

The Science and Art of Engagement

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Presented by The Leadership Program: Erika Petrelli and Christopher Williams

THE SCIENCE AND ART OF ENGAGEMENT

Tip One: Be Present

You can be physically present without *actually* being present, and your students can tell the difference.

Tip Two: Be Yourself

The genuinely, authentically you is the best you around.

Tip Three: Be Passionate

Ask yourself: why did you get into this field to begin with?

Tip Four: Be Curious

It's one of the surest ways to show your students that you really care.

Tip Five: Be Surprising

We are all more than meets the eye

Tip Six: Be Imperfect

Our imperfections are what make us human and our humanity is what connects us

Tip Seven: Be Forgiving

Your students may not say sorry for all the small and big ways they drive you crazy. Forgive them anyway.

Tip Eight: Be Flexible

Our plans usually only go exactly the way we imagine they will when there are no other people or movement or elements involved. So basically ...well, never. Embrace the inevitable.

Tip Nine: Be Grateful

Suddenly the entire world will start to change shape.

Tip Ten: Be Foolish

When we're asking them to take risks every day, we have to show them it's okay to get silly.

The Science of Engagement: Key Terms and Concepts

Attachment Theory – John Bowlby and Margaret Mahler

Attachment theory refers to the dynamic between mother and baby where the physical attachment to mother is perpetuated through an emotional attachment which is built through interactions with one another. This is most evident when a mother smiles at her baby and the baby smiles back. Through this type of interaction, the baby experiences positive feelings and increased levels of trust. This allows for the baby's *good enough sense of self* to emerge and the ability to differentiate themselves from their mother. The mother's physically holding of the baby (i.e. getting needs met) translates into the child feeling emotionally held and able to begin to play/explore in the outside world.

Infants become attached to individuals who are **sensitive and responsive** in [social interactions](#) with them, and who remain as **consistent caregivers** for some months during the period from about six months to two years of age (this is known as sensitive responsiveness). When the infant begins to crawl and walk they begin to use attachment figures (familiar people) as a secure base to explore from and return to.

Mothers'/primary caregivers' responses lead to the development of patterns of attachment. These lead to internal working models which will guide the individual's perceptions, emotions, thoughts and expectations in later relationships.

A baby who experiences secure attachment learns to trust that the world is a predictable and safe place. During the attachment phase, if the infant experiences warm, close and consistent care, the infant becomes '**securely attached**' and begins to use the caregiver as a safe base from which to explore. Between 30 and 36 months securely attached children should be able to tolerate longer periods of separation with minimal stress.

If the caregivers are inconsistent, various, absent or neglectful then the child's attachment is likely to be '**insecure**.' Subsequently, the infant is often more clingy at 30-36 months, reluctant to move away from the attachment figure and explore his environment. Insecure attachment styles can be characterized as anxious, avoidant, ambivalent/resistant, or disorganized. Consistent neglect and lack of loving care causes the infant stress and the production of the stress hormone, **cortisol**. Prolonged and uncontrolled exposure to cortisol can lead to permanent changes in the brain. This can lead to physical, mental and emotional difficulties in childhood and on into later life.

Object Relations Theory - Melanie Klein and Donald Winnicott

Based on [psychodynamic theory](#), the **object relations theory** suggests that people relate to others and situations in their adult lives as shaped by family experiences during infancy. Object relations theory describes the process of developing a [psyche](#) as one is growing up, *in relation* to others in the environment.

When a caregiver is able to meet the emotional needs of the infant, a secure attachment style is formed. This allows for a "**good enough self**" to develop and a healthy ability to relate to the world as a safe and secure place. This 'holding environment' allows the infant to transition at

its own rate to a more autonomous position. (i.e. a toddler who can leave mother's side and begin to explore playground due to having a secure base established from infancy). According to Winnicott, the therapist's context for intervention is to provide a **holding environment** for the client so they have the opportunity to meet neglected ego needs and allow their true self to emerge.

Transference – Transference is the process whereby we unconsciously transfer feelings and attitudes from a person or situation in the past on to a person or situation in the present.

Example: A student is experiencing the divorce of their parents and is crying during a mentoring session as feelings of sadness are being transferred to the mentor.

Counter transference – Counter transference is the emotional response and/or associated thoughts that are elicited in the recipient (teacher/counselor/mentor) by the student's unconscious transference communication.

Example: A mentor feels a wave of sadness as they are reminded of their own parents' divorce as they are listening to their mentee.

Psychological Developmental within Adolescence

Erik Erikson is a theorist who believed that every stage of life has an associated developmental task to accomplish for optimal development to occur. According to Erikson, the task of adolescence is **identity formation** vs. **identity diffusion**.

EGO IDENTITY is the attainment of a firm sense of self—who one is, where one is headed in life, and what one believes in. People who achieve ego identity clearly understand their personal needs, values, and life goals.

Erikson believed ego identity is the key developmental task of adolescence and sets the stage for meeting the next life challenge: achieving intimate, secure relationships with others. In other words, we need to know who we are before we can reveal our true selves to others in the context of close, binding relationships.

Some adolescents may fail to develop a clear sense of ego identity. They remain in a state of **ROLE DIFFUSION**, a confused and drifting state in which they lack direction in life.

Neuroscience

Mirror Neurons – the human brain harbors multiple mirror neurons systems, not just for mimicking actions but also for reading emotions and for extracting the social implications from what someone does.

Mirror neurons make emotions contagious, letting the feelings we witness flow through us, helping us get in synch and follow what's going on. We “feel” the other in the broadest sense of the word: sensing their sentiments, their movements, their sensations, and their emotions as they act inside us.

Mirror neurons ensure that the moment someone sees an emotion expressed on your face, they will at once sense that same feeling within themselves. And so our emotions are

experienced not merely by ourselves in isolation but also by those around us – both covertly and openly.

Mirror neurons appear to be essential to the way children learn. As children watch others, they are etching in their own brains a repertoire for emotion, for behavior, and for how the world works.

Oscillators –neural systems that act like clocks, resetting over and over their rate of firing to coordinate with the periodicity of an incoming signal, whenever we find ourselves in such harmony with someone else. When we are with another person, these timekeepers put us in synch unconsciously, like when lovers approach for an embrace, or take each other's hands at just the right instant when they walk down the street.

Neuroplasticity – the process by which *experience* changes neural structure. The applications of interpersonal neurobiology are based on the neuroplasticity finding that how we focus our attention directly shapes the activity and the structure of the brain. This focus of attention can be within our internal world and in the relationships with one another. Recurring patterns can alter the way we connect with each other, how we experience our subjective inner lives, and even how we come to shape the architecture of our own brains.

Please Note: For further reading related to the field of neuroscience, you may want to research the works of Kurt Fischer, Howard Gardner, Mary Helen Immordino-Yang, Joseph Ledoux, Daniel Siegel, and Allan Schore.

Ignition! Quick Games and Ice-Breakers
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Pass the Duck

- ✍ Give each table a small plastic or rubber duck
- ✍ Ask participants to start passing the duck around the table when the music starts, hot potato style
- ✍ When the music stops, the person holding the duck needs to answer a question with their table mates
- ✍ Sample questions include:
 - What is your go-to middle of the night snack?
 - What is one dream you have for the future?
 - What is one of your silly fears? (sharks, cotton balls)
 - What do you love about working with youth?

High Five!

- ✍ Ask participants to mill around the center of the circle without talking.
- ✍ Explain that when you call out a form of greeting, participants should find a person near them, say hello and then perform the greeting.
- ✍ Tell them that from then on, whenever they hear that form of greeting, they must find the same partner and perform that greeting. (It should be a different partner for each greeting.)
- ✍ Call out "Find a partner and shake hands with them. Remember who you shook hands with." Every participant needs a partner. In the case of an odd number, a participant can partner with you.
- ✍ Have participants mill around again.
- ✍ Call out "Find a new partner and give them a high five. Remember who your high five partner is."
- ✍ Tell participants "Now find that hand shake partner again and shake hands."
- ✍ Begin calling out other greetings and ask participants to find people to partner with to:
 - Bow
 - Rub elbows
 - Wink
 - Bump Hips
 - Touch toes
- ✍ Use all commands randomly. Ex: "Shake hands, touch elbows, wink, shake hands, high 5."
- ✍ Speed up your greetings as participants get the hang of it to create a fun frenzy.
- ✍ Continue this for a few moments. To end the warm-up give the command "high 5, high 5, high 5!"

Bunny, Bunny!

- ✍ Ask everyone to get into a circle
- ✍ Have everyone in the circle say together “ooh, ahh, ooh, ahhh” while patting their hands on their thighs (or hips) and instruct them that they keep that “ooh ahhh” going the whole time
- ✍ Next, have someone start a “bunny bunny.” They make bunny ears with their hands and point to themselves first and say “bunny, bunny” and then pass it to someone in the circle by pointing their bunny ears in their direction & saying “bunny, bunny.” That person will receive the ‘bunny bunny’ (pointing ears to self first) and then pass it to someone else in the circle. Let this go on for a little bit so the group gets used to just passing and receiving the ‘Bunny’ around the circle.
- ✍ Once the group seems comfortable with passing around the bunny, introduce the next layer of the game, which is when someone receives the bunny, the people on either side of that person turn in towards them and says (tuki, tuki, tuki, tuki) (pronounced “tooky”)
- ✍ Once the group has gotten used to that addition, you can introduce the method for speeding up the game. If someone wants the game to speed up, instead of sending a ‘bunny bunny’ to someone in the circle, they can point a “bunny bunny” to the ceiling. If that happens, everyone in the group together says “Oh snap, while clapping their hands together.” Whoever initiated the speed up starts a new bunny bunny.
- ✍ Let the game continue until it has become heightened.
- ✍ If the group wants to slow down the “bunny bunny,” after doing the bunny bunny to themselves, they can point a “bunny bunny” to the floor. If that happens, the group says “Snap, OH!” while un-clapping their hands. Whoever initiated the slow down starts a new bunny bunny.

Rock Paper Scissors Re-Mix

- ✍ Have participants break into pairs
- ✍ Remind everyone the rules of “Rock, Paper, Scissors”: Pairs shake their fists together, counting to three, and then after “three” they throw out either a rock, a scissors, or a paper. Rock crushes scissors, Scissors cuts paper, Paper covers rock
- ✍ Have each pair compete against each other, using the best 2 out of 3 shakes of Rock, Paper, Scissors
- ✍ In the first round, the person who loses is now the cheerleader for the winner in future rounds
- ✍ Have each pair find another pair to compete with—with the two winners competing and the two cheerleaders supporting their teammate.
- ✍ Each time someone wins they take their cheerleading squad to the next level ... so after the foursome finishes, they find another foursome, and the two winners compete while the rest of the team cheer their team member on.
- ✍ The cheerleading squad must introduce their winner WWF style to each new opponent
- ✍ Each team continues to compete until there are two opponents left
- ✍ Cheerleaders do a special introduction of their winner to the last opponent and the final two play to the finish

Leadership Snow Ball Fight

- ✍ Give each participant 3 pieces of paper
- ✍ Ask them to write one leadership quality that they possess on each sheet of paper.
- ✍ Then have them crumble up each paper with the leadership qualities, creating snowballs
- ✍ Split the room in half with two groups facing each other
- ✍ On the count of three, begin the snowball fight and allow participants to throw snowballs at each other for about a minute or two.
- ✍ Once you stop the game, have each person pick up three snowball from the ground and open them
- ✍ If the participants know each other:
 1. Have participants think about three other participants in the room that they believe have the same leadership qualities that are on the three snowballs.
 2. Ask participants to take the paper to those other participants and give it to them, sharing their leadership quality aloud.
- ✍ If the participants do not know each other:
 1. Have participants group with two or three others and discuss the leadership qualities they picked up—if they think they are important qualities, if they feel they possess those qualities, etc.

Crumple Ball

- ✍ Have the participants stand in a circle.
- ✍ Explain to them that we will be working on cooperation skills today, and the only way to “win” this game is if we work together as a team.
- ✍ Crumple a piece of paper into a ball, and explain to the class that the object of the game is for the group to keep the ball as many times as possible in a row by hitting it with your hand.
- ✍ Go over the game’s guidelines with the group:
 - The group counts together out loud each time the ball is hit. If the ball is missed and hits the floor, the count starts over.
 - You cannot hit the ball two times in a row. If someone does, the count starts over.
- ✍ If it is a larger group (more than ten participants), split them into two teams and have each team “compete” to see who can keep the ball in the air for the highest number, after giving them a few minutes to practice as a team.