not recognize what is happening. They feel that something is wrong with them or that they have done something wrong. This is why accurate labeling is doubly necessary. First, it helps the children who are being put-down to learn that they are not at fault. Secondly, it supports the children who are putting others down to learn that what they are doing is demeaning to another person and that someone

will insist that they stop. Most put-down artists know their put-downs hurt, but most of them will not stop of their own accord. They need help. No one should be put in the position where they feel bad about themselves because of someone else's actions or words. While no one can *make* you feel bad about yourself, others can certainly want you to feel that way. The intent is there and believable. The trap is when someone believes.

By using limits and consequences you can reduce, if not eliminate, this kind of misbehavior. My consequence is that anyone who puts another person down must write about what happened and what he or she can do to prevent it in the future. If the other child in some way instigated the put-down by heckling or teasing, that person also writes about his or her part in the interaction. Every put-down exceeds my limit, there are no free put-downs. Unlike the free heckle, which receives only a warning, every put-down has an immediate consequence. The child must write about it.

Put-downs can come in many forms and can be quite subtle. For example, there is such a thing as a put-down look. No words are used, but the glance or stare is just as harmful as a verbal put-down. One of my students, Jake, constantly gave me an "if looks could kill" stare filled with contempt and disdain. After the first couple of times, I said to him, "Jake, that look makes me feel as if you would like me to think I'm about two inches tall. I'm not willing to feel that way about myself. I don't want you looking at me or anyone else in the room with that kind of contempt. You will need to write me a note explaining what you did and why before you go home."

Although he wrote the note, Jake did not really want to acknowledge how he presented himself to others and accept responsibility for his behavior. He had learned, over the years, that this look scared off children so they would not compete with him and he was left as top dog. Of course he did not have any friends because of his behavior, and this was finally why he was willing to change. He wanted friends.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HANDLE PUT-DOWNS

I asked Jake if he wanted to change his facial expression so others did not think he was putting them down. Yes, he said he did want friends so he wanted to change. I think a truer statement might have been, he did want friends, but he did not want to change—at least not very much. One of the things we labored over was a way to help him learn when his expression was showing contempt and putting someone else down. Every time his face showed contempt, I would say, "Jake, are you aware of what your face looks like?"

Jake's next strategy was to say he did not mean to put someone else down when he looked like that. I was very calm and straightforward when I answered him.

I acknowledged that he might not mean to be hurtful and that, if what he said was true, I was pleased with his good intentions, but I did not necessarily believe his statement. I was concerned because his actions or expressions contributed toward hurting someone whether he meant to or not. I would ask him, "Did you like Roger's response to you just now?"

"No, because he got mad at me and he shouldn't have."

"Well, people will be angry when you look at them that way. You have to decide whether you want people to get mad at you or you're willing to change." This put the responsibility back in Jake's lap. It was important for him to learn when he used a contemptuous expression so that he could be clear about what was going on and why people—children and adults—were reacting to him the way they were. I did not want him to have people get angry at him without his knowing what he had done.

My labeling what Jake was doing to upset people helped him see his responsibility in the interaction. It allowed him to have a clearer choice—to continue using the put-down expression or to stop using it. He continued to use his contemptuous facial expression, but he did become much clearer about recognizing when he was using it, and he no longer tried to deny that he was using it.

By the end of the year, Jake had made a lot of progress. Other children were interacting with him and he was beginning to make friends and feel good about himself in this area. Jake was able to change because I cared enough about him to call him on his put-downs whenever I saw or heard them. There were days when Jake was full of put-downs. He could have spent all of his time writing me notes. On those days I would simply label his behavior and not require a note for each put down. One or two notes were sufficient.

The most common put-downs occur when someone makes a mistake and others laugh. The incident might go something like this:

Zach was playing handball. It was his turn to hit the ball. He swung his arm with great force, but missed the ball. Vu and Michael laughed. My response would depend on Zach's reaction. If Zach ignored the laughter, I would, at the first opportunity, go up to him, put my arm around him, and quietly say, "I saw what happened. It was mean of Vu and Michael to laugh. Their laughing was a put-down. I am very proud of the way you handled it. I will talk to Vu and Michael and label their actions so they are clear about what they did."

Then I would collect Vu and Michael and say something like this: "Are you aware of what you did when Zach's ball missed the backboard?"

"Yeah, we laughed."

"How do you think that made Zach feel?"

"Oh, he didn't mind."

"Well, he didn't respond to your laughter but that still doesn't mean it didn't hurt. Can you label your behavior?"

"Yeah, it's a put-down."

"Right and you'll both need to write me a note before you go home, telling me what happened, and why, and what you can do another time so you don't get into trouble."

If Zach had dissolved into tears at their laughter, the conversation might have gone something like this: "Zach, I'm sorry you're feeling bad. What would you like to do to Vu and Michael?"

"I'd like to take a big stick and hit them and hit them and never let them play handball again."

"Well, I can appreciate how you're feeling. You're pretty angry. It's no fun to be made fun of."

"They think I'm stupid because I missed the ball."

"They may, and they also may be pleased that you were the one to miss the ball, not them. I don't think you're stupid, and you don't have to think it either. You can come with me and tell them you don't like what they did, or you can go draw about what you'd like to do to them. Which do you want?"

Whatever Zach does, I would go over to Vu and Michael, discuss what happened, label their behavior for them if they aren't clear, and tell them they owe me a note before going home.

HELPING CHILDREN DEAL WITH PUT-DOWNS

When Kyra puts Bill down it is important to listen to both of them to find out what is going on. The three of you can talk, one at a time, while the other two listen. It is important for the children to know that they will be able to say what they want to say and that you will value what is said by really listening to it. It is also important to arrange a time to do this when you can give your full attention to the children.

I might start the conversation something like this:

"Bill, you complained that Kyra was putting you down. Will you tell me and Kyra what she did that you don't like?"

"Well, she called me names and said I was stupid."

"Kyra, is that true?"

"Yes, but Bill was doing some dumb things."

"Would you like it if someone said you were stupid?"

"No."

"I'm not going to let anyone hurt your feelings without a consequence. I'm also not going to let you hurt anyone else's feelings without a consequence. It's very important to me that you don't hurt people's feelings. You will need to write me a note before you go home telling what happened. (I have just made sure that Kyra understands that I will not let anyone call her names without a consequence before I say she may not call anyone else names. She knows I will protect her. Then

it is easier for her to accept my protection of other children.)

"Bill, are you aware of what you were doing so that Kyra called you names?" (If Bill is not aware, this needs to be clarified.)

"Kyra, what do you think we can do so that you won't call Bill names any more?"

In discussing these interactions, it is always important for the person putting someone else down to be reassured that he or she will also have your support and protection when he or she is the recipient of a put-down.

A group discussion about put-downs is valuable because children can begin to see that they are not the only ones who have been made fun of and feel put-down. Others have these feelings, as well as feelings of getting scared, lonely, angry, or upset. There is nothing wrong with having these feelings. It is what they do with the feeling—how they handle it—that is important. By talking about their feelings and getting clear about them, children gain some control over them. Hearing others say they don't like to be put-down helps children begin to say to themselves, "Hey, I don't like that either. If Johnny can get people to stop putting him down, maybe I can too."

Roleplaying for Put-Downs

As with heckles, roleplaying can help children learn to deal with put-downs. I usually ask the children for different ways they might react to someone who puts them down. They make suggestions for what to say, such as:

- "I don't believe what you're saying, and you can't make me believe it."
- "You just want me to feel bad about myself, and I'm not going to do that."
- "I'm not going to listen to you," (and walk away).
- "Stop it!" (and walk away).

To eliminate the possibility of hurting any of the children's feelings, I ask them to make their put-down statements to a stuffed bear as if it were another person. After the children have put down the bear, I ask them to respond from the bear's point of view, countering the put-down statement. Sometimes a child volunteers to play the role of a victim, the person who gets put down. If I allow children to play that role, then I make sure that they also experience being the person to make a put-down statement to the bear, so that they do not think of themselves as always having to be depreciated.

It is important to have a group discussion about the roleplaying and I follow that with a writing and drawing assignment: What did you like and not like about the roleplaying? Why did you feel that way? What did you learn?

It is very important to include both the positive and negative questions in the writing assignment so that the children will further internalize the experience. This helps them to be able to transfer their insights and knowledge to similar situations more readily.

Here are some examples of my students' writing:

Shanta: *I liked saying mean things to the bear because I knew I really wouldn't hurt its feelings. I learned it was hard to think of something to say when I was the bear.*

Annie: *I liked saying mean things to the bear because so many other people say mean things to me and I don't like it. I didn't learn anything.*

Heather: *I didn't like saying mean things to the bear because I don't like it when people say mean things to me. I learned that I could say something when someone puts me down.*

It is particularly important for those children who often are on the receiving end of put-downs to experience putting someone else down (in this case, a stuffed bear) in a safe place. Children who are often scapegoats or victims need to have the experience of putting someone down so that they know what it feels like to be in a position other than that of the one being picked on. Hopefully children will remember how it hurts when they are in the victim position so they will not take this assignment as license to go around putting other people down. By giving children alternate responses, they can begin to feel good about themselves because they are taking action instead of just receiving the put-down.

TEASING

People—children and grown ups—tease each other all the time. It is a fact of life. It's a ritual of childhood. Children who don't get teased are often at a disadvantage. They don't know how to handle being teased as an adult. When I am in a good mood, I love to tease my students in what I think of as an affectionate way.

What is the difference between teasing and heckling? Sometimes there isn't any. What can be teasing to one person can be heckling to another. Sometimes what starts out as teasing ends up as heckling. The child can choose to ignore it or stop it. This is why labeling is important. Children can say directly, "Stop, I don't like that," or "You're heckling me. Stop it."

When teasing is hurtful, it is a put-down. That kind of teasing needs to be stopped immediately. It is no longer fun for anyone involved.

Listening with care and respect is important. This is the first step to changing behavior.

The Victim

Often when children are being teased, they can extract themselves from the situation without any help from the teacher. They learn to keep themselves out of similar situations in the future, unless it is their choice, and they want to be teased. Teasing can be a negative way to get attention, and many children feel it is the only way they know how to get attention.

When children attract excessive teasing over an extended period of time and don't protect themselves from it, those children have become victims. This is a problem that requires special attention in two areas. First you have to stop children

from picking on them. Secondly, you have to get the victim to start sticking up for him or herself.

Some children ask to be picked on. They want to be a victim. For a variety of reasons, they have a difficult time relating to others unless they are being teased. Their self-esteem is so low that they can only visualize themselves with another child or a group if those people are being mean to them.

One year, everybody liked to tease Stephanie. She was a victim. Among other things, she was fat, slow—physically and academically—and she had no social skills. Hardly anyone would play with her. Stephanie and I spent hours talking about how she could relate to other children so that they would tolerate her without teasing. But incidents kept escalating until I decided to have a talk with the whole group about Stephanie. I told her ahead of time that I was going to share my concern with the other children and gave her the choice of being in or out of the room when I did this. She said she wanted to be out of the room, but when it came time for the discussion, she decided to stay.

I started the discussion like this: "Stephanie has a problem in that she gets teased about almost everything she does. This is called being a victim. When you tease someone and it makes them feel bad, it is a put-down. That means a consequence for you. However Stephanie asks to be teased some of the time because it's a way for her to get attention. She doesn't ask for it all of the time, but some of the time she does. This means she has a responsibility in the teasing too. When this happens, she too has a consequence. I've been working very hard to help Stephanie learn how to ask for assistance or for someone to play with her."

Then I asked the group to think about several questions: "How would you feel if you were Stephanie and got teased all of the time? What are some things you might do so you wouldn't get teased? What can we do to help ourselves and Stephanie so she doesn't ask to be teased, so people stop teasing her, and so no one gets in trouble?"

Often the only thing to come out of such a discussion is a raised level of awareness about what is happening. This is important because it helps children recognize more clearly what they are doing and the consequences of their actions. Some of the children will stop their negative behavior after such an interchange; some won't. By having this kind of a dialogue, you will probably cut down on the number of children who tease. Hopefully it also helps a child like Stephanie by giving her some support for her problem and some suggestions for changing her behavior.

A word of caution: Talking with the group about a specific child is not something you can do frequently. It works well *once*. If a child who has become a victim continues to have problems, you will have to find other solutions, such as referring both the child and his or her parents for professional help.

One reason you may have trouble dealing with a problem like Stephanie's is that her behavior may be supported by the family. When a family is having

difficulty functioning as a unit, they will usually focus on one member and insist that that individual is to blame for all the problems they are having. (In reality this person may or may not be the reason for the problems, but he or she gets the blame for them.) When this happens to a child, it is devastating. The child has no resources to withstand the blame of the family and so accepts it, appropriate or not.

Also, parents may know a child is having emotional problems, but they feel unable to cope. Rather than getting support for themselves and trying to find professional help, they throw up their hands and say, "There's nothing we can do. That's the way it is." This means the child is left to handle all these situations alone. Since children do not have the skills to do this, they are doomed to failure. Recommending professional help may be a service to the whole family.

Even if the problem is not that serious, you may find it more difficult to relate to certain children in a positive way. If I were a child and Stephanie were in my group, I probably would want to tease her myself. Yet it is necessary for me, as a teacher, to build a relationship with each child based on authentic, positive feelings. One helpful strategy to deal with your negative feelings is to write a letter that will not be sent to the child. Do not just state how you feel but exaggerate your feelings and describe what you would like to do. For example, I might write:

> *Dear Stephanie, I think you are simply dreadful. I don't know why you are in my group in the first place. I have enough trouble with all the other children but to have to deal with you as well is too much. I HATE the way you can't take care of yourself. I HATE the way you can only get attention by whining or saying you can't do something. I HATE the way you never, never, EVER have any friends. I've given you many, many suggestions, but will you use them? No, of course not. You don't know how to make friends. You just stand there and wait for somebody to talk to you. No wonder everyone teases you. You take FOREVER to do something. When it's time to clean up, you're just starting to work and everyone else is finishing.*

If I write such a letter at school, I take it home, tear it up, and throw it away in my own private wastepaper basket so that there is no chance of anyone else seeing it. It is important to be professional and not gossip; inevitably you will be overheard by someone. You also run the risk of adults and children knowing you can be inauthentic when you communicate to them. They might begin to wonder if you talk about them behind their backs too.

When you can get your own negative feelings out in an appropriate way, you are better able to deal with a difficult child. It is important to acknowledge your negative feelings, own up to them, and not try to deny them. By admitting what your feelings are and by getting them out in the open, you can judge if you are able to work with this particular child, or if another teacher needs to take over. If you feel

you are able to handle the child, you can then set your negative feelings aside—put them in a box, so to speak—and move on to dealing with the child in a positive way.

HELPING CHILDREN DEAL WITH VICTIMS

When Millicent makes fun of Stephanie it is important to listen to both of them to find out what is going on. I arrange a time to do this when I can give my full attention to the children. I might start the exchange something like this:

"Millicent, Stephanie complained that you were teasing her. Will you tell me what happened?"

"Well, she came up to where Katrina and I were playing and kind of hung around. We didn't pay any attention to her. We didn't want to play with her. She knew we didn't want to play, but she wouldn't go away so we started teasing her."

"Stephanie, is that true?"

"Yes, but I wanted to play with them."

"Why do you keep trying to play with Katrina and Millicent when you know they don't want you to play with them?"

"I don't know. I just want to play with them."

"Why don't you ask Lamoya if she'll play? Lamoya likes you and is willing to play with you when you ask her to."

"OK."

"Stephanie, are you clear? When you ask Millicent to play, you'll probably get teased. When you ask Lamoya to play, she'll probably play with you."

"Yeah."

"So you do have that choice. Millicent, are you clear that your teasing hurts Stephanie's feelings?"

"Yeah."

"Do you know the consequences for that kind of teasing?"

"Yeah, I write a note about it before I go home."

"Right and maybe some day you'll be ready to let Stephanie play with you instead of teasing her. Stephanie, I want you to write a note too, telling your part in this problem. This is not the first time this has happened, so you need to be reminded about what your choices are."

What is important in the discussion is that each child see that she has had a responsibility in the teasing; it is not entirely one child's fault. Once both children recognize their part, I ask them if they are willing to try another alternative the next time a similar situation occurs. If the behavior continues, I might consider bringing the problem to the group to discuss what Millicent could do instead of teasing Stephanie or what Stephanie could do instead of trying to play with Millicent. Often children will be able to come up with alternatives or insights that are very helpful.

Another strategy I use is to have a discussion or ask all the children to do a

writing assignment about a time they wanted to join a group and used an inappropriate technique to try and get in, or a time they were in a group and someone asked to join in an inappropriate way. What was their response? How did they feel? How do they think the other person felt? What was the consequence of their action? You can learn a lot by listening to what the children have to say.

Children with Differences or Disabilities

Not all children who get teased are like Stephanie. Children who have physical or emotional disabilities, children with unusual names, children of different racial or ethnic backgrounds, children who have to wear glasses or braces, all are subject to teasing. The list seems to be endless. It is important to talk about all teasing when it occurs within the group.

If possible, I try to have some discussions before the teasing occurs. For example, if I know a child will be getting braces, I invite the other children to verbalize about how they might feel if they came to the center with new braces. How would they want to be treated? What would they not want people to say to them? How would they feel if someone laughed at them? By helping children become clearer about how they would like to be treated, they learn to develop standards for how to treat someone else.

I have found that it is very helpful to discuss or roleplay what it might feel like to be different. What is it like to be hearing or visually impaired? What is it like to be in a wheelchair? How does it feel to know what you want to write, but when you make the letters, they don't come out the way you expect? Children have all felt that they were different from everyone else at one time or another. Their differences may not be as extreme as some children's but the feelings are the same. Recognizing this gives them a basis for empathizing with others.

Prejudice about race and religion can also be a source of teasing. While you cannot control the attitudes and influences to which children are exposed in other areas of their lives, you can model the behavior you expect from them at the center. By setting high standards for yourself and your group, you can help eliminate some teasing that might otherwise go on. You can also help children learn that differences are to be appreciated and valued.

There are many different approaches you can take to teaching children to understand and enjoy our culturally and ethnically diverse nation. For me the bottom line is that if I am teaching and acting according to the principles of Creative Behavior, I will be treating every child in my group with respect and requiring that they do the same for each other.

COMPLAINING

Some days it feels like when the children aren't heckling each other to death, they are busy complaining to me. Children love to complain and most of them want their complaints responded to immediately. Although this litany sometimes seems endless I try to pay attention because for some children complaining is a tool of communication. It is the only way they know how to begin a conversation with an adult. I have found I can listen to complaints as long as I don't feel I always have to fix them. To divert the need for constant fixing, I use a complaint box.

THE COMPLAINT BOX

My complaint box serves as a tool to help both me and the children maintain and utilize the group's limits, and deal with, or sometimes deflect, heckling or put-downs. It is just a cardboard box with a hole cut in the lid and the words "Complaint Box" written on top.

I tell the children at the beginning of the year that I know they will have many, many complaints. I will not always be able to stop an activity we are engaged in and listen to them, so they should write their complaint on a piece of paper, date it, sign it, and put it in the box. I promise that at some point, I will read the complaints and we can talk about solutions as a group.

The purpose of the complaint box is twofold. It offers children an immediate action that they can take when they have a complaint. By writing a note, they feel as if they have done something to take care of their problem. It also offers me some protection, particularly when I am busy; the child with the complaint is occupied by writing, not trying to talk to me, wanting me to solve the problem. They all know I will read their notes later. Some children just come to me with a complaint to have contact with me. Putting my hand on their back and saying, "Write me a note about it," is enough. Nothing more happens.

Periodically, I tell the group it's Complaint Box time. I then go through the notes one at a time, scanning them before reading them out loud to the group. What often happens when I begin to read a note is that a child will quickly say "Anne, that's been taken care of." My response is "What a wonderful box! I'm so pleased." I will not read out loud a note that is a put-down. I also will not read a note unless it has been signed. Some children write "Don't read to group" at the top of the note, and I honor that request. Some children are not clear about the concept of "Don't read." They write it on their note although a solution cannot be found unless their problem is discussed. I tell them if they want a solution they will have to let me read the note.

I do read every note, although I do not read them all out loud. I do not try to solve every problem. Some problems are ongoing, long-term problems. For example, Arlene and Todd, who have been in the same group since kindergarten, really do not like each other. I have told them they do not have to like each other, but they do have to get along with each other.

Occasionally one of them will write a complaint about the other as a put-down. I tell the group that the note I am reading to myself is a put-down, and I am not going to read it out loud because I am not willing to be part of making someone feel bad. Sometimes the same problem will come up over and over again. This means that we have usually discussed it individually and as a group, and I am beginning to feel like nothing will solve the difficulty. If it is not a serious problem, such as a child is doing a lot of silly heckling but not putting anyone down, I say that since what I have done in the past has not worked, I guess it is up to the group to solve the dilemma in an appropriate manner.

Often notes are about people bothering or heckling. For example, the note might say, "Ibrahim talks when he works and it bothers me. Lynne." When that happens I ask Ibrahim if he is aware of what Lynne means. If he says he knows, then I ask him if he is willing to stop. If he does not know what Lynne is talking about, then I ask Lynne to explain. Then I ask Ibrahim if he is willing to stop. If he says he is willing to stop, I give him my appreciation and thank him and go on to the next note. If he says he is not willing to stop I ask Ibrahim and the group what we should do—Ibrahim's talking disturbs Lynne. Various options are usually offered. I ask Ibrahim if he feels comfortable using an option that has been suggested or if he has thought of an alternative that he would be willing to use.

I ask the children to come up with options for several reasons. I do not want to be the only person who thinks of solutions. I want the children to learn that they too can come up with acceptable solutions so that they do not always have to rely on me. This also gives me a period of thinking time so I can go over what alternatives I might present to Ibrahim. It is always preferable for Ibrahim to come up with his own, appropriate solution.

You do not have to solve every problem just because a child complains. It is important that you listen to the complaint, but you do not always need to do something about it. Sometimes you cannot do anything; the problem is beyond your control. Sometimes a child just needs to complain and then is willing to go on with what he or she is doing. For most children your act of listening to them helps gets the problem out in the open. That is the crucial thing. Listening also builds trust and respect.

One year my group began to use the complaint box in a different way. I was reading the complaints and opened a note that said, "I like you Anne very much. You're a good teacher." I was not sure what to do, since the box was supposed to be for complaints. The children saw my confusion and shyness and asked what the problem was. I said I had a note that was not a complaint. "Read it! Read it!" they said. So I read it. I thanked the writer and put the note into my pocket to keep. I felt

very shy and quite pleased. After that, compliments began appearing in the box. It was nice having a mixture of the two.

The next year I made a second box with "Appreciation" written on it so the labeling of the two different concepts stayed clear. However, I found that I felt uncomfortable with the Appreciation Box because it was as if I were asking for compliments. That group certainly did learn how to give authentic compliments though.

Dealing with heckles, put-downs, teasing, and complaints will always be a part of your daily teaching. No matter what you do they won't go away. While it might be tempting, ignoring them is not a permanent solution either. In fact ignoring them will probably make their occurrence increase because children will continue to test you to see when and where you will step in and stop them.

Labeling and giving immediate consequences will not eliminate these behaviors either, but using Creative Behavior techniques will provide alternatives so that both teachers and children know they have a choice in how they relate to each other.

Neither you nor the children ever need to feel that annoying or negative behavior is something over which you are powerless. People who behave that way have the responsibility to change if they want to be a part of the group. Those affected by them have a responsibility too—to set and uphold limits to the behavior they are willing to accept from others. Understanding these roles provides children with important skills for not only getting along with others, but taking care of their own needs throughout their lives.

Questions and Exercises

Do these exercises only if you are willing. If you are not willing to do them, please provide yourself with an alternate assignment or write about why you are not willing to do the exercises.

The activity marked with ☆☆ is appropriate to do with children. However if you do use the activity with children, it is important that you, as a teacher, first have the experience of doing it yourself.

☆☆ Exercise 1

In 10 minutes list as many heckles or other behaviors as you can think of that might bother you as a teacher.

a) On another sheet of paper make three categories: 1) *Almost always* will bother me, 2) *Sometimes* will bother me, and 3) *Hardly ever* will bother me.
b) Categorize your list of heckles. If you can't decide on the category for a certain heckle, write it under two categories.

☆☆ Exercise 2

Compare your list and categories from #1 with a partner. Look for similarities and differences between your lists. (This will give you some idea of what limits you need for *yourself* when you teach your own group of children.)

Share your list with the whole group, if you are willing.

☆ Exercise 3

In 10 minutes write down as many limits, appropriate *and* inappropriate as you can think of.

a) On another piece of paper make two categories, *appropriate* and *inappropriate*. Categorize your limits. If you are not sure of the category, put it in both.
b) Discuss you list with a partner.
c) Also discuss with your partner what you have learned that you will be able to use in working with children.
d) Share part or all of your discussion with the whole group, if you are willing.

☆ EXERCISE 4

In 10 minutes write down as many consequences, appropriate *and* inappropriate as you can think of.

a) On another piece of paper make two categories, *appropriate* and *inappropriate*. Categorize your consequences. If you are not sure of the category, put it in both.
b) Discuss your list with a partner.
c) Also discuss with your partner what you have learned that you will be able to use in working with children.
d) Share part or all of your discussion with the whole group, if you are willing.

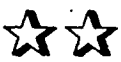
☆☆ EXERCISE 5

Discuss with a partner some strategies for saying no so that it will be heard. What are some ways of saying no that are not likely to be heard. In what situations might you say no ineffectively? Effectively?

a) Roleplay being heckled and saying no to the heckler. Choose someone you are comfortable working with. Take turns playing each of the four roles described on pages 77-78.

☆☆ EXERCISE 6

Write about your experience. What did you like, not like, and why about the roleplay? What did you learn about yourself from this experience? How will this affect your dealing with students' heckles? Share part or all of your writing with a partner and then with the whole group, if you are willing.



Activities to do with Children

(Note: #1 and #2 can be done on different days.)

☆☆ Activity 1

Discuss with the group different ways of saying no so that it *is* heard and so that it is *not* heard. Ask them the following questions:

a) What are some situations where you might not say no effectively? (e.g., When you are dealing with someone you are afraid of, or when you feel unsure of yourself.)
b) What are some situations where you think you do say no effectively? (e.g., When you feel sure of yourself.)

☆☆ Activity 2

Explain that you are going to roleplay being heckled and saying no to the heckler. Pick a child you feel comfortable with and model the complete roleplay. Then have the children choose partners that they are comfortable working with. Explain that each set of partners will have the experience of either saying no or hearing no four different times:

a) One partner heckles and listens to the other say no in an ineffective way, so that the heckler does not want to stop.
b) The same partner heckles and listens to the other say no in an effective way, so the heckler stops.
c) The partners then switch roles and repeat the two roleplays.

☆☆ Activity 3

Talk or write about the experience of being the heckler and the person who was being heckled.

Have the children answer these questions:

a) Which position did you like the best, being the heckler or being heckled? Why?
b) What did you like and why about the roleplay?
c) What didn't you like and why about the roleplay?
d) What did you learn about stopping someone from annoying you?

Ask them to share their writing with a partner and then with the whole group if they are willing.

☆☆ ACTIVITY 4

Have a discussion about what the children *would like to do* to someone who bullies or heckles them. What would they like to do to that person that they cannot do because it would get them into trouble?

Then suggest the following:

a) Draw a picture of what you would like to do to someone who bullies or heckles you.
b) Share your picture with a friend. Compare pictures. Find similarities and differences.
c) Share your picture with the whole group, if you are willing.

☆☆ ACTIVITY 5

Discuss what the children can do when someone bullies or heckles them.

a) What can they do that will get them in trouble?
b) What can they do that will not get them in trouble?
c) As a group make a list of appropriate actions to take when someone bullies or heckles.

☆☆ ACTIVITY 6

Make a list of all the things that are considered a heckle. Post the list where it can be referred to.

CHAPTER 6

MISTAKES: A TOOL FOR LEARNING

MISTAKES—EVERYONE MAKES THEM

"You didn't draw it right! That's not what a nose looks like!"

"It was awful! We had a spelling bee and I spelled 'vegetable' wrong. Everybody laughed. I never want to go to school again."

"Don't choose Carmen to be on our team! She can't hit the ball!"

How many times have you heard such responses to mistakes, directed at you or others, and felt that you just wanted to disappear forever? This is because in our society mistakes often result in accusations and blame leading to embarrassment, self-deprication, withdrawal, or denial.

A mistake is an error, a goof, something gone wrong. It could be a spelling or pronunciation error, a missed ball in a game of catch, or a losing move in a board game. Even very young children may already have developed an internal critic who tells them that they are bad for making mistakes, but one of the wonderful or tragic things about being human is that we *do* make mistakes. It is our job as educators to help students understand this and learn to value their own positive qualities no matter what happens.

Before learning about Creative Behavior, I was a caring teacher. I did not humiliate my students when they made errors, but I often cringed internally when mistakes were made. I thought errors were wrong, something to be avoided. I felt if only the children would try harder, they could avoid making them. Children grew under my care, but they did not learn that it was all right to make a mistake.

As I studied Creative Behavior, I learned new attitudes and new teaching methods. I realized that, under proper conditions, I could value my own errors and

see them as tools for learning. I had always empathized with and felt protective of children who made mistakes. With my new skills, I was able to help children learn *because* of their mistakes, rather than in spite of them.

Developing A Positive Attitude Toward Mistakes

In order to build a positive attitude toward mistakes a teacher must first create a safe environment characterized by trust and respect, with clear limits and immediate, respected consequences for all. Without basic trust in consistent surroundings, it is difficult for children to respond to a mistake as a positive learning experience. When faced with an error, children who do not feel safe hear their inner critic say 'I am a bad person,' rather than 'This is something that I have not yet learned.' Conflict and anxiety result from this self-condemnation. These feelings demand a child's attention so that no other learning can take place.

Not-Hypothesis

The **not-hypothesis**, a term developed by Eugene Sagan, states that often people are unable to succeed because of their fear of making a mistake. This fear immobilizes them because they internalize the making of a mistake as a self-accusation or 'I am bad.' Eugene suggested that the goal be changed so that success is inevitable. For example, if I were to use the not-hypothesis to help Alison learn a particularly hard spelling word, I would tell her to *not* spell the word correctly. Alison knows she can be successful at this so she lets go of her fear. At some point in trying to misspell the word, Alison will make an error, spell it properly, and experience great delight! What a wonderful thing to make a mistake.

In order to misspell a word, children need to be fairly clear about which letters are in it. This is valuable information for later on when the emphasis is changed, and the goal is to spell the word correctly except for one letter. In the wake of their relief, they let go of their fear, and recognize that they can feel good about themselves and what they are doing.

By changing the emphasis of a task so that success is assured, children begin to build confidence in themselves.

Margin of Error

Children often expect perfection of themselves. They expect to be able to never make a spelling error or miss a ball that is thrown to them. This is unrealistic, but there is a rational, helpful technique that can be used to change

this behavior. It is called giving yourself a **margin of error**.

A margin of error is the number of mistakes that you allow yourself to make without any self-degradation. This number can be changed, slowly decreasing it over a period of time. The idea is not to be perfect, but to start from a realistic point and improve. When you help children feel more comfortable with their mistakes, and so more comfortable in anticipation of making them, you can gradually help your students to look on their mistakes as learning tools rather than as a basis for putting themselves down.

The margin-of-error approach also has other benefits. Children who expect themselves to be perfect often have a difficult time relating to others socially. They continually point out other people's faults, snicker, or make snide comments about blunders until nobody wants to play with them. One of the reasons children do this is they do not want to be laughed at themselves when they make a mistake. Their strategy is to call attention to other people's mistakes before anyone can notice theirs.

Developing a margin of error for themselves can relieve them of the need for this behavior. If they can allow themselves to make mistakes without self-denigration, then they are more likely to allow their peers to make mistakes without abuse or disparagement. No one wants to play or associate with someone who is always belittling how a game is played or making insulting remarks.

Introducing the Idea of Margin of Error

When children feel they have some control over a situation, they feel less threatened. I begin to explain margin of error by asking children if they think I should yell or get mad at myself every time I make a mistake. They always tell me I should never get mad at myself just because of an error.

"Making a mistake is no big deal, Anne. Don't worry."

I say "I have never liked to make mistakes, but I have learned to accept them. I know that making mistakes is a normal, natural thing to do. How many of you have ever heard the saying, 'Learn from your mistakes'?"

The children respond with a show of hands or else clamor to tell me their stories and so show me they understand what I am talking about.

I continue, "If you're spending all of your energy on feeling bad because you've made a mistake, or trying to deny that you've made an error, then you can't learn from it. You might also then keep on making the same mistake over and over.

"By allowing yourself a certain number of errors every day in all areas, you'll end up feeling better about yourself and you'll learn more.

"This is what margin of error is all about," I tell them. "You are clear that it's OK for me to make a mistake. I'm not a bad person if I goof up. But how many of you, every time *you* make a mistake, think, 'Oh dear, I shouldn't have done that? Someone will laugh at me' or 'Someone won't like me'?"

Most, if not all, of the children admit to feeling embarrassed or ashamed if they make a mistake.

"When you give yourself a margin of error, you know it's all right for you to make a mistake."

Deciding What Is an Acceptable Margin of Error

To be valid, the margin of error should be set by the child. Yasuhiro, for example, feels secure in the computer room, but insecure on the handball court. By setting one margin of error for working with computers and a different, higher margin of error for playing handball, he acknowledges where he is in each area and gains control of his own learning.

Following are some examples of how I help children develop a margin of error.

- There are several daily jobs to be done in my room. One of them is to read the sign over the door that says: Students and teachers in this room all have a margin of error. This means at least once a day, I am reminded of my own margin of error and the children are reminded of theirs.
- I ask the children to predict how often they will spill paint or juice during the week. This allows them to feel it is OK to spill something occasionally.
- One year I had a group that had a particularly strong need to be outside, involved in large-muscle activities. They played so hard that they were always hitting the ball over the fence into the next yard. The batter wanted these always to be foul balls. The fielders wanted them to be out. We decided we should set limits for how many times the ball would go over the fence before there would be consequences. The group conferred and decided a batter could hit three foul balls over the fence before he or she was out.

Using Margin of Error To Improve Behavior

Since the process of setting a margin of error involves keeping track of numbers, it is easy for students to take credit for their progress. For example, children who are regularly late to school or day care might begin with a margin of error of eight tardies a month. They would not begin with a low figure of one or two tardies. That number is the final goal. At first they would try to reduce their margin of error number to six or seven times a month. By giving themselves a high but realistic margin of error to start with, they can more easily show improvement. Because they can keep track of their tardies themselves, they also can evaluate their progress without relying on information or judgment from the teacher.

One of my students, Sean, was always late to the center. He would find things to look at on the way from school, or he would stop and talk with his friends.

"It's OK to make mistakes. What was your margin of error? Did you use it up?"

Eventually he would show up. He knew we were concerned, and he was bothered by it. He made self-depreciating comments about himself and his lateness, but he continued to be tardy. Sean and I talked about his margin of error and being late. I pointed out that he had an average of eight tardies a month. We agreed that the first two months, he could be late eight times and not feel bad about himself. Then we would review what was happening. The first month, Sean was late eight times, but he did not put himself down. The second month, he was late six times. He was very proud of himself. I gave him a lot of credit for his accomplishment.

However, when we set the next margin of error, we decided that we would go for seven tardy times rather than six. My reasoning was that the six times might have been a fluke. I wanted Sean to have a high and realistic margin of error that he knew he could achieve and feel good about. This was more important than having a lower margin of error that might not be attainable. My goal was for him to feel he was a fine person even though he was tardy. The next month Sean's tardies fell to four. The following month he was tardy only once. From then on, he was tardy one or two times a month. We kept his margin of error at three just so he could continue to be proud of his achievement.

Another boy, Brandon, enjoyed getting attention by running through other

children's games. Simply telling him to stop did not change his behavior. To help him find an acceptable margin of error, I sat down privately with Brandon and talked about his behavior.

"Brandon, I know you like to disrupt games other people are playing," I said. "I've noticed that you do it two or three times in a row. You've said you don't like the trouble you get into, yet you can't seem to stop. I wonder if a margin of error would help you? You and I could decide on the number of times per day that you simply have to disrupt a game. You would still have to accept the consequences, but there wouldn't be so many consequences because eventually you wouldn't be doing it so often. Children wouldn't yell and scream at you so much. We can also find other ways for you to get attention. What do you think?"

Brandon thought this would be worth trying and set his first margin of error at three disruptions a day. I wanted him to try for a smaller number because I felt the disruptions were a real block to his making friends, but I accepted three as a realistic place to start. I continued to enforce the consequences whenever he disrupted a game because setting a margin of error does not mean the consequences of misbehavior are ignored. However, it was also very important to praise him genuinely for the times he did not disrupt a game. Whenever I saw him walking around a game rather than running through it, I took the opportunity to tell him how pleased I was with his conduct.

When Brandon was successful at meeting his first goal for margin of error, I helped him take credit for his accomplishment by giving him a pat on the back. Eventually he was able to decrease the number of times he disrupted a game. At the end of the year he drew two pictures. The first one was of himself running through a handball game. The second picture was of himself playing handball with a large group of children. "This is how I am now, Anne," he said, as he gave me the pictures "I like me better, and I've got lots more friends."

Using Margin of Error to Change an Attitude

Using margin of error can also mean working to change a child's attitude, rather than simply deciding on a specific number of acceptable errors. At the beginning of the year, Tony had few social skills. He did not have confidence in his ability to make friends, to participate in large-muscle activities, or to be successful in school. His interactions with children were limited to watching and pointing out what he saw as their errors. Together we worked on developing Tony's margin of error, which included such things as not catching the ball two out of three times, computing one out of three math problems incorrectly, and misspelling 3 out of 25 words. With Tony, I felt the number of mistakes he allowed himself was not as important as the fact that he knew that it was acceptable to make a m stake. I kept reinforcing the idea that it was OK to make an error. When Tony would report the result of his spelling test on Fridays, I would put my hand on Tony's back, smile at him, and say, "It's all right. You're doing just fine."

Tony is now a cheerful, outgoing child. He is eager to try new things and meet new challenges. Today, when Tony is playing catch and misses a ball I can hear him mutter to himself, "I've made another mistake. It's all right. I haven't used up my margin of error yet. I can even make some more, and it will still be OK." By talking to himself, Tony strengthens what he has learned—that it's normal to make errors. He does not have to feel bad about himself or what he has done. Instead he can feel pride in what he *can* do.

Sara startles newcomers with her delight when she makes a mistake. She claps her hands and sings, "Good for me! I'm not putting myself down 'cause I made a mistake." When I first introduced Sara to the idea of margin of error, she was unbelieving and shocked. I think she thought there might be something seriously wrong with my thought process. I persisted and complimented her when she made a mistake. The first time she felt comfortable making a mistake she was so excited. She ran up, threw her arms around me, and said, "Anne, I've just made a mistake, and I *know* it's OK. I feel so good I want to sing!"

"Why don't you?" I suggested. So ever since then, that is what she has done. She sings when she's pleased with her mistakes.

Sometimes it is necessary to go to this extreme to help children acknowledge their errors in a more positive way. But contrast this response to the jeering "Nyah, nyah, you made a mistake!" and I think you will agree it's a more productive way to respond.

Applying Margin of Error to Yourself

As a teacher, you are a model for children. You can help them believe that it is all right to make mistakes by acknowledging your own mistakes without disparaging yourself, and by reminding your students that a margin of error applies to you too.

When I am playing catch with Erica and miss the ball, she shouts out, "Oh, Anne, you dropped the ball!" I ask if she wants me to say that when she makes a mistake. Naturally, the answer is no. I remind her that I would prefer to be told in a way that helped me feel good about myself.

If I misspell a word or compute a math problem incorrectly while I am helping Roberto with his homework, he will usually point out my error to me. If, in the process of pointing out my error, Roberto helps me feel good about myself, I immediately thank him. I acknowledge that this mistake was within my margin of error. For example, a child might say, "Anne, I don't want you to put yourself down, but you need to look at (or think about) what you've just done (or said)."

If children try to put me down because of a mistake, I say that I do not like the style that they are using; they are trying to make me feel ashamed and I do not need to feel ashamed because I have a margin of error. Several children have used the technique of whispering to me so that others are not aware that I have goofed. I thank them, quietly correct my error if I can, and go on with what I am doing.

Sometimes it is exceedingly difficult to feel grateful when someone points out my error to me. It is very important, however, if the person has been caring and appropriate in the way he or she has told me, that I express my appreciation for the style in which the information was given. First of all, this is being a good role model for others; the children can learn from me. Secondly, the more I reinforce the fact that it is all right to make a mistake, the more children will begin to internalize this and not put themselves down for their own errors.

Doing Your Best versus Being Perfect

Children who are perfectionists expect criticism and rejection—from within or without—whenever they make a mistake. As a result, they are scared to try new things. Usually children do not identify their own internal critic as the source of their discomfort. They are only clear about their dislike of making any kind of errors, and they can only take credit for their accomplishments if they have achieved 100 percent of the goal they have set.

In Creative Behavior, we encourage children not to think about being perfect but to do their best. Trying to do their best means setting high but realistic standards and striving to do as well as possible. It means working very hard to achieve a specific goal. In trying to do their best academically, children work toward learning as many words as possible for a spelling test or understanding a math concept. In trying to do their best socially, children work toward asking for a toy rather than grabbing it or toward giving a friend positive, authentic feedback rather than pointing out what wasn't accomplished. If the goal is not reached, there may be disappointment, but there is no self-putdown. In this way, children can take credit for small successes on the way to the larger goal.

Parents often unwittingly aggravate the problem of perfectionism by pushing their children to be successful. Children regularly interpret the pushing as meaning they should always do better next time—that what they have accomplished is not good enough. In helping a child strive for excellence, adults typically focus on what the child has done that is incorrect or not complete, rather than helping the child take credit by emphasizing what is correct or well done. To help children overcome the fear of taking a risk and making a mistake, parents need to understand the difference between perfectionism and trying to do your best.

Children who want to be perfect can only fail. They have nothing to take credit for because they cannot reach their goal. If they make an error, they deny it or blame it on someone else or an outside event, but if they acknowledge their mistake, then their internal critic says 'I am bad' or 'I am a failure and no good.' It is a win-all or lose-everything situation, and they can only lose.

When children try to do their best and allow themselves a margin of error, they can remember and take credit for the times when they behaved appropriately.

If they ask three times and grab a toy without asking once, they have used their margin of error. They are not unduly anxious nor devastated by it. They are able to hear the teacher say that they have made a mistake without thinking that they are a bad person. This allows them to look at their behavior and learn from it, rather than to deprecate themselves in a way that stops or slows down the learning.

WORKING WITH PERFECTIONISM

Children learn to be perfectionists when parents, teachers, or significant others emphasize perfection. They feel that approval will come only when they achieve flawlessness, which is, of course, impossible. When children feel that they can please their parents or their teachers only if they are perfect, the anxiety aroused over a possible error is so distressing that their awareness of other events is diminished. They cannot savor or learn from what is going on around them. They miss many opportunities to grow, learn, and enjoy.

For example, Yasuhiro is intent on getting his math homework done. He is not sure what to do, but he does not want anyone to know he is having difficulty. Two of his classmates are collaborating on the same problems. If all three of them worked together, they could learn from each other. Yasuhiro might also realize that he knows *some* of the steps to solve the problems, even if he does not know all of them.

Bri can only focus on getting to another level in Nintendo. She is oblivious to what is around her so she does not respond when a special, serve-yourself snack is brought out. She loses out on an opportunity to enjoy an interaction with her friends.

Perfectionists begin to have tunnel vision, which allows them to focus only on the negative aspects of their mistakes. If Jake loses a game of checkers or cards, he gets furious at himself. He goes over and over the moves he made that lost him the game, berating himself for making those moves. He gets angry at the person who won. He does not look at his errors to see how he might do something differently another time. He does not see the possibility that an error is information or a tool for learning, to be used in making another attempt or a different choice.

A limit in my room is that you must treat yourself and others with respect. If children cannot accept this limit, they know they will have to experience the consequences of their actions. I tell my students that I will never make fun of them when they make a mistake. I will also not allow others to taunt them for making errors. I follow through by enforcing this limit so that trust and respect are built. If I do slip, and either they or I feel I have humiliated them, I apologize to them sincerely in private and then make a public apology.

Helping Children Enjoy Making Mistakes

I use two specific lessons to help change children's attitudes about perfection and mistakes. They illustrate that you can even take pleasure in making mistakes.

Helping Children Overcome Perfectionism

In the first lesson, developed by Joan Dodd, a Creative Behavior teacher, and Nell Sinton, an artist, errors are exaggerated and embellished. Exaggerations in art are funny and children can appreciate the humor. The task in this lesson is to draw a portrait of the teacher. Whenever the children feel they have drawn something wrong or made a mistake, they are directed to make the mistake even larger or to decorate it. For example, if they don't like the nose they have drawn, they are to expand the mistake by making the nose much larger than was originally intended or decorating it with anything that comes to mind. If they don't like the eyes or ears, they are to embellish them with something, such as flowers, leaves, or a repeated pattern, or make them bigger.

I invited Margot Biestman, another Creative Behavior teacher, artist, and author, to come to my class and teach this lesson. The children drew portraits of Margot or me. They loved the lesson and produced some original and delightful work. Our portraits had flowers and airplanes coming out of our ears. One girl had problems with drawing my face, so she made all of my features into letters and used different colors on all them. Margot's glasses hung on a cord like a necklace around her neck. They were hard to draw. Most children embellished her glasses and in one picture, they hung so low they touched the floor. Students talked about their pleasure in this lesson for a long time and continually mentioned what a relief it was to see a mistake as an opportunity for being creative.

Eyes-Closed, Unaccustomed-Hand Drawing

In the second lesson—an antidote for perfectionism—the children draw with their eyes closed, using their unaccustomed hand.* Since no one can possibly draw a perfect picture this way, the children's expectations of themselves are reasonable. These drawings are usually authentic expressions of the children's feelings.

Carmen gave me a wonderful gift on her last day at the center. It was a self-portrait. Drawing with her eyes closed and using her crayon in her unaccustomed hand, she made a self-portrait full of life, mischief, and excitement. I have it on the wall paired with her initial self-portrait which was done on her first day in my

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* See p. 118 for specific instructions.

group. That picture was tight, controlled, and not very authentic. By comparing the two pictures, I have one measure of Carmen's growth.

I show the children that I really value this lesson by participating in it myself.

DEVELOPING APPROPRIATE RESPONSES TO MISTAKES

When we discuss mistakes, I ask the children what they do *not* want to hear as a response. They are quite clear and immediately give examples such as "You're dumb!" or "Stupid, can't you do anything right?" or "Honestly, everyone knows how to do that! It's so simple. Why can't you do it?" They have a much harder time developing a list of what they *would* like to hear. They know they want the person to be kind or caring and not laugh at them, but they often do not know the specific words they want to hear.

I have learned that the tone and quality of voice are much more important to children than what is actually said. They all agree that the words "You've made a mistake" are acceptable when said in a caring voice. The same words, said in an accusatory way, are not acceptable because they are a put-down. When the discussion is finished, we post a list of the suitable responses that the group agrees on so that they are readily available.

Following are some responses my groups have come up with, with the stipulation that when they are said, the tone of voice and expression are compassionate:

- "Whoops, you've made a mistake."
- "I think you need to go back and check that again."
- "I'm sorry that happened."

HELPING CHILDREN GAIN PERSPECTIVE

THE FRIENDLY OBSERVER

A mistake can be such a little thing to one who is watching. To the person who made it, however, it can take on enormous proportions. The discrepancy between what perfectionists experience when they make mistakes and what is seen by an observer is often huge. A friendly observer can do wonders in helping children view themselves less critically and more realistically.

One day Sandya arrived at the center crying, and Jenny was trying to console her. When I asked what had happened, Jenny explained that Sandya had given a

book talk for reading class in school and felt she had done poorly. Jenny kept saying over and over, that as far as she was concerned, Sandya had done a good job. I asked Sandya if she heard what Jenny was saying, and she said no. I asked Jenny to repeat her statement and then asked Sandya to repeat what she heard. Sandya finally was able to take credit for some of the things she did well rather than to continue focusing only on her mistakes.

Sandya felt she had not done a perfect job; therefore, she had done nothing right. It was only with the help of Jenny, who kept reassuring her, that Sandya was able to look at her presentation as acceptable and begin to take credit for what she had done well. If Jenny had not been there, Sandya would have internalized her distress as 'I am a bad person because I made a mistake.' Because of Jenny's observation and caring, Sandya was able to be more realistic about the experience.

Jenny and Sandya are good friends, consequently Sandya was more likely to believe what Jenny said. She was only able to hear a little bit of information at a time, however, because she was so certain that since her presentation had not been completely perfect, none of it was good. It is up to you as a teacher to help children like Sandya first recognize the parts they have done well before they look at the parts that need improving.

When children are sure everything is wrong, it helps to have them state exactly what they think is wrong and why. Often when they start enumerating a list of specific mistakes, they realize that the list is not as long as they first imagined. They can find something they did right. As soon as they know they have done something correctly, then they can begin to take credit for that part of their work.

Giving Feedback

When children don't give themselves a margin of error, it is difficult to give them feedback that they can hear and understand. These children want to be told they are doing a great job, whether they are working on a homework assignment, making a model airplane, playing a piece on the piano, drawing a picture, or interacting with others. However, when someone gives them this information they do not always believe it because they are aware of the imperfections in their performance.

Children need to have feedback not only when they have done a good job but also when they have made a mistake. If they only hear praise, they will lose trust and respect for the person giving the feedback, and they may use that as a way to put themselves down. They may think that person does not value them enough to be honest, therefore they must not be very worthy themselves. They may also put down the person who praised them, believing him or her to be inauthentic.

Children need to be told about their mistakes, so that they have an opportunity to change, but they need to be told in a way that is nonthreatening and helps them

maintain their self-esteem. When I have a suggestion for a change and I think a child might take it in a negative way, I think of it as a sandwich. If there is too much in the sandwich, it is too hard to put into your mouth for the first bite. You cannot eat it. Feedback works the same way. In order to incorporate and use information, a person has to be able to hear it. Therefore I give only one suggestion for change at a time, and I put it between one or two positive statements that I know the student can hear more easily.

For example, I might say, "Larry, there are two good improvements about your behavior and one problem that I've noticed. Which would you like to hear first?" Most children want to hear a positive statement first. Larry is no exception, so I say, "I really like the way you have been settling down when you arrive at the center. Do you remember when you first started coming here, you had such a hard time finding something appropriate to do? I want to give you a lot of credit for your growth. Do you remember how you felt then?" By stopping and giving Larry a chance to respond, I allow him time to hear my pleasure in his progress which means he can then begin to integrate this information. I continue by saying, "Now I'm concerned about how you're giving your mom a hard time when she comes to pick you up. Do you know what I'm talking about?"

The teacher is reassuring this girl that it is all right to be upset. She can take as much time as she needs to collect herself.

Larry may or may not acknowledge the problem. "What do you think we could do to make it easier for you and your mom to leave when she comes?" If Larry doesn't have an idea I might suggest something, such as warning him a few minutes before going home time, so that he is more prepared for his mother's arrival. If Larry moves away from me at this point because he is uncomfortable or has had enough, that is all right. I will find him later and give him my other piece of authentic, positive feedback.

In this context of approval, a suggestion for change is less threatening. Children can also then choose which information they want to hear first, the positive feedback or the suggestion for change.

Being Authentic

For students to feel safe in your room and develop trust and respect for you, it is important for you to be authentic in your responses. If you say it is all right to make a mistake and then, a few minutes later, turn around and berate someone for making an error, children will know it is *not* all right with you when they make a mistake. If you say "I'm so sorry that happened," and there's glee in your voice because one of your least favorite students has made a goof, no one will believe you. Worse too, you give the signal to children, it is all right to make fun of someone when they do make a mistake.

Children can hear the authenticity or inauthenticity in your voice. If caring and acceptance are there when you talk about mistakes, others will hear it. Children can tell very easily whether or not a person is being honest. The honest, authentic person is believable; the inauthentic person is not.

Resistance to Change —A Brief Note

Despite everything you say or do, you may still have children who seem stuck in their negative attitudes. This resistance comes from not only the fear of the internal, critical voice that says 'You're a bad person' when you make a mistake. It also comes from fear of failure if there is excessive parental pressure. If children are resisting a change, be careful. If you force them, you will probably negate any good the new experience could provide. One reason children often have such trouble in elementary school is because they are resistant. Teachers have a curriculum to present and a lesson plan to cover, so they feel more pressured and unable to take the time to deal with resistance. In a center, you will have more time to deal positively with the problem.

You can help your students work through and overcome their resistance by giving them alternatives. You can teach them to fight their internal critic by learning to disregard that awful voice. You can reinforce your message by constantly telling them that they, and you, have a margin of error, that it is all right to make a mistake, and they are not bad for making a mistake. Eventually they may begin to believe you, and their resistance will diminish. Then they will be able to take credit for their small gains and so be able to build toward larger growth steps.

ENLISTING PARENTS' SUPPORT

Although you can have a great deal of influence over a child's attitudes while he or she is at the center, your progress will be limited unless you enlist the parents' support. Sometimes a child who is resistant or stuck is simply responding to the louder messages from home. The story of Carmen illustrates what can happen. In second grade she would vomit when presented with a task that she feared or thought she might fail at. She stopped vomiting in third grade, but her elementary school teacher reported she had become very compulsive; nothing she did was ever good enough in her own estimation. She was the best reader, the top math student, and had the most beautiful handwriting in the class, but her father wanted her to be perfect and that was unobtainable. She was quiet and withdrawn in the center, only participating in activities she was sure she would succeed at.

Through informal conversations and formal, planned conferences with Carmen and her parents, I was able to help them understand that Carmen's goals were unrealistic and needed to be revised. Carmen's parents wanted her to work hard at school, to try to do her best. I pointed out how the fear of failure was preventing her from learning and trying new things. Hearing this, they tried to support her successes and help Carmen celebrate them. Thus she could continue to learn rather than be defeated when she was not perfect. Carmen's parents began to look at the effort Carmen put into her assignments, rather than expecting her to get a perfect paper all the time. They began to praise her for her effort, rather than her grade.

Parents will often be able to understand if you explain the situation clearly and positively. For example, "Leo has been dreadfully upset all afternoon. He didn't want to join in the kickball game and that's usually his favorite activity. He told me he was upset because he missed one problem on his math test. When he showed me his test, I saw that he knows how to do division, even though he made a mistake. But he couldn't hear me when I pointed that out or when I said that he did beautifully on those hard story problems. I'm concerned that he doesn't recognize how well he's doing because he's only focusing on what he's doing wrong rather than what he's doing right. I'm concerned that if he only focuses on what he can't do, his progress will be limited. Neither of us want that."

Such a clear statement can make you and the parents a team, working together to help their child. You both want what is best for their child. You bring your professional knowledge and skills, and the parents bring their knowledge, caring, and commitment. Together you can work wonders. By initiating a dialogue, by being clear about your concerns, and by listening to their responses, you let them know that you are working with them, not against them.

Improvement Counts: Taking Credit

We all like to think that we are doing a good job whether that job is to pick up the art area, play a game, write a report, or settle a disagreement. However along with the message that we are bad when we make mistakes, many of us have been brought up to believe that to take credit for our accomplishments is conceited, bragging, or "blowing your own horn." Neither of these attitudes promotes a healthy self-esteem. It is as natural for us to do well at some things as it is to make mistakes at others, and a balanced self-image must be based on our acceptance and acknowledgment of both.

Taking credit is acknowledging and accepting both successes and failures in a healthy way. This is essential to learning. By recognizing what they have accomplished, children build confidence to try again, or try something new. When children share something they have learned or done with a good friend or teacher, the sharing adds value to achievement. Perfectionists have great difficulty taking credit for anything. By learning to acknowledge the satisfying parts of an event or piece of work, perfectionists begin to get over feeling a single mistake ruins everything that they have done. They can begin to take pleasure from partial success. When children learn to take credit, they gain perspective on what they have done well. Then they are no longer perfectionists!

People who are unable to take credit and integrate their actions cannot move forward in their development or learning. They are either stuck believing they cannot succeed because they are not perfect, or they have to deny their mistakes and pretend they are perfect. Either way, they cannot evaluate what they have done well, what needs changing, and how to change it.

In order to help children integrate and accept their progress, I continually ask them if they are willing to take credit for little, seemingly insignificant, specific actions. Children tend to overlook the small positive things they do. They feel that those actions are not very important. They think in terms of perfect achievements and disastrous failures and don't see that every small improvement is part of the foundation of success on which to build further learning.

When I am teaching children about mistakes, I often tell them the story of the half-full glass of water: Two people saw a glass of water. One of them said, "Oh, I don't want that glass. It's half empty." The other person looked at the same glass and said, "How wonderful! That glass is half full!" The two people had different points of view and ended up having different experiences.

Children have a choice about how they look at the glass of water or at a mistake. They can think of a mistake as a cause for self-put down or as a positive force. When children are helped to accept mistakes as reasonable, as part of being human, their self-esteem increases. When children know that mistakes are a tool for learning, they have a great gift indeed.

Questions and Exercises

Do these exercises only if you are willing. If you are not willing to do them, please provide yourself with an alternate assignment or write about why you are not willing to do the exercises.

☆ Exercise 1

Think about a time when you made a mistake and felt bad about it. What happened?

a) What might someone have said to make you feel worse?
b) What might someone have said to make you feel better?
c) What would you have liked someone to say?
d) Share your thinking with a partner. Discuss how you can use what you have learned when you work with children.
e) Share part or all of your discussion with the whole group, if you are willing.

☆ Exercise 2

Think about a time when you made a mistake and you felt all right about making it.

a) What happened?
b) What was the difference between this mistake and the mistake you thought of in #1? Why did you feel OK about this one but not about the other one?
c) Share your thinking with a partner. Discuss how you can use what you have learned when you work with children.
d) Share part or all of your discussion with the whole group, if you are willing.

☆ Exercise 3

Roleplay one or more of the following situations:

➡ A child has spilled some paint at the easel or art table. A teacher or another child points this out as a mistake.
➡ A group of children are waiting in line to play hand ball. Another child joins them by going directly to the front of the line.
➡ A child has dressed a doll with the doll's clothes on backwards.

For each situation each partner should take the role of mistake-maker and positive mistake-finder, mistake-maker and negative mistake-finder (a total of four different roles).

a) Discuss with a partner how it felt to be the mistake-maker and the mistake-finder.
b) How were the two positions the same and how were they different?
c) Share your discussion with another partnership.
d) Share part or all of your discussion with the whole group, if you are willing.

☆ EXERCISE 4

Think of a specific situation where you make errors or do something that bothers someone else and where you are willing to try and make some changes. Examples might be making spelling errors when writing letters, forgetting to pick up your clothes, or leaving your books or papers where someone else has to move them.

a) Give yourself a margin of error for the situation, e.g., three spelling errors per letter or forgetting to pick up your clothes three times a week. Make your margin of error challenging but definitely attainable.
b) Decide the period of time you want to keep track of your margin of error—one day, two days, three days, a week, etc.
c) Tell your margin of error to a friend. Report back within a week whether or not you have used up your margin of error.
d) If you have not used up your margin of error, how does that make you feel?
e) If you have used up your margin of error, how does that make you feel?
f) If you have gone over your margin of error, how does that make you feel?
g) Share what has happened and how you felt about it with a partner. Discuss how you can use what you have learned when you work with children.
h) Share part or all of your discussion with the whole group, if you are willing.

Activities to do with Children

☆☆ Activity 1

Do a drawing with your eyes closed, using your unaccustomed hand. The focus will be on making a mistake.

Give the following instructions to an individual child, small groups, or the whole group.

- ➡ Get in a comfortable position. Close or hide your eyes. If you are not willing to do this, be aware that you will have a different experience from the children who do. (Pause)
- ➡ Begin to think about how you felt when you went to school today. (Pause) How were you feeling? (Pause) What went well at school today? (Pause) How did you feel about that? (Pause) What didn't go well at school today? (Pause) How did you feel about that? (Pause) How did you feel when you came to the center? (Pause)
- ➡ Think about a mistake you made either today or sometime this week. It can be a mistake you made here at the center, or at school, or at home. If you cannot remember a mistake that you have made, think about a mistake someone you know made. (Pause) How did you feel after you made the mistake? (Pause)
- ➡ Think of a color that best represents how you feel. Stick with the first color that comes to mind.
- ➡ I'm going to ask you to open your eyes and get that color of crayon or chalk. If you can't find that specific color, choose a color that is close to it. Then wait for further directions.
- ➡ When you are ready, put the crayon or chalk in your unaccustomed hand, the hand you do not usually draw with. Close your eyes and draw a picture of how you felt when you made a mistake. Keep your eyes closed until you have completed the picture. When you open your eyes, that means you are finished.
- ➡ Those of you who want to share your pictures, may. If you don't want to share, you don't have to.

☆☆ Activity 2

Discus with the children how they feel about being told they have made a mistake.

Ask the children to think about making a mistake. What do they not want someone to say? Give them some time to think. Ask for volunteers to share their

responses with the group. Usually someone is willing to start talking. This gets other children to join in. If no one is willing to start, you start by telling what you do not want someone to say to you when you have made a mistake. Let everyone who wants to contribute do so. If someone is not willing to share, that is all right.

After talking about what they do not want to hear, have the children think about what they would like to hear. Usually children are very clear about what they do not want to hear, they are much less clear about what they do want to hear. This discussion can take place immediately after the previous one, later in the day, or the next day. It depends on your time schedule. Use the same procedure as in the previous discussion. Anyone who has something to say should have time to say it. Anyone who doesn't want to say anything can just listen.

CHAPTER 7

INTEGRATION

"I can't remember how to make the tape player work! What did Sara say to do?"

"I've lost my jacket! Has anyone seen my jacket?"

"Where'd I put my glasses? Somebody's taken 'em. I had 'em just a minute ago."

When you hear children talking like this, their voices rising steadily in pitch, you know they are frustrated and anxious. Things are not going right for them. As a Creative Behavior teacher, you would also recognize that the source of the problem is not memory, a jacket, or a pair of glasses. You would recognize that these children are off-balance—they have become unintegrated. They have taken in too much information, done too much, and not had the time to absorb their experiences. You would understand that finding the glasses will not solve the problem. These children need an internal kind of help before they will be able to move on.

Emphasis on the essential importance of this process of integration is one of the factors that distinguishes Creative Behavior from other programs aimed at increasing self-esteem. According to the Sagans, unless experiences have been thoroughly absorbed, the individual goes on feeling more and more scattered—and therefore less able to function and less able to feel good. While integration also occurs naturally, they believe it is too important a part of learning and the development of a positive self-concept to leave to chance.

What is Integration?

The ability to integrate information and experiences is what separates humans from machines. The knowledge we take in does not come in bits and bites. We are constantly reviewing and fitting together new and old information, categorizing, comparing, and moving on. In Creative Behavior teaching you externalize this process to help children assimilate the important emotional and intellectual aspects of an experience so that they become part of their knowledge and self-concept.

In order to really integrate an experience or some new knowledge, the person must acknowledge what has occurred. Experience has shown that this kind of credit taking is most effective when it takes place with the support of a significant other. When you reflect on an important event and how you felt about what happened, you are integrating. If you describe this experience to a friend, you further integrate your experience. If that friend is someone you trust and respect you are more likely to believe any feedback you receive. The validation that comes from a friend helping you to acknowledge your experience is important to integration. Knowledge seems to sink in better and is more solid when it is shared.

Integration does not involve the introduction of new knowledge. Integration is the assimilation of experiences that have already occurred so that they can be used to further learning and growth. For example, I wanted to help Lynne integrate her birthday. Consequently I did not distract her by talking about Tony's new toy airplane and where he was going to fly it this weekend. Instead I talked to her about what she had done on other birthdays, what she was looking forward to about this one, what presents she wanted and what she expected to receive, and/or what she thought she would like and not like about being 10 years old. To help Lynne take credit and integrate, I kept the focus on her birthday without bringing in any new material.

As a teacher you can help children integrate in informal ways, as I did with Lynne. You can also encourage and develop their integration skills through planned exercises and activities. While these exercises may seem very simple and obvious, this apparent simplicity is deceiving. When children or adults sincerely respond to an integration assignment, what they really understand about the experience being examined becomes apparent to *them*. This highly personal internal understanding frees them so that they are no longer reliant on someone else's interpretation of the experience.

When you take a test, the assumption is that there are correct answers to the questions. With integration, there are no right answers. People have to dig out the information and the answers for themselves. By doing this, they take responsibility for what they have learned, what they have done, and how they feel about it.

THE PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF INTEGRATION

The purpose of integration is to incorporate emotions, attitudes, responses, experiences, concepts, and skills into yourself so your whole self is enhanced or made stronger. When you incorporate what you have learned or how you feel about it into yourself, the new knowledge becomes a source of energy for you. It is available and can be used in the future. If you integrate an experience, you don't have to keep repeating it over and over again to relearn the lesson.

For example, Ibrahim is a good handball player. When he plays against Arturo he always wins, but Arturo doesn't like to lose and often will not leave the court when he is out. If Ibrahim has integrated this fact, he knows that when he plays with Arturo he may have trouble continuing his game. It then becomes his choice to play with Arturo or not.

In addition to helping children retain information, integration encourages analytical thinking. By asking children to explain why they liked or didn't like something, they are challenged to come up with reasons. At first students may say what they think you, as a teacher, want to hear; however, with practice and positive reinforcement their reasons will eventually become their own.

Transfer of knowledge from one area to another is a further benefit of integration. If Ibrahim has integrated the fact that Arturo has a difficult time losing at handball, he may be able to transfer this awareness to his relationship with Millicent. If she has a temper tantrum because she has lost a game, Ibrahim can come to the correct conclusion that both Arturo and Millicent have trouble with losing. Because he understands that he has a choice about playing with Arturo, he also can figure out how to take care of himself with Millicent by deciding whether he wants to play with her or not.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THERE IS NO INTEGRATION

As I have said, the process of integration can be compared to digestion. When food goes undigested it is not transformed into energy. The body cannot use what it has taken in, and this undigested food may actually detract from the proper functioning of the organism until it is passed off as waste material. Experiences that are collected but not integrated—not made part of the self-system or the whole—may also detract from the proper functioning of the person until they are forgotten or put aside.

For example, when I attend a workshop, I get many good ideas. Naturally I want to share them with my students. However, if I put out a new art project every day, introducing completely different materials, with no connection between the lessons, it does not matter how great these ideas were. The children acquire interesting, separate experiences, but that is the extent of their growth. They will

not be able to use the ideas later on because they will not have integrated what they have learned. They are moved so quickly from one experience to another that they have no time to attach their new information to old knowledge, thus making it a part of themselves. They have no opportunity to explore and discover on their own.

You might be surprised at how much the quality of your teaching will improve if you help children integrate. When children are not integrated they become ruder, noisier, more anxious, more disruptive, and/or more prone to heckle or fight. Some unintegrated children will resist any directions you give them. Others become overloaded; their eyes look unfocused and they do not respond when spoken to. In short, unintegrated children are more difficult to work with than integrated ones.

For example, if Ibrahim has not integrated that Arturo has trouble losing, he does not have the information necessary for making a decision about whether to play handball with Arturo or do something else. An unintegrated Ibrahim might continue to play handball with Arturo and spend a lot of time and energy trying to get him off the court. He would not remember why Arturo won't leave when his turn is over.

Katrina is the type of child who, when she decides what she wants to do, she wants to do it now. She is not able to wait. If she wants to cut out paper dolls and all the scissors are being used, she nags, heckles, or makes such a nuisance of herself that you may be ready to go out and buy a pair of scissors just for her. Instead you should recognize that Katrina needs to be integrated. She needs to talk, write, or draw about why it is so important for her to cut paper dolls now. She also needs to talk, write, or draw about what is happening in her life that might be important or scary for her. Katrina's frantic insistence on cutting out paper dolls may be a cover-up for something else. By helping her integrate th many different things that are occurring, you can decrease her anxiety and increase her willingness to adapt or accommodate herself to the normal give-and-take needed in a center.

This is not to say that integration will solve all the problems of anxious, fearful, or resistant children. Some of the problems may have other sources, but many problems that arise in the center can be solved through integration.

Healthy and Unhealthy Integration

Unfortunately just the fact that you, as a teacher, decide to focus on integration does not ensure a positive self-concept for your students. Children can integrate in either a healthy way or an unhealthy way.

For example, after competing in the local Bike Roadeo, Stacy told her friend Kyra: "I'm happy that I got second prize for knowing how to fix my bike, but I wish I'd gotten first prize in the safety division. All I got was a ribbon for participating. Maybe next year I'll do better." Stacy and Kyra then discussed different bike stories. A few days later Stacy told me she had decided she will continue working towards a first-place ribbon in safety. In this instance Stacy integrated her experience

in a healthy way. She was clear about what she liked and didn't like about the experience and understood her reasons for feeling that way.

In fact, Stacy went on to experience another benefit of integration: she was able to transfer what she learned from the Roadeo to another situation and teach someone else about it. When she heard that her friend Lamoya was learning how to ride a bike, Stacy offered to help her. She not only showed Lamoya how to balance herself so she would not fall off, she went over the basic safety rules with her. By helping Lamoya learn about bicycles, Stacy solidified her own knowledge in a way that will help her achieve her goal of winning first prize in safety next year. When Lamoya learned how to ride her bicycle, she and Stacy rode to the store to get ice cream cones to help them celebrate their accomplishments.

Stacy could have integrated this same experience in an unhealthy way. She could have said to Kyra, "I've been to the Bike Roadeo and I did such a *fantastic* job. I got second place. I should have gotten first place in safety, but the judges wanted to give it to a boy. Anyway, I know so much about riding a bike that I can ride down the street with my eyes closed!" In this scenario Stacy sounds like she feels good about her experience but underneath her omnipotent boasting she would probably be putting herself down for not getting a first-place ribbon. Bravado is often a cover-up for poor self-esteem.

This kind of distorted response can have further consequences as well. By not honestly recognizing that she needs to improve her knowledge of safety, Stacy may be setting herself up for an accident. She is overlooking the fact that her second-place ribbon was in bike repair and that no prize allows someone to neglect normal safety precautions. In this frame of mind Stacy is not only failing to acknowledge facts and her true feelings, she also shuts out opportunities. Stacy needs to be first so badly that if Kyra asked her to show her how to change a tire, Stacy might not want to do it. She might be thinking ahead to the next Roadeo and wondering if Kyra would compete with her and win.

To help prevent unhealthy integration, mutual trust and respect need to be established between you and the child. Then you can give authentic feedback in a caring way that helps each child keep in touch with reality. If trust and respect have not been established, your feedback may not be believed, which can lead to further unhealthy integration.

ACTIVITIES THAT PROMOTE INTEGRATION

THE TEACHER'S ROLE

Developing integration assignments is exciting because the results are so individual and valuable. I try to use a variety of activities to integrate children

because each child has a unique style of learning and what works with one may not work with another. My assignments usually ask them to focus on what they liked and didn't like about a specific event or assignment and their reasons for feeling that way. We also examine similarities and differences, alternatives that were available to them, and whether these alternatives would create a better or worse situation for them.

There are several skills that you can use to facilitate integration. All of them depend on the willingness of the child to participate. If children are forced to share something they have made or feel they have to ask for feedback, the experience becomes inauthentic, and the integration that does take place is often unhealthy or negative. When you introduce these concepts, you should be sure the children know that they do have alternatives, such as saying no to an assignment, choosing what would be more appropriate for them, and then writing or drawing about that.

Authenticity

Teachers sometimes develop a habit of giving praise as feedback without really meaning it. There may be times when you want to say to children "That was the most wonderful thing I've ever seen" to make them feel good about themselves. However, being inauthentic is not helpful to students. Recent research into praise, reviewed by Randy Hitz and Amy Driscoll,[10] shows that manipulative praise often has negative effects and does not foster a positive self-concept. Inauthenticity can be very damaging, both to the teller and to the hearer. It is not the way to build an atmosphere of trust and respect. It is important to model giving authentic feedback so that the children will learn this skill.

Action—Writing, Drawing, Drama, Discussion

You can help children to integrate their experiences through a wide variety of music, dance, art, drama, and writing activities as well as through discussions. This process works with individuals or groups of all sizes. Verbal communication skills are needed, but otherwise children of any age can participate. The more actively and authentically involved the children are, the more effective the integration will be.

I prefer art, drama, and writing integration activities, because I am most skilled in these areas. The advantage of having students write their responses rather than talk about them is that every child has a chance to participate and do some

[10] Randy Hitz & Amy Driscoll. "Praise or Encouragement? New Insights Into Praise. Implications for Early Childhood Teachers." *Young Children*. (Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children, July 1988): Vol. 43.

To facilitate integration it's important to share thoughts and feelings with a friend.

integrating. The children may not write their responses to all of the questions, but they will have thought about them. I have found that when I lead a discussion, unless I am very careful, one or two children do all the talking while the rest of the children just listen or daydream. If children don't participate, then they don't integrate their experience.

SHARING

Sharing a thought with friends or showing them an art product is important because it solidifies the children's learning experience. It plays a vital role in improving self-esteem because sharing provides an opportunity for children to receive authentic, positive feedback and experience the satisfaction or pleasure that enables them to risk the next step in learning. The action of saying aloud what they think or feel and having it heard and respected by someone important to them enables children to believe what they have said. The validation from this communication also helps quiet the internal critic's voice that asserts 'My work is no good' or 'I'm no good because I'm not doing good enough work.'

When children are sharing their creative work, be it drawing, writing, or drama, it is important to give enough time to the sharing process so that they come to value the credit taking and feedback. I also set up ground rules for sharing so that the child who is presenting work is not laughed at in a mean way, and everyone is clear that there will be immediate consequences for anyone who does that or makes a deprecating comment.

In the beginning of the year children will be shyer and less willing to share, so this activity may take only a few minutes; nevertheless I keep offering them the opportunity. I often have children start by sharing their work with a partner. This is less scary than sharing in front of the whole group. If they are not ready to share, I don't push them.

Getting Feedback

I give tips to the group on how to ask for feedback. I tell the children they can ask for one piece of feedback from the group. Children who want to give feedback raise their hand as a signal that they have something to say. Children getting feedback look around them so they are aware of all the children who have their hands up. This way they know their range of choices. Then they think about who they want the feedback from. Do they want it from a special friend or from someone else? This process can have surprising results and benefits. For example, at the beginning of the year Shanta had a difficult time making friends. She was bossy and not willing to listen to other children when they were playing; however, she gave excellent, authentic feedback in a group situation. I helped her take credit for this, and gradually the children began to recognize her talent and ask her for feedback. After integrating her skill, Shanta was able to apply this style to other interactions, and it helped her improve her relationships.

Fear of Feedback

Many students are threatened by the thought of sharing their work with someone else because they feel vulnerable. They don't want to read their writing or show their art work, because they are afraid of getting unasked-for, negative responses, such as being laughed at or being thought of as dumb by their peers or the teacher. I often see this fear at the beginning of the year, when a child does not yet feel safe in my group. Sometimes children are also afraid of hearing something more positive than they can believe. All these children need time to move at their own pace.

If children are not yet ready to share their thoughts, opinions, or work with a group, they need opportunities to say no, to have that statement heard and respected, and to be able to wait until they gain more confidence and strength before

they share. Being forced or talked into participating when they are not ready may increase their resistance or add to a sense of inadequacy. If children act like they want the group to see their picture but are not quite ready to show it themselves, I often ask if they would like me to hold the picture or read the story they have written. This seems to be a comfortable bridge for shy children.

Integrating Feedback

When I discuss feedback with the children, I always remind them that it is just another person's opinion. They have a choice about whether they believe the feedback or not. This is a further step in the integration process, essential if they are going to change their self-image. It too can happen in a healthy or unhealthy way.

GIVING FEEDBACK

In the beginning of the year I carefully explain why sharing and feedback are important to me. I tell children it is their job to give only positive, specific feedback about what they like and/or why they like it.

Feedback can be factual or emotional. For example children might say: "I like the bright red mountains" or "I like how you write stories because yours are really scary, and I like to be scared by stories" or "When you showed that picture, it helped me to remember when I was at the beach. I had a good time there and I like to remember it."

I do not allow students to give negative feedback or criticism because when they do, it usually is a put-down. Constructive criticism is reserved for me, as the teacher. It is extremely difficult to give suggestions for change and not hurt the feelings of the writer, artist, or performer. When children feel put down by criticism, they often give up. Many stop sharing completely. These children lose a chance to integrate, and the group loses the good ideas of that child.

I tell children that if they feel it is essential to share their negative feedback, they can tell me privately, either by talking to me or by writing me a note. By providing a vehicle for them to give negative feedback, I protect everyone. I make it clear that when negative feedback is given directly it is a put-down and results in consequences just like any other put-down.

The Importance of Timing

Sometimes students are not ready for feedback. It may be they feel they do not deserve it, or they have heard too much and they cannot handle any more information. I label this condition of not being able to absorb any more as overload.

Judging when a student is ready or not ready to receive feedback can be difficult. Often the student I particularly want to give feedback to cannot hear it, so

I have to be patient and wait. For example, Jomo was extremely shy and quiet. He had a lot of good ideas but not much confidence in what he said. One day I was thrilled when he asked to share in front of the group. I was even more thrilled when he asked Sean to stand beside him as his support. He had been on a trip with his family, he told us, and had brought back some souvenirs. His excitement overcame his fear of speaking out and, with Sean's help, he was able to communicate the highlights of his weekend. He did not ask for any feedback, but he heard the excitement in the children's voices as they asked questions. He saw the pleasure on their faces as they looked at his mementos. This experience did a lot to enhance his self esteem.

I wanted to give Jomo feedback about how pleased I was that he shared his weekend experience with the group and, that on top of that, he used Sean as support. But he had gotten enough from the class and from the process of sharing. My feedback could wait.

Support

One of the reasons Jomo was able to share was because he had support. Support can take many forms, from standing alongside a friend who is sharing with a group to going along with a friend who has to face a difficult confrontation. It can mean having a friend sit with you while you do your math homework to help you stick with an unpleasant task. Or it can involve listening and giving feedback while a friend complains and takes credit and then taking your turn to complain and take credit. Being good support can also mean just talking with someone about what is important to each of you or enjoying an activity or an event together. When you have the support of a good friend you increase the possibility of integrating your experience. The amount of experience that can be integrated also increases.

However, there are both appropriate and inappropriate ways of giving support. If Zach has asked Roberto to stand with him while he shows the group his new model car, and Roberto stands quietly giving his attention to what Zach is doing, he is providing appropriate support. He does not distract the audience. Roberto's support is inappropriate if he grimaces and wiggles, taking the focus away from Zach while he is talking.

To an uninformed observer, it might seem that the role of offering support is a weak, passive one. This is not so. It takes a great deal of strength to provide good support—to not take center stage away from the person you are supporting. Just because a person is in the support role one time does not mean that person is always in the support position. Friendship needs to be built on equality. Friends need to take turns sharing center stage and being supportive.

GIVING AND RECEIVING APPRECIATION

Children who know they are respected and valued tend to heckle less than children who feel unappreciated. If children can give authentic appreciation to others, they are more likely to be treated with respect rather than heckled themselves. By helping children integrate how much you, and others, appreciate them, you are not only reducing the amount of heckling that will go on in your center, you will increase the children's self-esteem.

I help children integrate how much others appreciate them by asking them to remember one way they were given thanks or appreciation. Sometimes children cannot remember receiving compliments. If this happens, I ask them to think of a time they feel they should have received kind words but didn't, and what would they have liked the person to have said or done. By reviewing past appreciation and thank you statements, children become clearer about when they have earned appreciation, even if they didn't receive it.

While standing up for yourself is frequently part of a primary teaching curriculum, often learning to give appreciation or thanks is left out. An appreciation can be as simple as saying "thank you" or "I like what you said. It made me feel warm and good inside." Children need to be taught to give genuine appreciation with care and consideration. Many children already have this skill, but many do not.

These are three techniques for helping children learn to give appreciation are: 1) ask them to write a letter of appreciation to their mom, a friend, or to you; 2) ask them to think about how they feel when they are given appreciation; or 3) ask them to write a letter of appreciation to themselves, one they would like to receive for something they did.

Many teachers like and use the idea of a "Student of the Week," having children write appreciation statements to or about a particular child. This honor is rotated so all children have an opportunity to receive appreciation statements from everyone, both adults and children. I do not use this idea, and it took me a while to understand that my discomfort came from the lack of authenticity in many of the letters that were written. I realized that if I or anyone else is forced to write an appreciation statement when I am upset with someone, my irritation will be there underneath the appreciation, and the statement will sound phony or contrived. The student probably will not swallow what I say and will feel that I cannot be trusted. Then, when I do make an authentic appreciation statement at another time, the student will be less likely to believe me since I have previously made an inauthentic one. This is something for you to decide in your own group.

I prefer to have children make authentic statements at the time they feel the appreciation. I teach this skill by example. When children have done something I appreciate, I thank them immediately on a one-to-one basis, being very specific about what I liked. Sometimes I ask the child if I may tell the children what he or she did so I can express my appreciation in front of the whole group. I respect the

Giving and taking credit can be simply acknowledging the appropriateness of wearing a special crown.

child's yes or no. I say an authentic thank you as often as I can. I never ask the children or force them to say thank you.

Credit Taking

Credit taking is psychologically indispensable to the growth of self-esteem because it represents a healthy acknowledgment of who you are—what you can do, what you know, what you feel. It should not be confused with bragging or omnipotence or—at the opposite of end of the spectrum—putting yourself down.

The credit-taking process starts when a person makes a statement of fact such as "I hit a home run!" or "I want to take credit for getting *most* of the spelling words right in my test today!" By sharing this information with a friend, these children have positively acknowledged themselves. Healthy integration can only occur when there is credit taking.

When I observe children making a credit-taking statement but not believing its importance, I ask them how they feel about what they have done. If they are ready to take credit for an accomplishment, they will say they feel good about it.

For example, when Sandya told me she participated in the Jesse Owens race, I was proud of her. It did not matter to me if she had won a ribbon. From the tone of her voice I felt she was not taking credit for her accomplishment so I asked her how she felt about what she had done. She said she was disappointed she had not won a first-place ribbon. After expressing her disappointment she was able to say that she was pleased she had entered the race, and she knew that she had tried her best. I reinforced this feeling by telling Sandya that I was proud of her, she deserved a pat on the back, and I would give her one when she was ready.

Gestalt therapists believe learning is enhanced when it is experienced through body movement, such as bows, applause, jumping for joy, or pats on the back. After a child has shared an original drawing or writing with a group, you might applaud. The rest of the children will join in. Your applause teaches the group to give their appreciation in an appropriate way as well as gives credit to the presenter.

I understand how difficult it is to learn to take credit because even now I am sometimes unaware that I have done something to be proud of. At those times I need feedback from someone else to recognize my accomplishment. The respect of people I admire helps me to believe in myself and allow myself to feel proud. If I feel deserving or worthy my internal critic is not in control saying, 'Anne, you haven't done a perfect job, therefore, what you've done is no big deal.' Credit taking is also easier when I am rested and free from stress.

Other times I am clear about the credit I should take because I can feel my pride. Usually I feel credit as an infusion of solidity and warmth that spreads throughout my whole body, starting at my heart. The feeling may come and go, but each time it comes, my belief in myself sinks in a little deeper. When I know internally that I have done well, I have assimilated or integrated the information.

Following are some statements children have made about the process of credit taking:

> *Credit taking means telling other people about what I've done. It means sharing with them my pleasure in my actions and myself.*
>
> *Credit taking is the way I feel after I've shared something. I usually feel very shy and very, very pleased with myself.*
>
> *I like taking credit because then I can learn if other people think I've done a good job. Often times I'm not sure until someone else has told me, "Good job!" and I believe them.*

Sometimes children brag or boast excessively about their accomplishments. This is not real credit taking. These children have a low self-esteem. They want to feel good about themselves but don't believe they are worthy. They are not clear about what they really do well or what their positive characteristics are. Nor are

they clear about how their actions and behaviors contribute to their success or failure at getting what they want. These children need feedback so they can learn to label their strengths, actions, and behaviors.

Celebrations

After a particularly big growth step or an unusual event, we have a celebration. This helps children feel proud of themselves, helps them integrate what they have learned, and allows me to share my pride and pleasure in their accomplishments with them.

I begin by asking the children to write a brief description of what we are celebrating, (for example, their hard work on improving yard or group-time behavior), including what has been important to them and why. Then I ask them to read their writing to a partner. If any of them are willing, I give them an opportunity to read a part or all of their writing to the whole group. To complete the celebration, this sharing is followed by either a special activity, an edible treat, or both.

The following are responses to the assignment "What did you like, not like, and why about working on improving the group's outside behavior?"

> *I liked working on the yard behavior, because it meant I wasn't bothered as much by Bill. I didn't like working on the yard behavior, because it meant I couldn't tease Bill like I like to.*
>
> *I didn't like working on the yard behavior, because Meredith was always reminding me to take care of myself. I liked working on the yard behavior, because I knew we were doing a good job and we'd have a celebration on Friday.*
>
> *I didn't like working on yard behavior, because I knew we'd have to write about it, and I don't like to write. I liked working on yard behavior because I feel a lot safer out there now.*

Focusing

At the beginning of an integration assignment I usually ask the children to close or hide their eyes while I ask them a series of questions aimed at helping them remember the experience I want them to integrate. This process is different from visual imagery where you imagine specific things, such as a beach with waves breaking on it or a quiet, woodland meadow. I deliberately do not give the children a specific image to think about because I want them to consider what is important to them about the experience they are focusing on. By allowing them to explore

their own recollections, they are free to remember all different aspects of the experiences, including feelings, sounds, smells, tastes, movement, or textures. They are not limited to a visual image.

JOURNAL WRITING AS AN INTEGRATION TECHNIQUE

I use journal writing in addition to other writing integration assignments because I learn so much about each child by reading what he or she has written. Research has shown that journals help to establish a person's sense of worth and self-awareness. People can discover within themselves resources that they did not know they possessed. Writing in a journal can also focus your attention on a problem and give you new insights into its solution.[11]

When I introduce the journals at the beginning of the year I explain to the children that I will be asking them to write about how they feel, what they are thinking about, what they like and don't like, and why. I expect them to be honest with themselves and me. I say that their authenticity is very important to me. If they are honest in their writing then they will be able to learn and grow from it, which is a marvelous thing.

I explain that journals are private property. If they want to read part or all of their writing to the group, I will give them an opportunity to do so, otherwise no one else is to read their journal but me. I read journals to myself and make comments on what is written. I will not share what is written in a journal without first asking permission. I tell the children to write "Don't Read" at the top of their writing if they write something and do not want me to read it. When I see "Don't Read," I respect that request.

Journal Feedback

Journals provide an important opportunity for me to develop trust and honesty between the children and myself. I give a tremendous amount to the children by taking the time to write authentic, positive responses to their journal entries. This is very time-consuming for me, but I consider it well worthwhile. My responses often include something like "I appreciate how you felt and how hard you tried. Good for you!" I limit myself to giving positive replies, saying what I liked about their writing and why I liked it. I do not correct grammar or spelling. Nothing turns off creativity faster than red pencil markings all over a page. Because children are writing from their own personal experience, there are no wrong answers. Nevertheless the journals do present a learning opportunity for the children and by

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11 Johnna Laird, "For the Record: Thoughts on Paper." *San Jose Mercury News*. 28 February, 1990, The Weekly, p. 2.

being genuine in my responses to them, I can nurture my students so they are able to grow and change.

Example of a Journal Assignment

The following are some responses to a journal assignment to explain what is scary and not scary about entering another grade.

> *I hate the first day of school, because it is so scary. I don't know if I will have any friends.*
>
> *I have questions. Who will be in my class from this year? Will they still like me? What about the teachers? Stephanie said the teachers are nice, but are they really?*
>
> *I hate the first day of school, because I'm so shy. I don't say much, and maybe the teacher will think I'm dumb.*
>
> *I like the first day of school, because it means I'm one year closer to getting to middle school.*

Children's Responses to Integration Activities

There are several factors I take into consideration when I plan an integration lesson. I think about my own and the children's pacing—which may be the same or different—what we are ready for, and what we are not. I consider alternatives—what choices I will give to them, and what I will do if they resist. I also imagine different forms that their resistance might take. In other words, I try to anticipate how the assignment can be shaped to achieve my goals, which are to increase children's self-esteem and help them recognize and acknowledge how they are feeling.

Pacing

Pacing is the rate at which you are willing and able to integrate. Some people change willingly and are able to keep integrated throughout the process so their resistance is generally low. Some people are resistant to change and so need to move more slowly in acquiring new experiences or new information. It is important to pay attention to these differences because when a person is forced out of a pace that is comfortable, he or she can become anxious and resistant.

Pacing is also the rate at which it is comfortable and appropriate for you, as

an individual, to learn new information. Everyone has his or her own individual pace. The advantage of knowing your students' pacing is that you will not try to push them too fast so that they experience failure or go so slowly that they get bored.

Often Creative Behavior teachers give the following instructions at the beginning of an assignment, "Get in a comfortable position. Close or hide your eyes. Pay attention to your breathing. Do not change it in any way, just be aware of its rate and depth. Use your breathing to get in touch with your pacing."

By listening to your rate of breathing, you can learn if your body is especially speedy or sluggish. If you are hurrying to reach your goal, you frequently ignore your anxiety. If you slow down, pay attention to your breathing, and become aware of your anxiety, you may find it is appropriate or inappropriate. This knowledge can govern your pacing. Breathing helps you look at your anxiety. It also may help you feel more secure because you are more aware of what is going on.

COMPLAINING

One mother told me her son was complaining too much and she did not like it. She said to me that if only I did not allow or encourage complaints, she would be much happier. I pointed out that she felt better because she had just complained to me. She had stated her opinion clearly so that I knew what it was. She had gotten her concern out in the open. This was one purpose of complaining. The complaint was not inside her, bothering her, or stopping her from doing something else.

Complaining is sometimes a necessary step toward integration. It can be a form of resistance—often it is resistance to the very credit taking that is so crucial to integration. For many children complaints are closer to the surface and easier to express than credit or their deeper feelings such as fear, anger, pleasure, or joy. They can hide their credit and feelings by not recognizing them, but once their complaints are expressed, the way is paved for acknowledgment and for real credit taking. Through this process of complaining and credit taking children are often able to get in touch with their feelings. Children need plenty of time for complaining. Listening to a complaint does not mean having to fix it or solve the problem.

RESISTANCE

Resistance is part of the learning process. All children, at some point or other, will be resistant to something you have planned. I try to listen carefully to distinguish the difference between when children say "I don't want to do this" but mean "I'm not ready to do this activity." If I feel they are not ready, I need to give them a direction or ask a question that will give them a focus in an area where they feel competent, such as "What happened yesterday that was important to you?" or

"What do you like and not like about doing this activity?" However, if I give too many options for an integration assignment, some children get stuck trying to decide which one to choose. If they never get started, they cannot experience the satisfaction of working on or finishing an assignment.

Resistance may come from several sources: not wanting to change, having a different pace, needing to go more slowly in order to absorb information, fear of failure, or fear of success. Some children choose to resist doing an assignment in order to feel in control and have some self-respect. Journal assignments are an excellent vehicle for helping children recognize and develop strategies for acknowledging their resistance without putting themselves down and for moving through their resistance to the next step.

"Anne, I don't know what to write!" they might say.

I say, "Write that! Write that you don't know what to say. Write about how that makes you feel."

I am clear about my own resistance to begin work on a new assignment or make a change in my routine. I often have a need to say, "No, I'm not going to do this" before I can say, "Yes I will." Therefore I am willing to listen to my students say no as a first step of doing an integration assignment. That statement of no is similar to a complaint before starting what may be seen as a difficult but doable task.

If children continue to complain, I often smile and move to another area in the room. By smiling, I communicate that I have heard their resistance. By moving on without responding, I avoid a head-on confrontation. The children have been able to express their resistance without encountering a negative or limiting response.

After acknowledging and working through the resistance, the next step is beginning the assignment. If they really are unable to do the assignment, they know what my three standard alternatives are: 1) draw a picture of themselves unwilling to do the assignment; 2) write about why they are unwilling; or 3) write about what they feel would be more important for them to be doing and why.

Healthy resistance occurs when children feel unable to cope with a situation. Sometimes a previous interaction, either at home or school, has been so disruptive that children can not focus on an activity. Sometimes they have already taken in all the information they can handle for one day. When children have some choice and control over the focus of their work, they become more willing to get involved in the process of doing an assignment, and they take more pride in their product. They are also less likely to find reasons for putting off starting or completing the assignment.

The Payoff

When children are integrated, you can practically watch them grow. You see them make connections between past and present learning and experiences that

ignite their interest in new learning and give them confidence that they can make sense of their world. They understand who they are because they know how they feel and why; they have an essential tool that helps them solve problems, learn skills, and build relationships. This self-knowledge is fundamental to a high self-esteem. I love doing integration activities because when students share their thinking with me, I can witness their progress and know that I have contributed to their long-term happiness and growth.

PLANNING AN INTEGRATION LESSON

I plan integration exercises for activities ranging from special movies, stories, holidays, and important events to guest presentations. If something unusual or scary happens like an earthquake, flood, fire, or an attempted child molestation, it is crucial to help the children express their feelings and describe what is important to them about what has happened. If a child is getting glasses, braces, or has been given a disastrous hair cut, it is time to try and put things in perspective by looking at the pros and cons, as well as by voicing complaints and fears. When any situation stimulates excessive heckling or stress, integration is important so that children can return to normal, and you, as a teacher, don't have to deal with unnecessarily disruptive behavior.

I do not try to integrate every single event or experience the children have. That would be too time-consuming. The children get a daily integration through their journal writing. When something out of the ordinary occurs, I give them an additional assignment. I pick and choose events to integrate, giving no more than one or two special integration assignments during a week.

During an integration assignment, I ask children to think of three statements concerning the event being integrated. I have chosen the number three because I want more than one thought from them, but I also don't want them to feel overwhelmed and unable to finish the assignment. I know the number three will require some reflection on their part. Often their second or third statement is more insightful or meaningful because it takes a while for children to get in touch with thoughts and feelings that are really important to them.

I am very careful to ask children to think about their dislikes. I feel negative comments can be shared as long as another person's feelings will not be hurt by the information or the style of presentation. Thinking about and giving both sides of a question or incident helps children use critical thinking skills. Older children or children with more highly developed skills can respond in depth and more detail to these assignments.

Following are examples of nine basic Creative Behavior integration lessons. I use or adapt one of these lessons each time I give an integration assignment. Some

are general integration lessons and can be used almost any time, while others can be used only in specific situations. If the instructions say "Discuss, draw, or write," I decide which one of those actions I am going to present to the children. I do not give them that decision to make.

1. **Discuss, draw, or write about three things you liked and three things you didn't like (regarding a specific event or activity). Explain why you felt the way you did.** It is one thing to say "I like playing ball," but when I'm asked to explain *why* I like to play ball, I have to stop and think. Do I like it because I like to win? Do I like the feeling in my arm after I've thrown a ball really far? Do I take pleasure in being outside with my friends? Do I like being a member of a group? Or is it a combination of these reasons? I don't like playing ball, because I'm afraid someone might make fun of me when I throw. I'm afraid I won't be able to catch the ball, so it will hit me. Maybe I'll decide that I really don't like to play ball all that much. A more honest statement for me might be: "I like to be with my friends. I would rather play tag, but if they really want to play ball, I'll play with them." The kind of self-knowledge that this exercise elicits is basic to making well-thought-out decisions. This is my work-horse integration lesson, the one I use most of the time.
2. **What is similar in this experience to what you have seen or done before? What is different?** Some children think in terms of absolutes, e.g., "I'm *always* doing the same old thing. I never do anything new." If these children look for and find similarities and differences, it expands their horizons by helping them be more realistic in their perceptions.
3. **Think about what you did (in a specific activity this morning, this week, etc.). What was important to you? Why was it important? If nothing was important to you, what would you rather have been doing and why?** Young children often want to please adults by doing things right. They need to know what is expected of them and the consequences of not meeting those expectations. But children also need practice in deciding what is important to them and what they expect of themselves. This exercise allows children to begin to think about what they want and value, rather than what someone else wants and expects of them. This is crucial to decision making throughout their lives. They may decide that nothing was important to them. If that is the case, then it's an acceptable response.

4. **Discuss, draw, or write about one to three facts you knew about before we did an activity. What did you learn that was new? What do you want to learn more about?** By identifying what they already knew and what they have now learned, children are taking credit and responsibility for their own growth. By identifying what they want to learn more about, children are able to get focused for the next step in learning.
5. **(*Before the activity*): What three things do you expect to see (or do, or hear)? What three things do you not expect to see (or do, or hear)? (*After the activity*): What did you see or do that was the same as you expected? What was different?** This assignment helps children distinguish between fantasy and reality as they compare their expectations with what happened. If their expectations were close to reality, they can take credit for their accuracy. If their expectations were off, they can take credit for their disappointment and unsuccessful guess. I don't stress or reward accurate predictions. Thinking about and making a prediction is the important aspect of this lesson.

   Note: I often give this assignment before going on a field trip. If we are going to a fire house, for example, the children have great fun saying they don't expect to see dinosaurs or trained seals. Again it is important to give the children an opportunity to say what they think will and will not happen, to begin to define the parameters of an experience.
6. **What did you find out about yourself and your partner from working together? (If you have trouble starting this assignment, look for similarities and differences in the way you worked.)** This assignment helps children take credit for how they work in small or large groups. They can discover there is more than one way to solve the same problem. This assignment also helps children to incorporate feedback about their own and another's way of working. They develop their observational skills and learn to recognize similarities and differences. The emphasis on differences and similarities of work styles leads to appreciation of one another rather than denigration and helps them value differences.
7. **What was comfortable and uncomfortable for you (in a specific situation)?** Identifying what is comfortable and uncomfortable helps students decide how they physically feel in their bodies. When they honor their feelings they become able to make better decisions about how to take care of themselves. In

addition they begin to realize that they do not have to rely on someone else's opinion in making a decision. This lesson is very similar to Integration #1, which develops the children's critical thinking skills.

8. **Roleplay an interaction. Then draw, discuss, or write about how you felt as you were performing or what you learned.** Children can roleplay many different situations: getting someone to stop a particular behavior, such as heckling; arguments over different topics, such as how to use equipment or take turns. When children put themselves in the shoes of another child, they usually understand that child's position better and understand why a person acts the way he or she does. This lesson builds understanding and compassion for others and often, after the experience of roleplaying, children relate to others in a more positive way.
9. **Discuss or write about what you gained and lost in a specific situation.** This is a difficult assignment. I don't usually give it until the end of the year. In order to gain clarity, we have to do a lot of talking as a group about specific situations, such as fighting in the yard. What do they gain and lose from fighting? We discuss the following questions: Why do people fight? What do they get out of the fighting? What do they lose by fighting? Why weren't they able to try another alternative? What might have been an alternative to try? This assignment helps children evaluate the choices they have made and the consequences of those choices.

A Dialogue as an Integration Technique

One of my favorite integration techniques is to give the children a focus and have them imagine two of their many internal characters. For example, after a school health unit about the respiratory system that included the effects of smoking on their lungs, I asked the children to think about two of their internal characters, one who wants them to smoke and another who doesn't want them to smoke. They were to write a dialogue between these two characters. The length of the dialogue and the outcome was up to each student.

When children write a dialogue, there are many opportunities for integration. They incorporate their own feelings and beliefs into the skit, which helps them solidify and become clearer about what they believe as well as why they think or feel that way. In trying to persuade one character to behave in a particular way, children have to marshal their facts and review what they know so their argument

is believable. This solidifies their knowledge of a subject. They also begin to learn about how another person might feel. By writing on both sides of an issue, children begin to develop more empathy for others.

After they have written their dialogues, the children often want to produce their dialogues as plays. This takes awhile because I feel that everyone who wants to should have a chance to perform. These dialogues are hilarious, because the children pretend they are teenagers and act in a most affected, sophisticated way.

Following are some of the children's responses to the integration of this unit:

I liked playing the part of a smoker. It was fun dressing up as a teenager and pretending to smoke. When someone asks me to smoke a cigarette, I expect to say no. I didn't like that I was so nervous, I dropped the cigarette during the play.

I liked learning about the respiratory system, because I want my mom to stop smoking. When I told her about the cancerous lungs, she said she'd think about it. I didn't like that it was hard getting close to the sheep's lung, because there were so many kids around it. I wanted to be up close all the time.

I loved writing the play. I want to be a writer when I grow up so this gave me some practice. I think I had good ideas for the play too. I didn't like putting on the play because I get scared when I get up in front of a group of people.

TIMING AND CHOOSING AN APPROPRIATE FOCUS

The timing of when to teach an integration lesson depends upon what you are integrating. I teach the integration lesson for the respiratory system about four or five days after the children have completed this unit. It is a planned integration lesson, because it is part of the whole unit on the respiratory system. However, when there is a fight between two or three children, I immediately give them an integration assignment. This can be part of our conversation as I am discussing the interaction, or it can be an assignment to describe in writing what happened and include what they liked, and didn't like about the interaction, the consequences of what they did, and what they might do another time so they won't get in trouble.

There is no hard or fast rule for choosing one focus over another for an integration assignment. Some lend themselves to specific situations better than others. If a focus seems appropriate and feels comfortable to you, then use it. For example I would not use writing about facts a child knew before doing an activity if I were integrating a puppet show, because the children may not have facts to write about. I would use either like and not like or what was similar and different from

previous puppet shows for this kind of an integration. Writing or drawing about facts they knew and learned would have been an appropriate assignment to integrate the respiratory unit, although I chose not to use it.

When you write an integration lesson you need to be careful not to fall into the trap of trying to make it the best integration there ever was. Remember that simple assignments can be highly effective. In fact, if you put in too many directions or choices, you will probably defeat your purpose. The children may be so overwhelmed, they might need to integrate the integration.

A Specific Example of Creative Behavior Integration

This example can be used in a variety of situations such as:

- after a story that is either read aloud to a group or that children read to themselves
- after completing an art project
- after going on a trip
- after a special event

All children can do the assignment, because they are working from their own personal experience. If a child was not present when the event took place, that child can use the same focus and write about what he or she was doing at the time of the event. Before giving this type of a lesson to children, it is important that you, as a teacher, have the experience of doing the lesson yourself. This increases your sensitivity to the children's responses and helps you give yourself and the children credit for the work you have all done.

Purpose of the lesson

1. To help children enjoy an experience.
2. To provide an opportunity to follow directions.
3. To help children take credit for their reading (listening) and drawing skills.
4. To provide an opportunity to share with a partner.
5. To provide an opportunity to integrate.

Materials

newsprint (12" x 18" if possible)
crayons
pencils
Instructions

Ask children to:

1. Read or listen to a story, tape, etc.
2. Take a few minutes to think about what they read (heard, saw).
3. Draw a picture of something they heard or read that was important to them.

   If children finish before the time period is over, have them add more detail to their drawing or write a description telling what was important to them and why.
4. Choose a partner and share their picture.
   a. Explain to their partner what was important about what they drew and why. Listen to their partner's explanation.
   b. Discuss what is the same and what is different between their picture and their partner's.
   c. Decide on one statement of a similarity or a difference to share with the group. (Each child shares a statement.)
5. Share pictures and/or statements in the group. Ask for feedback if they want it.
6. If they are willing, tell one thing they liked about this activity and/or one thing they did not like and why they felt that way.

INTEGRATION HELPS YOU LEARN TOO

Before students can take in new information or develop new skills they need to be clear about what they have discovered in previous experiences. Therefore, a major purpose of integration is for teachers and students to evaluate what they have learned. A second purpose is to enjoy and celebrate accomplishments. As a teacher, I know what I provide for children and what I hope they learn, but, until I ask them I can only guess what they have actually assimilated. What a child considers important is not necessarily what I had in mind when I presented the lesson. However, a child's response may be critical to my planning for the next step in the curriculum. An integration activity gives me an opportunity to learn how individual children think.

When my students are responding to an integration lesson, I particularly want them to be honest with themselves about what is important to them, how they are feeling, and what they are thinking about so they can make reasoned decisions based on rational observations. It is not valuable for me or them if they try to say what they think I want to hear.

I learn a lot about the children from reading their writing. For example, Jody wrote he did not like the center, because he did not have any friends. I was surprised because children sought him out and wanted to play with him. Finally he said that

he wanted to play with Roger exclusively, but Roger didn't always want to play with him. Jody's logic went like this: If Roger doesn't want to play with me all of the time then he is not my friend, so I don't have any friends.

Once this problem was out in the open, I was able to deal with it by helping Jody see the fallacy in his thinking. Jody and Roger continued to play together occasionally although they never became best friends. Jody realized other children did like him, and eventually he was able to think of himself as a person who had friends.

How you frame a question can be crucial to the answers you receive. You need to think about the kind of response you want and are willing to hear. If you ask the children to respond to the question "How do you feel about the center?" you run the risk of hearing negative statements about your teaching. You may want to rephrase it to "What do you like about the center?" and so limit their answers to positive statements. This is up to you. One thing that has helped me listen to adverse comments is knowing that I don't have to believe everything that is said or follow all of the suggestions. I make sure, particularly when I read negative comments, that I have a supportive friend, either with me or available by phone, so I can talk about the comments, become clearer about how I feel about them, and decide how I want to handle them.

Below are some replies to the assignment: What did you like, not like, and why about the center? What did you learn this year? What do you want to learn more about? Note that I put the negative question at or near the beginning of the instruction. I have found that if students can identify and acknowledge their adverse feelings first, and have those feelings accepted by an adult without fear of being put-down or criticized, they respond more authentically. If children or adults feel that only positive statements are acceptable, they may integrate their negative feelings as bad or think they are bad because of their feelings.

Some examples of children's responses:

What I liked about the center is songs, journals, art, doing plays, working with partners, and having Anne as a teacher. I liked working with partners, because then you don't feel like you're alone when you're doing something and can usually ask somebody something. I also liked having music, because it's fun to sing. I liked having Anne as my teacher, because she was nice and understanding especially with mistakes. What I didn't like about the center were some journal assignments, doing my homework, some group times, the first day, and thinking about the tests I had to take at school. I don't like the first day, because you wonder who's going to be in your group, and it's scary. I don't like doing tests, because I get scared. I think I'm not going to get it right.

What I don't like about the center is sometimes you want to get along with someone, and you and the other person don't seem to get along well at all. Sometimes I feel like saying, "You better be my friend or else!" What I like about the center is eventually you and that person become very good friends, and that's what I like about the center.

The children's excitement as they learn to express themselves validates my belief in the importance of the integration process. I also have some of the same feelings of excitement and pleasure when I share the children's responses with my colleagues. Their positive feedback helps me to see my competence as a teacher and encourages me to continue the next steps in my own growth.

There are many events and forces in children's lives—from advertising to poor home situations—that can reinforce their feeling bad about themselves. Not every aspect of their lives will be set up to build their self-esteem. I believe, though, that the more positive experiences they can have at the center, the more they will be strengthened to put those forces in perspective and learn that they can feel good about themselves despite external circumstances that are beyond their control.

Questions and Exercises

Do these exercises only if you are willing. If you are not willing to do them, please provide yourself with an alternate assignment or write about why you are not willing to do these exercises.

The adult activity marked with ☆☆ is appropriate to do with children. However, if you do use the activity with children, it is important that you, as a teacher, first have the experience of doing it yourself.

☆☆ Exercise 1

Close or hide your eyes. Think about how you felt when you entered a group for the first time. Did you know someone in the group or did you have to make new friends? Were you nervous, excited, pleased, scared?

a) Chose one color of crayon and draw a picture of yourself with the focus on how you felt. Use the technique of drawing with your eyes closed and using your unaccustomed hand, if you are willing.
b) Write three things you liked about the drawing process and three things you didn't like about the drawing process. Explain why you felt that way.
c) Share your picture and your writing with a partner.
d) Share your picture or your writing with the whole class, if you are willing.

☆☆ Exercise 2

Think about a time when you worked with one or more children and were very pleased by your interaction with them. What did you do to take credit for your part in the interaction? How did you feel while you were taking credit?

a) Share your experience with a partner. Listen while your partner shares an experience with you.
b) Discuss what is the same and different about your experiences.
d) Share your similarities and differences with the whole group, if you are willing.

☆☆ Exercise 3

Close or hide your eyes. Think about your expectations when you first started this course. What are some of the things you expected to get out of this course?

What are some of the things that you expected to get that you have actually gotten out of the course? What are some of the things that you got that you didn't expect? What are some of the things that you expected to get but haven't gotten?

a) Write three things that you have gotten from this class that you expected to get, three things you got that you didn't expect and three things you expected to get but didn't. Explain, in writing, how you feel about getting what you expected, getting more than you expected, and/or getting less than you expected.
b) Share your writing with a partner.
c) Share your writing with the whole group, if you are willing.

☆☆ EXERCISE 4

a) Write a dialogue. The first character wants the other one to change a behavior, such as take up smoking, stop smoking, go on a diet, go off a diet, or cut class. The second character resists strongly. What does the first character say to try and persuade the second character to do what he or she wants? How does the second character respond? How do the characters deal with each other's resistance? Have each character speak at least four or five times.
The outcome of the dialogue is up to you. You may have the second character successfully resist the first character or agree to what he or she wants.
b) Choose a partner. Read your dialogue to your partner, then listen to your partner's dialogue.
c) Choose one dialogue, either yours or your partner's, and read it to the class.

☆☆ EXERCISE 5

Close or hide your eyes. Remember the dialogue you wrote in #4. How did you feel as you were writing it? Were you pleased with it or did you feel frustrated trying to think of what to write? How did you feel reading it to a partner? Were you shy or not? Was your dialogue chosen to present to the group? How did you feel about that? What did you like about writing and performing your dialogue? What didn't you like about it? Why did you feel that way?

a) Either write three things that you liked and three things that you didn't like about writing and/or reading the dialogue in front of the group. Explain your reasons. *Or* Draw a picture of yourself writing or reading the dialogue.
b) Share your picture or your writing with a partner.

c) Share your picture or your writing with the whole class, if you are willing.

☆ Exercise 6

In this exercise, you develop a lesson plan for an integration activity.

a) Choose an activity or experience that you would like children to integrate, e.g. a ball game, a field trip, working on a project with a friend, or a time they felt embarrassed, shy, scared, etc.
b) Choose one of the nine basic Creative Behavior integration lessons from pages 140-142. Some of these lessons pertain to an act that has just been completed, others pertain to a past experience. Choose a lesson that you feel would be a good integration focus for the activity or experience you decided on in 6a).
c) Using the focus you've chosen, write an integration lesson that you think would be an effective way to integrate or write a lesson that would *not* be effective. Work by yourself or with a partner.
d) Identify the reasons why you think your lesson would be effective or why it would not be effective.
e) Share your lesson with a partner or another partnership. Discuss similarities and differences between the lessons as well as your likes and dislikes.
f) Write about what you like and don't like about your lesson plan, why you feel that way, and one thing you might change, if you had to rewrite it.
h) Share your writing with the whole group, if you are willing.

☆ Exercise 7

Put your head down and close or hide your eyes. Think about something you really enjoy doing with children. Where does this activity take place—inside, outside, or either place? Do you need any special equipment in order to do the activity? If so, what?

a) Chose one color of crayon to represent yourself and another crayon to represent a child or children. Draw a picture of yourself interacting with children, at your favorite activity. Use the eyes-closed, unaccustomed-hand technique if you are willing.
b) Write three things that you liked and three things that you didn't like about the drawing process or your picture. Explain your reasons.
c) Share your picture and your writing with a partner.

d) Share your picture or your writing with the whole class.

☆ EXERCISE 8

How did you feel during the above exercise as you were sharing either your writings and/or drawings with a partner? How did you feel as you were sharing with the class? Were your feelings the same in both instances or were they different? What did you like, not like, and why about the two times you shared?

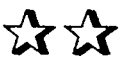
a) Discuss how you felt with a partner.
b) Share your discussion with the whole group, if you are willing.

☆ EXERCISE 9

a) Get into a comfortable position. Close or hide your eyes. Listen to your rate of breathing. Is it fast, slow, or just right for you?
   1. Breathe at a rate that is too fast for you. How does that feel?
   2. Breathe at a rate that is too slow for you. How does that feel?
   3. Breathe at a rate that is just right. How does that feel?
b) Choose an activity that you really enjoy doing by yourself or with others. Think about this activity under the three following conditions and decide how you might feel about each one.
   1. When you were forced to move faster than you wanted to.
   2. When you were forced to move slower than you wanted to.
   3. When you were allowed to move at the rate you wanted to.
c) Write a statement about what you have learned about your own internal pacing from this exercise. Include in your writing how you will apply what you've learned to the children you teach.
d) Share your writing with a partner. Discuss your similarities and differences.
e) Share part or all of your writing with the whole group, if you are willing.

☆☆ EXERCISE 10

a) Write a letter to a friend telling him or her what you've liked about this book and what you haven't liked about this book. Explain your reasons.
b) Share your letter with a partner. You may wish to share only portions of the letter.



Activities to do with Children

These activities are some of my journal assignments. They can be either writing, discussion, or drawing assignments.

☆☆ Activity 1

Describe your weekend. What did you like and not like about it. Explain your reasons.

a) Share your work with a partner.
b) Share your work with the group, if you are willing.

☆☆ Activity 2

What is scary about a fire drill? What do you know to do during such a drill? What do you feel you need to learn more about?

a) Share your work with a partner.
b) Share your work with the group, if you are willing.

☆☆ Activity 3

Write a letter to your mom and/or dad thanking them for something they've done for you this past week.

a) Share your work with a partner.
b) Share your work with the group, if you are willing.

☆☆ Activity 4

What do you think will happen on your birthday? How do you feel about that? Explain your reasons for feeling that way.

a) Share your work with a partner.
b) Share your work with the group, if you are willing.

☆☆ Activity 5

Think about a time you've been angry at someone. What do you *feel* like doing to them? What do you really do?

a) Share your work with a partner.
b) Share your work with the group, if you are willing.

CHAPTER 8

PLANNING THE CURRICULUM

When I first started teaching, my supervisor said to me, "Just let the kids do what ever they want. The main thing is for them to have fun."

I tried that approach. I let the children decide what they wanted to do, and they did it. They jumped from one activity to another, never staying long enough at any one to get involved and find satisfaction in what they were doing, be it building a block structure or painting a picture. Fights erupted all over the center, inside and out. I felt like a forest ranger, rushing here and there putting out brush fires before they became raging conflagrations. I went home exhausted and discouraged, wondering why I ever thought I wanted to work with children in the first place.

THE NEED FOR PLANNING

I soon learned that I needed a curriculum and a plan. While I was not responsible for meeting academic goals, I did have ideas about what I wanted my students to learn from their time in my group. For example, the children needed to develop skill in interpersonal relationships. They also needed to learn to express both their positive and negative feelings in appropriate ways, to cooperate, to keep a focus, and to follow directions. Learning these behavioral skills would add to their self-esteem, and therefore they became the basis for my curriculum.

I also discovered that activities that look spontaneous are actually the result of careful planning. This is because planning provides the basis from which spontaneity can blossom. You can't, for example, spontaneously decorate the walls

with silver stars if you don't have silver paper or paint, but you can spontaneously bake cookies if your cooking area has been stocked with the right ingredients.

While it might seem desirable to let children do what they want "the way they would at home," home is actually a more self-limiting environment than the center. Having too many choices can be as frustrating for children as having none. If you have planned a couple of activities for them to choose from, children can relax, decide which they want to do, and focus on enjoying that.

I always admired teachers who could be smiling and serene in the midst of a happy, busy crowd of children. When I felt miserable about how my teaching was going I assumed these teachers must be specially gifted people and that I wasn't one of them. Now I know they were probably smiling and serene because they had a plan—they knew what was going to happen that day and how that fit with what would happen tomorrow and that they had done the legwork necessary to make it happen successfully.

For example, one afternoon the children in my group were making Valentine cards. I don't show them a model to copy because I want them to explore their own individual ways of working. I believe if I present a model I take away children's creativity and, in effect, tell them that their way is no good, my way is the only right one. So instead I set out a selection of materials—red, white, and pink paper; doilies; pipecleaners; etc. While the selection is designed to stimulate creativity, it is limited. I don't set out black paper, paper bags, clay, or paint. Then I show them techniques for making cards so the children have two areas to experiment in—materials and techniques, but within a given framework. With structure and planning, children can take delight in their own and one another's originality, discovering how different their products are. Differences are to be celebrated rather than condemned.

Establishing Goals

As a Creative Behavior teacher, the goal of my curriculum is to promote self-esteem. All of the activities I plan have this in mind, so while I may teach the children a game, my main focus is on *how* they play the game and *how* they relate to each other while they play, not just whether they master the rules and necessary skills.

This means I have broad behavior goals—such as learning to behave in ways that are satisfying to them and that do not intentionally hurt themselves or others—and also many sub-goals. These sub-goals fall into several categories:

Physical skills

- Improve large- and small-muscle coordination

Social skills

- Learn to work cooperatively with one another and to share
- Learn about behaviors that enhance friendships or break them up
- Learn about the qualities of leadership
- Learn what behaviors will produce appropriate, positive, wanted responses and what behaviors will produce negative, unwanted responses

Emotional skills

- Learn to identify and label feelings
- Learn how to express negative feelings in socially appropriate ways
- Learn how to give appropriate support to another person's feelings

Intellectual skills

- Learn critical thinking skills
- Learn about making choices, distinguishing preferences, and exploring alternatives

Of course when I make my plan for the week, I don't write "improve large-muscle coordination on Monday," I plan a kickball game. But I am conscious of these goals as I prepare activities and review my plans with reference to these broader, more abstract goals.

GOALS FOR DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS

Younger children often arrive at the center before the older ones. This time by themselves increases their feeling of intimacy and sense of belonging. If you have older children in your program they may present some problems because most of them probably have been coming to the center for many, many years. While activities do change, there are only so many times you can fingerpaint or play Fish without some legitimate complaints about being really bored, so it is important to have goals that are only for these older children. You might plan a separate activity for them at least once a week. This helps the older children take credit for and acknowledge their age and ability.

Some centers facilitate this goal by having a room or a specific space that is exclusively for the use of the older children. This means they can have a choice of being in their own area or joining the younger children for an activity. Another

suggestion, which can be combined with the special area, is setting up a system for the older children to be helpers, assigned to work with the younger ones during snack, art, and/or homework time. This planning allows the helpers to share and take credit for their knowledge of routines and activities. Younger children love to work with the older ones. Older children who are having academic difficulty in elementary school will blossom in the center when they are given this kind of responsibility. It is an excellent way to build self-esteem.

Personal Goals

I also set personal goals for myself. Some of these are to explore ways of working that will give me pleasure and satisfaction; to have a diet and exercise program that will give me the strength to do my best at the center; to schedule time with friends so that I can give and receive the support that will enable me to do a good teaching job; to meet daily with team members to exchange statements of appreciation; and to begin to play the piano with the children because this is a new skill that I am learning.

All of these goals and sub-goals are the finish line that I am working toward, and I need them to be realistic. If I expect too much of myself, I will put myself down for not doing a good enough job, and I will not be able to take credit for the skills I do have as a teacher. If I don't expect enough of myself, I will be disappointed in accomplishing so little, and again I will not be able to take credit for the things that I do well.

Making and Evaluating Plans

Everyone does his or her planning differently. It may take awhile to find a way that works for you. I make a general overall plan for several months at a time. This gives me some sense of the direction I want the group to take in order to reach the goal I have set. Then I can be sure that I have included a wide variety of activities with time for a weekly integration lesson. I also review previous written plans, decide what I want to keep the same, and what changes I want to make.

I make lesson plans for the week and then modify them, if necessary, so I don't feel panicked about what I am going to do tomorrow. By planning for the whole week, I feel there is more of a continuity or flow to each day than if I planned on a daily basis. I also am able to pace the preparation of materials with my weekly planning.

Every month or so I evaluate my plan and decide what I like, don't like, and what I want to change about it. On a daily basis, I listen to children's comments. Often they come up with an addition or suggestion that I incorporate in the next

lesson. When I hear comments such as "Anne, this is boring!" I have to evaluate if the activity is really boring or if this is the way children are working through their resistance.

I have found that the more practice I have in writing lesson plans, the less time they take to write. Twice a year I celebrate what has gone well, what has not gone well, what I am going to keep, and what I am going to change for next year.

WRITING A LESSON PLAN

As a Creative Behavior teacher I spend a large percentage of my time thinking about and writing lesson plans for specific activities because I believe that a good lesson plan is crucial to center management. Time spent on planning pays off with positive results because children are happier, more productive, and present fewer discipline problems. Although Creative Behavior does not eliminate all negative behavior, a good CB lesson plan will take care of many of the problems before they arise. Thus a potentially negative interaction with children becomes a more positive experience and is more enjoyable for all.

WHY I WRITE OUT LESSON PLANS

I write down exactly what I want to say because in the writing process I become clear about each phase of the lesson. This also allows me to get clear about exactly what words I want to use to get my purpose across. I find that if I don't write down what I want to say, I often skip steps or leave out important Creative Behavior concepts or elements. I assume that the children will enjoy an activity just because I enjoy it, without taking the time to plan for their enjoyment.

After doing all this preparation, I sometimes get asked, "How do you possibly memorize all that you say to the children?" The answer is, I don't. I read what I have written to the children. If I feel very comfortable with a lesson, I only refer to my written plan before I start, but the first few times I teach a lesson, I have the plan right there in front of me, to either read from or refer to.

Other teachers choose to work in different ways. I suggest you try teaching a lesson without writing a complete lesson plan and then teaching one with a written lesson plan and compare these experiences. This way you can better make a reasonable decision for yourself about how you want to work.

Another advantage to writing out lessons is that the writing process helps me become aware of an appropriate next step. As I am writing, I think about children in my group and consider if I have brought them to this lesson with enough skills and information so that they will feel competent as they do the lesson. Also new

ideas often come to me as I am writing. I realize that there are several possibilities for a suitable next step.

Characteristics of a Good Lesson Plan

A good lesson plan has the following characteristics or considers the following points:

- The lesson has a clear purpose or goal.
- It deals with only one concept.
- The focus is clear and simple. There are not too many directions.
- The lesson plan contains an alternative for those who are unable or unwilling to follow the assignment.
- The plan is appropriate for the size and group of students for which it is written.
- It takes time constraints into consideration.
- The assignment is interesting and relevant to the student's experience.
- It considers former knowledge and builds on that, a small step at a time.
- It is flexible.
- Integration is built into the plan, or it is a two-part lesson and integration will be in a follow-up lesson.
- The plan incorporates the steps of the CB process in each lesson.
    1. After having an experience, the children respond to the experience.
    2. They describe their response in a different medium.
    3. They share their response with a significant other.
    4. They integrate the experience.

How Creative Behavior Applies to Different Types of Activities

The wonderful thing about Creative Behavior is that this process can be applied to any activity from how to rake leaves to making cookies. What is important is the child's attitude and awareness of his or her feelings, behaviors, preferences, levels of comfort and discomfort, and thoughts in the process of learning, rather than the "right" way to do it.

Every activity or lesson is based on an individual's response to a group experience. This means that if children are authentic in their responses, they will

look into themselves for much of their learning. However they respond to the activity is right as long as it is not destructive to themselves, other people, the environment, or the tools they are using. If their behavior is destructive, they need to be made aware of it so they have the choice to change their behavior.

For example, one afternoon I gave my group the assignment to rake leaves in front of the center. They had 20 minutes to complete this activity. You might say this sounds like a chore, not a learning activity, but in Creative Behavior rich opportunities for learning are everywhere. There are, after all, several different ways to rake leaves. If you hate the job, you can use your resentment and your anger to scrape hard at the leaves and the dirt. If you want to feel the joy and strength of your arms, you can treat the rake as an extension of your body as in a dance. You can cooperate to get the job done quickly. Or you can run through the leaf piles and scatter them so the job needs to be done twice.

In this activity, the goal is to teach the children to use the rake without clobbering anyone or breaking the rake. At the same time the children focus on being aware of their likes, dislikes, their physical sensations, and thoughts. It is also an exercise in being cooperative. Those who do not want to rake have the alternative of pulling weeds in the garden. After the raking is done, the children describe their experience to a partner and talk about what they liked and didn't like about the activity with the whole group.

Some people would say making cookies was more fun than raking leaves, but it really depends on your attitude. You can approach cookie making as a scientific process of mixing and measuring or as creative opportunity for expressing yourself. You can enjoy the textures, smells, and colors—or spend the whole time holding your breath because you're afraid of making a mistake.

In a Creative Behavior classroom making cookies is an important lesson because it is an opportunity not only to practice cooking skills and to celebrate by eating the cookies, but also to learn about themselves. They can discover that they hate baking cookies, because they are afraid the whole time of burning them. Or they might like to measure the dry ingredients, but not like the feeling of sticky dough on their fingers. They might prefer being outside in the wind, smelling the dead leaves. This self-awareness comes out of the process of identifying, writing about, and discussing individual feelings. It makes every lesson an individually important opportunity and experience.

A SAMPLE ART LESSON

There are always many reasons why I teach a particular lesson. When I am developing a lesson plan, I include them in the purpose. This way I don't take these reasons for granted and assume the children will get certain benefits from the lesson. If these details are not in the planning, they may not be in the final lesson.

The following is a lesson plan for making a collage out of one color and one shape. The children are to choose one basic shape, look through magazines for one color, and cut out various sizes of their shape in the color of their choice. This particular lesson is applicable for all children at the center.

Purpose

To feel:

- excitement about discovering color in magazine pictures
- pleasure in the process of discovering different ways of placing shapes on the paper
- more comfort using a medium and so having more control over it
- enjoyment in the lesson

To learn:

- about working within limits
- a particular skill—making a collage of different sized shapes
- more about making choices
- more about putting things away and cleaning up
- more about sharing space, materials, and/or a medium
- more about following directions
- more about keeping a focus

Materials

- magazines with colored illustrations
- scissors
- glue
- 9" x 18" sheets of black and white construction paper

Lesson Plan for One Color, One Shape Collage

Here's what I have written as my script for the One Color, One Shape Collage:

Today we're going to make a collage, something that I find very enjoyable. Does anyone know what "collage" means? (Solicit information. If no one is clear, explain it is a French word meaning to cut and paste pieces of paper into an artistic composition.)

It may take you a long time to complete the project, and that's all right. I would prefer that you take two or three days, if necessary, and enjoy the process rather than feel you have to rush through to be finished before you go home today.

I'm going to give you each a magazine, and I want you to look through it and think about the colors that you see in the pictures. Some of you may see more blues, some more greens, or reds. Think about the choices of color that you have—whether

many or few. Then decide what *one* color you want to use in your collage.

When you've decided on a color, then decide on *one* shape that you want to use. You can use squares, circles, rectangles, or triangles. Any questions so far?

Next, I want you to cut out your one shape from your one color. For example, if I picked blue for my color and circles for my shape, I would look through my magazine for the color blue. I don't have to cut circles from every single piece of blue in the magazine, but I want to end up with a lot of circles in a variety of sizes—some big, some little, many in between.

Place your shapes on your paper in a way that pleases you.When you're placing your shapes, experiment with them, move them around, try different arrangements. You may want to overlap some. You may want certain spots empty. Cover up about three-fourths of your background paper with your shapes.

If you're not pleased with the way your shapes are placed, what can you do to change your composition? (Wait for answers. Accept and acknowledge all reasonable answers by saying "Good," "Fine," or "Great!") You can even place the shapes with your eyes closed if you want to.

Who knows about using glue and is willing to tell the group how to use it? (Try to get across the idea that only a *little* glue is needed for each shape!)

You can chose either black or white construction paper as your background. When you make your choice think about which background your color would look best on, as well as which color you like.

Once you've placed all of your pieces on the background paper in a way that pleases you, don't move them because you may not remember where they were placed. Instead pick up one piece at a time, put a little bit of glue on the back of it, and then place and press it so it stays. Do that with each piece. When you're finished, be sure you put your name on your collage so you can be given credit for your work.

When you're finished gluing, be sure you tighten your glue bottle lid and put it back on the shelf. The magazines go back in the cupboard. The scraps go in the wastepaper basket.

Any questions?

How many colors? (Wait for answer—one.) How many shapes? (Wait for answer—one.) How many pieces do you need to cut out? (Enough to cover three-fourths of the paper.)

If you're not willing to make a collage, you can write about why you don't want to and what you'd rather do instead.

I expect you to get most of your shapes cut out today. You can save your cut out shapes in a baggie and we'll put your name on it so you can finish tomorrow.

We will share the collages after they're dry.

Some Potential Problems that You May Have To Deal With During the Lesson

By anticipating potential problems, I am protecting myself and the children. If these complications do come up, I will be ready with an immediate response to them. If a difficulty arises that I have not thought about, I have a reservoir of solutions that I might apply. In any event, the dilemma is less likely to unsettle me, and I will feel better about the way I handled it if I have done some preliminary thinking about problems in general.

Here are some examples.

1. **A child who starts with one color but doesn't have enough of that color in the magazine to complete his or her collage.** I would let the child share another magazine with someone else or get another one.
2. **A child who spends more time looking at the pictures than looking for color.** I would allow the child to look for a while. Looking at the pictures often generates very informative discussions. If the child continues looking at pictures for too long, I would ask if he or she wants some help in cutting out shapes. I might also restate that I do expect the collage to be finished.
3. **A child who has not listened to the instructions and uses circles, squares, *and* triangles in his or her collage.** I would keep silent about not following the instructions because I would have learned something valuable about that child and how he or she does not want to deal with limits. If another child pointed this out to me, I would say, "That happens sometimes" in a non-accusatory tone of voice.
4. **A child who compulsively cuts out tiny, tiny circles and who obviously will not finish the project.** I would give the child a smaller piece of background construction paper, tell him or her to stop cutting shapes and glue on the shapes that have been cut out. I would also feel that I had learned something about that child and his or her compulsiveness.
5. **A child who takes forever to cut out shapes and then loses them before getting them pasted on the paper.** I would keep still about the incomplete collage and feel that I had learned something about that child and his or her ability to make choices and take responsibility for those choices.
6. **A child who cuts out three circles, pastes them on a sheet of paper, and says "I'm done!"** I would say, "I agree that you've got three circles on your paper, but I'd like to see you put some

more effort into the process. I'm going to give a new instruction for you. You need to have some smaller circles. Some of them need to be the size of nickels. Some the size of dimes and some the size of quarters. You can have a couple of fifty-cent pieces in there but most of them need to be smaller. If you'd like some help in cutting out the shapes, let me know. Maybe someone would be willing to help you cut, if that's what you don't like about this project." Usually with a little encouragement, this child will produce a very nice collage and be very pleased with the results.

The next step in this lesson is integration, which I do on another day. After having an opportunity to share their collages with the group, I ask the children to recall how they felt when they first heard they were going to make a collage; think about the colors they saw in the magazine; remember the color and the shape they chose to use in their collage; and reflect on how they felt while they looked for colors, cut out their shapes, pasted, and shared. Then I have them write about three things they liked, three things they didn't like, and why they felt that way about the whole experience. I have them share their writing with a friend and give them the opportunity to read their writing to the whole group, if they want to.

EXTENSIONS OF A LESSON

If you want to continue to explore this theme, there are an almost limitless number of variations that you can use to help children integrate the collage experience and expand or strengthen their initial idea, rather than have them go on to another unrelated art activity. I present four alternatives here, all using the original collage as a starting point for an activity in different media.

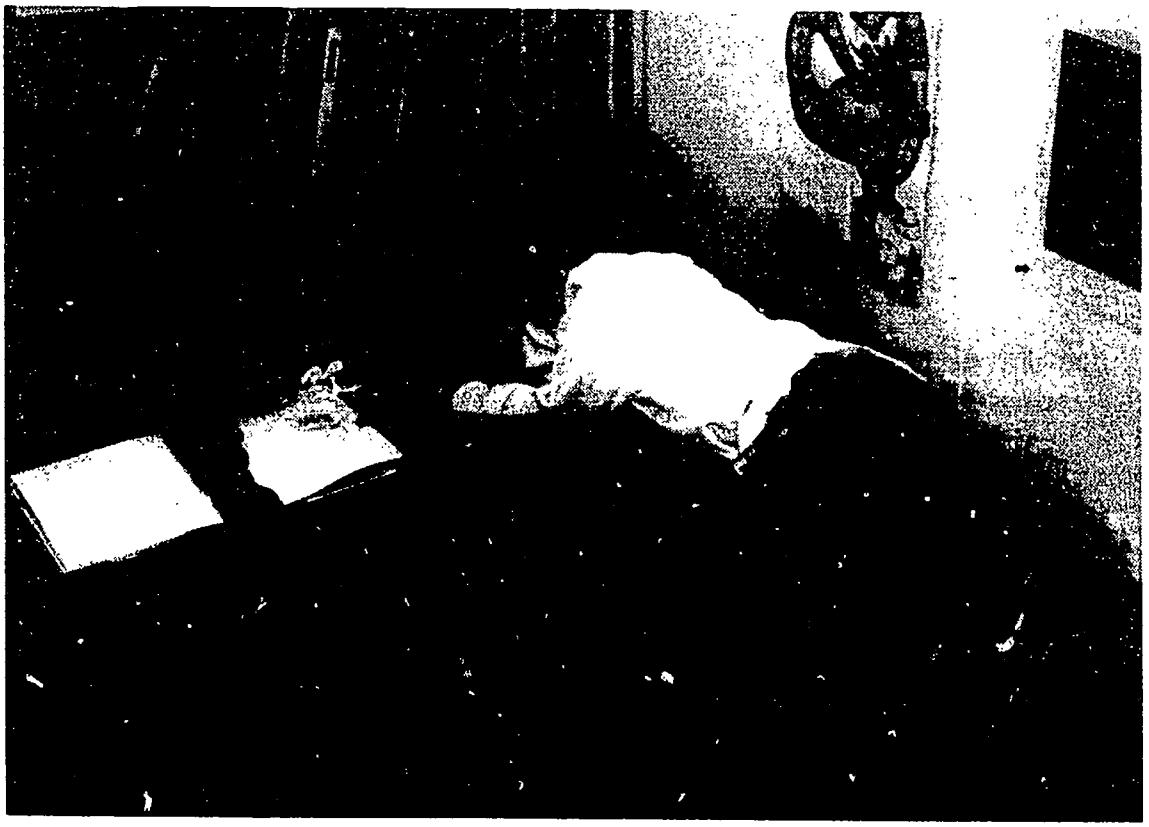
1. **Have the children choose a small section of their collage and imagine that that part is under a magnifying glass.** Then, on another piece of paper, using chalk, paint, or oil pastels, ask them to expand that small part so it takes up the whole sheet of paper.
2. **Have the children lay a piece of tracing paper over their collage and trace the negative shapes**—the spaces around the shapes. Then ask them to color those spaces with oil pastels or crayons, so the former background becomes the colored part.
3. **Have the children draw the outline of their collage** on another piece of paper, put glue where their shapes are, and sprinkle sand on the shapes made by the glue.

4. **Have the children close their eyes, think about the collage** they made, and from memory make a painting of the collage.

With any of these lessons, a discussion or written integration assignment of looking for similarities and differences between their original collage and the extension would be appropriate.

Once you have made a good lesson plan, you can keep it on file. It can be used over and over again with adaptations for different groups as needed. Also, I have found that children like to do the same lessons again and again. It gives them a chance to compare their present experience with the first time they did the lesson. They can see how they have grown in the skill they bring to the lesson. Because they are older, they gain a different perspective on the activity. With a lesson like the collage, which is built on an individual's response, they are in effect having a different experience from their original one.

Older children need their own space.



CONSIDER THE PROS AND CONS WHEN PLANNING

Trying to predict the outcome of an activity is probably one of the hardest tasks there is. By looking at the pros and cons of different ways for handling a situation, you begin to see cause-and-effect relationships and so are better able to judge what action of yours will promote self-esteem in children and also take care of you. This kind of prediction becomes easier with experience.

Before you undertake any new activity or institute a new routine, it is important to think about what might happen, both positively and negatively. You need to consider not only what *you* might gain or lose but the plusses and the minuses of this experience for the children. What are the possible problems? What are your alternatives if an activity bombs? If you think about options when you plan you will probably be better able to handle an emergency when it arises.

If you think through an activity and try to anticipate some of the problems that might occur before introducing it, you have a better chance of handling disruptions in a positive way. For example, if I think through a walk to the library, I can anticipate what might happen if I don't discuss my expectations when we meet another pedestrian on the sidewalk or cross a busy street corner. If I assume that some children might want to check out books, I can remind them to bring a completed application for a library card if they don't have one. If a complication catches you unaware you are likely to fall back on a solution you have used previously, which may or may not promote self-esteem. You might have found a wonderful book *How Much Is a Million* that you want to read to the group, but Libby's cat has just died. Would she benefit from your reading that book or a book about the death of a cat, such as *The Tenth Good Thing About Barney*? Which would be better?

THE PACE OF THE DAY

The kind of schedule your after-school program has will depend on factors such as the type of facilities you have, the number of children involved and their age range, the season of the year, as well as the elementary school the children attend.

Certain principles will remain the same, however. The goal of your daily plan will be to provide a healthy balance of exercise and rest, private time and social activity, freedom and structure.

It is important to remember that children who go to after-school day care are very busy people, leading very structured and demanding lives. One of the positive things your program can be is a place where hurried and pushed children can find time to relax, create, talk, slow down, share, and be bored.

It is not necessary—or even good—to provide a full schedule of nonstop activity for the children. While you might think this is needed to avoid having a room full of disruptive, complaining children, Dr. David Elkind points out in *The*

Hurried Child[12] that some boredom is good for children, because it forces them to go into themselves to find their own resources.

There is no way you can anticipate or meet all the children's needs—these will be as variable as their moods—so flexibility is always an essential component of every plan.

Sample Schedule

Here is a hypothetical schedule planned for "CB Center." The CB Center staff has decided they want all children to have an opportunity to participate daily in the following activities: an art activity, a physical activity, snack group time, free play, and homework time.

The daily schedule they set up for their center might be:

12:00-2:40	Kindergarten children only
12:00-12:30	Lunch
12:30-1:00	Free play
1:00-1:30	Story time and integration
1:30-2:40	Rest time (non-sleepers may get up after 2:00)
2:40-3:45	Older children arrive. Free play—inside or outside. Teacher's individual talk time with children (CB interaction skills)
3:45-4:00	Snack time
4:00-4:20	Teacher-directed CB group time
4:20-5:00	Activity/project/integration time (Group experience with individualized focus)
5:00-5:30	Homework time (Quiet free play when finished)
5:30-6:00	CB journal writing time and integration of the day

Structuring the Flow of the Program

There are several ways to structure your activities. You can choose the format that is most appropriate for your program, combining different methods or using one method exclusively.

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[12] David Elkind, *The Hurried Child*, (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1988), pp. 102-3.

Free Choice

In the free-choice method children move around the facility, changing areas and activities as they wish. Teachers are assigned to supervise specific areas, and children move freely between them. This format works when children can join an activity without disrupting those already involved.

For example, from 12:30 to 1:00 at CB Center, there is free time for the kindergarten children. Self-directed art projects, manipulative toys, records, and books are available inside, and balls and jump ropes are available outside. One teacher is assigned to supervise the playground, one teacher is assigned to the main room for general supervision, and one teacher moves to where the majority of children are.

Limited Sign-in

In this format, children can participate in an activity only if there is space available in that area. The number of children participating can be controlled by a sign-in sheet, the number of chairs available, or other methods that allow children to easily see how many spaces are open at that activity at any given time.

For example, if a teacher can help eight children at the art table, a sign-in sheet with eight slots is posted near-by. Children write their names on the sheet if they want to come to the table. When a space becomes available, the teacher calls the next child on the list.

Choose-Ahead Interest Clubs

With this format, children must make a choice and sign-up for an activity before it starts. This is often used for clubs or special interest groups where long-term projects are completed by the group. Staff members write a list of activities that they are interested in teaching to a small group of children. Children sign up for three choices, and the staff assigns them to one of their choices. This provides for a variety of activities and different age and social groupings. Interest clubs work better with programs having 40 or more children because of the additional staff members available to lead the groups.

Clubs can be formed to explore such activities and interests as basketball, music, sewing, tie-dyeing, ceramics, photography, baseball, track, tumbling, rug hooking, drama, mime, science, paper-folding, puppetmaking, Jazzercise, and gardening. The only limit to this list is the number of staff and their interests.

Structured Stations

In this method children are grouped by teachers, usually by age, and the whole group is assigned to a specific activity. Groups are rotated through different activities. The rotation can be on a daily or weekly basis.

For example, all children assigned to the "Red" group go to the science table on Monday, the art activity on Tuesday, and the cooking activity on Wednesday. Children in the "Blue" group go to the art activity on Monday, the cooking activity on Tuesday, and the science table on Wednesday. Children in the "Yellow" group go to the cooking activity on Monday, the science table on Tuesday, and the art activity on Wednesday.

The plans I use for implementing my goals for the year may change as I get to know the children. Groups have personalities of their own and what works for one group may not work with another. It's important to remember to be flexible.

Getting Yourself Ready

Getting ready to teach includes setting up the environment and planning the curriculum. It also means preparing yourself mentally so you are eager to welcome the children and work with them I accomplish this partially in my planning. If I have something I particularly enjoy or look forward to doing with the children, I find it easier to transmit my excitement to them. If I feel bored with my day, I find I usually have more disagreements among the children to deal with.

I try to be clear about what makes me anxious about teaching so I can label my anxieties and quiet them. My anxieties usually go something like this: Will I be able to handle a child who acts out? Will I get so angry that I force a confrontation, forgetting my long-term goal of providing a safe environment? Will I do a good enough job of teaching so that I can be pleased? How might I take credit for what I do or how might I try to cancel?

I think about what I do that gets me what I want, such as listening to children, parents, or staff complain, and what I do that sabotages me, such as being unwilling to compromise. I think about what I know how to do by myself and what I need help with. If I have had a difficult time at home, I try to put my anger or concern to one side and not bring it to work with me. This is not always possible to do.

Before I start to teach I think about children's various responses to me and the activities I have planned as well as how I will feel about their responses. I know that not every child is going to love me and think that I am the most wonderful person in the world, even though I would like them to. I need to be prepared for their negative statements to me, some which may be directed to me personally and some that may not necessarily have anything to do with me but have to do with parents, school, or other events in their life.

If I care more about being respected by the children than being liked, I will be less vulnerable to statements such as "Anne, I don't want to do this! Why can't we do something else?" If I care more about being liked when I hear such a comment, I will feel guilty about not pleasing them by planning the perfect lesson that every child

adores. When I get ready to teach, I have to decide if I am going to depend solely on the children's pleasure before I allow myself satisfaction from my teaching.

Here's my checklist for knowing when I'm ready to teach:

- ➡ I have set up the environment in a way that pleases me and that I think will please the children.
- ➡ I have a plan for the day that is not overloaded with activities, and I have left room for emergencies or being flexible.
- ➡ My materials are either at my fingertips or laid out for the children.
- ➡ I have met with other staff members, and we are clear about how we are going to interact with each other and the children.
- ➡ I am clear about my expectations, limits, and consequences.
- ➡ I leave enough time to integrate the day by writing, resting, or exercising.
- ➡ I am clear about a margin of error for myself and others.
- ➡ I have planned for transitions.
- ➡ I have room for anticipation and enjoyment.

USING RESOURCES AND SUPPORT

One of the biggest problems I had when I first started to teach was that if I didn't do everything myself I believed I wasn't a good teacher. In fact, it only makes sense to use whatever resources are available to you; working with children is a demanding job even with lots of help.

Today I use resources from both inside and outside the center. I use other teachers to discuss activities and problems, to serve as a sounding board, to complain to, and to give me feedback. I bring in teaching colleagues and consultants from outside the center as observers to give me feedback about techniques I am using and suggestions for modifying my procedures in dealing with behavioral problems. Using outside resources can also provide a good opportunity for supplementing the skills of staff members by bringing in parents or people from the community. Many centers use community or high school volunteers on a regular basis as a way of increasing the ratio of adults to children.

There are many organizations and agencies to help you: park and recreation departments, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, Campfire, 4-H clubs, local colleges and universities, senior citizen groups, Y programs, local historical societies, as well as special interest clubs and service organizations.

One year I made a real find! A friend told me about "The Snake Lady," a woman who raised snakes and wanted to help groups of children feel comfortable around them. I talked with her on the phone, told her of my wish not to force

children to touch the snake if they didn't want to, and listened to the way she had presented her pets to groups in the past.

The Snake Lady came to the center with five or six different kinds of snakes. Before she arrived I discussed with the children the need to be quiet and move slowly so as not to frighten the snakes. The Snake Lady was very patient. She recognized that some children would be fascinated, some would be scared, and some would be timid but willing to overcome their fear if given enough time. Several children announced that they would look but there was no way they were going to touch a snake. Before she left every single child had taken a turn helping to hold the eight-foot long anaconda. Her visit was a great success.

Before including any outside people or groups, however, I make sure the presenters or volunteers understand what my philosophy is and will not be sarcastic, demeaning, or talk down to the children. In this way I ensure that the quality of my program is not undermined.

Big Bombs and Brilliant Successes

Big Bombs

So what happens when all your well-laid plans go awry? Every teacher's career is seasoned with both successes and failures. The biggest bomb I remember was one day when a colleague had the children make "oobleck" from the Dr. Suess book *Bartholemew and the Oobleck*. Oobleck is like a runny form of Silly Putty, and George, my teaching assistant, had found a recipe for it that sounded intriguing. He wanted to try it out with the children, and after talking it over, we agreed to do it.

That day, George read the story out loud to refresh the children's memories. Then we passed out mixing bowls and the ingredients to all the children, who were in small groups of four. As he began giving the instructions, I got the first inkling that disaster was about to strike. Nobody was keeping their focus or listening to George. Every child was experimenting with the ingredients in his or her own way. Some were pouring the water from one pan to another. Others were running their fingers through the dry ingredients.

Finally George got their attention, explained about measuring, and the need to measure carefully. Some children were very meticulous in their measurement; others were not. Pretty soon there was one form of oobleck or another all over the room. It flowed freely from the children's hands onto tables, chairs, the floor, the walls, and themselves. The more they touched it, the warmer and more liquid-like it became. It was not until they left it alone and gave it a chance to harden that the oobleck took on a more solid form and could be picked up. It was so awful that George and I just collapsed from laughing.

What went wrong? The first thing we realized was that we had not thought the project completely through. We just thought it was a good idea, it sounded like fun, and so we tried it.

If George had written down what he was going to say, he could have anticipated some of the problems that came up. He would have realized that he was not going to keep everyone's attention in the beginning, that the children would not be able to measure the ingredients accurately, and that each child's oobleck would be different.

If we had looked at the pros and cons we would have discovered that working with one small group of children at a time would have been more sensible than having everyone make the oobleck at once. Yes, he would have had to go over the directions for each group, but by working with a small number of children, he could have helped them keep their focus and enjoy the process. He could have also answered questions, discussed the chemical reactions that were going on, and the children would have had a finished product that meant something. As it was, all each child had was a mess.

We spent the rest of the afternoon cleaning up the room. For several days afterward we kept finding pieces of oobleck on the furniture and floor. It became a standing joke. The children would say "Let's make oobleck," and George would say "No, no! I'm not ready."

I've never tried to make oobleck since, although I have often thought it would be a good idea if I could muster up the strength to rethink the lesson, reteach it, and make it more of a success the second time around.

BRILLIANT SUCCESSES

Over the years, as my skill at planning and teaching a Creative Behavior lesson has increased, my successes have increased too. I remember the plays the children wrote, practiced, and performed for their parents. I remember the potluck suppers with extended families, singing songs from different countries. I remember individual art, science, writing, roleplaying, logical thinking, physical activities, and cooking projects. I remember journal assignments and integration lessons where children realized they had grown and changed.

One of my favorite lessons is one I call the "Vegetable Lesson." It has three parts to it. I bring a variety of fruits and vegetables to the center, such as apples, grapefruit, green peppers, purple cabbages, and purple onions. Pomegranate is a good one too, but it is not always in season when I want to do the lesson.

On the first day I have the children look at the fruits and vegetables, handle them, feel them, smell them, and think about what the insides would look like if I cut them open either horizontally or vertically. The children choose one of the fruits or vegetables and draw as accurate a picture as they can of what they think or predict the inside will look like, using crayons to color.

On the second day, I cut the fruits and vegetables open. I love the expression on children's faces when they see what is inside—the anticipation and the pleasure. Their comments are wonderful too.

"See! I knew green peppers had seeds!"

"The grapefruit's pink not white!"

"Look! There's yellow inside the apple. I thought it was just white."

The next step is to draw an accurate picture of what their fruit or vegetable actually looks like. Of course we end that day by eating the fruits and vegetables as an extra snack.

The third and last step, which is done on another day, is a writing assignment to compare what is the same and what is different about the pictures they drew—in the prediction and the reality. They also write a statement about what they liked about the lesson, what they didn't like, and why they felt that way. This is a wonderful lesson and the children and I get a lot of satisfaction from it.

But probably what I would count as my most brilliant successes are the successes with individual children, the notes year after year from children who want to stay in touch because I was an important person in their lives. To me a brilliant success is when I see excitement in children's eyes as they understand the concept of margin of error and apply it to themselves for the first time. It is Elizabeth asking for a toy rather than grabbing it. It is Arturo missing the backboard when he is playing handball and, without argument or talking, taking his place in line for another turn. It is Brandon coming to me with two self-portraits and saying, "See how much I've grown! This is how I am now. I like me better and I've got lots more friends." I count amongst my brilliant successes the knowledge that I have made a difference in the lives of many children, that their self-esteem is stronger and healthier because of me. This makes all the effort worthwhile.

It's true that good planning is time-consuming and takes a lot of energy. But building self-esteem in children is an exceedingly important job. I think of my planning as putting together a jigsaw puzzle. I try to find pieces that fit the next small step in learning as well as fit the children with whom I am working. When I have everything in place, I have an overall picture or plan that gives me a lot of pleasure.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Do these exercises only if you are willing. If you are not willing to do them, please provide yourself with an alternate assignment or write about why you are not willing to do the exercises.

☆ EXERCISE 1

Think about a center in which you have been either a student, observer, or teacher:

a) Write three questions that teachers might ask themselves that would be irrelevant in their planning.
b) Write three questions that teachers might ask themselves that would be helpful in their planning.
c) After you have thought about a) and b), choose a partner. Discuss how your questions would or would not be helpful to a teacher.
d) If you are willing, share your discussion with the group.
e) What have you learned that will be helpful to you as a teacher?

☆ EXERCISE 2

Imagine that you are a first-year teacher at a center.

a) Write three goals that you want to accomplish during this year.
b) Write three goals that a person who is pushy and/or critical of you might want you to accomplish during this year, (e.g., a person who says "You should be doing more" or "You haven't done a good enough job.")
c) Write three goals that someone who is always flattering you might want you to accomplish during this year, (e.g., a person who says "You're doing just a wonderful job," no matter what you have done, whether appropriate or inappropriate.)
d) Write three goals that a good friend who is authentic with you might want you to accomplish this year, (e.g., a person who tells you honestly when you do things well, is specific about what he or she likes, and gives you appropriate suggestions for change.)

☆ Exercise 3

After reading your responses from #2:

a) Which goal is the closest to what you think might actually happen?
b) Which goal is the furthest from what you think might actually happen?
c) Share your lists from #2 and your responses to a) and b) with a partner. Discuss how they are similar and different.
d) Share your list, your responses, and/or the results from your discussion with the whole group, if you are willing.

☆ Exercise 4

Plan a day's schedule for an after-school center. Include private time with incoming children, snack time, homework time, group time, physical activity, an art activity or cooking project, and private or quiet time for the children.

a) Share your plan with a partner. Discuss the similarities and differences. Discuss what was hard about making your plan and what was easy. Discuss what you like about your plan and why and what you do not like about your plan and why.
b) If you revised your plan, what changes would you make?
c) Share what you learned with the whole group.

☆ Exercise 5

Think about the seven crucial concepts and elements (listed below) in a Creative Behavior lesson plan and the One Shape One Color lesson plan beginning on page 160.

a) Choose three of the following concepts or elements and describe in writing how each is dealt with in the art lesson.
   1. A safe environment
   2. A nurturing environment
   3. Reasonable limits and immediate, appropriate consequences
   4. Integration
   5. Margin of error
   6. Choices
   7. Resistance
b) Share your writing with a partner.
c) Discuss with your partner what you learned from this assignment.
d) Share part or all of your writing with the whole group, if you are willing.

☆ EXERCISE 6

Think about the collage lesson. What would be the next lesson you might teach or what would be a similar lesson you would teach in a different area?

a) Write a Creative Behavior lesson plan for either the next sequential step or an integration for this lesson.
If you don't like this focus, choose an alternative that you are comfortable with and write a Creative Behavior lesson plan for it.
b) Share your lesson plan with a partner. Discuss similarities and differences.
c) Share your lesson plan with the whole group, if you are willing.

☆ EXERCISE 7

Think about the lesson plan you made in #6. Write the answers to the following questions:

a) What did you like about making up the lesson? Why?
b) What didn't you like about making up the lesson? Why?
c) What part might you change if you rewrote the lesson plan?
d) How would you change it?
e) What would be the consequences of that change?
f) Share your responses to a) through e) with a partner. Discuss what you have learned.
g) Share what you have learned with another partnership.
h) Share what you have learned with the whole group, if you are willing.

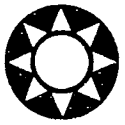
☆ EXERCISE 8

Present the lesson you wrote in #6 to a group of children.

☆ EXERCISE 9

After presenting the lesson you wrote in #6 to some children, consider the following questions and write your response to them:

a) What did you like about presenting the lesson? Why?
b) What did you not like about presenting the lesson? Why?
c) After having presented the lesson, what would you keep the same about the lesson and what would you change?
d) How is that similar to and different from your expectations before you taught the lesson?



CHAPTER 9

PREPARING FOR TRANSITIONS

You may think the biggest part of your job as a teacher is to plan activities and lessons, and carry them out successfully. Actually one of the most important parts of the day is the time between those carefully planned lessons. Many teachers plan excellent individual activities: the art table is set up to attract children; the book corner is conducive to quiet reading; there is enough room in the block corner to build large and complicated structures. But how do you get Bri to stop building a bridge when it is group time? And what if no one wants to help clean up the paints before going out to play kickball?

These transition times are particularly difficult for children because they test their flexibility, adaptability, and ability to change. As a result this is when children will express their resistance or resentment by moving more slowly if they are asked to hurry or--going to the other extreme--by acting manic and racing around. If you aren't prepared, the negative atmosphere generated while children are changing activities may stay with the group and undermine your prepared activities.

As a teacher, you need to put a lot of thought and planning into these periods of change for them to go smoothly. You can help children learn to handle change through your planning and anticipation of potential problems and then support them through these difficult times by talking with them about how they are feeling. Coping with change is hard for many children, yet it is an important skill for all children to learn because it helps them see the world as filled with alternatives and choices rather than no-win situations. If children are helped to feel comfortable when they make transitions and changes, they feel more secure. They learn to recognize their resistance to change, to acknowledge their feelings of discomfort, and to become less fearful and more willing to take risks. They learn that change is to be expected and can be managed.

Frequent Transitions

Teachers often label the children's arrival and departure as a transition and so give some thought to how they will help children make this go more smoothly. However, the many small changes that take place throughout the day can also be very disruptive and must be recognized and acknowledged.

Transition From Elementary School to the Center

Mrs. Smith was just awful today. She made us sit in our seats all during recess just because one or two people were talking.

Jody threw food at lunch time and hit the janitor! He had to go to the principal's office!

See my bandage!! I fell off the bars and scraped myself. It hurt when the teacher put medicine on it.

Katrina won't talk to me. She said she won't ever be my friend again. I don't know what I did to make her so mad at me! Now I hate her.

We had a test in math today. I know I made a lot of mistakes. My dad is going to kill me when I get home.

My mom is going to see my teacher this afternoon. She says I'm not to worry, but I know I've done something wrong. All day I felt the teacher was looking at me kind of strange. I wonder what I did?

I got a hundred on my spelling test! My mom is going to be so proud of me!

Coming to the center may be hard for some children because they really want to go home, have their mothers or fathers all to themselves, and be able to tell them, over a snack, about all the events of the day. They may feel resentful because they are not at home but at child care. We are not their mothers or fathers, whom they want to see, but their teachers. I try to give these children reassurance that I understand how they are feeling. I tell them I won't take their feelings away from them. If they really are angry and want to draw or write about it, I provide appropriate materials such as oversize crayons and large pieces of newsprint. I indicate I am also willing to listen without judgment to their complaints, knowing I can not necessarily fix the problem or change the situation. If they complain that

their parents have to work. I remind them that their parents still care about them and want them to be safe. Being at the center is a much better option than being at home alone.

I do not mean that you should dwell on this resentment every day because that might blow it out of proportion. However when it comes up, it is important to recognize it, acknowledge it, and help children to understand what is happening. Then perhaps you can help them move on to a favorite activity that takes their mind off their complaints. They do have to be at the center. You are not going to change that.

Other children may be thrilled to be at the center because there is safety and companionship there. They have friends and are cared for until it is time to go home. These children may want their mothers or fathers to be at home, but they do not especially miss them if you can provide a safe, nurturing environment and are respectful and caring until their parents arrive.

Often children don't want to stop an activity when it's time to do something else.

Transition from One Activity to Another

"Sara, it's group time. You're supposed to be with the group. Why aren't you over there? What's wrong with you anyway? Clean up that mess and get where you're supposed to be." If I were Sara, I would want to stay where I was just to get even with the person who spoke so thoughtlessly and rudely to me.

In all transitions, the child's and your own pacing need to be taken into consideration. Time warnings need to be given. If children are going to have to clean up an activity, it often helps to say, "You have five more minutes of play time before cleaning up." This gives children a warning and allows them to decide how they are going to use their time. By knowing time constraints, children have a choice and therefore feel more in control.

If a child ignores your warnings then you have some questions to ask yourself and some decisions to make. How important is it that this particular child follow these instructions? What would be the consequences of *not* enforcing the limits this time? Sometimes if I state the limits and consequences clearly and kindly and then leave, after a minute or two, a child will move on his or her own. If I really want a child to stop what he or she is doing, I can offer an alternative such as saying, "I'll help you pick up these blocks, and then we can go in to group time together."

There is no one right way to get a reluctant child to move. What works for one child does not always work for another. Also, you will have days when you are more patient and willing to wait for children than others. This is normal. You need to do what you can so you feel good about yourself as a teacher.

Some children have a hard time making transitions. Michael, for example, gets very engrossed in the block corner. His whole attention is focused on building. He can stay there for hours. Consequently, when he moves into another area, he has difficulty. It is as if all the energy he has devoted to the blocks suddenly becomes unfocused and unmanageable. He will often run through the room disrupting art activities or whatever is going on. He needs help to get outside and work off some of that energy. If it is not possible for Michael to go directly outside, punching a pillow or throwing a bean bag or nurf ball might be an alternative. Often children need some time to think about what they want to do next. They cannot leave one activity and know immediately where they want to go. They need time to make up their minds.

Shanta doesn't go to such extremes as Michael, but she dawdles, drags her feet, twists her body, and does not look you in the eye when it is time to come in to group time. Aaron simply does not move when he is told it is group time. Like Michael, he gets engrossed in what he is doing and ignores all early warnings. Usually the most effective way to get Shanta and Aaron to group time is to give them an early warning, then a reminder, and then to leave them alone to come on their own. Sometimes I have to send another child or teacher out after them, but

usually they appear and are among the last to sit down in the group.

Some teachers are not willing to bend the rules for any child because they feel that many more children might begin to act like Aaron and Shanta. I have found that most children do what they are told most of the time if they feel safe, cared for, and respected. Usually it is not necessary to give a long explanation to the group about why Shanta and Aaron are always so late. If you have set up a safe environment, children will accept individual differences. If children question me about why Shanta does not have to be the first one in at group time, I carefully explain that this is one of the areas where Shanta has real trouble following the limits and that I am helping her feel comfortable as best I know how. In a situation like this, you also might remind questioners that if ever they need a special limit, you will be willing to give it to them.

TRANSITION FROM THE CENTER TO HOME

"Why do you always come just when I'm having fun? Why can't you come later when I'm ready to go home?"

Some children use going home time to punish or control their parents. Children know when their parents are tired and in a hurry. If a parent wants to leave quickly, a controlling child will find something very important to do. It is a way of paying back parents for either an action or verbal response that the child feels is demeaning.

Some parents are willing to carry a kicking, screaming child out of the center. Other parents carefully explain to their child why it is important to leave when it's time to go. This tactic is based on the hope and premise that if children understand what is happening, they will accept and go along with it. Some parents are quite matter of fact about leaving, expecting children to come. They ask about the child's day and tell what is going to happen when they get home so their child can begin to anticipate what comes next. Other parents simply let the child decide when he or she has had enough and is ready to come home. This gives the child a lot of power. Still others use bribes or promises of treats or presents they will get once they are out of the center. Going home can be a very embarrassing time.

Children are different from one another in their wants and needs about leaving the center. If this transition is a problem for several children, it may need to be discussed in a meeting, so parents have group support. If it presents a problem to just a few children, you might consider individual conferences with the parents. It is also helpful if you talk about your expectations with the children. Do you expect them to take a long time leaving once their parents have arrived? Do you expect them to put away what they are doing before they go? Do you expect to help the parents in extracting a child, or are parents expected to do it all by themselves? Are there consequences for stepping over these limits?

Normally parents come to pick up their children at about the same time every day. Because of this regularity children begin to know when their parents will arrive. I expect them to get ready to go without any fuss when they see their parents. This means cleaning up and putting away any materials they have used, so that the area is ready for another person.

Infrequent Transitions

There are infrequent transitions which also need special attention, such as entering the center for the very first time, returning from a long vacation, having a substitute teacher, changing rooms, or changing teachers. Children's reactions to these changes will vary from eager acceptance to fearful withdrawal. Most of their responses will be somewhere in the middle. It is important to acknowledge not only the children who have difficulty but also those who accept change without a lot of fuss. These children need reinforcement too and will benefit from the activities that help less trusting children through the transitions, even though they themselves are not upset. By acknowledging the feelings of all the children, you help the more resistant or fearful ones to use the other students as role models, giving them strategies that they can use another time.

Entering the Center for the First Time

When a child enters the center for the first time, you can help by going slowly and giving him or her time to adjust. For some people, there is nothing more frightening than going into a roomful of people and not knowing anyone. Each person faces questions such as these: Will people like me? Will I find a friend? Where is the bathroom? What do I do if I'm scared? How can I get people's attention or, How can I keep people from noticing me? The way children enter the center will depend on their level of trust. If their world has been a safe place and they feel safe with their parents, they usually can feel safe with other people.

Rosa and Bill illustrate two completely different ways children react to entering a group for the first time. Rosa came into the center like a whirlwind. She wanted to see everything and meet everyone *now!* Rosa's outgoing behavior and excitement may have been genuine curiosity and a strong self-image, or it may have been a cover-up for her anxiety. She may have been afraid people would not like her so she rushed around, eliminating the necessity to really interact with anyone. The only way for me to tell was to wait and observe.

Fortunately for both of us, Rosa had a real enjoyment of life. After getting acquainted with her physical surroundings, she concentrated on getting acquainted with the people. She made friends easily and soon became a leader in the group. If

her behavior had been a cover-up for anxiety, I would have had to help her develop techniques for making friends, such as inviting her to take a special book from my bookshelf to read or look at with a prospective friend in the book corner.

Bill came into the center for the first time with his thumb in his mouth and clinging to his mother's skirt. When I spoke to him he hid his head and would not answer. His mother said he would be fine once she left, which she wanted to do immediately. Since this was Bill's very first time in a center, I asked his mother if she were willing to stay for a little while until Bill had had a chance to look around. His mother agreed, so we went on a tour of the center, which eased the pain of parting somewhat. There were still tears when his mother left.

It was then my job to figure out if Bill needed Kleenex and my lap to sit in, or if I should keep my eye on him but leave him alone with time to collect himself and observe the other children before deciding what he would do next. If those alternatives seemed inappropriate, I had to decide whether Bill needed to be taken over to a group of children and included in their play or given some specific direction to get him started. These are some of the things that you, as teacher, will have to consider in deciding how best to help a new child. These decisions are particularly difficult when you do not know the child. You have to do what feels comfortable for you, perhaps trying one technique, and if it does not work, trying another.

I believe the most important first step in assisting children to feel comfortable is helping them find a friend. Newcomers need someone to show them around, who will be willing to stay with them, answer questions, and make them feel more secure. Often in a center, children enter gradually, one or maybe two at a time, not all at once as in public school. I try to make sure each new child has a buddy to help ease the period of adjustment.

I spend a lot of time getting acquainted with new children, learning their names, going over the rules, setting up the expectations for behavior, and explaining the consequences for over-stepping the limits. This is like the spade work gardeners must do before they plant a seed. They have the choice of just sprinkling seeds on the ground without preparing the soil, but if they do that, they take a chance. The seeds might not germinate and grow, so the effort of getting the seeds and sprinkling them will have gone to waste. Teaching is similar.

The following are some children's responses to what is scary about coming to a new center:

I feel so shy when I'm new. I don't know if I'll have any friends or not.

I hate it because all the boys try to beat you up.

I'm scared the teacher will ask me a question. I won't know the answer and then she'll think I'm dumb.

Helping the Group Accept a New Member

Not only is it important to help new children adjust to the group, it also is important to help the group accept the incoming student(s). When members of a group change, there can be a period of discomfort as everyone redefines their territory. Some children may feel threatened that their friendships will change because of the new child, or that they will lose a competition with the new person because he or she will be a better handball player or softball pitcher. Others may be scared of the unknown or feel a loss of security with what is known. These feelings, even though they may not be accurately labeled by the children, can lead to resentment, isolation, and/or bullying. By discussing the possibility of these feelings, the children are helped to recognize them, and then they are more often able to accept the new child without so much trauma.

Group time offers a good opportunity to discuss how it feels to be the new child in the group. I always preface the discussion with a statement that I will allow children to say how they are feeling, so long as what they say will not hurt anyone's feelings. If they want to say something hurtful, they can tell me privately later or write it on a piece of paper and give it to me to hold. This admonition does not always work, of course, because a child still might say something hurtful. If that happens, I label it as a put-down and enforce the consequence of writing a note.

Everyone has been new at some time or other and remembers how it feels. I have found that most children look upon it as a painful experience. These are some of the questions I ask the children to think about.

How did it feel to be a new child? What kinds of things would you *not* like to have happen to you if you were the new child entering this group? What kinds of things would you like to have happen to you? What will you like about having a new child in the group? What won't you like about it?

After thinking about some of these questions and discussing them, the children are clearer about what kinds of things are appropriate to do to help the new child and what they are willing to do. There is usually at least one child who is eager to volunteer to help by showing the new person around the center, explaining routines, and generally helping him or her feel more comfortable.

Sometimes families take extended vacations, and children are away from the center for quite a while. Although the returning children are not new, they need special acknowledgment and greetings when you see them again. It may take them some time to ease back into the routine of the center.

Transition of Having a Substitute Teacher

Working with a substitute teacher can be a difficult transition for children. Students know a substitute is temporary, unlike a teacher who quits. To prepare the

children for the fact that I will be absent at some point during the year, I have a discussion with them early on about substitute teachers. I listen to their stories about how awful they feel some of their substitutes have been either at the center or elementary school. Then I ask them to think about what they don't like about substitutes, as well as what they like about them, and why they feel that way. I state my expectations of their behavior: that they will be kind to the substitute and not make life more difficult. Giving the children a chance to think in advance about how they will behave when they will have a substitute allows them to acknowledge more choices and offers them alternatives for when a substitute is actually there.

Whenever I know I am going to be absent, I always warn the children ahead of time and state my expectations for their behavior. This way I prepare them for a change. At this time I often ask them to write or draw about how they feel about having a substitute.

Following are some of the children's statements about what they might do to make it harder for the substitute, what the consequences would be, and what they were willing to do to help instead:

> *I might scream and yell and when the substitute asks me to do something, I might say, NO! If I scream and yell, I'll get my name written down. I'm willing to not scream and yell. I'm willing to listen to what she has to say.*
>
> *I might poke Lamoya with my pencil or throw paper wads at her. She gets mad real easy. I don't know what I'll do. I might poke Lamoya because it's such fun to see her mad. If I do poke her and get caught, I'll get into trouble.*
>
> *When the substitute asks me where the paper is, I might tell her the wrong cupboard. That will get me into trouble. I'm willing to tell her where the paper is.*

Some teachers object to asking children what they *might* do to get in trouble. They feel it promotes misbehavior in children. With very, very disturbed children, it may encourage them to misbehave. However, in a normal group if children are given a chance to say what they might do and what the consequences would be if they made that choice, they usually are willing to take appropriate care of themselves.

TRANSITION FROM ONE TEACHER TO ANOTHER WITHIN THE SAME ROOM

When Carol was our teacher, we never did things that way!!

Don't think just 'cause she smiles at me, I'm going to like her!

I hate her for taking Carol's place!

I overheard the children muttering these comments when a well-liked teacher left, and I replaced her. I knew the children were angry at Carol's leaving. I also knew that eventually they would come to respect and like me. Still the comments hurt, and I vowed if ever I were in a situation where someone was going to take over from me, I would prepare the group well to minimize their resentment.

A change of teachers during the year can be very traumatic for everyone involved. With a little preparation and care, however, the teacher who is leaving can make it easier on the children, as well as on the teacher who is taking his or her place.

If you are the teacher who is leaving, it is important for you to prepare the children by helping them to acknowledge the good times you have had together, but then say good-bye and let go. Wanting to be the best-loved teacher of all can prevent you from being able to help the children move on, and it can often prevent the children from liking and learning from the new teacher.

What can you do to prepare a group for your departure? If I had to leave, I would prepare the group by doing a lot of talking, writing, and drawing about what we liked, didn't like, and why about my leaving. I, as the teacher, would do these assignments as well and share them with the children. It would be important for the group to know how I was feeling about the change.

We would talk and draw about different ways of acting and the consequences of each. For example, what might they do to make it harder on me? What might they do to make it harder or easier for the new teacher? We would also talk about what they might do to make it harder or easier on themselves.

With this kind of discussion about the change, the children are clearer about their choices and about the consequences of their choices. Their resentment and anger are acknowledged. Their emotions can then be dealt with directly rather than hidden and left for the next teacher to handle. If they are angry, the children can draw a picture showing what they would like to do to me for leaving them—not what they would do, but what they would like to do—such as hitting me, throwing things at me, and calling me names. After their feelings are expressed on paper, the children and I would talk about everyone's feelings and what we can do about them. Maybe the children need reassurance that I will not forget them and will write them letters. Maybe they need reassurance that I will miss them too.

Changing Rooms or Groups Within the Same Center

If a whole group is moving or graduating to a new room, it is easier for everyone than if only one child is changing. If children are in a group, with friends,

they feel supported and are not so afraid. In this situation, I would use the same kinds of questions I use for changing teachers and helping children enter a group, i.e., What will you like, not like, and why about going to a new room? What can you do to make it harder on yourself? On the teacher? What can you do to make it easier? What are you willing to do to make it easier on yourself? On the teacher?

If only one or two children are changing rooms, you might ask them what kind of help or support they want from the class to aid them in making the move. Some may want to stay in touch with the class because it is easier to face the unknown if they realize they are not leaving their friends completely behind. This contact usually diminishes with time as new friendships are formed.

CHANGING SCHOOLS AND/OR DAY-CARE CENTERS

Changing schools and/or day-care centers usually means only one child is leaving. Again, I would use the same sort of group discussion and art lessons discussed previously in this chapter. It would be appropriate in either instance for the children to discuss or write about their feelings, describing what will be hard and what will be easy or what will be uncomfortable and comfortable.

A good-bye party is also important. I often have children think about something they particularly like about the child who is leaving or something they have done with that child that is particularly meaningful to them. I ask the children, if they are willing, to write a letter telling the child specifically why he or she will be missed. The child who is leaving can write a letter to the class telling them why he or she will miss them. This way children who leave have something to take with them and the rest of the children know what is happening. Otherwise they might imagine that the child has disappeared and, if he or she has disappeared, then it is quite logical to think that they might disappear too for the same unknown reasons.

Following are examples of children's writing about how it might feel to leave one center and go to another one.

> *I would hate to leave. I love my friends and my teacher. I don't know if I could make new friends.*

> *I would feel very sad if I had to leave my teacher. Anne says she needs me to smile at her and help her feel cheerful. I don't know if my new teacher would need me the same way.*

The reason for giving the above assignment is to help children take credit for the interpersonal relationships that they have established and the hard work they have done in many different areas while they have been in the center.

ENDINGS

Endings are important because they bring closure with celebration and allow children to move on, but they are more often overlooked in planning than beginnings.

In one center where I worked, all the children were in one group, so even though they moved from one grade to another in elementary school, they were all still in the same group with the same teacher in after-school child care. The advantage here was that I did not have to say good-bye so often. In another larger center the children were divided into groups according to their grade in elementary school. This meant every year the children moved as a group to a different teacher within the center. The last day with these groups was very special.

When the group moves on as a whole, I do the closure activities with all the children. I begin to prepare for the last day several weeks in advance. First I have the children fill out a self-evaluation form. They write comments about their skills in different areas such as physical activities, cooperation, social interaction, and general behavior. The form has a place for them to write about the specific areas they feel they have improved in so they can take credit for their growth.

Oh, the moaning and groaning when they h ve to fill out those forms! Children like to complain and their complaints and resistance get fully acknowledged in the noises they make. Credit taking and integration can be hard work, and there is a lot of resistance to it. It is often easier to deny or cancel credit than it is to integrate how much you have learned. Although they complain, the child en have shown me that they value this experience. People are always evaluating children; it gives them power and satisfaction to take control of the process themselves.

I also use an art lesson to help children take credit for what they have achieved. The children cut out two circles of white construction paper, each with a diameter of about five inches. Then I put out two-inch wide strips of construction paper in a variety of colors. The children have to take a minimum of three strips. On each one they write a credit-taking statement. They can write about their behavior at the art table, at quiet time, interacting with friends, how they cooperated in groups, how they dealt with frustration or disappointment, or something that is important to them.

After writing the credit-taking statements on the strips of paper, the children paste these strips to one of the circles. The strips can be attached in any way that pleases the child. Then the second circle is pasted against the back of the first circle so it covers up the ends of the attached strips. I have the children write the words "Credit Badge" and their name on the front circle. These badges are colorful and reflect real credit for their owners.

Over a period of several weeks, I give the children integration writing assignments such as, what have they liked about the center this year and why, and what haven't they liked and why not; what do they expect and don't they expect to

happen next year; what's scary about next year; and what are three things they have learned this year at the center, and how do they feel about that.

An appropriate pace would be to give no more than one or two of the above assignments each week. By helping children to integrate experiences, you are giving them tools they can use in the future. They can learn to ask themselves these kinds of questions when you are no longer their teacher. Thus the influence you have on a child will continue for a long, long time.

Hopefully you will have many children like Rosa who enjoy each day—no matter what challenge it presents. You will probably find, however, that for most of your students, change is uncomfortable and disruptive. Their resistance is strongest then, but once you have gotten them through the transition and into the next activity, their energy will focus on enjoying the new experience. There are some children whose resistance to change is so strong that even after they have started a new activity, their resentment continues. These children need special attention to help them let go of the old feelings and move on. If children use transition times to test your limits, I suggest you have them do some writing about why it is so important for them *not* to make the transition; what they like, don't like, and why about transitions; and what they would do instead.

As the teacher it is up to you to lead the children through their experiences at the center. Your careful planning can help you and the children anticipate many changes and learn to take them in stride. In addition to making the day go more smoothly for everyone, you are building an essential skill in your students individually and as a group—the ability to be flexible and respond to change positively. Having this skill gives children confidence that they can face the future and all the expected and unexpected changes it will bring.

Questions and Exercises

Do these exercises only if you are willing. If you are not willing to do them, please provide yourself with an alternate assignment or write about why you are not willing to do the exercises.

The adult activity marked with ☆☆ is appropriate to do with children. However, if you do use the activity with children, it is important that you, as a teacher, first have the experience of doing it yourself.

☆☆ Exercise 1

a) Think about a time when you were new in school or in your neighborhood. What did you not like about the experience? Why? What did you like about the experience? What might someone have done to help you have an easier time?

b) Think about a time when you were in a class and someone new came in. What did you not like about the experience or what were you scared of? Why? What did you like about the experience? Why?

c) Discuss your answers to a) and b) with a partner. Find similarities and differences between your answers and your partner's answers. Share the similarities and differences with the whole group, if you are willing.

d) Discuss what you have learned that you could use in a teaching situation.

☆ Exercise 2

a) Write three things that would *not* be appropriate to say to a child who was entering a center for the first time.

b) Write three things that would be appropriate to say to a child who was entering a center for the first time.

c) Share your answers to a) and b) with a partner.

d) Discuss how you would feel if you were greeted that way by a teacher.

e) Share your discussion and answers with the whole group, if you are willing.

☆ EXERCISE 3

Think about what happened when you came home from elementary school. What did your mother or father do to greet you? How did you feel about that? What were the first two or three things you usually did after coming in the door? How did you feel about them? What were some things you wanted to do but couldn't do when you got home from school?

a) Draw a picture of yourself doing either the things you normally did when you came home from school, or draw a picture of yourself doing what you would have liked to do but couldn't.
b) Share your picture with a partner. Include an explanation of what you've drawn.
c) Share your picture with the whole group, if you are willing.
d) Discuss with the group what have you learned that you can apply to the children in the center where you teach.

☆ EXERCISE 4

Think about a time when you have gone from one activity to another. It can be recent or not. What was easy about the move? What was hard? What could you have done to make the transition harder on yourself? What could you have done to make the transition easier on yourself?

a) Discuss your transitions with a partner, comparing them for similarities and differences.
b) Discuss with the whole group what you have learned that you can apply to the children in the center where you teach.

☆ EXERCISE 5

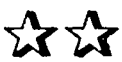
Think about how you would feel if you were going to leave a well-known group. What kind of good-bye party would you want for yourself? What would you want to give the group as an expression of your appreciation for their kindness to you? What would you want from the group to help you remember them?

a) Plan a good-bye party for a child leaving the center. Discuss your plans with a partner.
b) Share your plans with the whole group, if you are willing.

☆ EXERCISE 6

Think about a plan for a transition. How will one activity end and another begin? If the activity is a whole group activity, how will you be sure that all the children are participating? What is your plan if some children do not want to come to the activity?

a) Write a plan for a transition.
b) Discuss your plan with a partner. Discuss what was hard about making your plan and what was easy. Talk about what you like about your plan and why, and what you do not like about your plan and why.
c) If you are willing, share what you have learned from your discussion with the whole group.



ACTIVITIES TO DO WITH CHILDREN

☆☆ ACTIVITY 1

Have the group think about two children, one who is willing to come in at group time and one who doesn't want to come in. How might these children react to a teacher who insists that they come in? What might they want to do to that teacher?

a) Ask the children to chose one of the two children they have thought about and draw a picture of what they think that child might *want* to do to the teacher who insists that he or she come in for group time—not what the child would actually do, but what he or she might feel like doing.
b) Have the children share their pictures with a partner, describing in detail what they have drawn.
c) Provide an opportunity for children to share their pictures with the whole group, if they want to.
d) As the pictures are presented to the group, discuss the different feelings that are brought out. Acknowledge all the feelings even though they are not ones you might have yourself.
e) Label any feelings that are disturbing to you as ones that make you feel uncomfortable.
f) Discuss the consequences of actually using any of the behaviors described in the pictures.

☆☆ ACTIVITY 2

Have a discussion about entering and leaving the center on a daily basis. Ask children for examples of different ways they might behave when they enter or leave. (Note: This could also be a roleplay experience.)

If anyone suggests an example that might prove difficult for you to handle, ask for suggestions about how that behavior might be modified so that it is more acceptable.

At the end of the discussion, state your expectations for the children's actual behavior.

☆☆ ACTIVITY 3

Have the children think about entering this group for the first time. What are some things that would make them feel comfortable? What are some things that would make them feel uncomfortable?

a) Have the children draw two pictures of themselves entering this group for the first time. In one picture they're to draw what could happen that would make them feel very comfortable, and in the other, what would make them feel very uncomfortable.
b) Have the children share their pictures with a partner.
c) Provide an opportunity for any children who want to share their pictures with the whole group.

☆☆ Activity 4

After a new child has entered the group, have a discussion about how the children would like and wouldn't like to be treated if they were new. Acknowledge the children's feelings.

☆☆ Activity 5

Have a discussion of what the children might like about having a substitute, what they won't like about it, and why.

☆☆ Activity 6

Ask the children to write about what would be scary about leaving this center and moving to a different center or school. Have them include what they might like about the experience, what they might not like about it, and why they feel that way.

a) Have the children share their writing with a partner.
b) Have the children share their writing with the whole group, if they are willing.

CHAPTER 10

TEAM TEACHING

Teaching in a center means team teaching or working with other adults simply because of the way centers are set up. A good, solid, supportive relationship with the other teachers in the center will enhance your own teaching. Also as a teacher and caregiver, you are a role model for the children. The way you interact with other staff members will set the stage for building self-esteem in children or help to destroy it.

Quality team teaching has been compared to marriage. The success of a good marriage or a good team-teaching partnership depends on commitment, mutual respect, hard work, recognition of long-term goals, being out front with your disagreements, sometimes agreeing to disagree, and, above all, time and patience.

Team teaching can be very satisfying. There are other adults in the room to share responsibility. If a child oversteps the limits, and you are not sure how to handle enforcing the consequences, you can discuss the problem with your coworkers before making a decision. If there is an emergency, one teacher can handle the emergency, and the other can handle the children. It also can be easier to plan, gather, and prepare materials for lessons or art projects because you don't have to do it all by yourself.

Team teaching means taking the risk of allowing someone else to watch you teach and to see how you interact with children. Your team partner will know your strengths as well as your weaknesses. It is not easy to allow someone else to observe you as you teach, because you may put yourself down if you are criticized or asked to change the way you interact with children.

Competition and Complementarity

Competition

Competition is an enormous factor in team teaching. With hard work, awareness, and direction, competition can be positive, but usually people look on it as something negative, something to ignore or eliminate. When competition is unhealthy, team members compare themselves with others, feel they are deficient, and put themselves down. Many people try to deny competition or pretend it isn't there. However, competition cannot be ignored. It exists in some form or other in many of our interactions.

As a beginning teacher I would be very, very pleased with myself when I tried something new and it worked. I would be equally discouraged when I tried something new and it wasn't successful. I quickly learned with whom to share my problems and pleasure. Rae, my director, was always willing to listen to me, give me encouragement, and tell me stories of her successes and failures as a beginning teacher. I could feel her warmth and caring wrap around me like a warm blanket. On the other hand, whenever I shared with Mona, I heard things like, "Well, Anne, when *I* work with Johnny, I never have any problems. From the first day I started teaching, I've always been able to get children quiet at group time and there have never been any fights on the yard. I don't understand why you're having trouble." I felt she was in effect telling me, "You must be doing something wrong." Needless to say, I didn't share much with Mona, but I thought about her all the time and compared myself to her. I felt competitive with her because I was unsure of myself and my capabilities. I always felt I was not doing a very good job after I talked with her.

One-Upsmanship

One-upsmanship is a part of competition and a huge problem. Many years ago, when I first started team teaching, I often felt pleased when I was doing a better job than my team partner. Because I was not clear about the fact that my feelings of competition stemmed from feeling threatened by my partner's skills and abilities, the actions I took were damaging for me and my team partner. I felt that I could only take credit if someone else failed. I didn't feel successful because of my own skills. This way of thinking is detrimental and, unfortunately, all too common, although many people are often ashamed to admit it. This phenomenon is called schadenfreude and refers to the pleasure we get from the pain or failure of another. As Duc de la Rochefoucauld, a 17th-century French writer, said, "It's not enough that I succeed; my friends must fail."[13]

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[13] Leah Garchik. "Personals." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 6 February, 1991. p. A-6.

When I started team teaching I often scurried around, doing all of my jobs as well as some of Kate's, my team partner's. If she had agreed to make a list of children who had not taken their turn for a cooking project, I frequently wrote it for her. If she had agreed to make up new paint for the easel, I repeatedly did it anyway. I rationalized that the jobs needed doing and were not getting done fast enough. In reality I was neither giving Kate enough time to work at her own pace nor discussing the problem, as I saw it, with her. Since I could not allow Kate to do all of her assigned tasks, she had fewer things to take credit for, so she began to put herself down and become angry with me.

Fortunately we worked with a consultant, Juanita Sagan, who knew that both Kate and I were committed to being excellent teachers. Juanita helped me to develop several strategies that improved our teamwork: 1) listening to Kate's complaints and expressions of feeling useless because I did so many things so well; 2) becoming aware that I felt threatened and was scared that if I allowed Kate to do more, I would no longer feel needed; 3) recognizing our competition with one another; 4) taking credit for my skills so that I began to build a more positive self-image for myself; 5) acknowledging that I wanted Kate's pace to be the same as mine so I was pushing her to work at my pace rather than allowing her to work at her own; 6) recognizing my negative qualities; and 7) learning to accept and use these in a more appropriate way, such as pushing big chalk across a piece of paper, instead of pushing Kate, or writing in my journal about my feelings.

Juanita helped me to see that I am a competitive person. Once I recognized and accepted this I could channel my competitiveness so that I was competing with myself and recognizing how I was growing and changing, rather than putting myself down because I was not like Rae with her management skills or like Kate with her Creative Behavior skills. It also helped me realize that even though I did not like Mona, she had fine qualities, such as being well organized and having good ideas for drama activities.

Positive Use of Competition

Competition can be a positive as well as a negative force. If people look at what they can do now and compare it to what they previously did, they can usually see progress. They are in effect competing with themselves. This is an appropriate use of competition. Juanita helped me look at the things I was doing well and take credit for them. She helped me to remember how much I wanted to learn Creative Behavior skills from Kate. In order to do this, I had to give Kate positive support, a chance to use her skills, and then feel good about herself. I had to move away from focusing on what we were *not* doing. I had to learn to take credit for what was going well.

Another appropriate use of competition is when two people agree to work together for a common goal, and both are clear that each partner has specific qualities the other admires and maybe wants to learn about. Each person brings

something unique to the partnership. Each expects to gain something from the competition. There will not be one winner and one loser. Each partner will give up something in compromise, but both will also end up with something they want. To succeed, they have to be more aware of long-term goals than short-term goals. They have to trust that, as partners, they are not going to stab each other in the back, try to win, or get done in when they are not looking.

Probably the most essential element for keeping competition positive is for everyone to be clear about taking credit for their own skills and what they bring to the partnership. If partners are clear and solid about their own contribution, then they can give each other credit without feeling they have lost something. Kate and I agreed that we wanted our partnership to be successful, not just for the children but for us, personally, so we began to work on reducing our negative competition.

Kate had Creative Behavior skills that I wanted to learn. I had organizational skills that Kate wanted. We knew we would not lose the skills we had if we helped each other to grow and change. We worked together, knowing each one was adding to the partnership, and so we were able to learn from each other. We were able to use our skills, take credit for them, and give credit to each other for both of our accomplishments.

The following is what four members of a teacher support group have written about competition:

> *Healthy competition works so that each teacher studies everyone in the group. This brings out the best in each of us without hurting us or others.*
>
> *I think if I had been consciously competing for center stage I might have had to deal with stage fright. My concern about maximizing everyone's support was strong. I'm now in a position to appreciate how I used my healthy competition to produce a fine artistic product.*
>
> *My competitiveness comes out over "Pay for Performance"—the once-a-year merit bonus that has been very divisive to our team spirit and level of sharing. While we used to be quite open with each other about successes, failures, and problems, mum's pretty much the word now. I hate it! I said when it first started that I wasn't going to get caught in the trap of competing and guess what? I'm in there flailing away with the rest of them. Pretty stupid, if you ask me.*
>
> *Healthy competition means studying another person so well that I can model myself after their good qualities. Sometimes I don't choose all that well and end up imitating their not-so-good qualities. Unhealthy competition comes off my put-down of myself because I'm not perfect.*

COMPLEMENTARITY

I used to want to work only with my best friend. I knew she would support me, make allowances for my mistakes, tolerate my need to do things in a certain way, share her feelings with me, laugh, make jokes, and, most of the time, be nonthreatening. However, your best friends are often very similar to you, and complementarity can be lost if you work with them.

Complementarity means looking at your own strengths, the strengths of potential team members, and choosing someone to work with who has different strengths from you—someone who complements your skills rather than duplicates them. Often when you are working with someone, you want that person to do things exactly as you do them. It makes communication easier; you both know what the other person is talking about. However, with complementarity, you are looking for someone to fill in the gaps, not add to what is already there.

If you have a choice, be careful in choosing a team partner. While complementarity is an exceedingly important concept to consider when choosing another person to work with, it is vital for both of you to agree on a basic philosophy. A partnership will not work if you pour energy into caring about you, the children, and your work, while your partner looks at his or her work as drudgery and can't wait to leave. A partnership also will not be successful if your main goal is to build positive self-esteem and your partner's main goal is to be in a one-up position with children and adults. Again, a team will have difficulty if one teacher functions at and demands a fast pace from partners, while the other teacher's pace is slower. Complementarity needs to be considered after a basic philosophy is agreed upon.

For example, my strengths are in my organizational skills, my willingness to set limits and follow through with consequences, my respect for and genuine caring about myself and others around me, my ability to listen to children and parents, and my ability to give credit to others. To complement me, I look for someone with a lot of energy and skill at indoor and/or outdoor games, singing, or playing an instrument.

SUPPORT

One of the reasons students and teachers feel safe in a Creative Behavior class is because of the concept of support. While your supervisor is responsible for setting up the environment, you can begin building trust and support among your colleagues by using some of the following techniques.

- Ask if they want suggestions, help, and/or feedback before giving it.

- ➡ Make sure they know they can say no when they have choices, such as in giving or getting feedback or credit, choosing to be the inside or outside teacher, or planning an art project or not.
- ➡ Give them as much credit as you can without overloading them.
- ➡ Remember when you give credit it needs to be positive, authentic, and specific so that the credit or feedback you give in the future will also be believed.
- ➡ If you are not the director of the center it will not be your job to set limits for other staff members. However if someone infringes on your territory or your personal space, you need to set limits for them and yourself—in some cases you might want to ask the director for assistance and support to do this.
- ➡ Help others to use their resources such as asking each other for feedback, getting a pat on the back for a job well done, finding an alternative to a particularly dreaded task, or getting support to meet with a difficult parent.
- ➡ Help others clarify ambiguous feedback by asking them questions or supporting their asking questions to check out responses.
- ➡ Help them express negative feelings in appropriate ways such as writing letters with exaggerated complaints that will be torn up and thrown away, or drawing pictures of what they'd like to do the person but can't do because they could get in trouble.
- ➡ Help them to evaluate whom to ask when they want assistance or support.
- ➡ Help them evaluate what they've learned through listening, discussions, and integration assignments.
- ➡ Help them celebrate their accomplishments in announcements at staff meetings, group time with the children, and in planned celebrations.

By observing the ways in which you support other teachers, your students and other teachers will learn how to support themselves and each other.

Often when I had a problem handling a difficult child, it would seem insurmountable, and I would feel I either could not solve the problem, or my solution would be too hard to carry out. Kate was able to help me look at alternatives during our complaint and credit-taking time at the end of the day. For example, I would complain about Stephanie and her parents, and Kate would ask me what I intended to do. First I would use my resistance by saying I didn't know, there was no solution, and then I would explain my strategy. Kate posed questions such as "Have you thought about . . . ?" or "Would you be willing to try . . . ?" Since I had not thought about anything but my one solution, I was grateful for her suggestions. Slowly I learned I did not have to solve all my problems alone. By

discussing them, Kate and I were often able to come up with a final solution that combined a variety of different strategies. I ended up with a solution superior to my original one, and I certainly felt better about myself as I implemented it.

RESPECT

Respect is as critical an issue for your colleagues as it is for your students. You can only support your partnership if there is mutual trust and respect. If it is not there, your partnership will soon collapse. One of the hardest things to give to a partnership is respect for differences. If your team is truly complementary, there will be disagreements because you have different priorities, different ways of looking at the same child. It is vital that in your disagreements, you respect the integrity of the people with whom you are disagreeing. Sometimes differences can be resolved. Sometimes they can't. Sometimes the best you can do is to agree to disagree, still respecting your own opinion and your partner's.

Different pacing also needs to be respected. My pace is now slower than many of my colleagues. I like time to think about something before I decide to incorporate it into my program. I like time to enjoy and savor a project. I don't always have that time, but I function better when I do have it. I don't like to finish one task and rush immediately into another. If I work with someone who does not respect my pace and whose pace is much faster than mine, I am in trouble because I cannot integrate fast enough. I become unintegrated because I am not able to take credit for what I have accomplished. Also I am not able to give appropriate credit to those around me if I become pushed and unintegrated.

It is important to be aware of your own rate or the pace at which you integrate, so you can be on the lookout for potential problems, such as being unintegrated. Often when I or my partner feel pushed, we will respond by criticizing each other or something we have done, such as the way we have mixed paint or led a song. When I am criticized in this manner it takes me a while to understand what is happening and why. I feel confused because I don't usually get criticized for behaving that way. I feel responsible and unappreciated until I remember pacing and integration. Probably my partner is anxious and unintegrated. I know the solution for becoming integrated is credit taking. Hopefully my partner will work through the resistance and be willing to take credit. If not, I need to respect his or her different pacing and have patience and faith in the process of working together that we have developed.

HOW TO GIVE SUPPORT

Giving support is very delicate and complex. First of all you have to take

care of the part of you that is gleeful when your team partner makes a goof—the part of you that says "Tee hee! I'm glad it was you and not me!" Each of you will probably have an internal character who wants your partner to fail. It is essential to develop an avenue for getting these negative internal voices out without damaging the team relationship and to be willing to keep your mouth shut some of the time. You may want to offer very good advice. Your partner might be wise to follow your suggestions, but don't speak out unless your partner has specifically said he or she is willing to listen to what you have to say. Unasked for or unwanted advice can be death to a partnership.

Support for Differences

Differences in the partnership must be supported in order for you to be able to learn from one another. If you respect and admire your partner, it helps offset the tendency to put yourself down because you are not like him or her. It serves as a reminder, too, that you should not put your partner down for not having the same qualities that you value in yourself.

For example, I valued the organizational skills that I had and Kate lacked, but I was not able to take appropriate credit for them. I valued and wanted Kate's Creative Behavior skills for myself, but I was not able to give Kate appropriate credit for them. I wanted both of us to be perfect. So I put Kate down for not having my skills, and I put myself down for not having her skills. As we learned to work together as a good team, we learned to give and take credit for the skills we did have. Then we were able to learn each other's skills and become an even better team.

Disagreements

You will have disagreements with other staff members. When this happens it is appropriate to look at the cause. Sometimes there is a hidden agenda. Sometimes one person feels inadequate, angry, or upset and wants others to feel the same way. Sometimes one person is on a crusade about something vitally important to him or her. Sometimes there is a disagreement about values, such as how to handle discipline problems. Sometimes one person is unintegrated.

It can be appropriate in these situations to agree to disagree. Differences cannot always be resolved. For example, Mona and I were having difficulty with Kevin throwing a football inside the center. After the second time he did it, I said we should withhold his credit slip on Friday. Mona wasn't so sure. She felt he needed another chance. I pointed out that we had told him he would not get a credit slip if he threw the football again, and he would probably throw the football just to see if we meant what we said. Mona argued for leniency because he had not thrown the football for a long time and also because I was not going to be at the center when she gave out credit slips. She did not want to be the one to deny it to him. That was true, I was not going to be at the center that Friday.

I could have insisted on having my way, but since she was the one passing out the credit slips, I felt it would be beneficial to my long-term goal of working with Mona if I acquiesced to her in a graceful manner. I said I was willing to support her in this even though I didn't agree with her. I went home and wrote a nasty letter to Mona—that I didn't send—telling her all the reasons I thought she was a dreadful teacher. But Monday morning when Kevin showed me his credit slip, I told him matter-of-factly that Mona and I had discussed whether or not to give it to him, and that we had decided we would give him another chance. I showed my support of Mona by my words and actions. Kevin never knew how upset I was. Yes, he did continue to throw the football inside that next week, and yes, I did withhold his credit slip the following Friday, and yes, that did help him to throw footballs outside. And yes, I did want to say, "Tee Hee," to Mona but I didn't.

POSITIVE FEEDBACK

Positive feedback is a particularly rich form of support. By asking for feedback, you help yourself take credit and integrate the job you have just done. Conversely, by giving feedback you are able to help other people take credit, integrate, share, and grow. I have found that it is easier for me to use feedback for growth when I hear someone I trust tell me about the positive things I do, as well as let me know in a caring way when I am off base.

In order for feedback to be heard and helpful for building self-esteem, it needs to be both supportive and given by a significant other—someone the receiver trusts and respects. Mona and Rae could give me exactly the same piece of feedback, and I would be able to hear it from Rae but not from Mona. I did not believe Mona because I did not respect her the way I respected Rae. Also I did not trust her to be authentic. I felt that Mona would give me positive feedback because she wanted something from me. It was a way of manipulating me or buttering me up.

Often feedback is given and then forgotten. One way I have found to make sure I integrate important feedback is to write it down. The writing helps me remember what is said and means I can refer to it later on. I can also forget feedback that I don't believe. I might think someone is being inauthentic, or I might not be ready to accept the fact that I have really grown or changed that much.

Giving feedback involves a number of skills:

- listening to the other person's words and voice quality
- being aware of your own responses to the other person
- imagining what the other person's response might be to your feedback
- thinking about whether or not the person is ready for your feedback and considering whether or not it can be heard

Receiving Feedback

Receiving feedback also involves a number of skills. I remind myself I don't have to believe everything I hear. I can consider what the person says and decide later what I want to take in and what I want to leave behind. I can also check out feedback with a friend before swallowing everything hook, line, and sinker. Sometimes my internal voices will say "Mona is so dumb. She doesn't know what she's talking about," so I try to put these voices to one side and listen without criticizing. I try to listen without interrupting. If I don't understand I ask questions for clarification. I don't have to be defensive.

It is especially hard for me to hear feedback from someone I don't like. I am in a dilemma about how to respond if I don't like the feedback I'm given. Do I come out and say "I don't like what you've said," or do I say those words silently to myself and tell the person "I'll think about what you've said" knowing full well I will forget it as soon as I can? This is a decision that has to be made every time the situation arises.

Unlike children, adults receiving feedback can say what they do and don't want. They may want feedback in a nonverbal form, such as a hug or a pat on the back, or in verbal or written form. They can choose a specific person to give them feedback or they can ask for volunteers. They can decide if they want to receive negative feedback and if they do, whether they want it in verbal or written form. They may want negative feedback only if it is in writing and only if a suggestion for change is included.

Sometimes negative feedback is given without its being asked for and in a way that it is hurtful. If this happens to you, consider the motive of the person giving the feedback and try to remember that you do not have to believe it. If the negative feedback is given to you in a staff meeting you can ask someone afterward to give you support so you can discard it or integrate it in a healthy way. If it is given to you outside the center, be sure to call a supportive friend. Again, you don't have to believe all negative feedback.

Some Indicators of When a Person is Ready to Receive Feedback

Many times people will say they want feedback but in reality they are overloaded or have had enough information and are not able to assimilate anything new. It is important to judge when a person can hear feedback and not overload them even more. People are usually able to hear feedback if they exhibit most of the following qualities: they are calm, focused, attentive, able to ask and respond to questions, and are authentic with their facial expressions.

It can be a very tricky situation if you are asked directly to give feedback to a person who you feel is not ready for it. When this happens you have to play it by ear. If you tell the person that you think he or she is overloaded and needs extra time to integrate before getting any more new information, your caring might be

misunderstood. You can take the chance and give the person verbal feedback, or you can say you care about the person and are willing to give feedback but only in writing so it can be read later.

Of course, sometimes staff members can tell you directly that they don't want any more feedback. If people are not sure if they want more feedback, it is probably safe to say they are getting overloaded and they can't hear anything more.

AREAS OF SPECIAL CONSIDERATION

Any teaching situation can produce feelings of great joy, pride, and satisfaction as well as disastrous put-downs. Team teaching just has more opportunities for these highs and lows because there are more people involved. The best defense against failure is a good offensive plan that includes such things as celebration, integration, authentic appreciation, appropriate complaining, and credit taking.

CELEBRATION

Your team will benefit if you plan times when staff members celebrate with the children and with each other. In order to be effective, a large part of any celebration needs to be credit taking for how the team has worked together and/or how they have felt about their working together. These do not have to be big occasions. When I first talk about celebrating, my students immediately think about having a party or having something special to eat. This certainly can be part of it, but a celebration in Creative Behavior terms is an important aspect of integration, where you take credit for specific accomplishments.

You will celebrate many events during a year, but one of the most important things to acknowledge is your relationship with other staff members. This acknowledgment helps keep your focus on the relationship, supports building it, and making it stronger. By celebrating on a regular basis, you are aware of picking and choosing specific actions, statements, and examples of growth to take credit for.

As a staff you can decide on how you want to celebrate, but whatever you arrange, you should be sure that your plan includes time for a credit-taking statement from each staff member, if they are willing to participate. One group I worked with started off weekly staff meetings with a credit-taking statement from those present. Another group started staff meetings with either a credit or a complaint. A third group held potluck dinners twice a year as a special time to celebrate with the staff. All of these plans worked well because our focus was on giving credit to ourselves and others, as well as taking it, in a celebratory way.

Integration

Because of the issue of competition, it is doubly important to thoroughly integrate your team teaching. Through integration you can become clearer about complementarity, and the skills you bring to the team. By taking credit for your skills you will be less likely to put yourself or your partner down. The most effective way I have found for me to integrate is to sit down with my team partner at the end of each day and write in our journals. We write for 10 to 15 minutes and then share some or all of our writing. By writing before we share, we are often able to work through our resistance to integrating and credit taking. Also we are able to clarify issues that seem cloudy or unfocused.

However, one team I worked with was so resistant to writing that this was not a satisfactory solution. Therefore we chose to integrate by spending 10 minutes at the end of the day discussing interactions and events, giving each other credit, and taking credit for ourselves. That year I found myself going home and writing in my journal because I needed the experience of writing. I missed the opportunity to share what I had written and felt deprived because of that loss.

Authentic Appreciation

People often have a difficult time giving themselves credit for accomplishments, little and/or big. I know I do. It is much easier for me to take credit if someone says to me "Anne, you're doing a good job. You deserve a pat on the back," or "Anne, you need to take a bow," than to say to myself "I'm doing a good job here." When someone else tells me I am doing a good job, my actions are validated. I often need appreciation to help me recognize how good I am feeling.

It is important to give authentic appreciation to help your team partners take credit for their hard work and skills. By helping them focus on their skills and the positive aspects of your relationship, you help them recognize and acknowledge their strengths. The partnership is stronger if you can build on its strengths.

Complaining

While it is important to give appreciation to yourself and others, it is also extremely important to recognize and give yourself time to complain. Appreciation can be given directly. This is not true for all complaints. Complaints about children can be shared after the children go home. If you have complaints about your team partner, however, you will need to find another avenue of expressing them, such as writing an exaggerated letter at home, which you don't send; complaining to a good friend who does not work with you; or complaining directly to your dog or cat. This

way your complaints will be acknowledged but will not be detrimental to the working of your team.

Complaints may run the gamut from "I hate how I often end up feeling like I'm not doing a good enough job when I'm around Mona" to "I didn't see Roger's mom today. She knew I wanted to talk to her and she left before I could say anything to her" to "I hated today. It was noisy from the get-go. The children were full of complaints. Nothing went right for them, either at school or at the center."

Once complaints are out in the open, it is easier to proceed to credit taking. Often complaints such as "When I read a story to my group, they couldn't sit still. It took me *forever* to get them interested" are necessary before you can take credit for your story-reading skills. Even though it was terribly difficult to get the group quiet, you did it, and once they were involved, they sat enthralled for the rest of the story. That is real credit to take.

CREDIT TAKING

Credit taking is even more important in team teaching than it is when you are teaching all by yourself. Unless you are willing and able to take credit for your skills and accomplishments, you may fall into the trap of feeling you are not as good as your partner because you don't have the same skills. Or you will put your team partner down for not having your skills. Unhealthy competition will rear its ugly head. Your partnership will begin to disintegrate.

Having a specific time and place to integrate and take credit is important. This helps all staff members to think about what they want to take credit for. Again, writing down credit-taking statements helps people retain the credit. Sharing the statement with someone helps to integrate and internalize the credit. If appropriate credit is not taken for small, daily occurrences, you are more likely to cancel these small as well as larger events, saying to yourself "It's no big deal."

The following are statements from a teacher support group about the process of credit taking:

> *Credit taking gives me a feeling of joy, a mixture of hope, accomplishment, lightness, relief, a kind of ecstasy. It's a physical feeling. I feel good in my body. I light up and it shines through my eyes and posture. Credit taking translates into energy. I feel confidence and a sense of reassurance and security about who I am and what I am doing.*

> *Credit taking is the process of acknowledging or knowing from the inside out both the positive and negative aspects of my actions or behaviors. As the credit sinks deeper over time, I keep integrating it further until I feel I own it completely.*

A structure supports credit taking: An unstructured situation support canceling.

Staff Meetings

Staff meetings can be employed to build collegiality and support professional growth; or they can undermine collaborative planning, promote fuzzy policies and procedures that create problems in communication, and create a negative climate in the center. In order for weekly staff meetings to be useful, they should be designed to exchange ideas and plans about the program, materials, and activities, and to evaluate occurrences. In addition observations and information can be exchanged about individual children and significant events in their lives. It is important that the staff not only pool their perceptions, but that they agree on ways of interacting that will provide consistent handling of each child.

While regular staff meetings are imperative, such meetings are very difficult to arrange. Attendance may vary from meeting to meeting, but, with planned communication, everyone will have a sense of being part of shared decisions and policies. When meetings are not possible, brief daily exchanges can be extremely helpful. These can be less formal than a staff meeting, but still professional in their focus on growth and the development of children and families.

Communication in meetings requires a lot of tact. If meetings are at the end of the day, the staff will be tired and overloaded; and tired, overloaded, and unintegrated people tend to be more spiteful and mean than normal. Again, authenticity is very important. Staff members want to know they are being heard. If they perceive there is a problem, they want people to listen. They don't want someone, in effect, to pat them on the head and say, "There, there, everything will be all right." When a problem develops, (notice I didn't say *if* a problem develops) it is better to say you don't know how to solve it than to say everything will be all right.

Planning Time

One of the biggest complaints of teachers who team teach is that there is no time to plan. Planning creative lessons with another person takes a l-o-n-g time. However when several people pool their ideas the end result is usually more powerful than if just one person did the planning. During the planning time you can brainstorm, discuss various ideas, or alternative techniques. By expanding and improving on the alternatives you begin with, the final product benefits.

Of course you may be in the position of having a director or head teacher who does all of the planning, and you may only have to take responsibility for planning

an outdoor game or a specific art project once or twice a week. You may also work with a teacher who prefers to divide responsibility, saying "I'll work at the art table this week, you take it next week" or "I'll watch outdoors, you watch inside."

Probably most of your team planning will be done on your own time. Few administrators give teachers an opportunity to plan together while they are at the center, which means finding a mutually convenient time before or after work or on the weekend. Some teachers feel there is so much hassle involved in planning with someone else that it is not worth the trouble, and they would rather plan alone. You will have to decide for yourself if the advantages outweigh the disadvantages.

CHILDREN PLAY ONE TEACHER OFF AGAINST ANOTHER

Children are very, very good at playing one parent off against another. They have learned how to manipulate them and they know if one parent won't give them their heart's desire, probably the other one will. They are experts at the you're-my-favorite-parent game.

All parents and teachers want to be liked, but this is a trap. It is also very easy to fall into. One way to prevent this from happening is to present a solid front to your students. For example, often—when it wasn't raining—Michael would ask one teacher if he could use a special art tool that was reserved for rainy days. When that teacher said no, Michael would go to another teacher and ask the same question. Sometimes he would get another no, but sometimes he would get a yes. To keep this kind of behavior under control, you all should be aware of the children who tend to use this technique and try to keep an eye on what is happening in the whole room. If you see Michael going from teacher to teacher before he comes to you, you should find out what he has been asking the other teachers.

If Michael's manipulation becomes a problem, your team can decide as a staff what to do, and then be firm in your resolve to stick with that decision. This may be a place where it is important to respect differences, agree to disagree, and support the final decision of the staff even though you may not agree with it. Consistency is most important here. Presenting a united front is more important than getting your own way.

Often children internalize a mixed message as a signal that something is wrong with them rather than understanding that adults are giving contradictory information. This happens because children feel they should be able to understand and follow what adults are saying, even though the messages are not clear and consistent with each other. Mixed messages continually given over a period of time can lead to a person feeling inadequate and worthless. Or, as in Michael's case, the mixed messages can be internalized as power, even omnipotence. This also is damaging to their self-concept because it is unrealistic and gives children far too much power for their age.

If a child begins to complain about another teacher, you should not immediately condemn the teacher or say what an awful person he or she is. Perhaps you can just listen without responding. If the complaint merits a discussion, it is helpful to talk with the other teacher first, but you should also have a three-way discussion between you, the other teacher, and the child who brought up the complaint. By being open, honest, and up-front about complaints, children will soon learn that they can't undermine your solidarity with other staff members.

Martyrs and Do-Nothings

A martyr is someone who is willing to do all of his or her jobs plus all or most of the jobs of the other team member. When there is a martyr on a team, life can be difficult. Sooner or later martyrs become resentful about all the work they have done because they don't get much credit for doing it. They can't understand why nobody acknowledges them. On the other hand, their team members can't understand why martyrs get so upset—after all they *wanted* to do the work, it was not as if it was forced on them.

To prevent a martyr from taking over it is important that all jobs be spelled out and then divided up evenly. If there is some renegotiating of jobs later or if a martyr takes on another job, it is important to make sure there is an exchange. The group should see to it that he or she gives up a task when taking on another one.

Different Levels of Commitment

If you are more committed to teaching than your partner, it can be difficult to team teach. One year, my partner was resistant to changing her schedule or doing anything after work. I found myself always being the one to make a phone call if we had decided to check something out with each other. If she had a doctor's appointment, she expected me to readjust my schedule to accommodate her. I found that I got more and more resentful as the year went on. I felt like I was doing all the compromising so that the team would function smoothly, and I was. After I recognized this, I tried to cut down on my commitment to the children by not spending so much time planning lessons or preparing materials. This was extremely difficult for me because I liked the feeling I had after successfully teaching a lesson I had worked hard on. This particular teacher helped me realize that I have a great deal of pride in my professionalism and an investment in my commitment to teaching. If I became like my partner and did not expend much energy, I would not feel so good about my teaching.

DIFFERENT LEVELS OF EXPERIENCE

Many experienced teachers have difficulty taking a supportive role and letting a new teacher lead a group. The experienced teachers usually know they can learn some things from new teachers, but it can be extremely hard to stand back and let the more inexperienced teacher take over. I have been very fortunate in that I have had a good role model. I used to support my friend Margot Biestman when she taught Creative Behavior classes at the Institute of Creative and Artistic Development in Oakland. She was the lead or head teacher for many years. As my skills developed she made it a point to step back, let me be the lead teacher, and she was my support. We began to exchange roles. Eventually she joined the class as a student. Not many teachers are willing to give up that lead position.

No matter how much money is spent on equipment, materials, administration, buildings, and grounds, it is the teachers who make the difference in an educational or child-care setting. A center can have the finest equipment but have poor teachers and the quality of that program goes down. A center can have poor equipment, but have exceptional teachers, and the quality of that program goes up.

How teachers function in their planning and interpersonal relationships with each other and their students is the biggest determinant of the quality of a center. By using Creative Behavior techniques and strategies with both your students and your colleagues you have the opportunity to make your program an exceptionally good one. This process will allow you to enhance your team-teaching partnership so that you are effective in working with and communicating with each other. It will also allow you to increase your student's self-esteem because of the care and respect you show yourself and partnership.

Questions and Exercises

Do these exercises only if you are willing. If you are not willing to them, please provide yourself with an alternate assignment or write about why you are not willing to do the exercises.

☆ Exercise 1

a) Make a list of some your strengths as a teacher. These are the skills you bring to a teaching partnership. Which of these skills would you feel it's absolutely necessary for your team partner to have? Which of these skills would you like your team partner to have, but that are not crucial?
b) Make a list of some of your areas of need or weakness. These are the skills you would want in a team partner.
c) Share your lists with a partner. Discuss what is similar and what is different between the two lists.
d) Share either your list and/or your similarities and differences with the whole group, if you are willing.

☆ Exercise 2

Imagine your team-teaching partner gives you some negative feedback. You have not been:

1. respectful of the children;
2. respectful of staff members; or
3. respectful of your team-teaching partner.

a) Choose one of the above three areas as a focus for receiving negative feedback.
b) Write down some of the things you *would not* want your team-teaching partner to say to you when you're hearing this information. This can include the style in which the information is given.
c) Write down some of the things you *would* want to hear. This can include the style in which the information is given.
d) Share your writing with a partner.
e) Share part or all of your writing with the whole group, if you are willing.
f) Discuss as a group what you have learned and what you can apply to team teaching.

☆ EXERCISE 3

Imagine you want to give your team-teaching partner some negative feedback. You want to point out that he or she has not been respectful of the following:

1. the children;
2. staff members;
3. you.

a) Choose one of the above three areas as a focus for giving negative feedback.
b) Write down some of the things you *would not* say to your team-teaching partner when you're giving this information. This can include the style in which the information is given.
c) Write down some of the things you *would* say. This can include the style in which the information is given.
d) Share your writing with a partner.
e) Share part or all of your writing with the whole group, if you are willing.
f) Discuss as a group what you have learned and what you can apply to team teaching.

☆ EXERCISE 4

Write about some things you would do to set up a safe environment for two teachers who work together. Explain why you would use or do these things.

Share your writing with a partner.

☆ EXERCISE 5

a) Write about what you could do to make competition worse between yourself and another teacher. Explain your answer.
b) Write about what you could do to reduce negative competition between yourself and another teacher. Explain your answer.
c) Share your writing with a partner.
d) Share part or all of your writing with the whole group, if you are willing.
e) Discuss as a group what you have learned and what you can apply to team teaching.

☆ EXERCISE 6

Imagine a scene where your team-teaching partner puts you down by taking over your assigned task and does a better job at it than you would have done. What would you do?

a) List the actions and/or verbal responses you could make to take care of yourself.
b) List the actions and/or verbal responses you could make that would help you do yourself in.
c) Share your lists with a partner. Discuss what is similar and what is different between your list and your partner's list.
d) Share your lists or your similarities and differences with the whole group, if you are willing.
e) Discuss as a group what you have learned and what you can apply to team teaching.

☆ Exercise 7

Think about a time you were in a one-up position. How did you feel? How do you think the other person felt?

a) Write about a time you were in a one-up position. Include how you felt and how you think the other person felt.
b) If you've never been in a one-up position, or you can't remember what it felt like, write about what you think you would like about it and what you think you would not like about it.
c) Share your writing with a partner. Discuss what is similar and what is different between your writings.
d) Share your similarities and differences with the whole group, if you are willing.

☆ Exercise 8

Think about a time you were in a one-down position. How did you feel? How do you think the other person felt?

a) Write about a time you were in a one-down position. Include how you felt and how you think the other person felt.
b) If you've never been in a one-down position, or you can't remember what it felt like, write about what you think you would like about it and what you think you would not like about it.
c) Share your writing with a partner. Discuss what is similar and what is different between your writings.
d) Share your similarities and differences with the whole group, if you are willing.

CHAPTER 11

COMMUNICATING WITH PARENTS

"Mrs. Smith, I don't know what to do with your Johnny. He's really a mess. He hits children, and when I tell him to do something, he does exactly the opposite. What is wrong with him anyway?" If a teacher said this to you about your child, how would you feel? Chances are, you would be pretty upset. You would probably feel defensive and angry and think that that person was a dreadful teacher. This attitude would eventually become clear to the child, your student. That is why sometimes your success in teaching a child depends on your skill at communicating with the parents.

Good parent-teacher communication has three basic characteristics: it is collaborative, caring, and objective. Your teaching will be enhanced if you try to work with parents rather than put them on the defensive or neglect to involve them in strategies for dealing with their children. Parents will be more supportive of you if they know you care about their child, and one way to show that caring is through your clear, respectful communication style.

INFORMAL INTERACTION WITH PARENTS

ONGOING COMMUNICATION

When parents drop off or pick up their children at an after-school day-care center, they are often in a rush. Your answer to their hurried "How did it go today?" cannot replace well-thought-out meetings where you can exchange sensitive

information. However, these daily interactions offer an important opportunity to stay in touch and provide the foundation for your relationship with your students' parents.

It is your responsibility to communicate events that have taken place while their child was in your care. If a child has banged a finger or bumped a head, knowing the extent of the incident assures parents that nothing more serious has happened. It also shows that you are concerned about their child and not trying to keep anything back. If a child has been on either the giving or receiving end of a particularly negative experience, it is vital to inform the parents because children take their feelings home. Parents will be better able to deal with an event if they know some of the background and understand why certain behaviors are surfacing.

You should also let them know when something positive happens. For example, Elizabeth has a problem with grabbing. She has grabbed toys, tools—almost anything another child holds onto—ever since she came to the center. You and her parents have worked hard to help Elizabeth stop grabbing, so the occasion of her asking for, not grabbing, an object is a time for celebration. When you tell her parents about her progress, you give them the opportunity to celebrate her new behavior. In this way you reinforce Elizabeth and help her internalize this positive behavior, which is your ultimate goal.

There may be occasions when you expect to have a chance to communicate with a child's parents, but you don't. Perhaps you were busy with another child when they picked up their child, or perhaps they sent in a sibling to sign out their child, instead of coming in themselves. If this occurs, you should take the time either to write a note or phone.

When you keep parents informed about what happens at the center, you set a good example for them. You send the message that you also want them to let you know when something is going on at home that might affect their child's behavior at the center, e.g., when the child is upset and is not getting along with the family in a normal way, when a pet dies, or when a sibling is sick and no one got much sleep.

It is also important to keep parents up-to-date about the activities or events taking place at the center. You can do this by sending home newsletters, posting notices on the bulletin board, or having children write notes to take home. At the beginning of the year, I send home a general newsletter with an explanation of my program and a brief statement of my philosophy and approach to working with children. This allows parents to learn something about me—and sets the stage for our relationship during the year.

Newsletters

A newsletter can be an effective tool for maintaining communication between home and the center. It can also illustrate your caring and objectivity by the way you

describe events or state goals and help to substantiate the idea that parents and teachers are a team, working together to benefit children. A newsletter should be informative and interesting including such elements as reports on events at the center, samples of children's responses to these events, and information about upcoming activities. It can also be used to announce meetings, air concerns, and inform parents about relevant legislative action and other issues that affect the center.

If your newsletter contains information that you particularly want parents to read, you will get better results if you build in a way for them to respond. At the bottom of the newsletter, you might want to include a tear-off form with space for comments or questions that the parents can return. This lets you know that parents have read what you have written and helps to build your dialogue with them. If children have an incentive for returning the form—such as a sticker or other reward—you will increase your chances of getting responses back. This method also gives parents the opportunity to comment or ask questions.

HANDLING PARENT INTERACTIONS

A day-care teacher does not have regular parent-teacher conferences the way an elementary school teacher does. A day-care teacher usually sees parents on a daily basis, even if only for just a few minutes. Sometimes this contact will be sufficient, but if there is a serious or continual problem with a child, it is important to have a conference with the parent.

Most parents are very sensitive and feel vulnerable about the way their children behave. They see their children as a reflection of themselves. If their child misbehaves or is difficult to handle, they may feel they are bad parents. A discerning teacher keeps this in mind.

Parenting is one of the most difficult jobs there is, and parents need your help, not your criticism. When interacting with parents, it is important to remember that they are individuals who need to know that you value them and the role they play with their children. You can demonstrate your interest and your respect for them by your willingness to listen and learn from them. In turn, they may be more receptive to listening and learning from you.

ACKNOWLEDGING YOUR OWN NEGATIVE FEELINGS

Everyone has negative feelings about almost everyone else at some time or other. While you need to acknowledge these feelings, you should also remember that your negative feelings about a child or a parent can interfere with your

communication with the parents. It is important, therefore, to process these feelings in advance of a daily interaction or a conference.

Before talking with a difficult parent, I write down three negative statements *exaggerating* what I do not like about the child. By writing these feelings down, I can get them out in the open, on paper, where they often become more manageable. Then I can decide if my positive feelings toward the child outweigh my negative ones. If I think my negative feelings are overwhelming, I might ask a supervisor or another teacher to handle most of the daily interactions with this parent. If I schedule a formal conference with this parent, I will occasionally ask a supervisor or another teacher to be there to support me. Often, however, acknowledging my negative feelings frees me to concentrate on the positive aspects of a child. Then I can better focus on my goal, which is to develop a positive working relationship with both the parent and the child.

For example, I do care about and like Elizabeth in spite of the fact that she grabs things from other children. After a particularly hard day with her, however, or in preparing for a conference with her parents, I might write the following exaggeration of my negative feelings:

> *Elizabeth always grabs things. She never stops, no matter what I do, and she probably does it only to make me mad. True, she has been getting better, but I want her to stop grabbing completely, right now, and never grab anything ever again. I'm sick and tired of having to deal with children crying because Elizabeth has grabbed something from them. If only Elizabeth would stop grabbing, life would be so much easier for me.*

By writing down these thoughts it becomes possible to realize, often with pleasure, that Elizabeth is not grabbing as often as she used to. This change is something to celebrate and pay special attention to because it forms the basis for the next step in learning.

Authenticity

In talking to parents, your own desire to be liked can be a stumbling block. If you avoid telling parents about their child's negative behavior and tell them only what you think they want to hear, or recount only positive stories, your motive may be to get the parents and the child to like you. The fact is, however, that this is not being supportive. Parents need your authenticity and objectivity. They need to hear a balance of both positive and negative statements about their child's development. If you withhold negative information, parents do not get an honest or realistic picture of their child. They cannot begin to find solutions to problems if they do not

know the problems are there. And ultimately they may lose confidence in you as the teacher or lose respect for your judgment. By acknowledging the negative aspects, as well as the positive, you help parents to integrate and to take fuller responsibility both for their parenting skills and for any problems.

GIVING INFORMATION

When you give parents information, you will find that the conversation goes more smoothly if you give it in small bits so that they are not overwhelmed. This will also give them a better chance to focus on important points. Specific facts and descriptions are more helpful than talking in generalities or giving your interpretation of behavior or events. If Johnny is having a problem getting along with others, what kind of a problem is he having—hitting? disrupting games? withdrawing? using verbal abuse? With an accurate and balanced picture of exactly what Johnny is doing, you can discuss strategies for strengthening or changing his behavior.

It is better to avoid educational or psychological jargon when you talk to parents because your language may alienate them or make them feel demeaned. If you promote the feeling that the conference is a two-way exchange of information between people who care about a particular child, the result will be a better understanding between you and an improvement in your ability to work with that child.

INTRODUCING NEGATIVE TOPICS

A statement about negative behavior is much easier for parents to accept if it is sandwiched between two authentic, positive statements. If you cannot sandwich the negative statement, you should preface it with a positive statement. One way to introduce the topic is to ask parents if they have observed a particular negative behavior at home. This lets you know if the negative behavior is only occurring at the center or if this is a more general behavior pattern. These questions start the process of teamwork with the parents.

If I start out by telling Elizabeth's parents that she is an awful child because she grabs, I will shut down communication instead of opening it up. Her parents will be understandably upset and unable to hear what I like about her. Instead I might say: "I'm so pleased that Elizabeth is not grabbing as much as she used to. She has put a lot of effort into this change and I'm really proud of her. Her grabbing is something we need to continue to work on, but I am very pleased with the progress she's made."

If Sean is a child who is reluctant to join the group or play with others, I might tell his parents: "Sean has made progress since we last talked. He's more

willing to join a small group and participate. I'm pleased with this progress, although I am still concerned about his minimal interactions with others." At this point I could stop talking and allow his parents to respond. They may or may not see the same kind of behavior at home and may or may not have a rationale for thinking Sean's isolation is appropriate. This is information I need to have.

I always try to have a positive statement to end with, such as, "Has Sean told you about our new goldfish? He has been very interested in them and has taken on the job of feeding them. This has led to some nice interactions with other children and has helped him feel good about himself."

Millicent may be the rudest child I have ever met, but to her mother I might say, "Millicent had some periods of very good behavior this afternoon. She shared and was able to compromise when Todd wanted to play. However, Millicent also had some very difficult periods when she was rude to teachers and unwilling to follow directions. Is something happening at home or at school that may be upsetting her?" Millicent's mother may not want to talk about Millicent's behavior because she herself does not know how to handle her daughter. She may feel at a loss and consequently would like to deny that Millicent has difficulty getting along

Parents may or may not see their child's isolation as an area of concern.

with adults and children. If I provide a neutral atmosphere for discussing the problem, I will be doing a great service to all three of us.

GAINING PARENT COOPERATION

When parents acknowledge that they are aware of a particular behavior, you should try to determine if they feel it is a problem. If so, how do they handle it at home? Do they feel some or all of their interventions are successful? Answering your questions will give parents an opportunity to take credit for and acknowledge their skills. You can also explain what you have been doing to work with the undesirable behavior. It is important to be willing to wait for parents to ask you questions about handling specific behaviors. If they do, they are more likely to hear your suggestions.

When I make a suggestion, I begin it by asking, "Are you willing to try . . . ?" This question assures listeners that they have a choice to use my idea, to come up with an alternative, or to voice their objections.

Sean's parents, for example, may not see his isolation as a problem. Sean may have several siblings or an extended family. He may have no room of his own and no possessions that he doesn't have to share. The center may be the only place in his life where he has any space to himself. If this were the case, I would support Sean's need for privacy rather than trying to force him to interact with others.

HANDLING PARENT OBJECTIONS

When parents object to my procedures or suggestions, I ask for their reasons. It is easy to feel defensive and become either overly insistent or just let the matter drop. Neither of these responses promotes communication. Regarding their ideas as new input that will help fill out your picture of their child is more productive than viewing their objections as opposition. If you ask questions you can deepen your understanding of the parents, the child, and the situation. By focusing on gaining as much information as you can, rather than getting your own way, you will learn how to work with them and often arrive at an acceptable solution.

Elizabeth's mother may not want me to stop her grabbing. It is up to me to find out why she feels this way. It may be that Elizabeth's mother grabbed when she was young and the person who stopped her did it in a way that made her feel unworthy or ashamed. Quite naturally she doesn't want Elizabeth to have those same feelings. Then it is up to me to explain how I intend to stop Elizabeth from grabbing and build Elizabeth's self-esteem at the same time. I can do this by praising Elizabeth when she doesn't grab, by asking Elizabeth how she feels when

something is grabbed from her, and by asking what words she would want someone to use when asking her for something. If I can help Elizabeth think of words she would like to hear, she may be able to transfer this information so that she will begin to use these words to ask for something rather than grabbing.

If I can show Elizabeth's mother that my aim is not to humiliate her daughter but to help her, the two of us can better work together for Elizabeth's benefit.

Working with a Hostile Parent

"I don't understand what the problem is. Kyra never misbehaves at home."

"I told you I wanted Jake to do his homework as soon as he came in from school. Why aren't you making him do it?"

"Leo keeps telling me that Roger picks on him and you punish Leo, not Roger. Now let me tell you . . . "

Every teacher has to deal with this kind of hostility, but fortunately it does not happen very often. If parents do show you their anger it can be helpful to remember that it may have nothing to do with you. It may be because, among other things, they have had a rough day or they are defensive about their parenting skills.

Denial

Arlene had been difficult all year because she had a hard time controlling her behavior. She was often rude and disrespectful. I suggested family therapy and my suggestion was acted upon. However, because Arlene's behavior began to improve, the family stopped the counseling. I knew Arlene would pay a price for this; and sure enough, as soon as therapy stopped, she began to revert to her former ways. One day Arlene had an extremely hard time. She had overstepped the limits so often I was about ready to exclude her from the group. When Arlene's mother arrived to pick her up she recognized the atmosphere around her daughter and wanted to get Arlene out of the center as fast as possible. Instead of coming over and finding out what had happened, she yelled for Arlene to come to her. I went over to Arlene's mother and explained that, as the last in a number of defiant acts, Arlene had just made a mess on the floor and refused to clean it up. On hearing this, her mother got down on the floor, cleaned up Arlene's mess, and left the center dragging Arlene behind her.

I was angry. Arlene had just learned that her mother would intervene so she didn't have to follow my instructions. I would insist on a conference with Arlene's mother, but what about the immediate problem of my own anger and frustration? I am too good a teacher to take out my negative feelings on any child so I wrote a letter to both Arlene and her mother, listing all the mean, nasty things I would like to say and do to them, including that I was angry at Arlene's mother for cleaning

up her mess and so contributing to the problem. Then I took the letter home, tore it up in tiny pieces, and threw it away so no one would ever see it but me. This helped me be calm and reasonable when I met with Arlene's mother.

My goal for this meeting was to promote communication, try to see her point of view, and try to explain my point of view to her. I opened our discussion by saying I would like to talk with her about the day she picked up Arlene's mess before taking her home. She acknowledged that she had been upset that Arlene was misbehaving again, and so she had picked up Arlene's mess to get her out of the center quickly. I told her I appreciated how upset she was, however, I felt it was extremely important for Arlene to be responsible for cleaning up any mess she made. Unless she could take responsibility for all of her actions by accepting the consequences of them, she might go through life expecting others to clean up after her, and her messes could get bigger and bigger. I admitted that it might be difficult in the beginning because Arlene was used to making a mess, throwing a tantrum, and then being removed from the situation so she didn't have to clean up. It would take some time for her to learn new ways of behaving. But unless or until she did learn new patterns she was not going to feel good about herself and her self-esteem would continue to be low. Her mother agreed to support me and the next time Arlene made a mess in the center she would be expected to pick it up by herself before going home.

A CONFERENCE

PREPARING FOR A CONFERENCE

In order for a conference to fulfill your needs, as well as those of the child and the parent, it is important that you prepare fully. This means thinking about the child, the parents, yourself, and the format. People absorb comments or information at different rates, so during your talks evaluate what kind and how much information you will give. You may have many topics that you would like to discuss with a parent, but if you have had a long discussion and have only covered two out of six items on your agenda, you shouldn't feel obligated to go on with the rest. The parent is probably overloaded and has absorbed as much as he or she is willing to at that time anyway.

PLANNING A CONFERENCE

The first step in planning the format and content of a conference is to decide what you want to emphasize. As a general rule, I like to prepare for a conference by writing down two positive statements about the child being discussed. If I have

a negative statement, I sandwich it between the two positive statements and offer a suggestion for dealing with the problem. An example of a written comment might be: "Meredith has made some good progress since last we talked. She is now more willing to use positive ways of getting attention rather than just tripping people as they walk by. I am very pleased with this progress. Meredith and I are continuing to work on this problem because when she does forget and heckles others, it can result in a fight or hurt feelings. Meredith has been very generous and kind in helping Heather, a new child, to get acquainted with the center and the routine. She has made Heather feel welcome which has been good for both of them."

When you write down your comments and give them to parents, you can discuss the points, one at a time. Parents then have something concrete to refer to later on so they are less likely to forget what you have said.

Opening the Conference—Helping Parents Feel Safe

One way to start a conference or dialogue is to ask parents if they have any questions about what happens at the center or any questions about a particular routine or activity. By the kind of questions they ask, you can begin to find out what their concerns are.

You can also start a conference by asking specific questions in a nonthreatening manner. For example, you might ask what the child likes to do most on weekends, what jobs or chores he or she does around the house, or what the parent sees as the child's strengths and weaknesses. A third way to start a conference is to relate a positive experience you have had with that child and express your genuine pleasure in being his or her teacher.

Parents' Issues

Many teachers feel they are being good teachers only if they go over and over a child's negative qualities, hammering into a parent what they, as the teacher, see as needing change or improvement. Sometimes, but not always, a strategy for change is suggested, but afterward the parents are left with the problem of thinking up the solution. If parents have usually dealt with this kind of teacher, they expect to hear negative statements and may rush in themselves to make a derogatory statement about their child. Your caring and authenticity will be greatly appreciated.

If your goal is to work cooperatively with the parents, you need to build up their trust and respect. This can best be done through positive statements based on fact, specific descriptions of behavior you feel need attention, and constructive suggestions for change.

Sometimes parents need to vent their frustrations before they are able to talk rationally. Most parents are concerned about their children and want them to have

a positive, nurturing experience. Often they are not clear about how to handle a problem, or they do not see progress in dealing with their child. They may also be preoccupied by other problems from home or work. If you are able to wait out their anger and frustration, acknowledging it as a reality—not something to be swept under the rug or ignored—parents are usually able to move on to a more constructive, less defensive dialogue. However, it is important that you, as well as the child and parent, feel comfortable and safe.

If you become too uncomfortable, you can stop the conference by telling the parents that you recognize their anger and that you feel it would be more productive to have another person present, such as your supervisor or another teacher who knows their child. You will set up a time when all of you can meet together. This way you will have support and, while the next conference might be difficult, it probably will not be so very uncomfortable for you.

Parents may have a long agenda for the meeting themselves, and you may need more than one appointment to go through it. For example, it may be a new thing for both parents to be working, and they may have concerns about their child's adjustment to after-school care. Or there may be problems at the elementary school they want to talk over with you. They may be seeing a changed behavior at home and want to find out if it is carrying over to your program. Or their child may be having emotional difficulties, and they need your support and encouragement to get professional help for the family. On the other hand, the parents may be so thrilled about how well their child is doing that they need extra time to share their pleasure.

A PLANNED CONFERENCE WITH A DIFFICULT PARENT

When you know, or suspect, that a conference may be difficult or confrontational you need to prepare especially carefully. Being prepared may not make the experience a pleasant one, but it will let you know that you've done what you can to take care of yourself in the situation.

Here are some more ideas for handling a planned interaction with a difficult parent:

- If you know in advance that the parent is going to be difficult, you may want to ask another teacher or administrator to sit in on the conference with you.
- Listen to the parents without comment, indicating your attention by nodding, or with an occasional "uh-huh" or "I see," until they calm down. Then lead them into a rational discussion of their child.
- Listen to the parents for awhile and then move on to the subjects you want to cover trying not to allow their hostility to color how you are feeling.
- If your time is limited, make a statement at the beginning of the

conference so the parents are clear about the time parameters of the conference.

➡ Afterward, talk over the experience with someone supportive and be sure you take credit for the positive things that happened during the conference.

Other Considerations

Take Credit Yourself

When notes come from parents thanking you for your work, it is important to do something to celebrate and integrate them, such as sharing the note with a friend or buying yourself a bouquet of flowers. These notes are very special and I always save them. If a parent gives you a verbal compliment, I recommend writing it down as soon as possible; otherwise you may forget it or discount it as no big deal, when indeed it is a big deal. That comment means your hard work has been recognized and appreciated. On off-days you can reread those notes to remind yourself of your skills and the gifts you have given to parents and children. Writing down some of your credits every day can be important to your own well-being. Remember, it doesn't do you any good if you can give credit to your students but can't take it for yourself.

It can also be valuable to share positive notes as well as complaints with your supervisor. He or she needs to know what kind of communication is going on between you and parents. Parents will often complain about teachers to administrators, but they don't often write congratulatory letters. Sharing these may help you take credit for your teaching and may encourage you to continue the fine work you are doing.

Elementary School Parent-Teacher Conferences

Elementary schools usually hold parent-teacher conferences two or three times a year. Even though parents will not be coming to see you for a conference, this time may produce anxiety for the children. An awareness of their feelings can help you work with the children to make these periods easier for them and for you.

One thing you can do is to help the children take credit for what they are doing well. At group time or individually you might talk about positive, specific things you see children doing. This is particularly important if a child is not happy in school or is having trouble academically. Such children need a lot of support for

their nonacademic skills, ones that may not be recognized by their elementary school teachers.

Some of the questions I ask my students are these:

- What is scary about having your parents come to see your classroom teacher? What is not scary about it?
- What do you think your teacher will say that will make your mom and dad proud of you? What do you think your teacher will say you need to work on?

You also might have children make a list and write down as many complaints about elementary school parent-teacher conferences as they can think of in a five-minute period. This helps get their concerns out in the open so that you can talk about them in more detail later.

Here is a sample of some writing done by children after parent-teacher conferences in the elementary school:

> ***Rosa:*** *Another thing that is important to me is that my teacher is honest with me and tells me when I'm not doing good so I can work to do better if I want.*

> ***Stacy:*** *On the day my teacher told us about the parent-teacher conferences I was a little scared and a little happy because I thought I had done a good job at school but I wasn't sure. When my teacher took me in the hall to talk to me I was shy because I was scared. When my mom told me about the conference I was happy because she said I had done good work.*

> ***Sandya:*** *It is important to me my mom sees my work because she is willing to help me.*

Your success in teaching depends, to a large degree, on your skills as a good communicator. While your primary purpose is to communicate well with your students, you also need to communicate with parents because your students are their children. To succeed you need the support and information only parents can provide. It is also beneficial for children to feel that there is a continuum of support for them between home, school, and after-school day care. All of the adults in their lives are, ideally, working toward the same goal—their positive social, emotional, and intellectual growth. A collaborative, cooperative relationship with parents is a positive experience for all of you. It also offers you another opportunity for building self-esteem by demonstrating that you understand and care about the family context a child is coming from and support its positive elements.

Questions and Exercises

Do these exercises only if you are willing. If you are not willing to do them, please provide yourself with an alternate assignment or write about why you are not willing to do these exercises.

☆ Exercise 1

Think about a particular student in one of your classes or in a center where you've observed.

a) Write down three things you would *not* tell parents about this child during a parent conference (conversation) and state your reasons for not telling them, e.g., it would hurt their feelings, it would put them on the defensive.
b) Write down what you would tell a parent, i.e., two positive statements and one negative statement with a suggestion for a possible change.
c) Share your answers to a) and b) with one or more persons.
d) Share one or more of your answers with the whole group, if you are willing.

☆ Exercise 2

Roleplay one or more of the following interactions between teacher and parent:

a) You want to discuss a child's disruptive hitting behavior, but the parent wants to drop the child off at the center quickly, without discussion so he or she can get to work.
b) You try to discuss a child's disruptive hitting behavior and the parent is verbally abusive to you.
c) You want to express concern about a child's isolating behavior, but the parent only wants to talk about the positive things the child is doing.

☆ Exercise 3

After participating in or observing the roleplaying in #2, write about the experience. Answer these questions:

a) What did you like about the experience and why?

b) What didn't you like about the experience and why?
c) What did you learn about yourself from the experience?
d) What did you learn about someone else?
e) What did you learn about communicating with parents?

Share your writing with another person and then with the whole group. Ask for feedback if you want it.

☆ EXERCISE 4

Discuss these typical situations with one or more persons:

a) A mother doesn't want her son to stay after school because he will have to cross a busy street all by himself. She wants him to go directly to the center every day after school. The boy's elementary school teacher wants him to stay after school because he has been disruptive rather than doing his school work. The class limit at elementary school is "finish your work before going home."
   1. How might the center help the mother better understand the elementary school teacher's goals?
   2. How might the center help the elementary school teacher better understand the mother's goals?
   3. The child may be a discipline problem in school but not in the center, or vice versa. How will this affect the way the center communicates with either the parent or the school?

b) A mother doesn't want her child doing any homework at the center because she feels that physical activity and time to play are important. The elementary school teacher is upset because the child never does any homework, at home or at the center.
   1. What kind of help, if any, should the center give to the child?
   2. What kind of help, if any, should the center give to the parent?
   3. What kind of help, if any, should the center give to the classroom teacher?

Share your discussion of a) and b) with the class.

☆ EXERCISE 5

a) Write three things that would *not* be appropriate to tell parents in a newsletter.
b) Write three things that would be appropriate to tell parents in a newsletter.

c) Share your answers to a) and b) with a partner. Discuss what you do and don't like about your answers and why.
d) Work in small groups to write a paragraph from a sample letter that you might send to parents. Share the paragraph with the whole class, if you are willing.

☆ Exercise 6

Consider the problem of talking with a hostile or difficult parent.

a) What is an inappropriate way to tell the parent that you are not going to listen to ranting and raving?
b) What is an appropriate way to tell the parent you need to stop the conversation or change the subject?
c) Discuss your responses with the group.

☆ Exercise 7

Consider inauthenticity or not being honest. Choose partners.

a) Tell your partner something you like about them, such as the way they dress or an aspect of their personality. Give them this information in a phony, inauthentic way so they do not believe you.
b) How do you feel about yourself after being inauthentic?
c) Switch roles with your partner. Listen while your partner gives you some information in an inauthentic style.
d) How do you feel about yourself after hearing inauthentic feedback?
e) How do you feel about the person who gave you phony or inauthentic feedback?

☆ Exercise 8

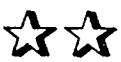
Consider authenticity. Choose partners.

a) Tell your partner something you like about them. Give them this information in an authentic way so they can believe you.
b) How do you feel about yourself after being authentic?
c) Switch roles with your partner. Listen while your partner gives you some information in an authentic way.
d) How do you feel about yourself after hearing authentic feedback?
e) How do you feel about your partner for giving you authentic feedback?

☆ **EXERCISE 9**

Write about the experiences you had in #7 and #8. Include answers to the following questions, remembering when you were either a "giver" or a "receiver."

a) What did you like about doing these exercises and why?
b) What did you not like and why not?
c) What did you learn about inauthentic feedback?
d) What did you learn about authentic feedback?
e) Share your writing with a partner.
f) Share your writing with the whole group, if you are willing.



Activities to do with Children

☆☆ Activity 1

Give each child a pencil and piece of paper. Tell the children you will give them five minutes to write down as many complaints as they can think of about their parents talking to their teachers. They are to write just words or phrases, not complete sentences. If they can't think of any complaints, they are to write down just whatever comes into their mind.

After the five minutes are up, have the children share their list with a friend. If there is time, have those who want to share one or two things from their list with the group.

These lists can be the basis of a discussion.

☆☆ Activity 2

Ask the children to think about how they feel when their parents come to school to talk to their teacher. What is scary about it? Why? What do they like about it? Why? Give them some time to think. Ask for volunteers to share their responses with the group. Usually someone is willing to start talking. This gets other children to join in. If no one is willing to start, tell about your childhood experience: what you liked and didn't like about your parents having conferences with your teachers and why you felt that way. Let everyone who wants to contribute do so. If someone is not willing to share, that is all right.

Ask the children to think about what usually happens when their parents get home after talking to the teacher. Do they get told in great detail what was discussed? Are their parents usually proud of them? Are they told a lot of things they need to work on? Use the same procedure as in the previous discussion. Anyone who has something to say should get time to say it. Anyone who does not want to say anything can just listen.

☆☆ Activity 3

Drawing with your eyes closed, using your unaccustomed hand: Focus—How you felt when your parents came to school to talk to your teacher.

Give the following instructions to an individual child, small groups, or the whole group:

Get in a comfortable position. Close or hide your eyes. If you are not willing to do this, be aware that you will have a different experience from the children who do. (Pause)

Begin to think about how you felt when you knew your parents were going to talk to your teacher. (Pause) Were you scared? (Pause) Nervous? (Pause) Excited? (Pause) Shy? (Pause) Did you say anything to your parents about their

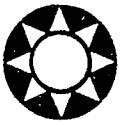
coming? (Pause) How did you feel about that? (Pause) Did your parents say anything to you about what happened when they came? (Pause) How did you feel about that? (Pause)

Think about how you felt about your parents going to school and talking to your teacher. (Pause) Think of a color that best represents how you felt. Stick with the first color that comes to mind.

I'm going to ask you to open your eyes and get that color of crayon or chalk. If you can't find that specific color, choose a color that is close to it. Then wait for further directions.

When you are ready, put the crayon or chalk in your unaccustomed hand, the hand you do not usually draw with. Close your eyes and draw a picture of how you felt when your parents came to school. Keep your eyes closed until you have completed the picture. When you open your eyes, that means you are finished.

Those of you who want to share your pictures, may. If you don't want to share, you don't have to.



CHAPTER 12

CONCLUSION

A good teacher can inspire and help children motivate themselves to grow and change. A good teacher can also help children overcome alienation, boredom, and low self-esteem. With good teachers, almost every child has an opportunity to reach his or her potential. Benjamin Bloom, in his book *Developing Talent in Young Children*,[14] described his research with adults who excelled in their field and were considered exceptionally talented. His results were surprising. A majority of these exceptional people were *not* identified as gifted when they were in elementary school. He found that sustained encouragement by parents and teachers brought about the greatest development of talent. The first step on this road to excellence is validation and encouragement, making learning an enjoyable and exciting experience for the child.

Children in an after-school day-care center are on the first step on Bloom's road to excellence, and you can make a difference in their journey. As you use Creative Behavior techniques in your teaching, you will be able to help children build their self-esteem. Your support, encouragement, and nurturing can help them become creative, productive, and unique individuals.

In the past this role of an encouraging adult was played by a family member or an elementary school teacher. With the shifting structure of the American family and the myriad problems besetting elementary school teachers, these traditional roles are changing. Many family members and teachers are no longer able to provide the sort of support they did in the past because of work obligations or time and money constraints.

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[14] Benjamin Bloom. *Developing Talent in Young Children*. New York: Ballantine, 1985, p. 533.

Today, children in after-school day care have the opportunity to be exposed on a regular basis to a trained, sensitive adult who can provide this kind of encouragement. Your expectations are different from those of school teachers. You don't have to show by standardized tests that you are getting the job done. You are outside the web of family expectations. Your ego is not riding on a child's performance. You are free to focus on the children's personal development, like the aunts, uncles, and grandparents of yesteryear. Family life is consumed by work, meals, and television. School is regimented and focused on academic skills. Your program could be the only time of day when concentration on a child's personal growth is really possible.

Focusing your work through Creative Behavior changes the whole tenor of after-school care. You are not just babysitters, there to keep the children off the streets or from being home alone. You are not there to teach them kickball or papermaking or how to make raisin nut balls. Your purpose is to help them become children with a sense of worth and self-confidence, able to view themselves realistically—accepting both their capabilities and limitations—and knowing they have a right to be happy and satisfied, and to stand up for who they are, so long as they don't intentionally hurt others.

After reading this book I hope that you have found some techniques and ideas that are important to you. You may have learned that you have a great deal to give to children by being yourself. Indeed, the greatest gift you have to give is yourself. Your gain in confidence will increase your ability to make positive changes for yourself and the children. One of my greatest delights would be for you to find more pleasure in teaching and learning.

As a teacher, you have an opportunity to play an important role in shaping children's lives. This is a contribution to the future that everyone benefits from. As a Creative Behavior teacher, you also have the opportunity to make your own life better in the process. Good luck and enjoy!

"I'll tell you a secret. You're my friend."

Questions and Exercises

Do these exercises only if you are willing. If you are not willing to do them, please provide yourself with an alternate assignment or write about why you are not willing to do the exercises.

☆ Exercise 1

Think back over the chapters you have read in this book.

a) Which chapter(s) did you like? Why?
b) Which chapter(s) did you not like? Why?
c) Write a statement about the chapters you liked, didn't like, and explain why you felt that way.
d) Share your writing with a partner.
e) Share part or all of your writing with the whole group, if you are willing.

☆ Exercise 2

Think back over the chapters you have read in this book.

a) Which chapter(s) were hard for you to understand?
b) Which chapter(s) were easy for you to understand?
c) Write a statement about which chapters were easy for you to understand, which were hard, and explain why you felt that way.
d) Share your writing with a partner.
e) Share part or all of your writing with the whole group, if you are willing.

☆ Exercise 3

Think back over the activities you have done at the end of each chapter.

a) Which activity (activities) did you like? Why?
b) Which activity (activities) didn't you like? Why?
c) Write a statement about the activities you liked, didn't like, and why you felt that way.
d) Share your writing with a partner.
e) Share part or all of your writing with the whole group, if you are willing.

☆ **EXERCISE 4**

If you could use only one idea or strategy from the book, which idea or strategy would it be and why?

a) Write a statement about which idea or strategy you would use and explain your reason for using it.
b) Share your writing with a partner. Compare similarities and differences.
c) Share part or all of your writing with the whole group, if you are willing.

☆ **EXERCISE 5**

Think back to what you expected to learn when you first started to read this book.

a)What did you get from the book that you expected to get?
b) What did you get from the book that you didn't expect to get?
c) What did you expect to get from the book that you didn't get?
d) Write a statement about your expectations, answering questions a) through c).
e) Share your writing with a partner.
f) Share part or all of your writing with the whole group, if you are willing.

☆ **EXERCISE 6**

Think about what you would like to learn more about in another book or class.

a) Write a statement describing what you would like to learn more about in the future.
b) Share your writing with a partner.
c) Share part or all of your writing with the whole group, if you are willing.

☆ **EXERCISE 7**

Consider being either a parent or a teacher.

a) What do you think is hard about that job? Why?
b) What do you think is easy about that job? Why?
c) What do you think you will like about that job? Why?
d) What do you think you won't like about that job? Why?
e) Write a statement about what you think will be hard and easy and

what you will like and not like about the job of being either a parent or a teacher. Explain your thinking.

f) Share your writing with a partner.

g) Share part or all of your writing with the whole group, if you are willing.

☆ Exercise 8

Make yourself a credit badge. (See lesson described in Chapter 9, *Preparing for Transitions*, on page 188.)

a) On the strips of paper write credit-taking statements describing your growth in this class.

b) Share your badge with a partner.

c) Share your badge with the whole group, if you are willing.

APPENDIX

BACKGROUND OF CREATIVE BEHAVIOR

Creative Behavior is a theory of learning developed by Juanita Sagan with her husband, Eugene. They brought together their expertise in the fields of education and psychology to focus on the teaching-learning process. This theory proposes that good teaching occurs consistently only when the teacher takes into account the whole child—his or her emotional, social, and physical, as well as academic growth. Mutual trust and respect must underlie the relationship between the student and the teacher, and the learning environment must be perceived as safe by both. To make the environment safe, the teacher sets up a structure with reasonable limits with consistent consequences. If these conditions are met, then the student is in a nurturing environment that ensures that what is learned is retained over a long period of time and contributes to a more positive self-esteem.

Eugene Sagan received his doctorate in clinical psychology from the University of Chicago in 1955. He was the first Gestalt therapist in the San Francisco Bay Area, bringing Fritz Perls, founder of Gestalt therapy, to Esalen in 1963. For 15 years Eugene taught in the Graduate Psychology Department at John F. Kennedy University, Orinda, California, where his classes had an exemplary reputation for developing insight and creativity in his students. He made an audiotape for training therapists, *Expressive Gestalt Therapy,* that was a national bestseller for 10 years. He died in 1987.

Juanita Sagan is a psychotherapist and an educator, with master's degrees in elementary administration and clinical psychology. She uses a variety of disciplines in her private practice such as Gestalt therapy; psychosynthesis; and dance, art, and theater therapies. Since 1965, Juanita has been testing the Creative Behavior theory in elementary schools, junior highs, high schools, and colleges. She taught for eight years in the public schools in Marin County, California and later taught education, psychology, and art at Sonoma State University and College of Marin. For 15 years

Juanita was an educational consultant in the Bay Area and in Multnomah County, Oregon.

The Sagans' theory is an eclectic one based on the disciplines of education, psychology, drama, art, and movement. In the late fifties and early sixties Juanita applied the "creativity in the classroom" research of Paul Witty and E. Paul Torrance to develop lesson plans that would expand her students' observational, critical-thinking, and creative decision-making skills. While working with Caleb Cattegno in teaching mathematics using Cuisenaire rods, she saw the rods as a diagnostic tool for social behavior. By observing how people played with, built, and used the rods, Juanita understood how they related positively and negatively to each other. She also used this technique with individuals to find out the level of their self-esteem by the way they related to the material and themselves. This diagnostic tool has since been used by many other therapists and teachers around the country to assess students' growth.

Creative ways of working with the process of learning and developing a healthy self-system emerged in different fields during this period of time. Roberto Assagioli developed them for use in psychosynthesis; Maria Montessori formulated them for use in education; Fritz Perls crystallized them in Gestalt therapy and acting; and Constantin Stanislavsky developed these concepts for use in the theater. The Sagans studied with these people and incorporated some of these developments into the Creative Behavior process. They also included the concepts of security and basic trust as defined by Erik Erickson and basic respect as defined by Abraham Maslow.

Combining this background with Eugene's work with Harry Stack Sullivan on the development of the self-system, Juanita designed a curriculum with lesson plans for enhancing self-esteem and aiding academic achievement. She developed a teaching structure so that other teachers could experience, identify, and use the process with awareness. William Schutz, a colleague of Eugene's, developed the term "creative behavior." The Sagans adapted this term and labeled their curriculum and process, Creative Behavior.

This husband-and-wife team founded the Institute for Creative and Artistic Development (ICAD), Oakland, California, in 1965. Juanita has been the director of the Institute since its inception. Through ICAD she has taught Creative Behavior, art, writing, and teacher-training classes for adults. She also directed Creative Behavior summer school programs for elementary school children for 12 years. These programs included specialized training for teachers who wanted to learn effective team work and for parents who wanted to gain Creative Behavior skills to support their children's learning. In addition to learning the Creative Behavior process, all classes at the Institute have served as support groups for the members—professionals in the fields of health and education, business, and the arts (painters, writers, and performing artists), as well as lay persons who want to improve the quality of their lives.

The Institute has recently moved to El Cerrito, California. If you are interested in finding out more about ICAD, you can call them at (510) 525-9083 or write to:

Institute of Creative and Artistic Development
419 Kearney Street
El Cerrito, CA 94530

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Activities & Exercises Index

Adults

CHILDREN

NAMES INDEX

SUBJECT INDEX