

CCHS
Presentation

INFLUENCING THE CLASSROOM CLIMATE WITH PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCE

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OBJECTIVES

- Discuss psychological principles and techniques that may be used to positively affect classroom climate and student learning (e.g., empathy, validation, accommodation, growth mindset, and exposure with response prevention).
- Share experiences and strategies used this year to impact comfort and achievement of students with SEL/MH challenges.
- Engagement and classroom management strategies based on shared reflections and experiences.
- Consider next steps for this PD path

MY CREDENTIALS TO TEACH THIS WORKSHOP

My private practice is in Concord, MA. I offer psychological services for 3-17 year olds, most of whom represent various forms of neurodiversity. I offer extensive case management, parent guidance, and evidence-based psychotherapy.

My interest in serving the needs of children in schools has been long standing. In addition to community clinic and hospital rotations during my pre and post-doctoral training, I provided clinical services in a handful of urban and rural schools in New Hampshire and Massachusetts. I completed my dissertation on pre-adolescent girls' groups in the schools. Additionally, I served alongside psychologists from around the country on the American Psychological Association Coalition for Psychology in Schools and Education.

I've taught group psychotherapy, tests and measurements, and interventions courses at Antioch University New England in the Clinical Psychology Psy.D. program. I have also supervised doctoral trainees in the School Psychology Psy.D. program at William James College. I'm currently preparing to co-teach a grant funded class at MIT.

I like to innovate in ways that serve patients. I am currently partnering with colleagues on a case study which integrates psychology and technology to better treat childhood trauma. For this, I am partnering with MIT Research Scientist Dr. Richard Fletcher and local Psychiatrist, Dr. David Kaminester.

I love coordinating with CCHS and this partnership has been amongst my most rewarding.

KEY CONCEPTS

Positive and negative reinforcement

Positive and negative punishment

Social learning / modeling

Classroom norms

Classroom climate

Empathy and validation

Neurodiversity

Accommodation

Exposure with response prevention

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE REINFORCEMENT & PUNISHMENT

	Promote behavior / Reinforce	Inhibit behavior / Punish
Add Stimuli (+)	<p>Positive Reinforcement E.g., Teacher praising student effort (resulting in positive feelings in student) may increase student effort in the future. E.g., Students gaining pleasure from substances may increase likelihood of future substance use. Or, alternatively, students gaining pleasure from being outdoors may increase likelihood of being outdoors. E.g., Lengthy conversations with argumentative student may increase student argumentativeness.</p>	<p>Positive Punishment E.g., Teacher delivering harsh criticism towards a student following the student's full effort on a test may decrease student effort in the future. E.g., Teacher criticizing student for taking extra time as allowed by 504 plan may hinder future self-advocacy efforts by student. E.g., Teacher making invalidating statements when student seeks support may contribute to less support-seeking behavior by student.</p>
Remove stimuli (-)	<p>Negative Reinforcement E.g., Teacher giving student permission to skip test when the student is anxious may increase test avoidance. E.g., Students using substances as a way to temporarily remove negative emotional states may increase similar future escape behaviors. Or, alternatively, going for a swim, and subsequently moving adrenaline and removing stress, may promote swimming in the future.</p>	<p>Negative Punishment E.g., Removing attention towards a student during the student's argumentativeness may decrease the student's argumentativeness. E.g., Peers ignoring a student whenever the student engages full effort and reaches goals may result in student having less desire to engage effort or to reach future goals.</p>

ADD COURAGE AND RESILIENCY INTO CLASSROOM CULTURE

It's not just
about a list.

Praise process
& model
norms.

CLASSROOM NORMS

**WE...Communicate respectfully. Embody
patience. Handle materials with care.
Practice courage. Value resiliency. Make
safe choices. Support each other. Let
educators lead and guide. Take up
leadership roles when appropriate. Try to
be flexible. Honor personal space.
Maintain curiosity about self and other.
Value diverse perspectives and celebrate
diversity, broadly defined.**

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VALIDATE EMOTIONS

NOTES FOR VALIDATING EMOTIONS

Happy....want more

Sad....something lost

Mad....perceived transgression

Anxious....anticipating

Afraid....sense danger

Disgusted...toxicity

Therapeutic Designs by KMH

Whether or not emotion is based upon something “real,” we can appreciate how emotions are functioning for the student. Validate in context.

CONTRAINDICATED FOR ANXIOUS STUDENT

- There's nothing to be anxious about. (Invalidating and challenging)
- It's OK. (Reassuring)
- You are smart. (Reassuring)
- You will do well. (Fortune telling)
- It's OK, you don't have to take the test. (Accommodating Anxiety, Negative Reinforcement)
- Let's take deep breaths and calm down so that you are available for learning. (Sends the message that emotions are inherently problematic and that it is possible to willfully make anxiety go away.)

ACCOMMODATION: HELPFUL VERSUS HARMFUL

Changing the environment to address some unfairness. Typically reduces anxiety in the long run.

Example: Representing neurodiversity in a neurotypical world results in (1) constantly struggling to adapt to the environment; (2) sometimes being confused and/or (3) needing more time to make sense of material being taught. Without accommodations, a student who represents neurodiversity may feel chronically punished. The student may be punished by low grades in spite of effort, and by statements that they aren't trying or that they are lazy.

Changing the environment solely to alleviate a student's irrational anxieties. Often results in decreased anxiety in the student in the short term, yet increased anxiety in the long run.

Example: Plagued with worry, the anxious student asks to take a scheduled test on another day. The teacher sees the student's emotional distress, understandably worries about the student's wellness, and sends the student to the school nurse. The student feels relieved, for now!

IN MY EXPERIENCE, TEENS WITH ANXIETY MUST CHOOSE ERP, WHICH IS THE EVIDENCE BASED WAY TO TACKLE ANXIETY

If the teen is over accommodated and allowed to avoid feared situations repeatedly, then their anxiety will be heightened. **Avoidance fuels anxiety.**

On the other hand, if the teen doesn't agree to move towards and through their fears, but instead feels overly forced by outside influences, such as parents and school, then the teen may develop learned helplessness and continue to decline in their emotional wellness.

Thus, anxious teens need non-judgmental, empathic listening; psychoeducation; and inspiration in order to decide to face their fears. They need to choose to be uncomfortable - to choose to engage Exposure with Response Prevention (ERP). Exposure with response prevention is, in a nutshell, moving towards feared stimuli and preventing the avoidant response.

SENSITIVELY PROMOTE FRUSTRATION TOLERANCE AND COURAGE

Observe (quietly)

Describe non-judgmentally what student does and says (aka paraphrase non verbal and verbal communication)

Validate student experience

Maintain curious position & refrain from reassurance giving (eg “you are smart”) or fortune telling (e.g., “you will do well”).

You may choose to reflect on class values (optional).

Encourage bravery

INVITING SOMEONE TO TACKLE TEST ANXIETY

“Naturally, if you didn’t get a sufficient chance to study and aren’t expecting to perform well today, I can see how the test would be anxiety provoking. I don’t know what the the process or outcome will be in advance. In this class we promote resiliency and growth above perfection. So, I encourage you to be willing to be uncomfortable and complete the test, even while experiencing worry or perhaps butterflies. I know this is difficult. I support your courage.”

Therapeutic Designs by KMH

DIVING INTO FEAR & ANXIETY IS A SKILL

Performance anxiety is common. Facing anxieties and fears and growing frustration tolerance are important life skills. Athletes and musicians work on these skills a lot. Although challenging, leaning into discomfort and unearthing grit is possible.

Learning to support students to face their fears and to grow frustration tolerance is a reasonable, and also challenging goal. The student's overall profile and needs ought to be taken into account. Empathy and validation, in my experience, are critical for maintaining the relationship with the student as the student practices courage.

REVIEW

Create a class culture by outlining the sort of norms you'd like to cultivate and reinforce behavior that is in keeping with the norms.

Take an empathic and validating stance.

Accommodate in ways that are useful, but refrain from accommodating solely to remove anxious feelings.

Encourage students forward towards courage so that they may choose to dive into their own fears and worries rather than swim away from them.

VIGNETTE A

14-year-old freshman on the Autism spectrum is offering a poster presentation for the class today. He is visibly shaking. He knows the material extremely well, probably more than anyone else in the class. Still, he struggles to make eye contact with his peers and worries, as well, about the overall delivery of his presentation. He is aware that his poster presentation is a bit more sloppy than some others and is concerned that his grade will be affected. He goes to the teacher to express his concerns.

VIGNETTE B

A 16-year-old sophomore with a history of obsessive compulsive disorder would like an additional extension on a writing assignment, which has been completed, but he feels it is not to his full potential. He is extremely worried about the possibility of getting a grade that will jeopardize college admissions. His father has called the school noting that the student worked on the project all weekend. The father also noted that there is an uptick in the student's ritualistic hand washing. The father worries that having to hand in the assignment will worsen the student's obsessive compulsive symptoms.

VIGNETTE C

17-year-old soccer player has become overwhelmed during the college application process. She is hoping for an athletic scholarship to a division 2 soccer program. She has also endured rejection by teammates who seem jealous of her recent accomplishments. The pressure has become overwhelming and she disclosed to her coach that she has been having panic attacks before games and is thinking she might do poorly moving forward because of the isolation and pressure.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Ehrenreich-May, J., Kennedy, S. M., Sherman, J. A., Bilek, E. L., Buzzella, B. A., Bennett, S. M., & Barlow, D. H. (2018). Programs that work. Unified protocols for transdiagnostic treatment of emotional disorders in children and adolescents: Therapist guide. New York, NY, US: Oxford University Press.

Herr, N. R., Jones, A.C., Cohn, D. M., & Weber, D.M. (2015). The Impact of Validation and Invalidation on Aggression in Individuals With Emotion Regulation Difficulties. *Personality Disorders, Theory, Research, and Treatment*, Vol 6 (310-314)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Kagan, E. R., Frank, H. E., & Kendall, P. C. (2018). Accommodation in youths' mental health: Evidence and issues. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 27(4), 227-231

Kagan, E. R., Frank, H. E., & Kendall, P. C. (2017). Accommodation in youth with OCD and anxiety. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 24(1), 78-98.

Kagan, E. R., Peterman, J. S., Carper, M. M., & Kendall, P. C. (2016). Accommodation and treatment of anxious youth. *Depression and Anxiety*, 33(9), 840-847.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Robins, C. J., Zerubavel, N., Ivanoff, A. M., & Linehan, M. M. (2018). Dialectical behavior therapy. In W. J. Livesley & R. Larstone (Eds.), Handbook of personality disorders: Theory, research, and treatment (pp. 527–540). New York, NY, US: The Guilford Press.

Websites:

<https://www.apa.org/ed/schools/teaching-learning>

<https://www.apa.org/ed/schools/teaching-learning/principles>

http://www.jabramowitz.com/uploads/1/0/4/8/10489300/guidelines_for_exposure.doc