CLEAR EXPECTATIONS & BOUNDARIES

PROVIDING STRUCTURE AND CONSISTENCY

Research shows that Children crave structure and benefit from consistency. We can provide this structure for them in any environment by teaching them clear expectations and boundaries. In this booklet, we will discuss the importance of boundaries, how to create them and how to support them in any challenging situation so that you survive and the children thrive.

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"We want to actually THRIVE not just SURVIVE parenthood like our parents did many years ago."

-Cindy & Trent Baylor
(clients from B.C., Canada)

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the MISS BEHAVIOUR METHOD!

A developmentally appropriate and respectful approach that has been created that helps promote learning and a positive growth mindset for children. It is a combination of my own observations, research, ideas and strategies that have been collected for well over 25 years. That information has been based on the experiences that I have had working with children and families in a variety of different roles around the world. I have found the MBM to be the most effective method to communicate, guide and connect with children of all ages and abilities.

The content of this booklet is geared to help the **adults** in children's lives (Parents, Educators, Teachers and Caregivers) to have a better understanding of what is going on behind the behaviour and know what technique to use in order to best support the child. This in turn helps the child learn from the guidance given to better regulate themselves, make positive choices and be more autonomous in their lives.

I believe in adding in the 'element of development' when addressing a child's behaviour. It is not about YOUR way or MY way but rather what is best for the child.

The methods and strategies in this booklet are suggestive and is the responsibility of the individual user to correctly apply this method, content and/or strategies to ensure that every child is being well cared for and their health and safety as top priorities.

Enjoy!

Julie

BENEFITS OF THE MBM

The MISS BEHAVIOUR METHOD (MBM) is an effective approach on how adults can respond POSIVITIVELY to children's NEGATIVE behaviour such as stress, defiance and aggression. Learn ways on guiding and caring for children that are expressing these types of behaviours and may need help with how to respond appropriately and cope with specific situations or people. The MBM takes into consideration the child's developmental stage, their personality, a variety of outside factors and current situation and helps to create the best possible outcome.

This approach can help shift the common perception that a child's undesirable behaviour is bad or wrong into perceiving that the child may be struggling and trying to communicate the best they can. It can also help the adult in the situation be able to understand what exactly is going on and what to do about it. The MBM can really help boost the adults confidence in knowing how to best navigate through any situation, even the most challenging ones!

The MBM diagram below is a visual OUTLINE of the method to provide a clear path forward when helping a child in distress. It is especially helpful during the 'heat of the moment' times when it can be hard to think of what to do without getting triggered or it ending up with even more stress. This approach also clarifies how to guide a child in a more positive and effective way that helps promote building skills, self-awareness and connection. This is not a one-size-fits-all method as each individual and situation are different however, it is user friendly and adaptable to most situations, children, adults and abilities.

The MISS BEHAVIOUR METHOD TM

A proactive approach for negative behaviours or situations

1st

To be proactive, think of the jam sandwich as a metaphor for the negative behaviour/situation.

2nd

Use the 3 sections of the sandwich as cues to know what to do **BEFORE, DURING & AFTER** a negativebehaviour/situation.

3rd

While interacting with the child during this negative behaviour/situation, stay **NEUTRAL, CONNECTED & ENGAGED.**

UNDERSTANDING BOUNDARIES

VERY DIFFERENT ROLES

Most children crave structure and thrive in environments and with people who have clear boundaries. I have found in my experience that this is most effective when the adult takes on the role of creating and supporting the boundaries. This can be found within routines, expectations, rules, procedures, actions and communication. The child has a different role. They discover and push the boundaries that the adult has put in place. Think of it as injecting structure into daily routines as well as responses to certain big feelings.

WHY THIS HAPPENS

I believe they do this in order to 'know where they stand' and use it as a reference point for future actions and reactions. Over time, when a child is guided consistently within the same boundaries, they are then able to start to 'predict' what is going to happen. Being able to predict what is about to happen is the groundwork into a child feeling more confident in the situation. This feeling of knowing what is about to happen - or what will happen - can help allow them to feel self-secure and calm. When this happens, it's likely a child will learn more and take on more. We will discover how to create these expectations and boundaries next!

Proactive Approach -
Aim for the stable structure as seen below in Pen 'A'.

Reactive Approach -
Try to avoid the unstable aspects in Pen 'B' as much as possible.

CREATING BOUNDARIES

THE PURPOSE

When boundaries are created, it can help a child understand the message the adult is trying to communicate through the expectations provided. I have created a 4-point strategy that gives the child the necessary information to succeed in a specific situation or routine. This strategy acts as a road map or blueprint in communicating needs and expectations of what is required for the flow of the day. When a child knows what is going on ahead of time, they are better able to predict and then adapt to the situation accordingly. Think of it as PRE-LOADING them with the necessary details. This can help them succeed by knowing how to make the best decisions with their actions for a more productive outcome.

Try visualizing it. Think of boundaries as a room. Each one of the walls, is an 'expectation'. The 4 walls all combined is the 'boundary'. One can not happen without the other.

WHEN TO DO IT

Timing is everything! Once you have decided what the challenges are that you would like to address, choose a time to discuss the details with the children but make sure it is NOT during the time of challenge. For example; if it is bedtimes you want to create boundaries around, have the discussion during the day or the next morning. We often want to discuss and lecture during the time of chaos and distress, right in the heat of the moment but this is not an ideal time as we are usually frustrated, stressed and/or emotionally heightened. We want this conversation to be a positive one where we are connected to the child and have a successful outcome.

HOW TO GET STARTED

It is critical to connect and engage with the child prior to beginning this discussion. The connection between adult and child is the glue that will not only capture the child's attention but also add great value to the purpose of this discussion. Play blocks together or colour at the table. Do something simple that the child likes and can listen at the same time. You don't want to do anything too distracting from the goal at hand. Electronics tend to not work great as they can be very distracting to many children.

PUTTING IT INTO ACTION

During the first step, always start with discussing YOUR concerns and goals with the child. Do not be fooled in thinking that they have the same concerns and goals as you do. This discussion should flow naturally and be a positive experience for everyone involved. If it is not, go back to connecting with the child and try again. If it is still not working out, then take a break and try again another time. There is no rush to get it done. It is more important that this experience is positive and that you are all calm and engaged.

1st
Discuss the Topic
(concerns & goals)

The second step is to make the parameters around this boundary clear. Give the child the CAN'S and CAN'TS within the boundary. Ensure that YOU are clear as to what this is first, so that when it is discussed, you are confident in what they are. You want to avoid any hesitation around this. Think of the information being given in 'oppposite language' which can help children understand better.

2nd
Boundaries & Parameters
(cans & can nots)

Examples of 'Opposite Language':

- ok / not ok
- good / bad
- right / wrong
- can / can't

Children respond really well to these types of opposites as it helps them to understand how far they can push those boundaries from one side of the spectrum to the other. By delivering the information in this way, you are literally communicating the boundaries clearly.

The **third** step is to let them know what their role is with in this boundary as well as what yours is. If you find it helpful, you can include other family members and people who may be involved. One child I knew wanted to know exactly where everyone in their family was going to be AND what they were going to be doing during their bedtime routine....even their pet dog!

3rd
Roles & Responsibilities
(of child & adults)

The final **fourth** step is about possible feelings that child may experience with this new boundary. They may feel upset, mad or sad during the time of when this is to take place. Reassure them that this is perfectly normal to feel that way and it is allowed. It doesn't take away from it happening however, it allows an opportunity for the child to feel their way through it and to regulate themselves with in it. This is how they feel through the boundary.

4th
Possible Feelings
(of child & adult)

IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER

Creating boundaries through clear expectations gives the child a REFERENCE point in which they can navigate themselves. Some people think of it as the goal posts on sports field. These markers help the players know what is a score or not. Boundaries can also give an overall SNAPSHOT of what is going to happen or what a routine should look like.

For example:
"I want to talk about what is happening tomorrow because it's different than what we are used to and I want everyone to feel comfortable about it. We are going to the festival at the park. You can definitely have fun, listen to the music, dance and play. You can not run away, leave the park or hurt other people. My job is to help keep everyone safe and healthy and have fun singing and dancing. Your job is to stay safe, listen to me to stay safe, dance and sing. You may not like having to listen to me all the time or you may find it hard to always stay safe but it is what is expected of you."

MISSING THE MARK

HOW CHILDREN LEARN

Most adults want children to perform the expectations each time and every time they say it. Although this would seem ideal, it is not realistic. Try to avoid assuming the child will be perfect in their actions every time. This is not how children learn unfortunately. They learn best through repetition and their mistakes. Knowing this and accepting this reality, allows the adult to take on a more supportive role in helping the child learn rather than feeling frustrated at the lack of instant results, leading us to think that the child is not listening to us or that we are inadequate some how.

BOUNDARIES ARE MEANT TO BE PUSHED

Once you have created the boundaries, children require time to process this information and then do what they do best, push those boundaries! This happens because they want to know how solid this structure is. They want to know if YOU will do what you say YOU will do. This doesn't mean that your efforts are lost or that this strategy does not work. It just means that the child needs time to feel and learn where the boundaries are by observing YOUR responses to THEIR actions. Guiding the child THROUGH this process is part of the adults role.

MISSING THE MARK

Expect children to 'miss the mark' several times. After they have been guided and supported through this part of learning, they will know how to do it correctly hitting that bullseye! This is also true for the adults. We are not meant to be perfect or to perfectly execute these strategies but rather participate the best we can. It can take time to practice this and reach goals - be patient and trust the process. Think of how long it can take for us adults to learn a new language or how long it can take a child to learn how to tie their shoes!

Knowing that repetition is part of learning and development, can help us stay neutral, connected and engaged during this very frustrating lesson.

"Scientists have recently determined that it takes approximately 400 repetitions to create a new synapse in the brain—unless it is done with play, in which case, it takes between 10 and 20 repetitions!"

—Dr. Karyn Purvis

SUPPORTING THE BOUNDARIES

MAKING IT WORK

Sometimes in the 'heat-of-the-moment' when children's negative behaviour feels out-of-control, it can be hard to know exactly what to say and do that will help a child or the situation. It's common to be caught-off-guard and feel like you don't know what to do. During these times, we can easily feel triggered and then panic and potentially cause a desperate attempt to try something/anything in hopes that it works even if it's not positive or beneficial. As an alternative during these difficult times, I encourage you to refer to the expectations that had already been created as the platform to which you stand on. Remind and guide the child during the challenging times with these expectations. The work has already been done, it is simply just repeating it again to help guide the child. Children learn in a variety of different ways, the most common being through repetition.

TROUBLE-SHOOTING

If you feel like you have repeated the expectations and they still are not working, focus on re-connecting with the child as this can easily be missed. If it is still not working, the child is likely too stressed or emotionally-heightened and not thinking logically at that moment. They may need to regulate first to be able to return to a more logical state of mind to be able to listen and understand. They will need YOU for this to assist in co-regulation. The process of regulation may take a while but it will take place and it now becomes the priority at this time. The discussion around boundaries will have to wait till another time. Once the child is regulated (this varies and may take 5 minutes, hours or days) only then can you return to supporting the boundaries by repeating the expectations in a connected, caring and positive manner.

CREATING VS. SUPPORTING

Note that this visual looks similar to the one on how to create boundaries. There is one very important difference. The horse trainer is not showing the horse the pen, it is inside helping guide and remind the horse on what it already knows. As the adult, we do not have to come up with new things to say or do when a child pushes the boundaries. This work has already been done in the creating boundaries part. We have to connect with the child and support their learning by reminding them of what has already been put into place.

WISHLIST EXERCISE

Creating the Wishilst

Write down all the areas of challenge that you may experience on a regular basis with children. This could include times of day (mornings), specific routines (getting ready) or places (school).

Creating Boundaries for that Challenge

Choose one of the challenges on your wishlist and insert it into the 4-point method we just learned.

Challenge:

What is my concern and goal....

What the child can and can not do....

My role in this and your role in this....

Possible feelings you may have during this.....

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION

To enhance the effectiveness of communication with a child, it is ideal to deliver the information in a way that THEY understand. Most children's behaviour is expression of feelings and needs that they have but they many not quite know exactly how to articulate them yet leaving the adult left to 'guessing' what is going on. This is why it is also very important for the adults to help children LEARN to communicate these feelings and needs effectively but in order to do so, the adult must know how to communicate effectively.

Below is a diagram that helps provide some key points on how to communicate effectively. Using the techniques all TOGETHER as much as possible, can also help avoid potential power struggles and misunderstandings as well as deflate explosive, out-of-control behaviour.

VALIDATION

By offering clear information and validating the child's needs, this can allow the child to feel 'heard'. You don't have to like what they say or agree but by validating them, the energetic tone of positivity demonstrates to the child that they have worth and value because you have 'heard' them and acknowledged it.

For example:
"I know you don't like that I said that playtime is over. You just want playtime to keep going don't you? I understand. I know you don't want to stop."

BOUNDARY

This would have already had to have been put in place prior to using this point so the child has reference to what you are talking about.

For Example:
".....but it's time to stop playing now and get ready for bed time. It's time for bed now. Playtime is all done and bedtime is now happening."

AUDIO & VISUAL

Adding in any kind of audio or visual cues for children can help them to understand you better and make communicating more effective. Audio cues can range from a variety of sounds such as bells, timers, alarms or music and visual cues can range from pictures, images, videos, posters or drawings.

For example:
"There's the bell for outdoor playtime. Look, the poster on the door shows boots and rain jackets today. Let's get them on and go play outside!"

NOTIFICATION

Giving a child any type of notification helps them to PREPARE for something that is about to end and something else is about to begin. This is not about actual time (5 minutes) but rather about them knowing something is about to change really soon. Think of it as giving them some extra time to process this information to prepare for the transition.

For example:
"In 5 more minutes, playtime will end and snack time will begin. That means we have to stop playing in 5 minutes and go get our snack bags."

CHOICES

Most children really like to do whatever THEY want which does not always mesh well with what the rest of the group wants. By offering them choices with in the desired outcome, we can offer an opportunity to them where they can pick what they want the most.

For example:
"It's time for lunch now. Do you want to start eating or would you like to tell the other children it's lunch time?"

REPITITION

We know children learn in a variety of different ways but one of the main ones is through repetition. Having things said many times can feel frustration because as adults, we are used to getting quick results from other adults around us.

For example:
"We have discussed this before. It is time to turn off the TV and go upstairs for bedtime. It is the same every night."

"Creating expectations and boundaries is a necessity in providing clear and effective communication with in the parent and child relationship."

-Miss Behaviour

CONNECTION

CONNECTING WHEN IT IS HARD

It can be easy to connect during happy times when everything is going well but not so much during challenges and difficult situations. During times of distress and frustration, most of us want to pull away from that person and possible even shut down. Children are just starting to understand their big feelings but still need support from their adults to know how to best cope with these feelings. When they are upset, they seek an adult that is calm and regulated and willing to want to remain connected to them. This can make for a more positive outcome and impact.

Ways to Connect More

- **affection/hugs/kisses**
- **expectations and boundaries**
- **helping to de-escalate a child**
- **staying calm ourselves**
- **continue our regulation**
- **don't judge the child's upset**
- **listening to a child**
- **spending time together**
- **talking with each other**
- **re-assuring a child**
- **being in-sync with each other**

CONFIRM CONNECTION TIMES

Children want to know "when do I get you?" They constantly check in with us to meet their need of emotional security and physical safety. Try to schedule quality time together without any distractions. Start with a short amount of time like 5-10 minutes a few times a week and then work your way up if you can. If you can keep this special time spent together as a consistent routine, this may help children understand when they WILL have you which can decrease whining and clingy-ness. For an extra benefit, schedule this special connection time on a calendar or in some other visual format so they can actually see it and to signify it's importance.

Children always want to know....
"When do I get you all to myself?"

CONNECT THROUGH BOUNDARIES

The very act of creating and supporting boundaries is connecting. The underlining message to the child of how 'you've got their back' is understood by doing this. They can understand that YOU are assisting them and meeting them where THEY are at. This energetic form of communication is a connecting one - literally connecting the adult and child to be more in-synch with each other and on the same page.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

When children have structure in their lives, they are more likely to thrive in that life. Providing clear expectations & boundaries helps provide that structure on a consistent basis. The 4-poit method to create expectations & boundaries acts like a blueprint to provide that positive structure both in physical routines as well as feelings and responses. I find it easier to stay consistent when I actually have a plan. Otherwise, I 'wing it' and that can be hard to do when other stressors take place.

"I find it easier to stay consistent when I actually have a plan. Otherwise, I 'wing it' and that can be hard to do when other stressors come into play."

-Jennifer B.
(client from ONT, Canada)

Increased and more effective communication around feelings to certain likes and dislikes, can help children to respond more positively and continue to learn how to regulate these feelings through out their lives. It is important to remember that every child, adult and situation is unique and using the MBM outline below can help guide us into making decisions for a more positive outcome.

Clear boundaries support the MBM as this is a key component in helping a child BEFORE any possible negative behaviours or situations. The act of prevention comes in the form or boundaries and offers a terrific strategy to be more proactive.

It can also help the adult to stay more neutral, connected and engaged because the knowledge around development and communication has been discussed. Learning WHY it is happening and WHAT to do about it helps build that confidence. In the face of challenge, the MBM anchors us and helps supports everyone involved.

DATE	TOPIC

Journal

THINGS THAT RESONATED

GOALS

-
-
-

TO DO

-
-
-
-

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We offer a variety of other workshop topics both online and in person.
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CERTIFICATE OF PARTICIPATION

REGISTERED AND PARTICIPATED IN THE 1.5 HOUR ONLINE WORKSHOP: 'CLEAR EXPECTATIONS & BOUNDARIES'

PRESENTED BY:

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This workshop can be used towards professional development hours. Confirmation will be cross-referenced for those who had registered and participated in the full workshop.

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