

Keeping In Touch

Staying Connected, Growing Together • Winter 2023



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Welcome

The **Keeping in Touch** (KIT) resource was created to celebrate and support the creativity and dedication of all who participate in the quality education of young children. The resource strives to provide inspiration and knowledge to professionals in the Early Learning and Care Sector through informative articles and resources which promote inclusionary practices, cultural diversity and competence, programming ideas and community information. The KIT committee is comprised of professionals from various agencies within the Toronto Children's Services Every Child Belongs model. We welcome you to share this resource with your colleagues, friends, and family.



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Early Childhood Bullying

Part 3, How You Can Make a Difference

BRENDALEE SIMAS, RT, RECE, Child Care Consultant,
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Bullying is never OK.

It is an aggressive behaviour and occurs when someone deliberately and repeatedly frightens, threatens, upsets, or hurts someone else or their property, friendships, or reputation. It is meant to cause harm, fear, distress or create a negative environment for another person. Bullying used to be something we associated with the occasional teasing of children in schools and playgrounds. However, this kind of bullying is the tip of the iceberg as far as the spectrum of bullying is concerned.

“In twenty-first-century society in Canada, we see and appreciate that bullying takes on many forms and happens in many places.” **(2022 - Safe Canada)**
Bullying behaviours are a prevalent problem in our

Only half of educators have received training on how to handle bullying situations. According to bullying.org founder Bill Belsey, not teaching educators how to handle bullying is like not training physicians to deal with the flu!

society. Nevertheless, we strive to bring children up so that they can remember a wonderful childhood where they were loved and cherished.

Early childhood environments provide the opportunity for educators to effectively prevent and stop the emergence of bullying behaviours and to foster the development of positive social interactions. It is critical, that educators take bullying seriously, intervening when necessary and encouraging healthy relationship skills. It is important to bear in mind, that

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behaviours children experience or adopt within peer relationships in early childhood could carry over to other relationships as they move through adolescence and into adulthood. Therefore, adult intervention is crucial. It is in *no way* the responsibility of a child to resolve a situation involving acts of bullying. If children were capable of that, they wouldn't be requesting the help of an adult in the first place.

Previously, the Keeping in Touch (KIT) article series, Early Childhood Bullying: **Part 1 - Understanding the Act** and **Part 2 - How to Spot the Signs**, opened the door to help foster an understanding of what bullying is. Extinguishing these behaviours before they start or intensify is the next step. Having the awareness of the ways in which young children engage in different forms of bullying, it is essential that early childhood educators be prepared to address the act of bullying through prevention, intervention, and follow-up.

Educators must first recognize how powerfully they can influence the development of children's social skills, empathy, and social responsibility. Relationship skills are just as essential as knowing how to read and write. Children will be better equipped to engage in healthy relationships when *taught* how to recognize and manage their emotions, how to make decisions and how to behave morally and responsibly. So, the million-dollar question is, "How do we do this?" A great place to start is to look at prevention, intervention and follow-up practices.

Prevention

As an educator, we have a responsibility to create a safe and healthy environment in our classroom — one that protects every child from experiencing any act of bullying. This means we must not only identify and address bullying consistently; we must also create a culture of respect and dignity in our classroom. To create a classroom atmosphere that prevents bullying, we can:

1. Re-examine our own beliefs about bullying. Misconceptions may prevent us from "seeing" a potential bullying incident or intervening as quickly as we should.



Photo by Ben White on Unsplash.

2. Create a place that is **safe and supportive**. This means teaching children to welcome and include everyone in addition to teaching kindness and empathy. Children who can empathize, understand that bullying hurts and may be less likely to engage in the act and be more likely to help other children.
3. Continuously read pro-social books with children, such as 'Horton Hears a Who' and 'The Little Engine That Could'. Books like these show how kindness helps heal awful feelings when children have been hurt by others. "Children's books are beams of light that can help children grow their inner source of kindness and empathy, creating a more positive world for everyone." (Dr. Michele Borba, KINDCo.)
4. Preserve the classroom as a positive, accepting, and engaging place to be—a truly safe environment; providing numerous outlets for children to express their feelings through drawing, music, acting and puppetry.
5. Create opportunities for connection. Maintain open communication and be visible, especially in places where acts of bullying could occur.

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6. Openly talk about bullying. During circle time, define and label bullying behaviours. Create an **anchor chart** to encourage student participation. Be sure to clarify the difference between “tattling” and “telling.” “Tattling” is what you do to get someone in trouble; “telling” is what you do to get someone out of trouble.
7. Use ‘spidey senses’ as much as possible to help identify any gateway behaviours. These are small behaviours that often signal the beginning patterns of bullying. These can include but are not limited to eye rolling, prolonged staring, ignoring, or excluding and name calling. (**Ways Educators Can Prevent Bullying in Schools**, Lesley University)
8. Seek professional development and increase bullying awareness among parents through meetings, newsletters, and social media.
9. Encourage and praise positive behaviours among all the children in the classroom.
10. Check yourself. Educators can participate in acts of bullying too. When adults feel bullied by colleagues, the children in their care can also become negatively impacted.

Families and educators must start early to encourage empathy and show children how to help a person who is in trouble or feels hurt, scared, or worried. Adults need to continually model kindness and reassurance by reaching out to those who have been hurt by others. They also need to learn how to handle their own anger and resentment, so that they don’t vent insults, sarcasm, and putdowns that children can so easily copycat.

Intervention

Initially, it is important to investigate the behaviour to determine if it was indeed bullying (Please review **Early Childhood Bully: Part 1 - Understanding the Act**) or an isolated incident, such as a quarrel over a toy or a turn on the playground equipment. Sometimes, conflict can be confused with bullying, but they are quite different. Children learn at a young age to understand that others can have different perspectives than their own. Developing the ability to gain perspective takes time and continues into early adulthood. If our friends or peers disagree, or if someone says something mean once, it can be unpleasant and even nasty, however, this isn’t bullying. We must also bear in mind that a child might not share that they are being bullied due to the worry that they’ll make things worse if they “tell”, “tattle” or “rat.”

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Once established that an act of bullying has occurred:

1. Respond immediately. Avoid normalizing bullying with statements like “kids will be kids.” If you minimize the act of bullying, you are sending a message that engaging in acts of bullying is okay.
2. Speak with the child who has incurred the bullying privately in a space where they feel safe talking to you and at a time when the child who engaged in the act of bullying would not be aware of the meeting.
3. Speak with the child who engaged in bullying behaviours separately. Encourage them to own their behaviour and do not allow them to blame the other child. Address the behaviour, administer the appropriate follow-through and then provide them with ideas for behaving differently moving forward. (e.g., “If you break a friend’s building, you can help them to rebuild it.”)
4. Avoid imposing immediate consequences. Allow yourself time to consider the incident and obtain any clarifying information—then decide the best course of action.
5. Avoid asking children to “work things out” for themselves. Bullying is different from an argument or conflict; it involves a power imbalance that requires adult intervention.
6. Set aside ample time to have a conversation with the parents of the children involved (including bystanders). If either family is not keen on speaking with each other directly, the educator needs to be willing to speak to both families individually and encourage a mutual discussion.
7. Teach appropriate behaviours such as friendship, assertiveness, and anger management skills, and not simply reprimand the child. Additionally, ensure that each child’s emotional well-being is supported.
8. Utilize **culturally responsive strategies** and skills that are inclusive and enhance communication and relationship building.



Photo by Mikhail Nilov on Pexels.

"Bullying," according to noted expert Dr. Dan Olweus, "poisons the educational environment and affects the learning of every child." Key components to successful intervention, according to Olweus, are increased adult supervision in all areas, increased consequences for bullying behaviours, and a clear message that acts of bullying will not be tolerated.

Follow-Up

Following up after intervening, let all participants involved know they have ongoing adult support. The act of following up provides the chance to gather new information in order to find out what, if anything, has changed. Thorough follow-ups, information can be revealed to the effectiveness of anti-bullying policies and efforts to establish a nurturing culture for everyone. Follow-ups can include:

1. Keeping a close eye on the situation. Check in regularly with both parties. This is an important step in making sure bullying behaviours come to an end. Pay attention to how the children interact in the classroom, as well as outdoors.

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2. In private conversations, asking both parties how things are going and if they're having any problems. Support them with the tools for dealing with future bullying incidents and for regaining self-confidence.
3. Do not hold a grudge against a child who engages in the act of bullying. Give them an opportunity to put the past in the past. With the proper support and encouragement, they can learn to treat others with respect and kindness.
4. Documenting and maintaining a detailed record of the incident. Include who is involved, what type of bullying occurred, where the incident occurred, whether it has happened before, and strategies used to address the problem. This record will reveal any patterns and help you see which interventions work best.
5. Informing appropriate staff. Report the incident to a room partner, supervisor or any other educator's who work closely with the children.
6. Providing alternative ways to report bullying behaviour such as an anonymous bullying box for children who may be uncomfortable about coming forward.

Children involved in acts of bullying are experiencing relationship problems that require relationship solutions. By supporting the development of relationship capacity for children, and by providing social environments that promote healthy connections, we can lay a foundation for healthy change and positive relationships. Remember, you have a responsibility to stop bullying behaviours and create a safe learning environment for all of the children in your care.

References

- Bullying - CHEO** (<https://www.cheo.on.ca/en/resources-and-support/bullying.aspx#Websites>)
- How parents, teachers, and kids can take action to prevent bullying, American Psychological Association** (<https://www.apa.org/topics/bullying/prevent>)
- Preventing Bullying In Early Childhood** (<http://preventingbullying.promoteprevent.org/preventing-bullying-in-early-childhood>)
- PREVNet | Canada's authority on bullying prevention - Research and Resources** (<https://www.prevnet.ca/bullying>)
- Psychology Today** (<https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/basics/bullying>)
- Stomp Out Bullying** (<https://www.stompoutbullying.org/tip-sheet-signs-your-child-being-bullied>)

Resources

- 7 Picture Books Series for Toddlers That Encourage Positive Behavior, Create Good Habits, and Understand Their Big Feelings** (<https://nurtureandthriveblog.com/toddler-behavior-book-series/>)
- 22 Children's Books That Support Social Emotional Learning** (<https://betterkids.education/blog/22-children-books-that-support-social-emotional-learning>)
- 25 Can't Miss Books for Teaching Social-Emotional Learning** (<https://www.differentiatedteaching.com/social-emotional-learning-books/>)
- 40+ Books About Feelings For Preschoolers** (<https://preschoolinspirations.com/books-about-feelings-for-preschoolers/>)
- Epic! Social Emotional Collection** (<https://www.getepic.com/collection/215532/social-emotional>)
- Self & Social Awareness Read Alouds & Resources** (<https://selspace.ca/modules/self-social-awareness/self-social-awareness-read-alouds-resources/>)

Practicing Mindfulness with Children

WRITTEN BY AVNEET SINGH, Resource Consultant,
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Practicing mindfulness with children is an important aspect to overall well-being.

When we are in spaces that bring us calmness and joy, it allows for greater connection to our internal self and brings clarity to what we are thinking and feeling.

Consider adding yoga/body stretching movements into your daily programming to support children with self-regulation and social-emotional skills. Integrate yoga/body stretching as a transitional experience before entering outdoor play.

Bringing awareness to your surroundings builds capacity for overall well-being. When connecting with nature, consider singing, “Good Morning Dear Earth” (Waldorf’s children’s song). Singing songs and being outside in vitamin N as ‘nature’ (Zimanyi, 2018) is a form of mindfulness practice. It helps children and teachers bring attention and appreciation to different forms of elements on our land.

Set the tone in your learning spaces. Consider taking deep breaths in and deep breaths out (“smell the chocolate cake and blow out the candles”) before starting your lunch routine. Use descriptive words associated to that part of the routine, “I’m hungry”, “My tummy is making noises” and/or simply put your hand over your stomach to acknowledge that food is on its way. Modelling is also an important way to support children to connect with how they’re feeling to their bodies.

Adding soft music, setting the tone in your voice, and staying calm helps children feel and feed off the energy from the teacher in the environment. It is the small steps that we practice mindfully in our everyday routine that support our overall well-being.



Illustration by nightwolfdezines on Vecteezy.

Reference

Miss Katie Sings (2021, April 07). Good Morning Dear Earth – (Waldorf’s Children’s Song) [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sfSmzx0LG8M>

“Mindfulness isn’t
difficult, we just need
to remember to do it.”
—Sharon Salzberg

Winter Explorations and Stories

WRITTEN BY LOUISE ZIMANYI, Professor, Early Childhood Education, Humber College

Four-year old Fariah feels happy when she is out in the Humber Arboretum. “I like to explore and make snow angels.” When asked to describe the happy feeling, she pauses and says, “the air smells good.”

The snowfall the night before makes it easy to see the tracks ahead. We try to guess who has been here before us. Is it Waawaashkeshi/Deer? The tracks are too big for Misko-Bineshiinh (red bird)/Northern Cardinal. It is Waabooz/rabbit, an Eastern Cottontail!

We learn from our friend Lynn that Waabooz means rabbit in Anishinaabemowin. When there is snow on the ground, only then can Lynn share the story of how Waabooz got his brown fur, a teaching that was gifted from Onaubinisay (Elder Jim Dumont). As we sip our cups of mint tea made in the kelly kettle, we listen to the story—every animal and plant has a story, a teaching, a gift.

On our way back for lunch, we pass the frozen pond etched with lines and circles. Nibi (water in Anishinaabemowin) looks different when it is ice and snow. We wonder how Omagakii/Frog and Miskwaadesi/Turtle are doing deep below. Another day we will hand-feed hungry Gijigijigaaneshiinyag/Chickadees under blue-gray skies*.

Winter offers many invitations to explore and connect to and with the stories of the Lands, animals, winter birds (Blue Jay, Black-Capped chickadee, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Cardinal for example) and plants wherever you are!

Go outside and look for tracks in the mud or snow! Follow and see where the tracks lead and what you might learn from animal behaviour.

Learn more about tracks and tracking from **How to be a winter wildlife detective** (<https://www.ontarioparks.com/parksblog/winter-wildlife-tracking/>)



Eastern Cottontail Rabbit tracks. Photo courtesy of Louise Zimanyi.

*Excerpt adapted from article written for **Play Outdoors, Winter 2022 issue** (<https://playoutdoorsmagazine.ca/>) by Louise Zimanyi & Lynn Short with Faris Khan, Asima Shahid & Jennifer Casale from the Humber Child Development Centre.

“When there's snow
on the ground, I
like to pretend I'm
walking on clouds.”
—Takayaki Ikkaka

What is Specialized Equipment?

Shared with permission from [Connectability.ca](https://connectability.ca)

Seating

There are several types of specialized seating. Wheelchairs and specialized strollers are used when a child's temporary or permanent physical condition makes walking impossible, when walking is so difficult that it leaves no energy for other activities, or when the child needs to develop the motivation to get around.

There are many types of wheelchair designs: manual and self-propelled chairs can be light-weight or heavy-duty, have one-armed drive, or be lever-operated. Battery driven wheelchairs can be conventional, scooter-type, heavy duty, or all-terrain.

Stroller/travel chairs are a type of specialized seating in which the child is pushed by another person. These strollers are sturdier than young children's strollers and offer more head and neck support.

Other Mobility Aids

Mobility devices can provide support for a child to crawl, stand, or walk.

Crawling: Scooter boards can be propelled by the child's arms as he lies across the board.

Standing: Many children with balance issues are unable to stand independently but can play if they are supported in a standing position. Sometimes children who cannot hold their heads up while lying down are able to hold their heads up when they are in a sitting or standing position.

Walking: A child with weak leg muscles may require braces to help support the joints. Even with bracing, a child may require a walker for trunk balance. Young children usually require walkers with front wheels as they require less energy to use than walkers without wheels.

Rolls and Wedges

For children who require support in developing control of the head, shoulders, arms, and hands, a small roll may be used. When placed under the chest, the roll makes lifting the shoulders or raising the head easier. Some children keep their arms close to their body because they don't have enough control and balance to reach out their arm(s). The roll can also assist children to move their arms forward and reach out.

A wedge provides slanted support to help children work on head, shoulder, and arm control. The height of the wedge depends on the child's needs. Lower wedges allow the child to lift up onto the elbows, while a higher wedge encourages arm and shoulder movement.



Top image: specialized seating.
Middle image: rolls.
Bottom image: wedges.
Photos courtesy of Connectability.

References:

Based on Parent Articles for Early Intervention, 1990, Communication Skill Builders, Inc.

ConnectAbility

(<https://connectability.ca>)

ConnectABILITY.ca



Photo by Kindel Media on Pexels.

Every Child Belongs Specialized Consultation Service

CONTRIBUTED BY SHERI ROBB, CYW, CTP, Resource Consultant, Lumenus Community Services

Specialized Consultation (SC) service is available to licensed child care and home child care (CC/HCC) programs through the support of the Resource Consultation (RC) Service, in the following areas:

Complex Support Needs:

- Behaviour (BC)
- Occupational Therapy (OT)
- Psychological/Psychiatric (PSY)
- Registered Nurse (RNC)
- Specialized Resource Consultant (SRC)

Language and Culture:

- Indigenous Resource Consultation (IRC)

These services aim to address and support the successful inclusion of children with extra support needs by building the skills and knowledge of the Resource Consultation (RC) staff, as well as child care staff, home child care providers and parent(s)/legal

guardian(s). The consultation helps to review strengths and address concerns and challenges within the group setting. The service builds on the knowledge and expertise of the team members. Specialized Consultation service is one of the many supports offered through the Every Child Belongs service model. The service is designed as an enhancement to the Resource Consultation Service and is not intended as a substitute.

Behaviour Consultation

Behaviour Consultants (BC) have academic training and experience in addressing complex behaviours by applying various strategies to improve a child's ability to function successfully in a child care program. A referral can be considered to assist with a situation that requires the specialized expertise of a BC and will help the team to better support a child with complex behaviour/social/emotional needs. The service may take place through single or multiple service visits.

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Occupational Therapy Consultation

Occupational Therapists (OT) are registered with the College of Occupational Therapy and are committed to helping people do what they need or want to do in the areas of self-care, productivity, and leisure. Occupational Therapists accomplish this by enhancing skills, adapting to the environment and/or changing the activity. Input from an OT may be helpful if a child is experiencing difficulties within any areas of development, such as: sensory processing, fine motor skills, gross motor skills, visual perception, organizational difficulties, feeding/oral motor (not related to speech development) and seating/mobility needs. Specialized equipment may be recommended by an OT for use in a child care program. The service is typically a single consultation.

Psychological/Psychiatric Consultation

Psychological/Psychiatric (PSY) Consultation service within the Every Child Belongs model is provided by an accredited Children's Mental Health agency. The Psychologist/Psychiatrist helps by considering the child's unique development, characteristics, goals, and circumstances. Consultation from a Psychologist/Psychiatrist can be requested if a child is experiencing heightened social or emotional difficulty which may take the form of concerning behaviour. The consultation may include recommendations for program accommodations, programming modifications, and social-emotional interventions. The service is typically a single consultation.

Registered Nurse Consultation

Registered Nurses are members of the College of Nurses of Ontario. Within the Every Child Belongs, Specialized Consultation model, the Registered Nurse Consultant (RNC) provides health promotion, information, and education to help build the capacity to respond to the care of children with complex medical needs. The RNC is able to consult in many areas, including feeding safety, special diets, seizure disorders, diabetes, urinary catheter,



Photo by Keira Burton on Pexels.

peripherally inserted central catheter, G-Tube, I-V pole, Oxygenation and Emergency Medical Plan development (as detailed in the Child Care Early Years Act). The RNC is not able to provide direct intervention, however, may be able to make suggestions/recommendations for direct intervention services.

Specialized Resource Consultant

The Specialized Resource Consultant (SRC) offers team support and ideas on generalizing specialized consultation strategies – classroom-wide, through a Program Consultation request. The SRC has training and experience in incorporating Specialized Consultation (SC) strategies and collaborates with the RC staff for the purpose of promoting a class-wide view to delivering the recommended strategies. The consultation may include managing children's curiosity in the classroom/playground with specialized equipment, storing specialized

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equipment for easy access and use, toys, activities, and visuals to compliment SC strategies, additional resources to compliment team member knowledge, brainstorming around class-wide practices to maintain the momentum, and promoting strategies that strengthen positive attitudes when making changes to accommodate all children. The service is generally a single session and may include follow-up sessions if needed.

Indigenous Resource Consultation

The Indigenous Resource Consultation (IRC) staff has lived experience as an Indigenous person and is able to provide support with a lens of two eyed seeing (being able to balance western and traditional cultural methods of healing and being). The IRC integrates culture into the written summary with examples of how to best support the child, family, and program. Although the IRC is not an elder or traditional knowledge holder, in consultation with an elder, healer or knowledge holder the IRC aligns cultural support plans with that person's specific nation. IRC input could be important when working with a self-identified Indigenous child and family to support inclusion in a child care program. Examples of culturally informed consultation may include understanding Indigenous worldview training/decolonization, culturally specific service navigation, trauma informed practice, traditional hand drumming and drum teachings, children's own Sacred Bundle, ceremony and medicine teachings, elder referral or support, and Indigenous cultural resources.

Reference

Toronto Children's Services, Every Child Belongs
Specialized Consultation Service Guidelines, June 2021



Photo by Yan Krukov on Pexels.

Crisscross-Applesauce: It's Time to Move on From This Tradition

WRITTEN BY RAE PICA, ECE Author, Speaker and
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How long could you sit crisscross-applesauce before you need to move? For me, the answer is: about 20 second's max! Unless I'm deeply, deeply engaged in something, I will change positions multiple times or start to fidget. Even while watching something absolutely fascinating on TV, I may start by sitting with my legs folded underneath me, but before long my legs are stretched out on the coffee table. Then I'm lying on my right side and, finally, my left side. And that's all during an hour-long program.

In other words, I find it very difficult to stay completely still, even in a comfortable position. I'm a long way from being a preschooler and among the most active segment of our population.

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Photo by Jep Gambardella on Pexels.

Crisscross-applesauce gives the child who's incapable of complying one more chance to be seen as misbehaving.

It has been written before about the folly of requiring children to sit still in order to learn. But requiring them to sit crisscross-applesauce – cross-legged, with the back straight and hands in the lap – as is so often done/required during circle or story time, brings the issue to a whole new level.

I have no inkling when sitting like this became a “thing.” The idea, of course, is that the children will pay greater attention to the task at hand. That they'll be more capable of listening. But wiggling and moving doesn't necessarily mean they're not listening. In fact, being required to sit like this may mean they pay even less attention, because crisscross-applesauce is a particularly challenging position – and that means it can require the majority of a child's concentration.

When sitting crisscross-applesauce became one of the major dictates of the early childhood setting, it gave the child who's incapable of complying one more chance to be seen as misbehaving. Breaking the rules. But I propose that we examine why such rules exist in the first place — rules that run contrary to what we know about children and, now, about fidgeting. If we understand that children are much more likely to be engaged when they're comfortable, why insist that they assume a position that perhaps isn't comfortable at all, often for long minutes at a time? Tradition is simply not a good enough reason.

So, what are the alternatives? Well, as pediatric occupational therapist Christy Isbell once said, in an interview for BAM Radio Network: “Who's to say we have to sit down to learn? Why can't we stand to learn? Why can't we lay on the floor on our tummies to learn? Why can't we sit in the rocking chair to learn? There are lots of other simple movement strategies. Just changing the position can make a big difference.”

So, why not offer children options? One major benefit is that they can choose the one that best meets their needs. And because they're given that responsibility and choice, they will take the decision seriously, and there will be fewer actual behavioural issues. This is how self-regulation is acquired – not by being ordered to sit still.

Often, early childhood teachers argue that they must get children used to sitting because the children are going to have to sit in kindergarten and beyond. Unfortunately, it's true that until policymakers begin paying attention to the research and opt for an education system that aligns with how children learn, children will have to become accustomed to sitting in school. But it's also true that most kids will eventually have to learn how to drive. That doesn't mean we should stick them behind the wheel while they're still preschoolers.

Learning to sit is a process that involves movement.

Learning to sit is a *process* that nature put in place. And that process involves *movement*, which allows

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children to develop their **proprioceptive and vestibular systems**, which allows children to be able to sit. Surely, we can imagine that we can do better than what nature intended.

Here are some recommendations, in addition to offering children choices:

- For circle time, you might simply allow children to stand or walk as needed. When I'm doing a telephone interview, or I am on a business call, I walk from room to room because I think better when I am on my feet.
- You might allow children to engage in a quiet activity, like colouring, as you read a story. A teacher once approached me following a keynote to show me what she had drawn while listening to me speak. Despite having created a lovely drawing, it was evident she had indeed been listening to me.
- For each of the above suggestions, you can and should designate a specified area within which the children are allowed to stand or colour; and that area should be within the circle. If you're going to allow children to walk, designate a larger circle that will help prevent the other children from being distracted.
- If a child is unable to sit still while you're reading a story or otherwise attempting to engage them, remember not to take it personally. Once you get to know each child as an individual, you'll be able to determine who might need a fidget toy, for example, or to sit on a balance ball.
- If you find yourself distracted by the children's movement, it's important to remember that, as adults, we should be better able to make adjustments to our thinking than young children are to their behaviours that are beyond their control.

As far as crisscross-applesauce is concerned, the time has come to do away with this tradition. Honestly, there was never a time for it in the first place!

Movement is not misbehaviour!



Photo by Yan Krukov on Pexels.

“Who’s to say we have to sit down to learn? Why can’t we stand to learn? Why can’t we lay on the floor on our tummies to learn? Why can’t we sit in the rocking chair to learn? There are lots of other simple movement strategies. Just changing the position can make a big difference.”

—Christy Isbell



Photo by Jhon David on Unsplash.

Steps to Supporting a Child Experiencing Stress and Trauma

AMANDA BOYD, BA, CYC, CTP; Resource Consultant, Lumenus Community Services, Every Child Belongs

Looking through a Trauma Informed Lens Part 3

Stress and trauma can significantly impact a child's health, development and wellbeing and can influence how they interact with others and their environment.

Part 1 and **Part 2** of this series on “Looking through a Trauma Informed Lens” identifies how childhood experiences of stressful and/or trauma can activate the survival brain. When this happens, the child's brain shifts to a heightened state of survival and instead of growing and learning, the child's responses to life experiences is focused on staying safe and meeting their basic needs.

Recognizing and responding to a child's behaviour through a trauma-informed lens can change how we, as adults, interact; what we say, and what we do.

The steps to responding with a trauma-informed lens are purposeful, based on how the brain operates when stress and trauma overwhelm a child.

Understand your own feelings

Take a moment to look at your own responses to challenging situations. What are your feelings and how are those feelings modelled to others? Situations can be stressful and sometimes overwhelming, particularly when dealing with challenging behaviour that happens on a regular basis. Understanding your own feelings and adapting your responses is the first step.

Recognize FEAR

If the child is experiencing stress and trauma, fear is at the root of their actions and behaviour. The **survival brain** is in charge and the **emotional brain** has been

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activated. The child's behaviour is a symptom of the problem, not the problem itself.

Ask yourself:

- Are they scared?
- Is their **survival brain** in charge?
- What can I do to calm their emotions and get their **thinking brain** back online?

Model calm and reassurance

Take a moment to stop and breathe, then decide what to do next. Our own actions could potentially escalate or de-escalate the situation, depending on what we do next.

Go to the child

Get physically close while respecting the child's personal space. They will likely not be able to come to you if you call them. They will not be able to follow through in this moment because the **survival brain** is in charge.

Critical things to remember at this time:

- **Be Silent.** This is very hard as we are used to talking and going into problem solving right away. However, if the child's **survival brain** is activated, they are not an available listener in that moment. Talking before helping the child to calm will only escalate the situation.
- **Be completely present and available.** Pay attention to the child without distraction.
- **Convey warmth and reassurance through your body language.** Consider your body posture, facial expression and tone of voice. Is it open, warm, inviting and comforting or closed and harsh? Find a calm quiet area and position yourself alongside the child in a non-threatening way, at eye level.
- **Cultural Considerations.** There are differences in meaning and intention when it comes to non-verbal communication across cultures. It is important to understand the child from a

cultural perspective and be mindful to avoid miscommunication.

The **survival brain** and the child's fight—flight—freeze responses will be reduced when the child feels safe and calm. The child's **thinking brain** will turn back on...

Critical things to remember at this time:

- **Do not focus on talking, problem solving or making expectations.** The child cannot take on tasks or directions at this time and may perceive this as threatening, adding feelings of being overwhelmed.
- **Do not ask for investment in the outcome.** This is not the time to think about solving the situation or what the child is going to have to do.
- **Use calming techniques that help to regulate the nervous system.** Calming techniques, such as deep breathing, will help to keep you calm and will be a model for the child as well.

Connect with the child

You may begin to notice the child beginning to relax, signaling that they are beginning to feel safe. Their **thinking brain** is coming back. You may start to see that they have more eye contact, breathing is slower and steadier, and challenging behaviours have decreased. This is the moment when you must connect and reassure them that you are there for support.

Important things to say at this time:

- "I am here." "I am with you."
- "You are safe."
- "Your feelings matter to me."

You must be sincere, otherwise, the **survival brain** will not believe that it is truly **SAFE** and this interaction may be perceived as another threat, which could re-escalate a survival response. Listening and acknowledging feelings with empathy helps the child feel safe and understood.

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Reason with the child

Once the child is calm and you recognize that the **thinking brain** is activated, you can begin to have a conversation with the child. Processing and problem solving comes AFTER calming and connecting. How you do this is important, using Dr. Dan Hughes's "Two-hand Approach": connection and then correction.

Example:

Connection: "On one hand you have good reasons for getting upset when (insert what happened)."

Correction: "On the other hand it's not okay to (insert behaviour or action here). Let's find another way to handle that situation that serves you better. I'm here every step of the way to figure that out with you."

This approach validates emotions expressed when the **survival brain** was in charge. It addresses how those big emotions did not help the child in the moment and what they can do instead to be able to handle a situation in a more positive way moving forward.

Help the child to re-do and repair

Providing the opportunity to re-do and repair is an important step in helping the child move to using their **thinking brain**.

Re-do: This is an opportunity to immediately practice a **replacement skill**, one that may lead to a better outcome. It lays the groundwork for a skill to be tried and take root. When you help the child to practice a new skill and praise their attempts, it will help to increase their confidence and provide a more positive relationship.

Repair: This is about fixing a situation. For example: cleaning up if a mess was made, or apologizing to a peer if hurt was caused. You will need to **match the repair expectation to the developmental level of the child** instead of their chronological age. Remember that children who have experienced stress and trauma often present as developmentally younger.

The point of "repair" is to show the child that they can come back from a challenging situation and



Photo by Humphrey Muleba on Unsplash.

that you will support them to do so. This can be scary, especially if they are left alone to perform expectations that are above their ability. This may lead to re-escalation. If we meet a child where they are at, with appropriate expectations and support, they can successfully repair.

Important things to say at this time:

- "It was really hard to (name the repair action) wasn't it?"
- "You must be proud of yourself for (name the repair action)."
- "I am proud of you."

It is important to engage in re-do and repair alongside the child to help demonstrate the skill you want to teach, build a trusting relationship, and provide support and encouragement during the learning process.

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Move forward

When a situation is over, it is important to move forward with the activities of the day. The supportive, nurturing connection with you needs to continue, however the child needs to see and understand there is closure and a fresh start.

Remember...

Be patient as each step may take time. You may need to fight the urge to start talking and problem solve. At times it will be difficult to find the time to work through each step.

When things do not seem to be working, think back on what happened and what actions you took. Be consistent, repeat the steps and give time for the skills to take root. Each child is unique and will need a thoughtful approach.

You will know if your strategy is working by observing the duration, frequency and intensity of each challenging situation. Does it take as long as it used to for the child to return to calm? Is it happening as often as it used to? Is the situation as intense as it used to be?

Focusing on building your child's skills and connecting with you in positive ways, even in difficult times, can help your child be more successful. Thoughtful and supportive responses on the part of the adults in a child's life can help them learn how to manage the stress and trauma they face.

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Salmon with Orange Slices

LARISSA KOSTEVSKII, RECE, ECAS, BASc, CWT Training Coordinator, Humber College

Once again, winter has arrived. While it is cold outside, we crave meals that warm us up and give us energy. I am not an exception and find myself cooking dishes with fish often. Why? Simply because I love eating fish. Also, fish is a source of protein, minerals, magnesium, and iodine and is filled with omega-3 fatty acids and vitamins such as D and B2. According to numerous research studies, omega-3 significantly lowers the risk of coronary heart disease, has strong anti-inflammatory effects and plays a significant role in the treatment or prevention of age-related macular degeneration, ADHD, and rheumatoid arthritis. And the best part is that I include fish in my family's meals regularly because it does not take long to cook. In this issue, I would like to share a recipe that became one of my favourites, and I hope you will appreciate this elegant, mouth-watering baked salmon with orange slices arranged below and on top of the fish. I love how the slices of oranges, with their citrus aroma, take a simple salmon recipe and turn it into a beautiful piece of art. You can be creative and substitute or combine slices of oranges with limes, tangerines, or lemons.

Ingredients (for four servings):

- 1-2 large oranges, sliced into rounds
- 1-pound salmon fillet, skin removed
- 1 cup of Greek yogurt
- 4 Tbsp Dijon mustard
- 4 Tbsp soy sauce
- 1 tsp of honey or maple syrup
- 1 tsp of oil and optional garnishes: chopped green onions, minced fresh cilantro or minced microgreens

Instructions

1. Heat the oven to 200 degrees F.
2. Lightly oil the bottom of a baking dish and arrange some orange slices on it.



Salmon with Orange slices. Photo by Larissa Kostevskii.

3. Place salmon in the baking dish over the arranged citrus slices.
4. Mix the Greek yogurt, mustard, soya sauce, and honey in the bowl. Pour the sauce over the salmon fillets.
5. Arrange the remaining citrus slices on top of the salmon and bake it for 15 minutes.

Bon appétit!

References

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Professional Learning and Links

Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario (AECEO) (<https://www.aeceo.ca>)

City Wide Training Calendar
(www.citywidetraining.ca)

College of Early Childhood Educators (CECE)
(<https://www.college-ece.ca>)

Connectability
Information and tools supporting inclusion
(www.connectability.ca)

The Garry Hurvitz Centre for Community Mental Health (<https://sickkidscmh.ca/>)

The Hospital for Sick Children
(www.aboutkidshealth.ca)

How Does Learning Happen?
(<https://www.ontario.ca/page/how-does-learning-happen-ontarios-pedagogy-early-years>)

Surrey Place Preschool Speech and Language Program
(<https://www.surreyplace.ca/services/preschool-speech-and-language-program/>)

Toronto Public Health
(<https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/children-parenting/pregnancy-and-parenting/parenting/healthy-child-development/>)

KIT Resource Committee Partners

Child Development Institute
Brendalee Simas, Child Care Consultant
(<https://www.childdevelop.ca>)

George Brown College
Jennifer Cloke-Campbell, Resource Consultant
(<https://www.georgebrown.ca/>)

Humber College
Josie Iannaccio, Resource Consultant and Larissa Kostevskii, CWT Training Coordinator
(<https://humber.ca/>)

Lumenus Community Services
Amanda Boyd, Diana Burgess and Sheri Robb, Resource Consultants
(<https://lumenus.ca/>)

Terry Tan Child Centre
Brenda Wilson, Resource Consultant
(<https://www.terrytan.ca/>)

WoodGreen Community Services
Janet Scott, Resource Consultant
(<https://www.woodgreen.org/>)



Photo by Kampus Productions.

“Children are great imitators.
So give them something
great to imitate.”

—Anonymous