Brain & Behavior: How to Create a Classroom Environment that Supports Learning

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Mindfulness Moment



Cognitive Triangle



Brain State Model



Survival State: Safety

Thought: Am I Safe?

Trigger: Threat (e.g., mismatch instruction level)

Response: Self Defense (e.g., fight, flight, freeze, fawn)

Emotions: Angry, Irritated, Insecure, Afraid

Behaviors commonly seen in the classroom:

Physical Aggression	Tantrums Frustration Fits
Withdrawing	Elopement
Surrendering	Escape/Avoidance



Emotional State: Connection

Thoughts: Am I loved?

Trigger: World is not going my way

Response: Negative Self-Talk

Emotions: Worried, Embarrassed, Sad, Envious

Behaviors commonly seen in the classroom:

Attention Seeking	Relationship Resistance
Clinginess	Social Exclusion
Naming-Calling	Perfectionism
Blaming	Procrastination



Executive State: Problem-Solving

Thoughts: What Can I Learn?

Trigger: Curiosity, Reflection, Needing Help

Response: Problem-Solving

Emotions: Optimistic, Creative, Confident

Behaviors commonly seen in the classroom:

Willingness	Problem-Solving
Receptive to Relationships	Conflict Resolution
Managing Emotions	Setting Goals
Empathy	Achievement



Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport

Nurturing the Survival State

Noticing

Assertiveness

Routines

Composure

Safe Space



Nurturing the Emotional State

Rituals

Encouragement

Jobs

Empathy

Choices

School/Classroom Family

Establishing & Maintaining Relationships with EACH student is essential!



Managing Student Behavior

Nurturing the Survival State

Noticing

Assertiveness

Routines

Composure

Safe Space



Nurturing the Emotional State

Encouragement

Empathy

Choices

Accessing Executive State

Solutions

Positive Intent

Consequences: Natural & Logical

Establishing a Culture for Learning

Nurturing the Executive state

Solutions

Positive Intent/Impact

Academic Integration

Consequences

Executive Skills



Tips to Create a Culture of Learning

Establish high expectations

Encourage positive peer relationships

Student voices are valued in classroom

Create a safe space to fail

Model expected behaviors

Give feedback often

Avoid only celebrating grades

Managing Classroom Procedures & Organizing Physical Space

1. Fostering the Development of Future Thinking

1. Plan Backward to Execute Forward

1. Make Time Visible

Working Memory - Two Types Essential for Learning

Non-Verbal Working Memory - makes it possible to retain and remember content without words.

Verbal Working Memory - makes it possible to retain, remember, and speak about content with words.

Nonverbal Working Memory drives *"If...Then"* thinking which allows for Verbal Working Memory (Self-Directed Self-Talk).

Situational Awareness/Intelligence

Space Navigate the Room	Time Get on the Timeline	Objects Organization	People Read the person: ROLE
Kind of Space?	Time of day ?	Organization of the Space?	Face
What's going on?	What is happening at this Moment in	Location of objects:	Body
It is Expected or Unexpected?	Time?	in sight? Out of sight?	Appearance
	Sequence of		Mood
Pathways used to Navigate to different areas within the	Actions/Pace? What is coming up?	Objects	Pace
space?	Predictable?	Necessity & Relevancy	Saying-Tone

Fostering the Development of Future Thinking

NonVerbal Working Memory & Situational Awareness = Mental Trial & Error without Risk of Error

Make an Image: What will it look like?

What do I look like? - Self-Projection into the future

- Episodic Future Thinking
 - Semantic vs. Episodic

How am I moving to achieve this?

- Mental Time Travel (Temporal-Spatial) helps with Time Management

How will I feel? - Emotional Physiological State

If..Then Thinking

Self-Directed Self-Talk

Strategies to Reduce Prompt Dependence

Teaching Students How to Plan Backward



Strategies to Reduce Prompt Dependence

After Planning Backwards they Execute Forward

Ask Students: "Walk/Talk me Through Your Plan" to prompt Future Thinking & Gestures

Working My Plan Sequence				
4. Start	5. Check	6. Stop		
Gather Materials	Create Time Markers Set a Halfway Point ½ Point Check In	Stop, Clean Up, Review		

How Does This Look in the Classroom?

Too Much Verbal Language

Supports NonVerbal Working Memory



How Does this Look in the Classroom? - Differentiated Instruction

Verbal Memory Overload



Supports NonVerbal Working Memory

What Does this Look like in the Classroom?





00800

Eye Movement & Brain Function



Making Time Visible - Development of the Time Horizon

How Far into the Future can they Anticipate?

2 Year Olds: NOW

3-5 Year Olds: 5-20 minutes

K-1st Grade: Several Hours

3rd - 6th Grade: 8-12 Hours

6th - 12th Grade: 2-3 Days

17-23 Year Old: 2-3 Weeks

23-35 Year Olds: 3-5 Weeks

Students are NOW vs. NOT NOW

If a Student has ADHD the development of the Time Horizon is delayed by 30%.

So a Middle Schooler with ADHD may actually anticipate time similar to a 3rd or 1st grader.

MAKE TIME VISIBLE!

Making Time Visible - Digital vs. Analog

Digital Time = Verbal Working Memory

It does not demonstrate the PASSAGE of Time.



Analog Time = NonVerbal Working Memory It demonstrates the PASSAGE of Time



Make Time Visible - Time Markers

Time markers are the equivalents of spatial cues - trigger an implementation intention (self) not the goal (outcome)

Instead of: "It is 10:05. You have until 10:30 to work on your Science Lab. Make sure to write your hypothesis, the list of materials and methodology."

Demonstrate the passage of time so students can pace themselves.



What does this Look like in the Classroom?











Barriers to Success - Cognitive Distortions

- 1. Assumed Intent teacher thinks the child is misbehaving deliberately to upset them, the classroom or another student
- 1. Magnification in the teacher's mind, the situation is much worse than it is.
- 1. Labeling the teacher uses negative or derogatory words to describe the child, their behaviors, or symptoms of their emotional/behavioral disorder.



Proactive Protective Factors

Composure

Self-Regulation

Coping Strategies

Self Care

Routines/Environments that are structured, consistent, and predictable.



Optimistic Closure

Share 1 thing you learned

Share 1 thing you will try to implement in your practice

Challenge: Complete a thought log and strategies sheet for a week.

Possible Benefit: Increase the awareness of your thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. Develop self-regulation skills and implement coping strategies during the school day to reduce stress.

Possible Risk: You learn more about yourself.

Questions or Comments