

Building Powerful Relationships

Key Takeaways

Engagement

- ❖ ****There is no one way to engage with families, parents, caregivers or students.**
 - *Personalize engagement strategies for the individual to meet them where they're at*
- ❖ Positivity helps build a foundation for relationships; reach out positively, be supportive and build a relationship.
 - *Send a note home with something positive you noticed about the student that day.*
- ❖ Empathy and understanding are important in building trust
- ❖ Humility goes a long way!
- ❖ Using neutral language: Using language that does not confine responses and allows the person/family to share about themselves
 - *Instead of "Are you a dog or cat person?", try "What kind of pets do you have?"*
 - *Instead of "Are you a basketball player or baseball?", try "What kind of activities do you like?"*
- ❖ Open ended questions are helpful to gather more information and allows for natural elaboration in the conversation
 - *Instead of "Do you feel supported by the school?", try "In what ways can the school better support you and your family?"*
- ❖ It is not only **what** you say, but **when** you say it. Build the relationship by getting to know the student and family. Difficult conversations will be easier because you have built a connection.
- ❖ Utilize a wide range of engagement methods: email, text, sending a note home, phone calls etc.
- ❖ Get to know your family and their communication preferences. Would they prefer to communicate via text, a phone call, or instead of a home visit would they prefer to meet somewhere in the community?

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- ❖ Neutral spaces to engage with families may be helpful if the school does not feel like a comfortable space or are hesitant to allow home visits. Is there a neutral space such as Dunkin Donuts, or another community area, that may be more comfortable to meet?

Communication Considerations:

- ❖ Recognizing your own potential discomfort with engagement, what preconceived notions may you hold based on your own life experience?
- ❖ Avoid “Othering”: Keep in mind that the rate of depression, substance use, poverty, etc is high enough that we all know someone impacted. It’s not just for “others” to experience.
- ❖ Cultural humility: Getting to know your family and their values, beliefs, religion, cultural practices etc. Think about how to accommodate your students/families whose backgrounds, values, and beliefs differ from your own and how that may influence engagement. Be aware of the power imbalance between students/families and school staff. Students and families will feel supported if they feel included.
 - Use *“How would you like me to address you?”*, *“What is the best time of day to contact you?”*, *“What has worked for you in the past?”*, *“Tell me more about that”*

Resources

- ❖ What folks within your building can you utilize as a support in your role and engaging with families?
- ❖ <https://nafsce.org/>
- ❖ <https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/publications/pub5071.pdf>, Endicott Family Resource Center St. Paul’s Episcopal Church 200 Jefferson Avenue Endicott, NY 13760 607-785-4331
Deborah Zapotocky, Coordinator
- ❖ <https://broometiogaliteracy.org/>
- ❖ <https://www.uek12.org/o/tjw/page/tjw-library>
- ❖ <https://thestcc.org/programs/>



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Coins of Strength Exercise

Goal:

- To provide a quick experience that illustrates the strength-based approach to working with children and youth (as well as multi-generational groups and other diverse groups) versus a deficit based approach.
- To get people thinking about how our strengths are often our weaknesses as well—and getting rid of one will always impact the other.
- To use strengths based language rather than deficit based

1. Easily distracted	Perceptive
2. Poor Planner	Spontaneous
3. Unrealistic	Creative
4. Irritable	Sensitive
5. Nerd	Intelligent
6. Irrational	Caring
7. Stuck Up	Quiet
8. Impulsive	Carefree
9. Unpredictable	Flexible
10. Talks too much	Public Speaker
11. Gullible	Trusting
12. Anxious	Cautious
13. Boring	Sensible
14. Disorganized	Creative
15. Explosive	Dramatic
16. Stubborn	Committed
17. Controlling	Responsible
18. Uncaring	Rational
19. Opinionated	Independent
20. Rigid	Organized
21. Disobedient	Self-directed
22. Smart aleck	Clever
23. Rebellious	Individualist
24. Impatient	Eager
25. Loud	Enthusiastic





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- | | |
|------------------|--------------------------|
| 26. Bossy | Leader |
| 27. Defiant | Believes in equal rights |
| 28. Picky | Attention to detail |
| 29. Hyper | Energetic |
| 30. Arrogant | Confident |
| 31. Willful | Determined |
| 32. Manipulative | Negotiator |
| 33. Stubborn | Persistent |
| 34. Defensive | Protective |
| 35. Nosey | Informed |





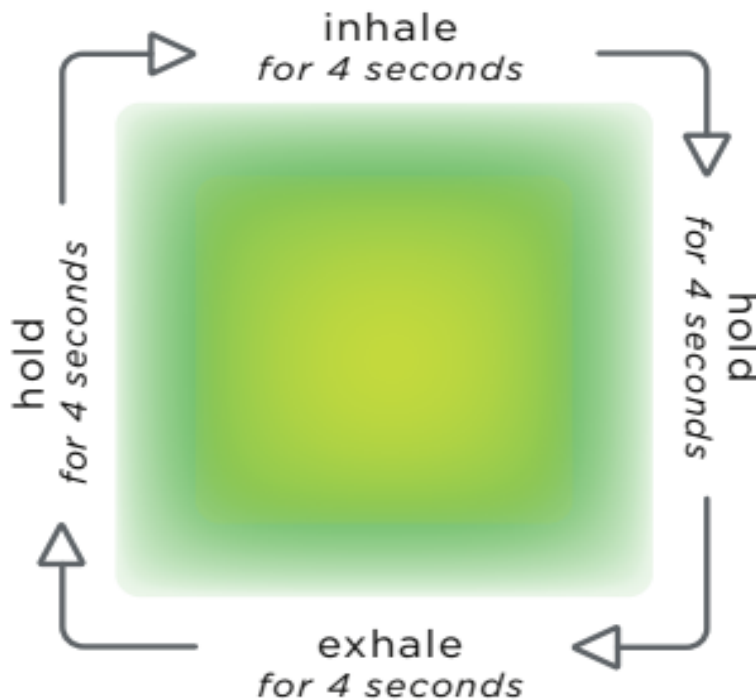
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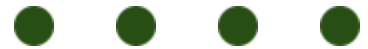
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Grounding & Breathing Exercises

Try these techniques to manage your discomfort when engaging in a difficult conversation. These are also great to use with a student feeling overwhelmed and needs help calming down.

SQUARE *Breathing*





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5 4 3 2 1 Grounding Exercise



5 things you can
see



4 things you can
feel



3 things you can
hear



2 things you can
smell



1 thing you can
taste

