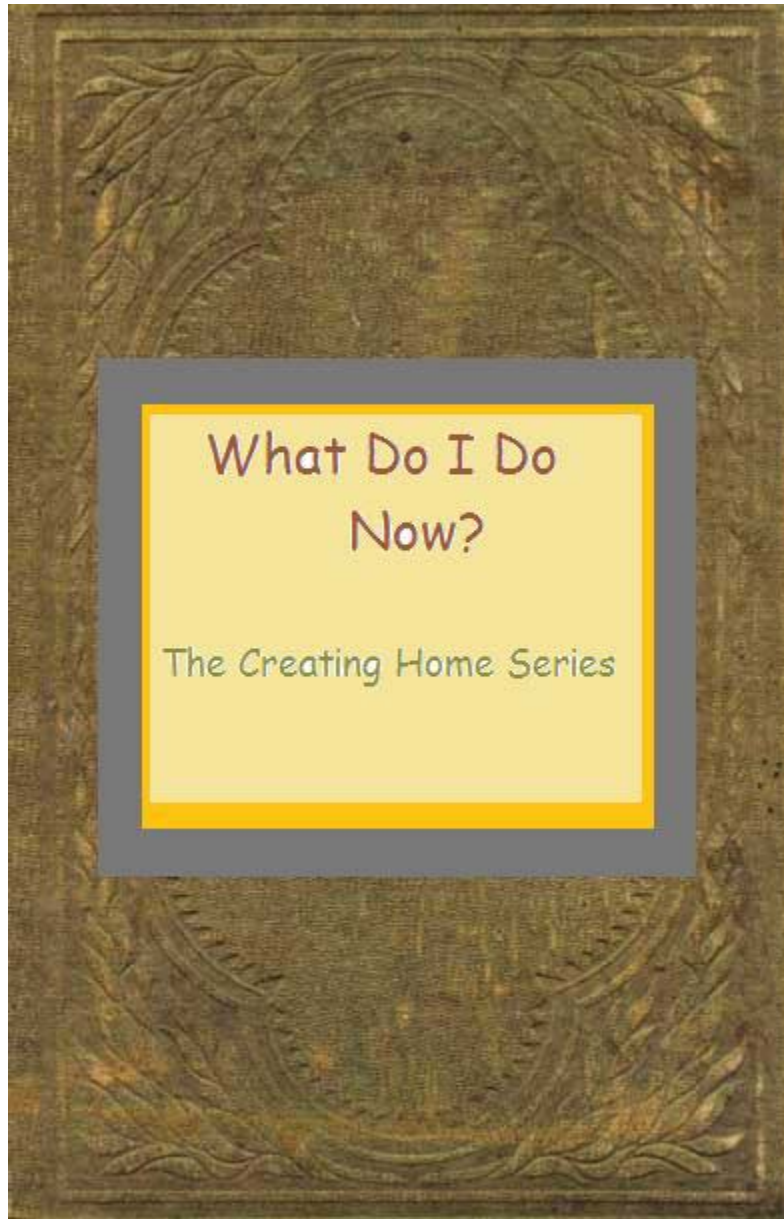


What Do I Do Now? The Second Step In "Creating Home"



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WHAT DO I DO NOW!

The Second Step in "Creating HOME"



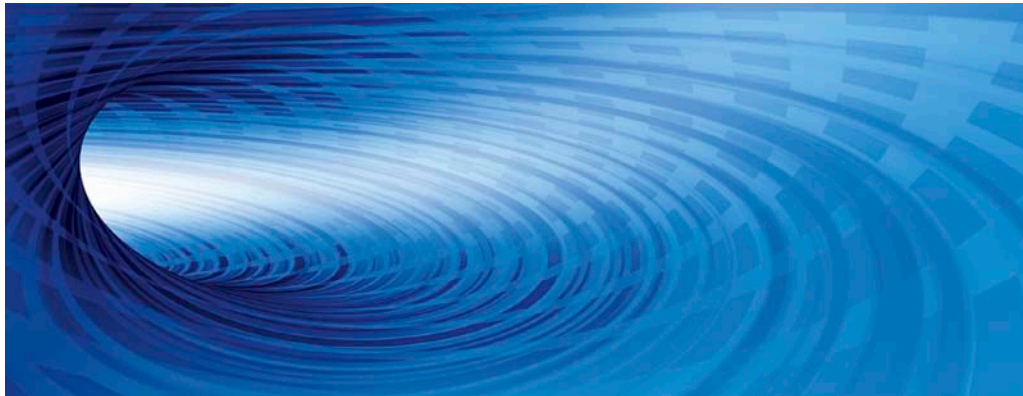
This Book offers an overview and summary of some of the crisis management techniques available. The terms and ideas which follow have been adapted from or directly cited in the text as identified from sources cited at the end of this Book.

It is Head In The Right Direction, Inc.'s hope that parents / caregivers will use this information as part of a larger family intervention aimed toward increasing awareness of their own roles in the family and what they can do to develop and foster healthy relationships with their children.

This program focuses on teaching caregivers to work through difficult times with children by helping them deal with frustration, failure, anger, rejection, hurt and depression. This program consists of:

- How did that just happen?
- Identifying what to do when...
- Different Approaches to use when...
- How to get your child to do what when...
- How to teach your child what to do next time when...

How did that just happen?



Most of us believe that things just happen. Your 5 yr. old just started hitting his sister. Your 12 yr. old just started answering you back. Your 17 yr. old just decided to stop listening to the rules of the house. Without sounding too existential, things don't "just happen". Everything that happens has its origins in what happened before it. For us to be successful in understanding what just happened, we have to learn to ask "What happened before this?".

If we think about any incident as not happening in the moment, but sometime before this, we can begin to have a discussion on how best to intervene. We start at and return to baseline. Let's use the timeline adapted from Therapeutic Crisis Intervention "The Phases of a Crisis" below to illustrate this.

Baseline	Trigger Phase	Escalation Phase	Outburst Phase	Recovery Phase	Return to Baseline
Norm	Stressor →	More Stressors →	Problematic Behavior →	Time → Opportunity →	Return to Norm

When we begin to accept that problematic behaviors do not happen in the moment, we can begin to address them more effectively. We as parents can intervene at anytime to avoid problematic behavior. Understanding where your child may be along this continuum is a key for developing successful interventions.

WHAT TO DO WHEN



Increasing our awareness

Our awareness as caregivers will greatly affect the outcome of our interventions. Before any successful intervention (except for that of safety), you must consider your own feelings, the feelings of your children, the environment, and what you can do. Only when you consider these questions will you have the information you need to develop an informed plan.



The first thing you will need to do is a self-inventory. How are you feeling right now (physically and emotionally)? We as caregivers need to know what we are feeling before we can intervene with any success. If we are anything but calm, our interventions will reflect this.



The next thing you need to do is your child inventory. Most problematic behavior is reflecting a need of your child. Needs can be tangible, like wanting a toy, hunger, or not liking a punishment. Sometimes a need can be emotional like safety, love, or feeling wanted. It is important not just to make an effort, but to truly identify what it is that your child wants. Your child may be able to tell you what they need, but sometimes it is up to you as a parent to identify what your child needs based on what you know of your child. You can't always assume your children will tell you what they need. You can't teach them healthier ways of getting their needs met if you don't know what their needs are.

Our surroundings play a major role in all of our interactions, especially at times when our coping has reached its max. Think about your ability to cope with difficult feelings when you're driving home from a hard day at work, it's 95 degrees out, your air conditioner is broken, traffic is at a standstill, and everyone on the road seems to be testing their horns to make sure they work at the same time. Sure it's a little extreme, but now think about this from a child's perspective. Your child just had a rough day at school, was teased on the bus which never has air conditioning and the windows only open about 4 inches if they are lucky enough to have a seat with a working window and a kid dexterous enough to coax it open. Considering these things will lead to more successful interventions. Sure you could try to talk to your child about "the incident at school" now, but think about how much more successful the discussion would go if the surroundings were comfortable?



Lastly, and what I consider to be most important is developing a plan before you act. I like this because inherent in developing a plan is the notion that you will not react. We all react at some time or another and this may work sometimes - pulling your hand back from the stove, catching the glass before it hits the ground. Reactions can save us from injury, and are not always problematic. Reactions require little or no thought and can be executed quickly. When we are intervening with our children however, reactions should only be used when safety is an issue. Our interventions should be thought out and discussed with co-caregivers to be consistent and directed toward your own family values.



What Approach to Use When...



The following approaches were adapted from Therapeutic Crisis Intervention "Intervention Approaches" and can be very successful when used in various settings. It is important to learn each of these approaches and to know when to use which one. Every setting and every child is different from the next. As you learn the benefits and shortfalls of each approach, begin to practice using them. Consider what your goals are when deciding which approach to use.

1. Create the Environment This strategy focuses on providing a safe, secure environment for the child and then using the environment as an intervention to prevent crisis.

- provide a safe and secure environment (quiet room, limit distractions, etc)
- be predictable and consistent (develop clear expectations and follow through)
- maintain routines based on the needs of the child (use a chart with times if needed)
- depend on the structure of the program (use your routine or you won't have one!)
- remind children of your expectations (they need to hear this often)





2. Listen: This strategy uses active listening techniques to open up and discuss internal conflicts before being overwhelmed by feelings, as well as avoid power struggles.

- identify feelings (your child's - you should have identified your own already - you can't help an angry / stressed child if you are angry stressed)
- focus on internal conflicts (What may be causing your child distress?)
- be nonjudgmental, accepting and supportive (actively listen = your child will share, judging = your child will fear sharing / judgment - model your values instead of preaching them.)
- use active listening techniques (summarize what your child has said for clarification; reframe into positives when possible, ask for more detail, what happened next?)

3. Compliance: This strategy is effective in redirecting a child's out of control behavior and directive statement helps to clarify what they are expected to do when situations present themselves as chaotic or unpredictable. You use this approach when your main goal is compliance or safety (getting a child out of the street, away from the campfire, etc.)

- make directive statements ("Get over here now!", "Move away from that fire!", etc- This is not the time to talk about feelings, this is the time to act - talk about it when all are safe)
- redirect behaviors ("Please go get showered now instead of ...", - change the behavior to something productive)
- establish control and order - be firm, but fair - while the goal is compliance, always remember these are your children - interventions should always be done with love and respect.



4 Relationship: This strategy focuses on building relationships with the child. Once a relationship has been built it enhances the effectiveness of other techniques used. This is a good strategy to use when trying to help your child consider other perspectives.



- role model effective behaviors (your children learn most from what they see you do, not from what you tell them to do!)
- use personal influence (consider the value of your relationship)
- engage withdrawn, isolated children (show your child love so they are not alone)
- give personal attention and encouragement (this builds on your connection with your child and is also a great reinforcer for positive behaviors)

5. Learning: This strategy allows the child to be given opportunity to explore new behaviors, try out things on their own, and then come back and talk about them.

- *process events throughout the day
- *make decisions together
- *hold young people responsible for actions and choices
- *create opportunities for learning



How to Get Your Child to Do What When...

"I ASSIST" was developed by Howard Bath in 1999 at the Thomas Wright Institute. This is a group of intervention strategies that when used together model effective leadership, increase compliance and ultimately reduce the level of arousal (remember timeline) of the child.

I ASSIST

I Isolate the child - Remove the child from the audience (or remove the audience from the child). By removing the audience, you are allowing your child to focus on what you are saying without having to consider their peers.



A Actively listen - Remember the "Four Questions"? Here is your chance to really learn what your child feels, needs or wants. This is important - once you know what your child wants, you have something they want to talk about.



S Speak calmly, assertively, respectfully - Although you might not agree with what your child is doing or saying, it is important that you model the desired behavior. Your child will be more likely to remain calm and respectful if you are. You are the adult and it is your responsibility to maintain this. Remember the First Question "What am I Feeling?"



S Statements of understanding preceding requests - Now that you understand what your child is feeling or wants, you can talk. "I understand you are angry that Tom took your ball...Please stop throwing sand on the lawn so we can talk about how to get it back"..."I understand that you are angry that your teacher yelled at you...Please you stop punching the floor and maybe we can talk about it...". It is key to convey validation of your child's feelings when requesting your child to cease from the problematic behavior. When your child feels understood and see you as help, they are more likely to comply.

Please

I Invite the child to consider positive outcomes of desired behavior - If the statements of understanding preceding requests do not work, consider inviting the child to think about what's in it for them. You're not bribing the child, but you are trying to get them to think about their own interests - "maybe we can talk about you going to the mall, if you stop yelling and sit down to talk"... "we can talk about extending your curfew, if you're able to stay home and talk about it." Be clear in your expectations, but you don't have to discuss anything in that moment - the key here is that you are showing your children that you are willing to discuss these things, but first they need to comply with your requests. Don't make promises here that you cannot keep - you can always talk about something, that is true, but you don't have to change the rules in that moment. As your children get older, it may be good to consider what privilege they are asking for and allowing them to demonstrate they are ready for it.



S T Space & Time reduces pressure and allows children to respond - If your child has not responded to any of the other strategies, perhaps what will work is to give some space and time. This does not mean you just leave. State the purpose of why you're leaving. You are giving your child some time (be specific, 5 minutes, next commercial, etc) to think about what they want to do. You have already explained your expectations; perhaps they just need the time to process this. When you return it is important to consider safety first, then act accordingly. Allow your rules and consequences to stand.



How to teach your child what to do next time when...

THE LIFE SPACE INTERVIEW

The life space interview or LSI was introduced in the early 1950's by Fritz Redl & David Wineman as part of their work with children and youth. In 1979 Cornell University was studying child abuse and neglect in New York State group care institutions and developed a curriculum which included the Life Space Interview based on Redl's work. This may be the single most important strategy you will learn in this program, as it calls upon all the other skills discussed here to be done effectively. The LSI is used after a behavior occurs. Although it has not been found in literature proposing a specific use to identify positive behaviors and their reinforcers, it is my belief that this same interview strategy can be used to do just that.

The LSI is used after an event has occurred. Just after "It Happened" (remember the timeline). This is the time when your child is most susceptible to learning and where your efforts will count the most. Not to put undue pressure on you caregivers, but here it is - your chance to make it or break it. After "it happens", your response is crucial. Redl did not propose a sequence of events for its use to allow flexibility of the caregiver to implement. However Family Life Development Center (FLDC) at Cornell University's model emphasizes sequence. The Cornell University model is more readily available and is explained here.

A life space interview happens after an incident, and when the child is calm and ready to talk. Sometimes this is later in the same day, sometimes the next day. It is important that the staff and child discuss what happened, and develop a plan to prevent another incident from happening. It gives validation to the child's feelings, and helps to reestablish trust and faith with the staff.



This model has been adapted from Therapeutic Crisis Intervention "Life Space Interview".

The steps to a Life Space Interview are:

I Isolate the conversation - remove the audience - This discussion is between you and your child

E Explore child's point of view - get details of what happened - do not react or judge - allow your child to tell their story- use active listening techniques

S Summarize the feeling and content - try to tell the story of what happened as your child understands it - correct any discrepancies from what you saw through discussion and mutual understanding

C Connect behavior to feelings - try to connect what the child was feeling to what they did - "so when you felt angry you threw the chessboard..." or "so when you felt sad you broke your toy..."

A Alternative behaviors discussed - this is key - get your child to offer you alternatives - try not to fall into the trap of giving them all the options - get them to work here - silence is ok when it helps them to think about what else they could have done - "what else could you have done?"

P Plan developed/practice new - after discussing options, have your child commit to one - "which option do you think you can do next time?"....then practice this with them - use role plays

E Enter child back into the routine - bring your child back into the family - address any hurt feelings and find out what actions may be needed to get your child back into the swing of things.

Formal instruction in Therapeutic Crisis Intervention through Cornell includes practical skill development, a key component of this program, implemented through in person role play scenarios and personal self exploration exercises to assist individuals in developing these skills as they would any other skill - through vigorous practice. This Book does not propose to make any reader proficient in these skills, but serves as an introduction to the ideas and values presented within and to promote further education and participation in these types of training.

Reading this Book does not replace any training you may be required to take, nor does it serve to fulfill any certification requirements you may have. This resource is being offered as a tool for parents and caregivers to learn to teach their children new ways of coping with difficult emotions. It is widely used around the world with great success in residential and foster care settings and has been modified to be more available to families for in-home use here.

It is our hope that this information is helpful to increasing your awareness of your role and what you can do to improve your parenting / care giving in the home. This section is part of a larger series designed to help parents and caregivers create a therapeutic milieu in the home. The earlier you start using these strategies, the better. Consistency is key. As a parent and caregiver, I can attest to the soundness of the strategies included in this section and the series. I have seen these strategies used in institutions, foster care families, and in the homes of individual families. Maybe you won't use all of the principles outlined here. That's ok. Get from this what you can use and use it well. Please consider other sections in this series "Creating Home" at Headintherightdirection.com.

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About the Author

Adam Barta is a licensed *Clinical Social Worker* in New York State and has been working with children and families for over 13 years in various settings. Adam's work has included:

- Various residential foster care settings working with various populations of children and adults including:
 - Community Living Corporation -Westchester County, NY
 - Putnam ARC -Putnam County, NY
 - Green Chimneys Residential Facility - Brewster, NY
 - Saint Basil Academy - Garrison, NY
- Stony Lodge Psychiatric Hospital - Ossining, NY
- The Mental Health Association of Westchester - Westchester, NY

Adam incorporated Head In The Right Direction, a provider of community based treatment services in 2007. HITRD, Inc. utilizes only the most qualified local licensed therapists to see clients in their homes, offices, or other convenient locations. Head InThe Right Direction's mission is to promote wellness by making mental health services more accessible for all individuals and families. We seek to assist individuals and families in reaching their full potential for living enriching and satisfying lives and gaining better understanding of their world through the interventions of qualified, competent therapists.

From Adam

In my work with individuals and families I have found a shortage of "how to" resources out there that utilize what professional caregivers use to address problematic behaviors. I found myself adapting what I have seen work in my years of experience consistently. This was done on a piecemeal basis, taking what I believed the family needed at the time and leaving the rest. Talking with the families I work with I found that they were looking for a "how to" guide that was not out there. They wanted something simple that could be read in a day and easily understood. "What Do I Do Now!" is the second in a series designed to bring effective parenting / caregiver strategies to its readers simply and effectively.

Please visit our website Headintherightdirection.com where you can sign up for our informative newsletter, find national and local free resources, and ask for more information.