

Unlocking Every Child's Potential



HELPING THE WHOLE CHILD

HOW TO IMPROVE BEHAVIOR BY FOCUSING ON COMMUNICATION, SELF-CONTROL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH

The
Floortime
Center[®]

Presented by
Jake Greenspan

BEHAVIOR IS A SYMPTOM



- **All of our experiences get “dually coded” in our brains**
 - Emotional and sensory categories
- **Emotions and occasionally sensory needs or stimulation drive behavior**

NEUROPLASTICITY

(SCIENTIFICALLY PROVEN PRINCIPLES)



Neurons that "fire" together "wire" together

The brain grows throughout our lives and functions like a muscle.

- Two things are necessary to help grow the brain: a rich learning environment and opportunities to practice thinking.

The brain is highly adaptable and can improve and enhance neural connections, given the right learning experiences.

If a certain part of the brain is not operating effectively due to injury or other factors, a new area can be recruited to perform the task.

RULES FOR LEARNING HOW TO WIRE THE BRAIN FOR PROCESSING AND THINKING, NOT JUST MEMORIZING



- **Active participation and full attention are necessary - How do you create a level of motivation that induces neurological growth?**
- **The activity must progress in difficulty at a subtle and manageable level - Memorization and repetition are not methods to change the brain long-term.**
- **There must be consistency and intensity in practicing these thinking processes.**
- **There has to be meaningful emotional feedback (reward) to make the experience pleasurable and positive - What should that reward be?**



QUICK FIXES ARE RARELY COMPLETE OR HEALTHY FIXES

Think about your experiences when it comes to making lasting changes in your life.

A robust learning process is what encourages healthy long-term change (not simply being given a solution or told what to do.)

Short cuts and quick fixes often are only partially or temporarily successful. They are also more likely to cause side effects and new behaviors.

BEHAVIOR, COMMUNICATION, AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT TECHNIQUES



Follow the child's lead: During times of challenge or when helping children work on their emotional thinking, talk about what they are focused on at that moment.

Challenge the child: Gradually challenge them to express information, ideas and feelings in a more organized manner.

BEHAVIOR, COMMUNICATION AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT TECHNIQUES



Expand: Challenge the child by asking questions that get them to think critically about their own conclusions.

Provide empathy and sympathy when the child expresses emotional themes.

- ▶ This serves as emotional feedback if the child is expressing a difficult emotion.

The main goal is to encourage thinking.

- Don't try to teach a lesson or push a conclusion you want the child to come to.

EARN THE RIGHT TO CHALLENGE AND SET LIMITS



Give more to expect more!

- Discipline and setting limits are something you earn the right to have.
- You earn that right by providing enough nurturing, love, compassion and Greenspan Floortime!
 - Greenspan Floortime: Following your child's lead allows them to really feel you're part of their universe and part of their life, making them more responsive to your limits.

The child needs to feel secure and confident that you are there for them. That feeling will enable them to learn from your limit setting.

EARN THE RIGHT!



Children, if they feel secure in their relationship with you, want your respect!

- This happens early, once the child comes to understand the difference between an admiring, approving look and a negative look.
- This usually occurs between 12 and 24 months of life; it's not something you have to wait to have until the child is older.

HOW TO ESTABLISH A POSITIVE RELATIONSHIP



Have Fun!

Follow the child's Lead (FtL)

- Show interest and enthusiasm in the child's interests
- Listen, don't judge or lecture
- Sympathize and empathize

EVERY CHILD IS UNIQUE



Education and discipline have to be tailored to the child's personality, and to their unique emotional and sensory profile.

Most children are sensitive – be the "gentle giant"!

REMEMBER:



Be consistent and persistent (rather than punitive):

- Use understanding with persistence and firmness.

Be proportionate: Always modify the punishment to fit the crime.

When you feel you're losing it (because you're only human) take a time out to relax and take a deep breath.

Use pretend play or reality-based conversations to work through stressful themes and situations.

REMEMBER



A child who needs more discipline is already feeling rejected, resentful, and angry.

- They are often the ones who need the most love and support.

Tough love approach is an extreme: children often harbor resentment and it affects their personalities and relationships.

Avoid isolation or rejection.

ASK YOURSELF THESE QUESTIONS WHEN IMPLEMENTING THE PREVIOUS STRATEGIES:



Am I calm and regulated right now?

Am I the best person to help regulate this child? (i.e. what is my current relationship with this child?)

Has this child received the right amount of support before I began setting limits and challenging them with boundaries?

Is the child regulated? Have I asked the appropriate questions to understand the child's perspective before I set boundaries?

STEP 1: REGULATE - FIND EACH CHILD'S METHOD FOR CALMING DOWN OR REGULATING, AND STAY ENGAGED.



- This may mean being empathetic, using sensory calming inputs (like a blanket), or giving them some space while maintaining a level of engagement.
- Always calm and soothe. If the child is in the middle of a meltdown, help them calm down first. You don't want to throw fuel on the fire when the child's already scared by a caregiver who is too loud or tough.
- Don't discipline a child in the middle of a tantrum, meltdown, or any time the child is revving up.
- Your method needs to be very gentle and persistent, but firm (Imagine the "Gentle Giant").
- Transitioning the child out of the room may further escalate them. Some children may need more space to calm down, but always try to stay near them so they know you are there when they are ready.
- Avoid letting a child fall back into a maladaptive regulatory strategy, where they have to self-absorb in digital media or other isolating sensory materials.

STEP 2: LOGICAL COMMUNICATION - FIND EACH CHILD'S LEVEL OF COMMUNICATION AND DISCUSS WHAT HAPPENED AT THEIR LEVEL.



- **This may be a real conversation, asking questions, or as basic as using simple facial gestures.**
- **Listen to the child. Get as much information as possible by asking the right questions.**
 - You need to understand the child's thinking and reasoning before you respond.
 - If the child struggles to communicate, try to understand the emotional and sensory components driving the behavior.
- **Help the child come to their own conclusions about their behavior.**
- **If they can handle it, ask questions about whether the child broke a rule, did something they were not allowed to, etc.**
- **If the conversation is shortly after the behavior, DO NOT discuss social-emotional consequences. Discuss the outcomes of their actions later on.**
 - If the child is still in an emotionally heated moment, they will experience guilt if we push the emotional consequences of their actions. Guilt can perpetuate the behavior.
- **Determine your response:**
 - Is a consequence necessary? Consider a discussion of future consequences, or a discussion of other ways the child can express themselves.
 - If this is a repeat offence, then implement the previously discussed consequence.



LONG TERM PLAN: THIS WILL BE A SET OF INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENTAL GOALS FOCUSING ON IMPROVING COMMUNICATION, ESPECIALLY AROUND EMOTIONAL TRIGGERS (NEGATIVE EMOTIONS) AND IMPROVING WEAK PROCESSING AREAS.

***Before we can help a child progress developmentally and emotionally, we must develop a more trusting and respectful relationship with the child. Give before you expect trust in return!**

- Improve the child’s overall communication and self-awareness by asking open-ended questions. Don’t ask a question you already know the answer to.**
- Improve communication around negative emotions, especially those that trigger anger, frustration and fear by asking open-ended questions.**
- Improve flexibility by working on creative and abstract thinking.**
- Help the child learn to think ahead by encouraging them to tell you what the next step is, or what’s about to happen next (and even next after that).**
- Provide regular opportunities for a child to feel “in control.” Have the child come up with constructive ideas. This will curb the child from seeking negative behaviors.**



FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TRAINING

The Greenspan Floortime Approach®

www.stanleygreenspan.com

or

The Floortime Center®

Phone: (301) 657-1130

Email: jake@thefloortimecenter.com

Website: www.thefloortimecenter.com