



Healthy Minds Newsletter

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Let's Work Together

Who we are, what we do and **why we do it** :)



What is an BCBA?

A Board Certified Behavior Analyst, or BCBA, has a graduate degree in applied behavior analysis, or the study of behavior and learning. They also collect supervised field hours prior to passing a board exam. Their job is to observe, record, and analyze behavior, and then put strategies into place to change behavior. While a majority of BCBA's work with children diagnosed with autism, we *all* engage in behaviors and these strategies can be used with any population.

What is an LPCMH?

A Licensed Professional Counselor of Mental Health has a Masters Degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling. To obtain professional licensure, 3200 hours of clinical work and supervision by a licensed supervisor are required; as is accreditation by the National Board of Certified Counselors. LPCMHs engage with people across the lifespan to provide therapy and therapeutic interventions to achieve the person's goals related to their mental/emotional health. I chose this work because I believe it is a **privilege and honor** to engage with children and their families.



Prompting Strategies

Prompting is a tool that can be used to help assist a learner from incorrectly responding to a question, task demand or activity to correctly responding. Prompting is implemented in a strategic manner depending on the task at hand and the learner's ability. Strategic implementation is done so that the learner does not become dependent on the aid! When prompting is done correctly, it can help reduce frustration and help the learner to learn more efficiently! Click [here](#) for a visual of this information.

1. **Visual**- using visual cues, such as positioning the correct item so it stands out, or using visuals to guide the response
 - a. Example: Using tracing lines/dots on paper to guide the correct path for writing
2. **Gestural**- pointing to the appropriate response or the area where a task must be completed
 - a. Example: If the direction is the brush teeth, pointing to the toothbrush
3. **Verbal**- a vocal cue, or vocal demand
 - a. Example: If a child wants a cookie, use a vocal cue saying "cookie."
4. **Modeling**- demonstrating the action your learner must complete
 - a. Example: If the demand is to open the door, then open to door to provide a model, close it, and then give the demand again
5. **Partial Physical**- gently guiding a learner's elbow or lightly moving their hand to complete a task
 - a. Example: If your learner is writing their name, guide their elbow to the paper
6. **Full Physical**- gently taking a learner's hand and guiding them through the task hand-over-hand
 - a. Example: If your learner is washing hands, guide their hands through the entire task using your hands over theirs

Prompting Strategies	Description	When to use
Most to Least	Using the most intrusive prompt first, working down to the least intrusive prompt necessary to complete the task	When teaching a new skill, or when a learner has never completed the demand/skill before
Least to Most	Using the least intrusive prompt necessary first, working up to the most intrusive prompt to complete the task	When completing a known skills or a demand that has been done before

IF/THEN

**If I learn the Premack Principle,
then my kids should follow directions!**

Generally speaking, the Premack Principle is as simple as the visual above! The idea behind this principle is that a behavior that is more likely to occur (something your child enjoys) will strengthen the likelihood that a less probable behavior (something your child doesn't enjoy as much) will occur. For example, let's say your child does not like to eat broccoli, but *loves* playing video games. Using the premack principle, you could say; "If you eat 5 pieces of broccoli, then you can play video games." The idea being that your child will be motivated by the video games and will eat their broccoli.

Premack Principle
"Grandma's Rule"

Premack Principle occurs when a preferred activity is used as reinforcement for a non-preferred activity.

First
LOW-probability behavior
OR
Something that the child **NEEDS** to do.

Then
HIGH-probability behavior
OR
Something the child **LIKES** to do.

The use of Premack Principle or "first/then" language increases motivation and establishes the contingency that reinforcement is available following engagement in a non-preferred activity.

"First eat your veggies, then you can have a cupcake."

First: Then:

NOTE: Ensure that the high-probability (preferred) behavior remains reinforcing by restricting access to the item or activity.

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Reinforcement is *EVERYTHING*

We all work for reinforcement, plain and simple. There is a “pay out” for ALL behaviors that we engage in more than once. Of course, many of us love our jobs so much that we would consider doing them for free, but our overall purpose for working is for an income. Reinforcement defined in basic terminology as a reward that is earned after work/behavior is complete, that will create lasting behavior change over time. Oftentimes, reinforcement and bribery can be confused. Reinforcement is a practice that is planned, and controlled, whereas bribery is a quick fix.. Below is a visual that really puts the difference of reinforcement and bribery into perspective.



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Behavior Specific Praise

“Catch them being good.”

Anytime you notice your child engaging in a behavior that you would love to see more of, “mark,” that behavior! “Alexis I love how helpful you’re being in the kitchen tonight, I appreciate it so much.” “Alexis it makes me proud to see you play with your brother, thank you.” “Alexis you are working so hard on your school work, you are so smart!” Behavior specific praise is **so** important. Everytime you feel yourself going to say “good job,” think about **why** you’re saying it, and extend that sentence a little further! See the graphic below for more information.





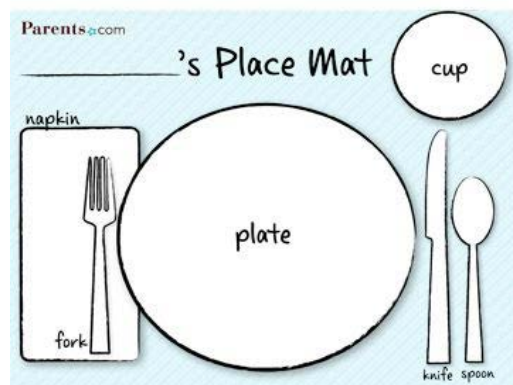
Life Skills

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 setting the table and brushing your teeth.

Setting the Table	Brushing Your Teeth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Gather all materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Turn on water
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Put placement on table 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wet toothbrush
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Place a large place in the middle of the placemat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Squeeze toothpaste onto brush
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fold a napkin in half and place it to the left of the plate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Brush bottom teeth in circular motion for 30 seconds
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Place a fork on top of the napkin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Brush top teeth in circular motion for 30 seconds
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Place a knife to the right of the plate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Spit out toothpaste and rinse mouth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Place a spoon to the right of the knife 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rinse toothbrush and put away
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Place a cup in the upper right corner of the placemat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Turn off water



Bring it all together: In order to teach setting the table, provide the initial direction using the **Premack Principle**. "If you set the table, then you can watch TV before dinner." Provide the least intrusive **prompt**, a visual aid, to guide your child through the task. Use higher levels of prompting when necessary for your child to complete the task, but limit verbal directions when possible. Remember to provide **reinforcement** immediately once the task is complete, and allow your child to watch TV.





Social Skills: How to Request a Break.

When it comes down to it, we all need to take breaks. Some days, due to what we have eaten, how much sleep we've had, and our exposure to additional triggers we may need more breaks. As adults, we can often identify this, and let our loved ones know to take it easy on us. However, many kids need to be explicitly taught this skill. All of the tools below are ways that we can begin to help our kids identify when they may need a break. Click [here](#) for an example of a break card to use.

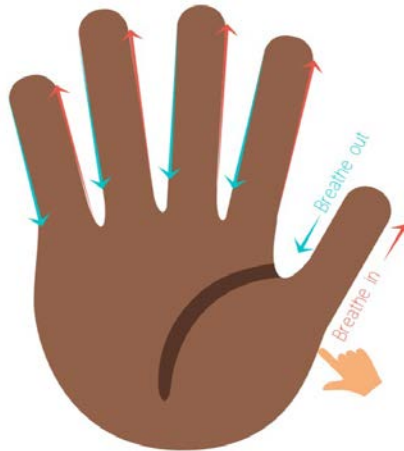
- **Giving your child a break visual may prompt them to request independently!**
 - When you start to notice your child hitting their capacity, whatever that may look like... some kids become visibly fidgety, some become tired, some may yell or cry or release bigger emotions.... Hand them the visual, and grant them the break! [Here](#) are some visuals you may find helpful.
- **Creating a break space/chill down area within your home that is available whenever is often helpful with teaching this skill.**
 - When you see your kiddo at the designated area, you already know how their body may be feeling. "Oh I see you are in the chill area, you must need a break, thank you for taking care of yourself."
 - If an area isn't accessible, create a "chill basket," that is full of materials that are helpful when taking a break. [Here](#) is an example.
- **Scheduling breaks throughout the day is another helpful tool.**
 - This can be an addition to a visual schedule, or even utilized with the premack principle mentioned above. Click [here](#) to learn a little about visual schedules.



Mindful Moment

Mindfulness is moment by moment awareness of our feelings, thoughts, bodies and the environment that surrounds us. Research shows us a mindful practice will impact the way our brains/bodies learn to self-regulate, reduce anxiety and stress as well improve our focus/attention and ability to empathize.

5 Finger Breathing



- 1) Sit criss-cross-applesauce facing your child, and if possible, looking into your child's eyes (if your child has difficulty maintaining eye contact, don't worry about it!).
- 2) Raise your left hand with an open palm. Have your child mirror you.
- 3) Trace your fingers, starting with your thumb, trace the outside of your thumb with your pointer finger, breathing in for a count of three. While tracing the inside of your thumb, breathe out for a count of 3. Continue across your whole hand (see above illustration).
- 4) Take turns leading- adult leads and then child leads.
- 5) Practice together- if you are feeling irritated, invite your child to lead you. If you notice your child feeling frustrated, invite them to join you.

Practicing simple, mindful, face to face activities with your child increases the emotional connectedness you share in your relationship! Enjoy the small moments !



Weekly Tips

1. **Pair with your child!** Think about how you can spend time with them that does not include placing demands. Maybe this is a conversation about one of their interests, going for a walk, watching a movie together, playing a card game, etc. When we engage with people who only place demands, with no other engagement... the likelihood of the demands being completed efficiently is not as high! It's also great to just spend time with the people you love, demand free. - Lauryn Elder M.Ed., BCBA
2. **Every moment can be a learning opportunity!** Everyday life has plenty of teachable moments that we don't even notice most of the time. Have your child help cook dinner with you, dig in the garden, or play a board game. Learning can happen in more than just math, reading, science and social studies! - Alexis Foulk, M.S., BCBA
3. **Don't forget to breathe!** It is definitely a stressful time right now, and we all are experiencing different hardships due to COVID19. When you notice yourself getting stressed, take a few deep breaths, and remind your kids to do the same! - Alexandria Larson M.S., BCBA
4. **Smile at your child! And then go smile at yourself in the mirror!** Kids can be really difficult- sometimes you love them but you may not like them a whole lot. When the thought crosses your mind "I'm gonna lose it with this kid!", take a breath, smile at them, then smile at yourself in the mirror. Give yourself permission to acknowledge your feelings! Then give yourself permission to think and feel "I'm doing the best I can and that makes a difference!" - 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. [Houston Space Center](#) - Download the app and explore the Houston Space Center! Use the GPS map feature to find things in outer space as well as on Earth! You can also watch recordings of shuttle launches, learn about the history of space and get answers to questions you didn't even know you had!
2. [Tootsie Roll Plant Tour](#) - Anyone have a major sweet tooth? If not, you may after watching the virtual tour of the tootsie roll factory! You can explore the factory, how Tootsie Pops are made and how the classic candy - The Tootsie Roll - came to be!

Keeping Kids Engaged at Home: [Fun and Learning for Parents and Children](#)

Brandywine School District
Behavioral Support Team
Wilmington, DE

All visuals presented from: [Behavioral Interventions and Solutions](#)

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