Let's Work Together

Pairing & Repairing

Pairing is the foundation of applied behavior analysis, and is defined as building rapport with your learner, or child by pairing yourself with reinforcement. The goal of pairing is to establish such a strong relationship, that even the hardest of demands feel supported. To put it simply, it builds compliance, but also builds relationships. Pairing can be compared to attachment in many ways, and serves as the foundation to skill building in kids. Pairing allows our children
and students to reach their optimal outcomes. When looking at the definition of pairing it is so simple that we often forget about the importance of having this as our foundation.

**Put it into Perspective:**
Are you more likely to complete a task for someone you know such as parents, best friends and siblings, or are you more likely to complete a task for a complete stranger?

**Here are the rules to pairing!**

1. **No demands!**
   - That’s right. Pairing sessions should be utilized to build rapport, not build demand tolerance. However, over time with commitment to pairing you will begin to see compliance grow. Spend time with your child, demand free! Play a preferred game, share a snack.

2. **Preferred activities, only!**
   - Easiest way to guarantee this? Child centered play! Do whatever your child is doing, and make it fun! Does your child like building tall block towers and then knocking them down? Join in. Singing karaoke? Pick up the “mic!”

After steps 1 & 2 are done with fidelity, your child should be coming to you for access to reinforcement, all on their own!

3. **Restrict access to reinforcement until small demands are complete**
   - Continue the fun environment, but test the waters. Turn off the fun for a second, and place a small demand before continuing the fun! For example, if tickling is a part of the pairing session, stop tickling... and have them request for you to turn it back on! “You want more tickles? Say tickles!!” As soon as they say “tickles,” tickle them! Bam, easy compliance.

4. **Build on those demands.**
   - This is when behavior momentum comes into play. Over time, we will begin to build on the demands, increasing the difficulty slowly. We do not want to place too many demands too quickly, or we may “unpair,” ourselves with reinforcement. * Don’t forget to still deliver reinforcement between “small,” demands too! (behavior specific praise, a thumbs up, or a high five can be reinforcing for most children!)
Talking to Your Teen about COVID-19

By: Jane Cislo, LCSW

Is my teen ok?

Emotional and behavioral changes in children are to be expected during a pandemic, as everyone adjusts to a new sense of normal. If children show an ongoing pattern of emotional or behavioral concerns (e.g., nightmares, excessive focus on anxieties, increased aggression, regressive behaviors, or self-harm) that do not resolve with supports, professional help may be needed. Many mental health providers have the capacity to provide services via “telehealth” (i.e., therapy provided by telephone or an online platform) when in-person social contact must be restricted.

What to watch for and consider extra support:

- Regressive Behaviors
- Significant Sleep Issues
- Concerning behavioral changes: angry and aggressive outbursts, sudden bouts of crying, sullenness, irritability
- Withdrawal from family and friends
- Somatic Complaints: More complaints of headaches, stomach aches, and less energy.
- Acting Out: drug or alcohol use, increase in risk taking behaviors, cutting
- Increase talk of hurting themselves or others with a plan or intent

In addition to seeking professional guidance, parents can foster open dialogue with their kids, validate their feelings, correct misinformation, exercise patience, offer reassurance, establish routines and other sources of stability, facilitate virtual communication with friends and family, plan safe activities in nature and share opportunities to help others and make a difference in the world, even from the confines of home.

Bartlet, Jessica;Griffin, Jessica;Thomsen, Dana, “Resources for Supporting Children’s Emotional Well-being during the COVID-19 Pandemic” Child Trends, March 10, 2020

**************************************************
Life Skills

While your kids are home, it’s the perfect opportunity to teach them life skills, such as basic household chores or daily living skills. We often teach life skills through task analyses, which involves breaking down the skill into several steps, and teaching each step individually. We have provided two task analyses below for sweeping and making prepackaged cookies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sweeping</th>
<th>Making Prepackaged Cookies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Get broom and dust pan</td>
<td>• Gather materials: refrigerated cookie dough, parchment paper or silicone mat, baking sheet, spoon, spatula, cooling rack, oven mitts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Move furniture or small items off the floor</td>
<td>• Preheat the oven to the temperature listed on cookie packaging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Using two hands on the broom sweep from the edge of one wall to center of room</td>
<td>• Place parchment paper or silicone mat on the baking sheet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Continue sweeping from the edge of all walls to make a pile in the center of the room</td>
<td>• Scoop cookie dough out with a small spoon, then using your hands, roll each spoonful into a ball and place on baking sheet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• If necessary (in a bigger room) make several piles</td>
<td>• Place each cookie at least 1 inch apart on baking sheet until full</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Hold the dust pan at the base of the pile and sweep pile into dust pan</td>
<td>• Place the baking sheet in the oven for the appropriate time listed on cookie packaging and set a timer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Throw away debris from the dust pan</td>
<td>• Using oven mitts, take the cookies out of the oven when the timer goes off</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| • Put away the broom and dust pan                                       | • Use a spatula to move each cookie from the pan to the cooling rack, and allow to cool for at least 10 minutes, then enjoy!
**Social Skills: Showing Empathy**

Empathy or the ability to put yourself in someone else’s shoes and express an interest and/or concern is a social skill that is key when it comes to being a kind, well-rounded individual. Without this skill, we can be perceived as selfish, which in turn can have a negative impact on the social aspect of our lives. Empathy is not always a skill that comes naturally, but there are things you can do to help cultivate this skill in your child.

1. **Express Concern:** When your student, or child becomes upset - be empathetic! Ask them questions to try to understand why they feel that way. Let them feel heard and supported. Take what they tell you and validate it.

2. **Be a Model:** We touched on this in last week’s newsletter as well, but your children or students are always watching you! If you want them to show empathy, practice it. Let them see you caring for others in more ways than one!

3. **Bring it to their attention:** Another way to teach your child to show empathy, is to bring it to their attention. If their sibling is crying and upset, ask them to think about why they’re sad. Were
they called a mean name? Did they get hurt? Talking about emotions and why we feel the way we do is a great way to build empathy.

---

**Mindful Moment**

Sit down with your child and ‘color your feelings’ together depicting each emotion with a new color. Be curious with your child/teen (yes teens color too! You can find many different Mandalas online which are more “grown up”) about where they experience their emotions in their body. Pay attention to your body as well- where do you experience joy, anger, boredom, curiosity?

---

**Weekly Tips**

1. **We all work for reinforcement:** Things have changed so drastically. Many of our ongoing “reinforcers,” have changed. Some of us aren’t receiving our usual paychecks, some of us cannot go to our typical appointments for our “me time,” we can’t see all of our loved ones, those who work for retail therapy can’t go to a mall.... *It’s hard.* We have to find ways to reinforce ourselves.
within our homes. What feels good for you right now? Work for that. For me, I tell myself “First work, and then you can take a long walk.” I take the time to fill my schedule with a ratio of “work,” and some reinforcing things that I have access to right now. Things have changed, and so have our reinforcers…. But you are STILL deserving of your cash outs :) – Lauryn Elder M.Ed., BCBA

2. **Please wait!**” Sometimes, especially for younger children, waiting is difficult, which in turn makes it difficult for parents. Right now, you may be working from home, homeschooling and multitasking all day long so it could be a great time to work on those waiting skills! Start with short durations (3 seconds) and praise your child when they wait patiently! – Alexis Foulk, M.S., BCBA

3. **Stay positive by asking yourself one thing you are grateful for each day!** Things are extremely difficult right now, and it’s easy to think negatively about everything going on. Your children can and will pick up on this negativity and begin to worry just as much as you! One way to think positively is asking yourself what you are grateful for. Do this each day with your family and it will help you recognize all the good in each day! – Alexandria Larson M.S., BCBA

4. **Be Curious**- Now is a great time to “wonder” with your child/teen. Be curious about their experience. If you are playing with your younger child, say with blocks, wonder about what kind of house they would want in the future. Don’t correct them if they want something fantastical, just enjoy the story they tell you. If you are with your teens watching a show or Youtube, wonder what your child thinks of a character or situation. Wonder what they might do or do differently. Again, just listen and enjoy their response! Jennifer Stein, LPCMH

**************************************************************************************************************

**Just for Fun**

**Virtual Tours:** Click on the links below to go on a virtual adventure! Check back each week for different locations!

1. **Farm Food Tours** - Use this link to explore and learn about farming and how the food they grow gets its way to us! With the weather getting warmer, you may see a lot of people planting their own gardens and doing a little bit of “farming” of their own! :-)  
2. **Zoos Victoria - Australia** - This link will take you to a website with a ton of fun things to enjoy! There are live cameras on some of the animal exhibits like zebras, penguins and koalas. There are also weekly Keeper Talks which help you learn more about the different animals.
Keeping Kids Engaged at Home: [200 Activities for Kids at Home]

Brandywine School District
Behavioral Support Team
Wilmington, DE

Email Lauryn Elder for teacher questions: Lauryn.Elder@bsd.k12.de.us
Email Alexis Foulk for additional resources: Alexis.Foulk@bsd.k12.de.us
Email Alexandria Larson for parent questions: Alexandria.Larson@bsd.k12.de.us
Email Jen Stein for mental health tips: Jennifer.Stein@bsd.k12.de.us