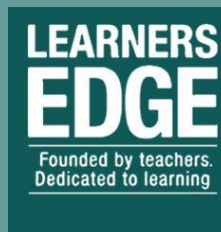


PARTNERING WITH PARENTS THAT CHALLENGE YOU

August 2017



Keely Swartz, Presenter

- Is a huge hockey fan in the winter and loves to spend time on the lake during the summer
- Most recently served as a Special Education Coordinator in a suburban school district
- Worked in both Special Education and Administration for nearly 20 years
- **Current Role:** Director of Professional Development for Learners Edge



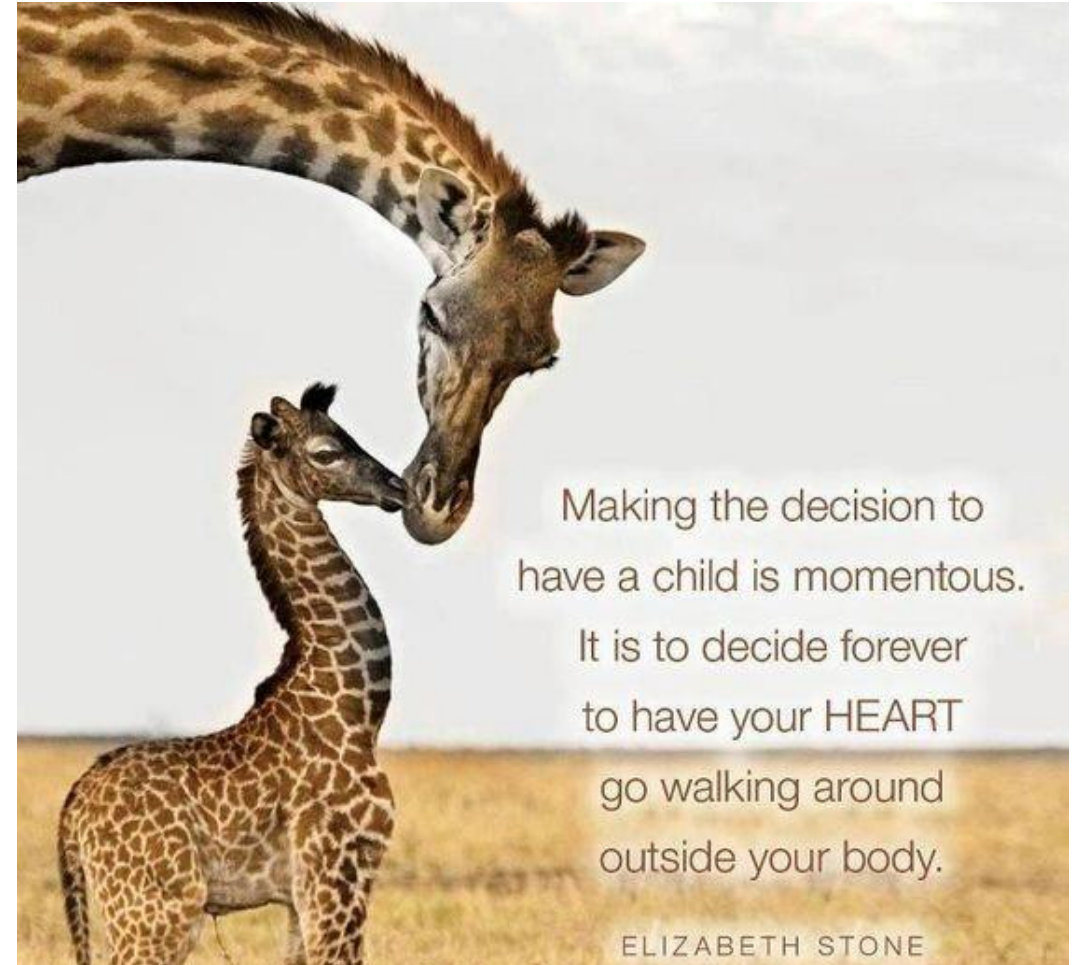
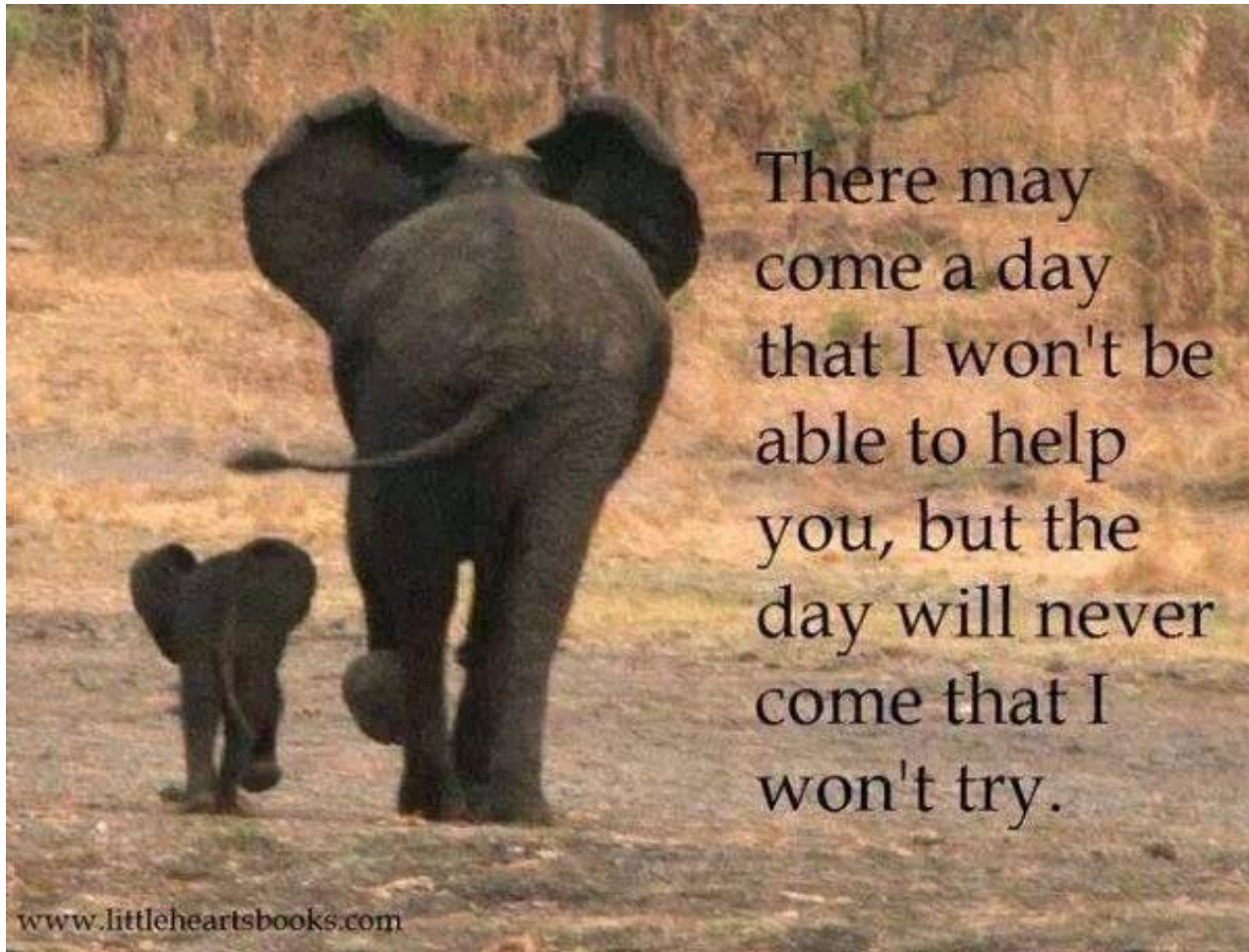
Agenda

- Perspective
- Build Relationships First
- Communicating Tough Stuff
- Conflict Resolution
- Successful Meetings

A mother's love for her
child is like nothing else in the
world. It knows no law, no pity, it
dares all things and crushes down
remorselessly all that stands
in its path.

.Agatha Christie

Perspective



Perspective:
You are
working with
someone's
“most
important.”



My most important...

Perspective: Child at the Center



Perspective: Focus on the Positive

- Did the child learn a new skill?
- Was the student observed interacting with peers? Laughing? Learning?
- Was there fewer emails from the parent than the week before?



Perspective: All behavior is purposeful

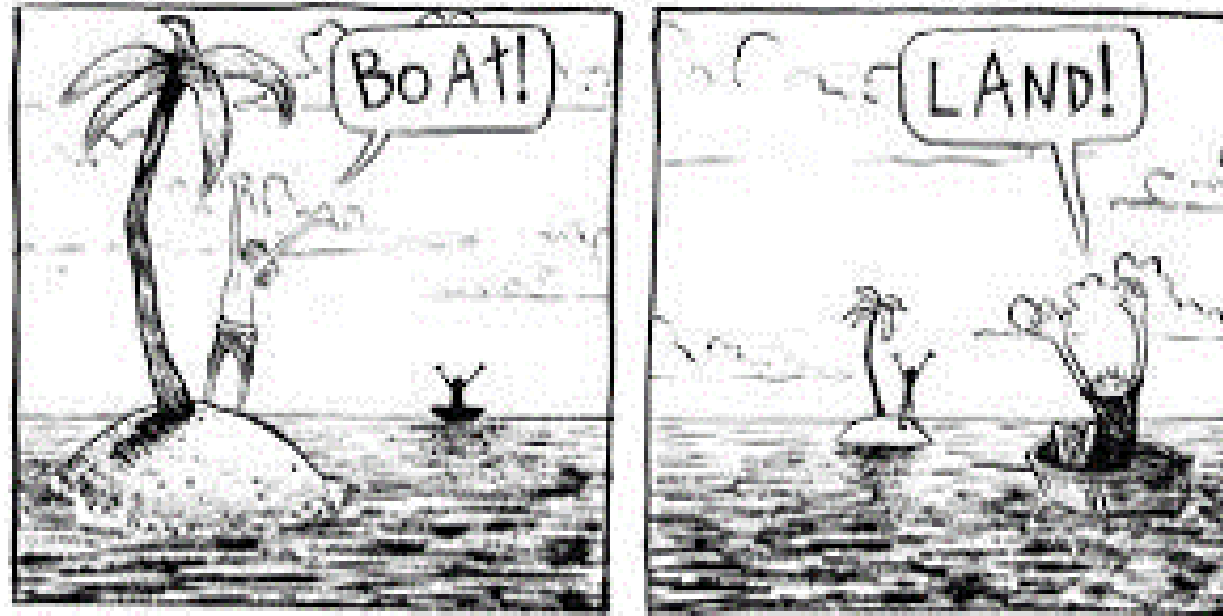


- If we can understand why the parent is behaving the way they are, we can design a more successful approach.
- This is similar to identifying the function of the behavior in a student and using the information to develop a plan to meet the needs of the student.
- We can also teach replacement behaviors.

I'm not talking about the students!

Perspective:

Depending on your angle, there are a million.



Yours is not the only one!



**LEARNERS
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**BUILD
RELATIONSHIPS**

Build Relationships



- Introduce yourself!
- Find some common ground.
- Build trust early.
- Encourage parental involvement in the classroom (ie. Volunteering, field trips, lunch with student, etc.)
- “Seek first to understand...”
- Touch base throughout the year and follow up when they bring concerns forward.
- Call, email or snail mail positives!
- Use social media or newsletters to build relationships, not just communicate information.

COMMUNICATING
TOUGH STUFF



KEEP
CALM
AND
USE YOUR
WORDS

Communicating Tough Stuff

➤ **Initiating Contact**

- Don't wait!
- Unless you have an established, solid relationship, do not email.
- Call them.
- Document what you shared and their response.
- Stay calm and professional (no matter what!)

➤ **Email tips (if you choose to do this.)**

- You do NOT need to respond to barrages of emails immediately.
- Wait, think, prepare and then call with your responses.
- If you choose to email a response, do so in one email.



Communicating Tough Stuff



- **“Never let ‘em see you sweat.”**
 - Be calm, relaxed, confident and assertive all at the same time! Ha!
 - Be prepared (mindfulness) and practice
 - Maintain good eye contact
 - Move your body
 - Lower your voice
 - Close the gap (with open body language)



Communicating Tough Stuff

- What if the parent is right?
 - Honesty is the best policy.
 - Apologize.
- Thank the parent for bringing the information to your attention in a rational, understanding manner.
- Don't wait for a parent to bring something to your attention. If you know a mistake has been made, be forth coming and prepared with a solution.



Communicating Tough Stuff

- I'm sorry is hard!
 - "I'm sorry that happened."
- Sometimes, they just want to be heard.
 - No solution necessary.
- Are you defensive? Why?
 - Does the rule make sense?
 - "Why didn't I know?" When in doubt, communicate!



Communicating Tough Stuff

- The more difficult the news, the more prepared you should be and the more effort you should put forth.
- The phone is our friend...unless it is ringing!
- Don't feel a need to respond to every challenge a parent throws at you.
- Feel comfortable in saying, "Please don't talk to me like that."
- Providing too much detail can be BAD.
- Do your research before you call. What don't you know that might be asked?
- Don't pass the buck or make excuses.
- Little ears...

Eye rolling is my cardio.

som**ee**cards
user card





Communicating Tough Stuff

- Watch your non-verbals.
 - Eye roll
 - Crossed arms
- Do not use Eduspeak (educational jargon)

CONFLICT RESOLUTION



Conflict Resolution

- Problem Solving
 - Shift the focus to the future: “Can we all agree we don’t want this to happen again?”
 - Ask for their help.
 - “What can we do to make sure this doesn’t happen again?”

Stay Solutions Focused!

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Conflict Resolution

- Diffusing a parent who may be angry...
- Follow the acronym ANGER

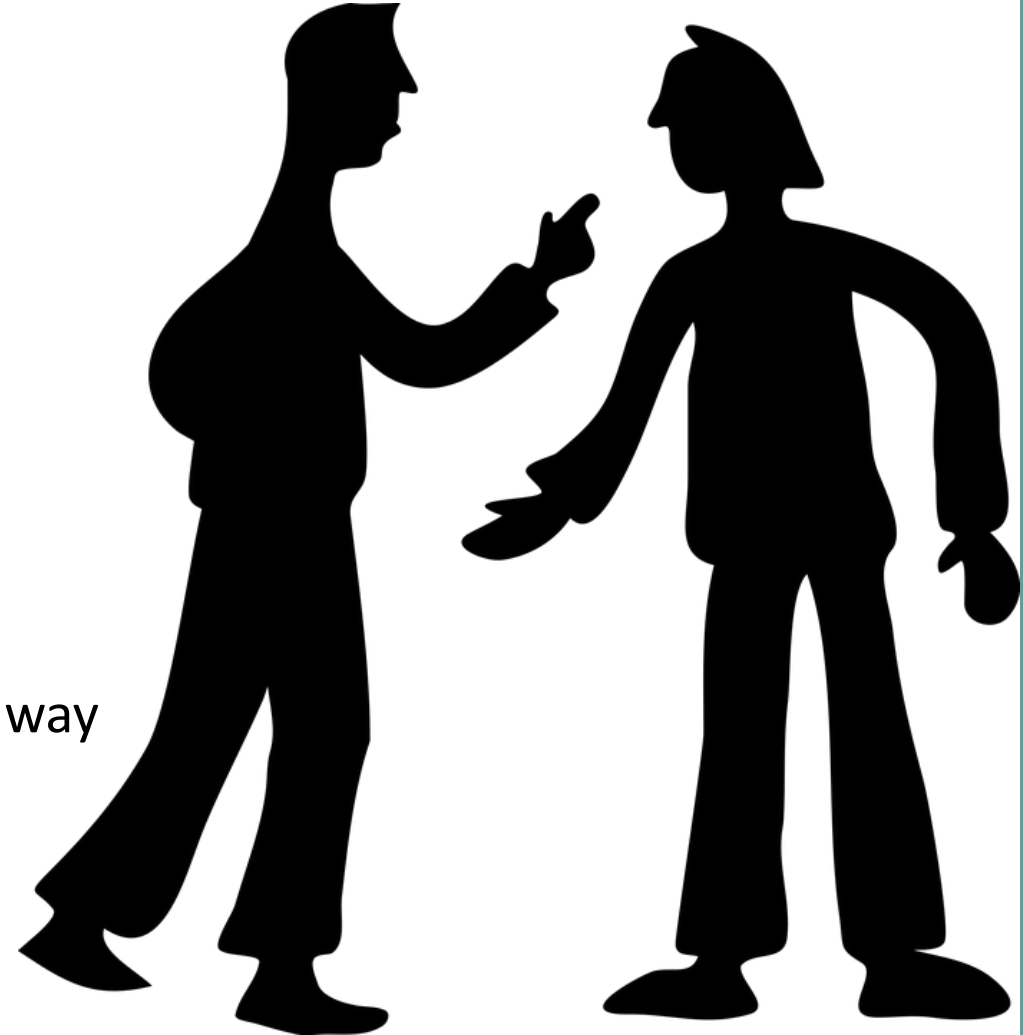
A-Acknowledge

N-Note aloud by paraphrasing

G-Gauge the importance

E-Engage in solutions

R-Remind them of your relationship intentions in a positive way



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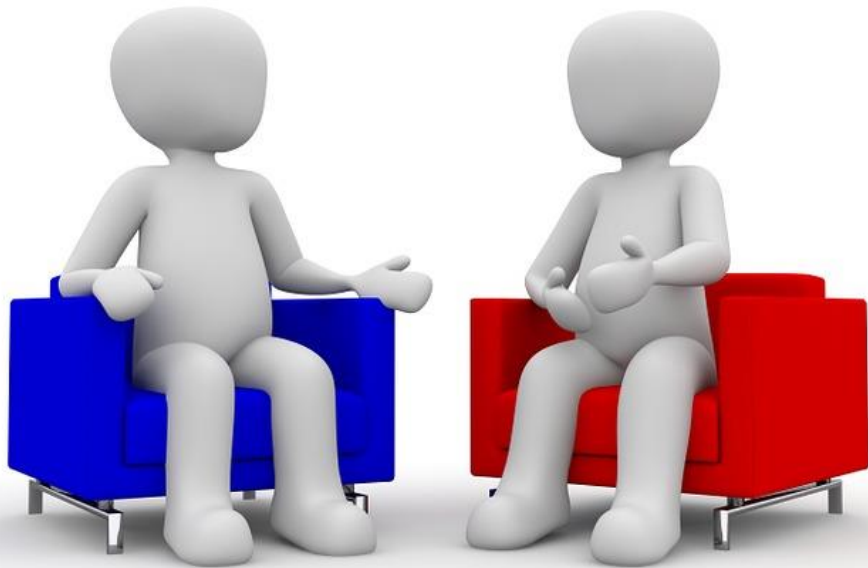
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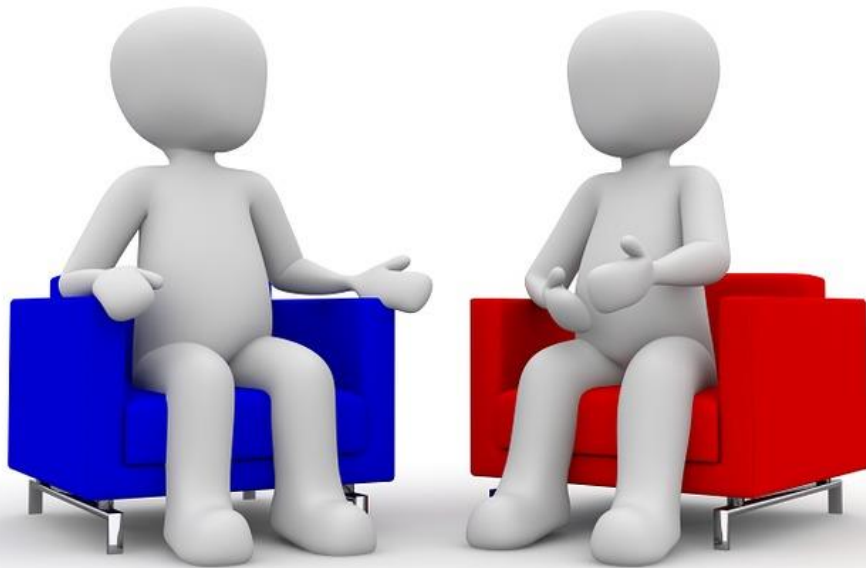
**SUCCESSFUL
MEETINGS**

Successful Meetings



- WELCOME the parent(s)!
- If you are anticipating conflict, set meeting norms.
 - Make sure you list, “Keep the child at the center.”
- Follow the norms and hold others accountable to follow them as well.
- Create a level playing field.
 - Seating
 - Information
- Listen (and take notes!)
- Thank them for coming and working together.
- Send summary notes and action items after the meeting.

Successful Meetings



Core Meetings - Highly Structured

- A core meeting is a regularly scheduled meeting of “core” team members. (Meeting templates available for download [.doc](#) | [.pdf](#))
 - Set meeting duration
 - More often in the beginning to (re)build trust and get team members on the same page
- The agenda is sent out prior to the meeting and agreed upon before the meeting.
- Only items on the agenda are discussed.
 - Other topics can be added to the next agenda.
- Notes are sent after the meeting with action items.
 - Action items are discussed as an agenda item at the next meeting to ensure progress.
- Helpful to start with positives or student accomplishments.
- Make the student and parent responsible for some action items.

References and Resources

- Whitaker, T., Fiore, D. J., & Whitaker, T. (2016). *Dealing with difficult parents*. New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- [Parent Partnerships 101](#)
- Blog Post: [Dealing with Difficult Parents](#)
- Blog Post: [10 Strategies for Dealing with Difficult Parents](#)
- Blog Post: [How to Make a Parent Phone Call](#)
- **Learners Edge Course 859: Parent Trap: Achieving Success with Difficult Parents & Difficult Situations**
This course will explore strategies to help you establish positive, constructive relationships with parents of your students. It will also help you work with the most challenging parents in the most challenging situations. Some of the many skills you will learn include: learning how to avoid the "trigger" words which serve only to make bad situations worse, learning how to use the "right" words to develop more positive relationships, and dealing with parents who accuse you of not being "fair." (3 GRADUATE CREDITS)
- **Edge Express 408: Parent Communication – 3 Steps Toward A Paradigm of Partnership**
Completion of this Edge Express will better prepare K-12 teachers to partner with parents. Strategies to communicate frequently, efficiently and often are presented along with tips to promote two-way communication with your biggest asset - parents. (FREE ONLINE WORKSHOP)



THANK YOU FOR JOINING US!
