





Empathy Well

Play Well. Talk Well. Be Well.

2280 Highland Village Rd,
#150

Highland Village, TX 75077

www.empathywell.com

info@empathywell.com

(972) 498-1307

Who We Are...

EmpathyWell PLLC works in partnership with school districts to provide training and services in the areas of socioemotional development and mental health for students at all levels, parents, teachers, and administrators. The owners at EmpathyWell PLLC are credentialed as both Licensed Professional Counselors and Registered Play Therapists and have extensive experience partnering with schools. Using a relational approach based in the principles of the developmentally-appropriate method of play, EmpathyWell provides trainings and programs that lead to healthy learning environments for students. At EmpathyWell, we are committed to culturally-inclusive practices and educational opportunities that seek to involve and give voice to diverse perspectives and values. We are specifically focused on improving child mental health through increasing empathy, social skills, and emotional regulation through direct counseling services and through training parents and teachers to respond to children in ways that promote their abilities and self-concept. Healthy school environments inspire a sense of both physical and emotional safety, especially among peer relationships.

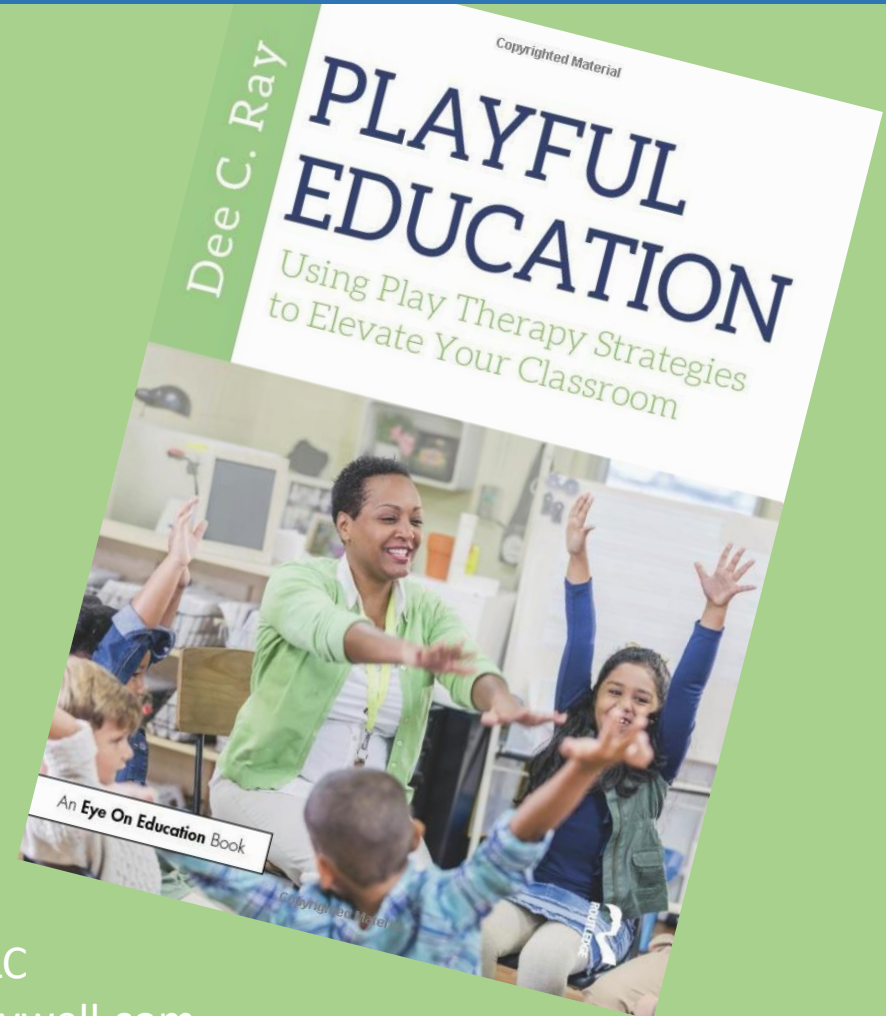


The word "PLAY" is rendered in large, 3D block letters. The 'P' is yellow, the 'L' is blue, the 'A' is red, and the 'Y' is green. The letters are set against a plain white background within a rectangular frame.

► Play is the precursor to, instigator for, and indicator of growth and development in childhood. In other words, play correlates with children getting ready to learn, the process of learning, and demonstrating what they have learned (Ray, 2023)

Playful Education

Using Play Strategies to Elevate Your School



EmpathyWell, PLLC
Dee.ray@empathywell.com



Our Programs and Services

Supportive Discipline



Supporting Challenging Behavior and
Connecting with Hard-To-Reach Students:
The Playful Education Way

Note: This section also applies to School Climate and Mental and Behavioral Health and Well-Being

The Teacher-Child Relationship

The most important relationship in a child's life, second to a parent, is with a ***teacher...***

180 days in a school year
7 hours of contact per day
1,260 hours a year with a teacher



a teacher's higher sense of
self-efficacy has been
shown to contribute to
closer student-teacher
relationships

(O'Connor, 2010).

Child-Teacher Relationship Training 10-Week Program

- Initial Educational Component (3-6 hours) – virtual or in-person
 - Increasing Empathy
 - Encouragement Strategies
 - Building Decision-Making
 - Limit-Setting
 - Choice-Giving
- Implementation of the PlayBreak (6 sessions)
- One-to-One Coaching on PlayBreaks
- Transitioning Skills into the Classroom (3 sessions)





The PlayBreak



Goals of the PlayBreak

Offer	Offer extra relational support to students in need
Improve	Improve relationships with most difficult students
Practice	Practice verbal and non-verbal skills for teachers to use in the classroom
Reduce	Reduce instructional time lost to disciplinary problems
Enhance	Enhance the joy of teaching

The Five PlayBreak Attitudes

Operating

- operating from a place of **genuineness and authenticity**

Seeking

- seeking to have **full acceptance and prizing** of a child

Striving

- striving for **empathic understanding** of a child

Holding

- holding a **multicultural orientation** toward each child

Valuing and respecting

- **valuing and respecting play** as the natural language of communication and expression for children

Evidence-Based Practices

Child-Teacher Relationship Training has been demonstrated to be effective in

- Reducing children's disruptive behaviors at school
- Reducing children's internalizing problems (anxiety and depression) in school
- Reducing disciplinary problems at school
- Improving student's on-task classroom behavior
- Increase academic effort and performance
- Increasing student empathy
- Increasing the teacher's sense of self-efficacy and competency
- Increasing the teacher's satisfaction with teaching
- Improve positive teacher responding in the classroom
- Improving the child-teacher relationship



Webinar or In-Person Instructional Modules (3-6 hours)

Limit-Setting in the Classroom

Choice-Giving as a Discipline Method

Effectively Dealing with Meltdowns in the Classroom

Preventative Practices to Avoid Disciplinary Problems

How Anxiety Shows Up in the Classroom

What's Happening in the Brain When Students Have Problem Behaviors

How to Respond to Trauma Symptoms in the Classroom

What to Expect in the Classroom Based on Child Development (3-18 years)





A Peek at our
Curriculum...



Limit Setting: A-C-T Method

3 Step A-C-T Limit Setting Method

Acknowledge the Feeling
Communicate the Limit
Target Alternatives

Scenario: Jaden is having a lot of fun drawing big swirls on the paper and accidentally draws on the table. He then moves the paper and, with a huge smile on his face, begins to draw all over the table

1. Acknowledge the child's feeling or desire (your voice must convey empathy & understanding).
"Jaden, I can see that you like drawing on the table..."
 - *Child learns that his feelings, desires, wishes are valid and accepted by parent (but not all behavior); just empathically reflecting your child's feeling often defuses the intensity of the feeling or need.*
2. Communicate the limit (be specific, clear, and brief).
"But the table is not for drawing on."
3. Target acceptable alternatives: provide one or more choices (depending on age of child).
"You can choose to draw on the paper or on the easel."
 - *The goal is to provide your child with an acceptable outlet for expressing the feeling or the original action, while giving them an opportunity to exercise self-control.*

Note: pointing helps redirect child's attention.

When to Set Limits

Rule of Thumb: "Limits are not needed until they are needed."

Limits are set only when the need arises, and for these basic reasons:

1. To protect child from hurting himself or parent
2. To protect valuable property
3. To maintain parent's acceptance of child

Before setting a limit, ask yourself:

- "Is this limit necessary?"



Choice Giving 101: Teaching Responsibility & Decision Making

Giving Choices

Providing children with age-appropriate choices empowers children by allowing them a measure of control over their circumstances.

- Children who feel more empowered and "in control" are more capable of regulating their own behavior, a prerequisite for self-control.
- Choices require that children tap into their inner resources, rather than relying on parents (external resources) to stop their behavior or solve the problem for them.
- If parents always intervene, the child learns that "Mom or Dad will stop me if I get out of hand" or "Mom or Dad will figure out a solution if I get in a jam."

Presenting children with choices provides opportunities for decision making and problem solving.

- Through practice with choice making, children learn to accept responsibility for their choices and actions and learn they are competent and capable.
- Choice giving facilitates the development of the child's conscience; as children are allowed to learn from their mistakes, they learn to weigh decisions based on possible consequences.

Providing children with choices reduces power struggles between parent and child and, importantly, preserves the child-parent relationship.

- Both parent and child are empowered.
- Parent is responsible for, or in control of, providing parameters for choices.
- Children are responsible for, or in control of, their decision (within parent-determined parameters).

Choice-Giving Strategies

- Provide age-appropriate choices that are equally acceptable to the child and to you (parent). Remember that you must be willing to live with the choice the child makes.
- Don't use choices to try and manipulate the child to do what you want by presenting one choice that you want the child to choose and a second choice that you know the child won't like.
- Provide little choices to little kids; big choices to big kids.
 - Example: A 3-year-old can only handle choosing between two shirts or two food items.
"Sasha, do you want to wear your red dress or your pink dress to school?" "Sasha, do you want an apple or orange with your lunch?"



Advanced Choice Giving: Providing Choices as Consequences

Choices as Consequences

Children need parental guidance and discipline. In many instances, parents must make decisions for children—decisions that children are not mature enough to take responsibility for—such as bedtime, other matters of health and safety, and compliance with household policies and rules.

However, parents can provide their children with some measure of control in the situation by providing choices. Parents are reminded of the importance of connecting with their child and being sensitive to their emotional state when giving choices or limiting behavior.

Remember the Rule of Thumb: **"When a child is drowning, don't try to teach her to swim."**

When children are feeling upset or out of control, they have difficulty hearing choices and consequences. First connect and help calm your child (co-regulate through reflecting child's feelings in soothing voice), then provide choice or wait until a later time.

Oreo® Cookie Method of Choice Giving (from *Choices, Cookies, & Kids* video by Dr. Garry Landreth)

Example 1: Three-year-old Isabella is clutching a handful of Oreo® cookies, ready to eat them all (it is night before bedtime, and the parent knows it would not be healthy for Isabella to have all the cookies. But Isabella does not know that—she just knows that she wants cookies!)

- **"Isabella, you can choose to keep one of the cookies to eat and put the rest back, or you can put all of the cookies back—which do you choose?"**
- Or, if it is permissible to the parent for Isabella to have two cookies:
"Isabella, you can have one cookie or two—which do you choose?"

Example 2: Six-year-old Oliver does not want to take his medicine and adamantly tells you so! Taking the medicine is not a choice—that is a given. But the parent can provide the child with some choice in the situation:

- **"Oliver, you can choose to have apple juice or orange juice with your medicine—which do you choose?"**

Example 3: Eight-year-old Omar is tired and cranky and refuses to get in the car to go home from Grandma and Grandpa's house.

- **"Omar, you can choose to sit in the middle row by Daddy, or you can choose to sit in the back seat with Selin—which do you choose?"**

REDIRECTING CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR IN THE CLASSROOM

A-C-T LIMIT SETTING & PROBLEM-SOLVING



(Landreth, 2012)



Acknowledge the Feeling

"You're really interested in that game..."

"You're mad at him for what he said to you..."

"You're having a hard time focusing..."



Communicate the Limit

"...but it's time for the assignment."

"...but there's no cursing in here."

"...but it's time to work-- not talk with friends."



Target & Explore Choices

"You can use your phone after you finish."

"I wonder what else you can do to express your anger."

"Is there something you need that would help you focus?"

3-PART LIMIT SETTING

- Helps set clear boundaries in a way that empowers students to limit their own behavior

- Builds problem-solving abilities

- Maintains teacher-student relationship

REMEMBER:

- Collaborate with the student to find solutions or alternatives if possible

- Be curious about the student's needs

- Use encouragement rather than humiliation or criticism

WHEN LIMITS ARE BROKEN:

- Be patient! Set limit 2-3 times.

- Then, state final choices and consequences:

"If you choose to go off-task again, then you choose to finish the project on your own."

- Remember it's the student's choice, not a



1 / 1



Page Rd, #150

Empathy Well 75077

(972) 498-1307



REDIRECTING CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR IN THE CLASSROOM

A-C-T LIMIT SETTING



(Landreth, 2012)



Acknowledge the Feeling

"You're excited to go to recess..."

"I know you're mad at Grayson for taking your markers..."

"You're wanting a break right now..."

3-PART LIMIT SETTING

- Helps set clear boundaries in a way that empowers students to limit their own behavior

- Builds problem-solving abilities

- Maintains teacher-student relationship



Best Practices for Preventing and Intervening with Problem Behaviors in Preschool Classrooms

Dee C. Ray, PhD, LPC-S, NCC, RPT-S
EmpathyWell, PLLC empathywell.com

Preventative Practices to Keep Problem Behaviors from Escalating

1. Keep development in mind - Check out the development handouts
2. Identify possible triggers – sensory, times of day, activities, feelings of incompetence
3. Provide empathy through reflecting feeling - Check out reflecting handout
4. Give opportunity to make choices
5. Have a predictable environment with clear expectations
6. Try not to deviate from normal structure of day (If schedule changes, provide as much as notice as possible to student)
7. Teach positive breathing techniques to classroom (e.g., shark fin, balloon, walking, rainbow)
8. Use encouraging phrases often “You worked hard on that”, “You’re really proud of what you did”, “You’re trying hard”, “You did it”, “You figured it out”
9. Create an environment of mutual respect
10. Teach how to ask for help
11. Provide tactile coping items (e.g., squeeze ball, clay, drawing materials, etc)
12. Create a safe play place – soothing colors, music, pictures, toys
13. Integrate physical movement throughout day every day – stretching, recess, exercise

Intervention Practices When Problem Behaviors Occur

NOTE: When children are dysregulated, soothing techniques are more effective than teaching practices.

1. Breathe – take a second to breathe before engaging with child



Why Play in School?

When children play, they learn. When children learn, they grow.
When children grow, they thrive.

CHILDREN PRACTICE MATH IN PLAY

- How many blocks do I line up on each row and column to build this house?
- Will a circle or square work best to hold this structure up?
- How many seconds faster do I run to win this

CHILDREN PRACTICE LANGUAGE IN PLAY

- My puppet show needs a beginning, a middle, and an end.
- What words are the best ones to describe my play scene?
- I have a new joke or riddle to tell you.

CHILDREN PRACTICE BRAIN DEVELOPMENT IN PLAY

- I'm pretending to be an astronaut just like Neil Armstrong on the moon.
- I'm going to practice this ball trick until I can do it really well.
- Having fun helps me think better.

CHILDREN PRACTICE BUILDING THEIR SOCIAL SKILLS IN PLAY

- The baby elephant is sad that the baby turtle got hurt.
- There's only 1 magic wand so we have to share.
- My friend made up this rule for the game but I want a different rule.

CHILDREN PRACTICE CREATIVE THINKING FOR FUTURE PROBLEM-SOLVING

- I can make the sand stick together if I use 2 cups of water.
- I found 5 different ways to save the dolphin from drowning.
- I used pipe cleaners and tape to build a zoo.

CHILDREN PRACTICE CREATIVE THINKING FOR FUTURE PROBLEM-SOLVING

- I can make the sand stick together if I use 2 cups of water.
- I found 5 different ways to save the dolphin from drowning.
- I used pipe cleaners and tape to build a zoo.

CHILDREN PRACTICE BUILDING THEIR SOCIAL SKILLS IN PLAY

- The baby elephant is sad that the baby turtle got hurt.
- There's only 1 magic wand so we have to share.
- My friend made up this rule for the game but I want a different rule.

CHILDREN PRACTICE REGULATING THEMSELVES IN PLAY

- I wanted to cry when the cash register wouldn't open but I found a spoon to open it.
- I'm so mad I want to hit someone, but I can paint instead.
- Pouring the sand through my fingers feels good on my hands.

CHILDREN PRACTICE BUILDING SELF-ESTEEM IN PLAY

- I kept working on the wall until I figured out how to make it stand.
- I'm proud that I kept playing the drum until it sounded just like I wanted.
- I made up a whole new game that was fun.

CHILDREN PRACTICE REGULATING THEMSELVES IN PLAY

- I wanted to cry when the cash register wouldn't open but I found a spoon to open it.
- I'm so mad I want to hit someone, but I can paint instead.
- Pouring the sand through my fingers feels good on my hands.

Why Play in School?

When children play, they learn. When children learn, they grow.
When children grow, they thrive.

CHILDREN PRACTICE MATH IN PLAY

- How many blocks do I line up on each row and column to build this house?
- Will a circle or square work best to hold this structure up?
- How many seconds faster do I have to run to win this game?

CHILDREN PRACTICE LANGUAGE IN PLAY

- My puppet show needs a beginning, a middle, and an end.
- What words are the best ones to describe my play scene?
- I have a new joke or riddle to tell you.

CHILDREN PRACTICE BRAIN DEVELOPMENT IN PLAY

- I'm pretending to be an astronaut just like Neil Armstrong on the moon.
- I'm going to practice this ball trick until I can do it really well.
- Having fun helps me think better.

CHILDREN PRACTICE BUILDING THEIR SOCIAL SKILLS IN PLAY

- The baby elephant is sad that the baby turtle got hurt.
- There's only 1 magic wand so we have to share.
- My friend made up this rule for the game but I want a different rule.

CHILDREN PRACTICE CREATIVE THINKING FOR FUTURE PROBLEM-SOLVING

- I can make the sand stick together if I use 2 cups of water.
- I found 5 different ways to save the dolphin from drowning.
- I used pipe cleaners and tape to build a zoo.

CHILDREN PRACTICE BUILDING SELF-ESTEEM IN PLAY

- I kept working on the wall until I figured out how to make it stand.
- I'm proud that I kept playing the drum until it sounded just like I wanted.
- I made up a whole new game that was fun.

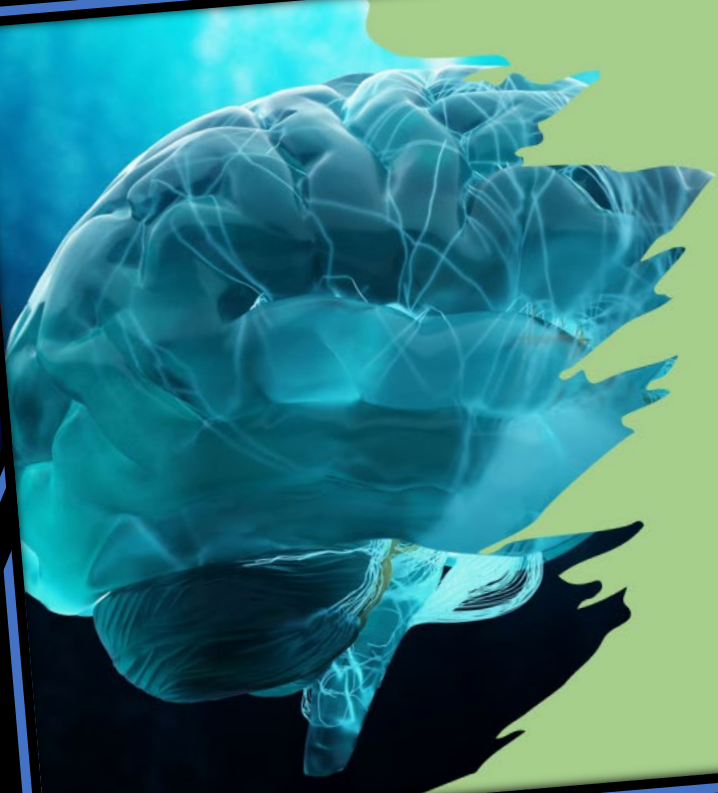
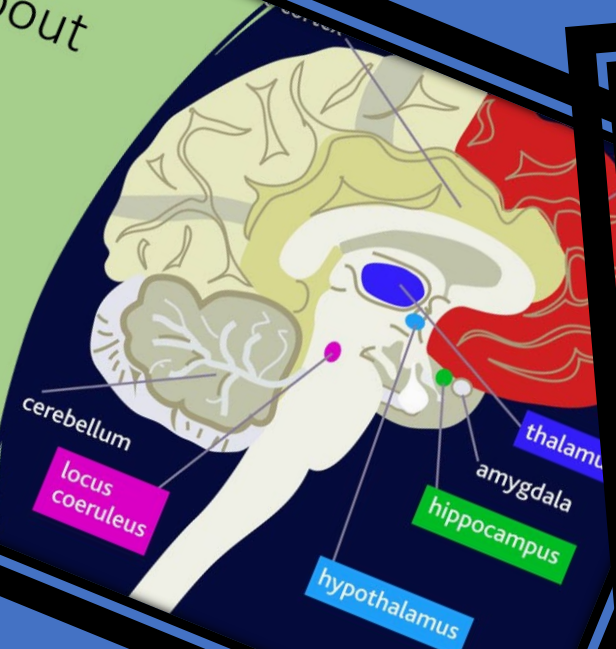
CHILDREN PRACTICE REGULATING THEMSELVES IN PLAY

- I wanted to cry when the cash register wouldn't open but I found a spoon to open it.
- I'm so mad I want to hit someone, but I can paint instead.
- Pouring the sand through my fingers feels good on my hands.



Let's Talk About the Brain

- Brain Structure
 - Stem
 - Limbic
 - Cortex
- Neural Network
- Cortisol
- Oxytocin and Dopamine in Play
- Neuroception



Repeated and consistent experiences of play and positive relationship restructure the brain for optimal development

CONNECTING WITH STUDENTS: Reflective Listening

What is reflective listening?

- Ways of interacting with others that help them to feel heard and understood
- Fully attending to others and what they're expressing with their words or body language
- Can be used during 2x10 intervention strategy

Why reflective listening?

- Strengthens teacher-student relationship, especially with more difficult students
- Fosters students' awareness of own feelings and behaviors
- Builds students' coping skills
- Helps redirect challenging behavior

Characteristics of Reflective Listening

- Brief & interactive
- Non-evaluative
- Statements, not questions
- Personalized



Examples:



Brief and interactive

"You're so excited to get to recess today."



Non-evaluative statements

"You're frustrated there's a quiz today."



Personalized and caring



Families and Communities



Child-Parent Relationship Training

10 week virtual or in-person curriculum

Child-Parent Relationship Training 10-Week Program*

- Initial Educational Component (Four 2-hour sessions) – virtual or in-person
 - Increasing Empathy
 - Encouragement Strategies
 - Building Decision-Making
 - Limit-Setting
 - Choice-Giving
- Implementation of Playtimes (Six 2-hour sessions)
- One-to-One and Group Coaching on Playtimes

* Number of sessions can be modified



Child-Parent Relationship Therapy is beneficial for all parents and is particularly effective for parents who:



- Experience a disconnect within the parent-child relationship
- Feel frustrated with their child's behaviors
- Struggle to understand their child's emotions and behaviors
- Are searching for ways to support their child's socioemotional development
- Want to provide more opportunities for their children to thrive both socially and emotionally
- Struggle with responding to their child's difficult behaviors
- Feel out of control in interactions with their child
- Want to gain support from other parents in the community
- Want to feel closer to their child

Evidence-Based Practices

Child Parent Relationship Training has been demonstrated to be effective in

- Reducing children's disruptive behaviors at home
- Reducing children's internalizing problems (anxiety and depression) at home
- Increasing parent empathy
- Improving the parent-child relationship
- Increasing positive parenting responses
- Increasing parent satisfaction with parenting



Webinar or In-Person Instructional Modules

(3 hours)

Healthy Relationship Boundaries: How to Engage in Effective Limit-Setting with your Child

How to Help Your Child Make Good Decisions and Take Responsibility

Responding to your Teen's Anxiety

How to Bring the Joy Back to Parenting

Addiction and the Effects on the Family Unit

Improving the Lines of Communication with Your Adolescent/Teen

Preventative Practices to Avoid Disciplinary Problems

Parenting Tools for a Stronger Relationship with Your Child

Is This Normal? — Development of Children Ages 3-10

What's Happening in the Brain When Your Child is Challenging and How to Respond



A Peek at our Curriculum...





The Most Powerful Tool in the Parenting Toolbox

by Dee C. Ray, PhD, LPC-S, RPT-S, CCPT-S, CPRT-S, NCC

Parents are given a lot of advice. Like a lot of advice. You can check any social media site and you're going to get guidance on what foods to help your child be healthier, smarter, happier. You're going to read what toys are best for your child's learning. You're going to read endless number of ways to help your child calm down when they are upset or disciplined when they behave badly. The sea of information on parenting can be overwhelming. And this advice leads to parents feeling insecure about their parenting because they realize there is no way to be the perfect parent. And this realization is the truth: There is No Way to be a Perfect Parent! The good news is that your child doesn't need a perfect parent. Your child needs you.

I started working as a counselor with parents when I was 22 years old (Crazy, right?), way before I was a parent and way before I had enough life experience to know what parenting is actually like. I remember thinking, "Why can't these parents just do what I tell them to do? If they would just follow these tips that I give them from the books I've read, then they and their children would be so much happier." Life had many lessons to teach me. My own children and so many lessons to teach me because I seemed to rarely be able to access all my book knowledge when it came to my own parenting struggles. In addition to my own children, the parents and children that I have worked with over the last 32 years have been the greatest influential teachers in instructing me on what works in parenting.

And this is what I have learned...

There is one tool that is the most powerful in parenting and works in every situation, no matter what. It is a simple tool, one that every parent can use, takes little time, and costs no money. The tool is called "reflective listening."

Reflective listening is a simple concept. I listen to what my child is saying, observe how my child is behaving, or notice how my child is feeling then I reflect back what I see or hear to my child.



Esteem-Building Responses:

Developing Your Child's Sense of Competence

Building Self-Esteem

Rule of Thumb: "Never do for a child that which he can do for himself."

When you do, you rob your child of the joy of discovery and the opportunity to feel competent. You will never know what your child is capable of unless you allow him to try!

Parents help their child develop a positive view of "self," not only by providing their child with love and unconditional acceptance, but also by helping their child feel competent and capable. Parents help their child feel competent and capable by first allowing the child to experience what it is like to **discover**, figure out, and problem-solve. Parents show faith in their child and their child's capabilities by allowing him to struggle with a problem, all the while providing encouragement.

For most parents, allowing children to struggle is hard—but it is a necessary process for children to truly feel capable. The next step in helping children develop a positive view of self as competent and capable is learning to respond in ways that give children credit for ideas, effort, and accomplishments, without praising.

Esteem-Building Responses to Use

"You did it!"

"You decided that was the way that was supposed to fit together."

Preventative Practices to Manage Anxiety Day-to-Day

Dee C. Ray, PhD, LPC-S, NCC, RPT-S
EmpathyWell.com

What Your Teen Can Do...

1. **Movement Every Day** – Make a point to move your body every day for at least 10-20 minutes. Make it enjoyable (e.g., walking, running, exercising, stretching, dancing, jumping, etc).
2. **Be Outdoors Every Day** – Spend time outdoors every day even on the hot, cold, and rainy days. Notice the sky, the roads, the grass, the sounds, and whatever is around you.
3. **Practice Breathing** – Take deep breaths in through the nose and out through the mouth. Practice breathing every day for just 1-2 minutes at least. Try to take a breathing break every hour.
4. **Sleep** – Try your best to sleep at least 8 hours each night and no electronics are visible.
5. **Social Media Breaks** – Take a break from social media on Tuesdays & Thursdays, or Evening Breaks.
6. **Relate** – Spend at least 5 minutes a day talking to someone you trust (parent, friend, or relative/friend). If you don't have someone like this, start by talking to yourself and building a closer relationship.
7. **Fun/Play** – Engage in something you truly enjoy at least once a week. It should be something that makes you happy.

What You Can Do As A Parent...

1. Make yourself available every day for a few minutes in a way that encourages your teen to come to you when they need you.
2. Check in with your teen but do not push interaction. “I wonder how you’re doing” is simple and effective. And sometimes even works better than trying to interact with you.
3. Do not overly question your teen when they are not forthcoming with an answer like, “fine,” you can respond with “Sounds like everything is okay now. I’m here if you need me.”
4. When your teen reaches out to talk, respond by reflecting back to them that they are okay. Instead of “you’ll do fine on that test” try “you’re really worried about that test” or “you’re scared of that test.”
5. Take care of yourself through movement, sleep, and relationships (all the tips above for your teen apply to you too) so that you are ready and regulated when your teen comes to you.

Intervention Practices to Respond to Intense Times of Anxiety

1. Before any talking, encourage your teen to breathe slow breaths for 2 or more minutes. Breathe with them. If possible, use the drawing “8 technique”.
2. Be the thermostat, not the thermometer. Instead of reacting to your teen (becoming anxious because they are anxious), set the temperature (maintain your heart rate and breathing).

Recommendations to Address General Anxiety in Children

Dee C. Ray, PhD, LPC-S, NCC, RPT-S
EmpathyWell.com

1. Schedule 30 minutes a week for one-to-one time with your child where they lead the discussion, play, or activity.
2. Engage in strategies to calm the body.
 - a. Take 5 deep breaths with child. Breathe in through your nose slowly and from the abdomen. Breathe out through your mouth. Practice a couple of times a day. You can add these ideas to breathing:
 - i. Place one hand on chest, and one hand on the abdomen, and let the breath come from the abdomen.

and lower them when you breathe out. When your child is feeling anxious (e.g., throw

such as curling up the toes and then releasing, or clenching fists, hands, face, neck, etc).

How much worry do you feel right now on a scale of 1-10? Have your child pick their number.

Write down their most private thoughts and

At the end of the session, ask your child to list everything they are worried about. When the child finishes, provide a statement of validation: “It seems like you have many big worries going on in your head.” “Seems like you have many big things to worry about so many different things.” Finish up by saying “I’m here for you with any of those.” Don’t push your child to talk more.

For example, if your child begins to worry about getting into college, when the child would need to give more than 10 years old, then you would put a date on the calendar for getting into college. This puts worry into

mini-mistake in their mind and tell you the story of what happened. Then make a plan for creating that scenario in

your life, such as forgetting a book or assignment, or making a mistake in what they say. This helps expose your child to reality of consequences which are typically not as big as a child believes.

8. Engage in spontaneity with your child. Go places without a destination, build something without a plan, start a silly conversation.
9. Close circles of communication with your child. When your child starts a conversation, you respond to that subject before bringing up a new subject. For example, your child says, “We have a big assignment due tomorrow and my group isn’t doing anything for it,” you can respond, “you’re really worried about what will happen if your group doesn’t come together.” Try to

Press or Release? Responding to Your Teen’s Anxiety



Dee C. Ray, PhD, LPC-S, NCC, RPT-S
EmpathyWell, PLLC
empathywell.com

Brain & Cognitive Development

- Enjoys mastering new tasks and skills independently
- Is focused and independent in schoolwork and projects
- Able to be interrupted and return to task successfully
- Thinks logically and rationally, and is able to follow the scientific method
- Has decreased interest in fairy tales, fables, and magic
- Enjoys reading silently and is able to master chaptered books
- Able to solve mathematical word problems and multiplication tables
- More detail-focused and self-sufficient

Physical Development

- Moves at a slower and more purposeful pace
- Complains frequently about somatic discomfort, pains, stomach aches, and headaches
- Tends to push physical limits and tires easily
- Frequently twists hair, bites nails, or bites lip
- Able to
- Enjoy w
- Enjoys p
- Holds ob
- May sho
- Desires n

Emotional Development

- Tends to worry or become anxious
- Gets feelings hurt easily
- Determined, motivated, and independent
- More mature and generally calmer
- Persistent and sometimes impatient
- Able to take the perspective of others and understands others' thoughts and feelings
- Follows rules and is eager to gain approval from teachers, parents, or peers
- Generally self-confident and dependable
- Able to communicate and express his or her feelings with others
- Has strong and intense internal world and emotional experiences
- Tends to be perfectionistic

Relationship & Social Development

- May seem detached and disinterested in parents
- Is less argumentative with adults, but may become more so with peers
- Understands romantic relationships and has an increased knowledge of sex



- Is more acutely aware of differences and similarities between himself or herself and peers
- Is more concerned with social groups and peer acceptance
- Prefers same-sex friends
- Is competitive with peers
- Tends to be overly self-critical and critical of others

Normal Challenges at 9

Nine-year-olds often have behaviors that parents find challenging or concerning, but which are a normal part of development, such as:

- Struggling with taking tests and becoming more anxious about academic performance
- Excessive perfectionism
- Excessive worries
- Competitiveness with others
- Self-criticism
- Sensitivity and avoidance of situations in which they believe they will fail

Tips for Parents & Caregivers

- Allow your child to have some choices to help to
- Encourage your child to be active for at least 30 minutes each week, and allow your child to
- Limit and monitor social interaction over digital sources given the 9-year-old's high level of sensitivity
- Engage as a participant in video games that your child enjoys and also allow your child time with friends without your involvement

When to Seek Help

- Your child's behavior or abilities seem significantly different from those of other children his or her age
- Your child's worries interfere with his or her daily functioning
- Your child withdraws from interaction or competition because of fear of failure
- Your child is overwhelmed by social interactions or has difficulty developing friendships
- Your child experiences severe or prolonged anxiety or sadness
- You need parenting support to address concerns or issues related to discipline
- Your child experiences a significant change or traumatic experience, including loss, disruption in the home or family environment, abuse, or a medical emergency
- You frequently feel disconnected and stress in your relationship with your child
- Your child demonstrates highly aggressive behavior towards you or others



Development 3 to 12 years old

Mental Health and Behavioral Well-Being





Why Play Therapy?

- Developmentally responsive, play-based mental health intervention
- For children ages 3 to 10
- For children who are experiencing social, emotional, behavioral, and relational struggles
- Utilizes play, the natural language of children, and therapeutic relationship to provide a safe, consistent therapeutic environment
- Leads to positive change
- Evidence-based intervention

**play well
talk well
be well**



We can provide play therapy directly to children in your schools if in the DFW area

OR

We can train your school mental health professionals to do play therapy in your schools (training can be online or in-person)



WHY PLAY THERAPY?

- ✓ Developmentally responsive, play-based mental health intervention
- ✓ Allows children to express themselves clearly and learn coping skills to handle difficult emotions and experiences
- ✓ Supports children's emotional and behavioral regulation
- ✓ Used with children with behavioral and emotional concerns such as:
 - Anxiety/depression
 - Grief/loss
 - Trauma
 - Divorce and other life transitions
 - Impulsivity
 - Anger management
 - Social skills struggles

PLAY THERAPY HIGHLIGHTS

PLAY-BASED
MENTAL HEALTH
INTERVENTION

FOR CHILDREN AGES
3 TO 10 YEARS OLD

FOR CHILDREN WITH
SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL,
BEHAVIORAL, OR
RELATIONAL
STRUGGLES

LEADS TO
POSITIVE CHANGE

EVIDENCE-BASED
APPROACH



School Climate and Culture



Integrating Throughout the Day and Throughout the School

- Child-Teacher PlayBreaks
- School-Wide PlayBreaks
- Playful Regulation
- Large Group Activities and Field Days
- Playful Connection with Teachers and Staff

We work with administrators, counselors, parents, teachers and all school staff to implement play and relationship throughout the school day.



Contact Us:

2280 Highland Village Rd, #150
Highland Village, TX 75077

www.empathywell.com

info@empathywell.com

(972) 498-1307