



How To Reach The Hard to Teach Child

Texas Parent to Parent

About Us



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What You Will Learn:

- What Children Need to Thrive
- Common Reasons Children Resist Teaching or Guidance
- Frequently Overlooked Foundations For Learning
- Simple Strategies To Develop Emotional Regulation
- How to Build Trust as a Parent or Teacher



Why Are You Here?

What Children Need to Thrive

- Regulation and Consistency: In daily and weekly routine
- Nurturing Relationships
- Proper Basic Care + Nutrition
- Sufficient Cognitive Challenges + Problems to Solve
- Fun + Play

Reasons Kids Resist

- Anxiety about doing it 'right' = Protecting Self-Esteem
- Boredom (Gifted children)
- Not appropriate skill level/too challenging
- Neurological Foundations are not in place
- Attentional Priorities are at a level of needing safety/security
- Resentment around performance demands

Exercise 1

Think about the individual that brought you here today. What does your gut tell you is the reason for their behaviors or 'resistance'?

What Are Foundations To Learning?

- Body Awareness
- Balance/Vestibular Functioning
- Visual Processing
- Auditory/Language Processing
- Muscle Tone
- Background processes need to be automatic and not the primary focus (touch, for example)

Potential Obstacles To Learning

- On a neurological level child is in fight/flight/fright mode: this causes reflexive orienting to background noise, peripheral movement and possibly explosive outbursts
- Any time there is aggression there is fear in the brain
- Low muscle tone can slow down processing input and motor output; others assume boredom

Potential Reactions to Processing Issues

Child may avoid, act 'silly', become class clown, etc. when presented with challenging tasks that have a common theme:

- poor spatial understanding
- poor body awareness (can't follow directions involving position of body)
- poor visual figure-ground (sort silverware + homework)

What Are Social-Cognitive Foundations To Learning?

- Individuals with autism and ADHD often have less developed: self-awareness, self-other relationships, perspective-taking and empathy.
- How does this influence a student's understanding of what they are reading when they are reading about characters' relationships and socially-based narratives? The person with ASD does not have the same memory encoding as a non-autistic person.

Emotional Regulation

How does it develop?

- Through parent-child guiding interactions
- Entrainment to caregivers' heart field
- Social referencing
- Also a component involving sensory experiences, such as tactile integration

2 Kinds of Strategies For Emotional Regulation

- “In the Moment” strategies
- “Big Picture” stress reducers

“In the Moment” Strategies

- Touch-based calming techniques
- Deep Breathing - mirror neurons, parasympathetic nervous system
- Energy techniques for grounding
- Label emotions in the moment “You look angry, frustrated, sad”
- “It’s ok to feel ___ but not to hit.” “That hurts mommy/daddy.” Don’t react with anger yourself.

Strategies for Stress Reduction

- Daily massage or tactile integration program
- Deep Breathing Routine
- Yoga part of daily routine (also integrates reflexes)
- Energy techniques and neurodevelopmental programs
- Playful rehearsing when NOT angry - use stuffed animals, etc.
- Vigorous daily exercise to the point of exhaustion.
- Sleep hygiene - good quality sleep, avoid electronics before bed, etc.

Big Picture Components to Think About

- Activity Level - Is Child Getting Enough Movement?
- Not Enough Sunlight?
- Nutrition: too much sugar, artificial “food”?
- Energy Of Space You Live In (Objects Absorb Energy)
- Cluttered Environment
- Stress - Workload too high, Not enough play
- Play is IMPORTANT for everyone - not just kids

Are You Playing Everyday?

“The opposite of play is...depression.”

Brené Brown

When A Child Is In Meltdown

- Stop talking
- Tactile integration - nervous system calms down, same pressure as in the womb
- Deep breathing - hopefully activating mirror neurons
- Keep yourself calm and centered
- Energy visualization (pink bubble from heart)

How To Build Emotional Intelligence

- Tactile Integration program (MNRI)
- Frequent safe touch, hugs, smiles
- Frequent play (rough and tumble with young children)
- Comment on scenes - “She looks sad. I think he hit her by accident.”
- State your feelings: “I like this game. What do you think?”
- Be curious about your child’s perspective.
- Label feeling states and emotions: “You look like you are getting sleepy. Is it time for bed?” “I know you are mad/frustrated, but we don’t hit. It’s ok to be angry at mommy but not to yell.”

How To Build Trust

- Nonjudgmental attitude
- Smile often at your child
- Set consistent limits
- Explain your feeling state (“It makes me nervous you might get hit by a car.” “Sometimes I worry you will fall from the tree.”)
- “That looks hard. Let me know if you need some help.”

How To Build Competence

- Minimize praise (rewards, ‘good job’)
- Allow small challenges and build frustration tolerance
- “You worked hard on that” instead of “Good job!”
- Regular opportunities to help with projects: put a bookcase together, declutter the garage, help with a garage sale.

Step 1: Reduce Stressors

If your child is significantly stressed right now and this is impacting your relationship and his or her motivation, then:

- Look for patterns in the kinds of activities/subjects he/she avoids.
- Remove unnecessary stress (such as 2 hours of fighting over homework, for kids in school)
- Remove addictive activities like video games or computer access if it interferes with motivation

Step 1: Reduce Stressors

Give 2 weeks of adjustment and monitor your child's:

- Affect/emotional expressions (is he generally happy*?)
- Activity level (signs of depression?)
- Anxiety
- Motivation to do things with you
- Independence

Step 2: Increase Smiles + Eye Contact

- Make a point of making eye contact with your child and smiling BEFORE you communicate verbally.
- When you walk into a room, connect eye to eye with your child and say “Hi honey.”
- Do not hold an expectation they will respond to you in any specific way. Don’t take it personally if they don’t right away.
- Pupil-to-pupil eye gaze is important for bonding.

Step 3: Give More Gentle Touch

- Any time your child is near you, give a gentle hug or rest your hand on their back or shoulder for a few seconds
- Keep it natural and don't make a big deal about it
- With young children, rough and tumble play is important
- When walking together, hold hands or put your arm around elbow, shoulder, when appropriate

Building / Repairing Relationship

Those 3 Steps are important for repairing relationships, and even work with teenagers with Autism and Reactive Attachment Disorder.

If child is not motivated and has had a lot of failure, the first place to begin is repairing your relationship. THEN look into assessing neurodevelopment foundations (such as with a HANDLE program).

Self Reflection

What do you think is your child/student's primary issue?

What will you do differently after today's talk?

What specific actions are you going to put into place when you get home?

Reflection Question

- What is your big takeaway from this talk?
- Email us with your feedback and receive a complimentary consultation.

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Resources

www.happyhealthyhomeschooling.com

- Homeschooling course coming out August 2019
- Free webinars on Time Management, Organization, How to Handle Meltdowns + Challenging Behaviors, How to Choose Curriculum, etc.
- Get Support At Facebook Group: Happy Healthy Homeschooling

Carla's Bio



Carla Scruggs is a homeschool consultant who is mom to two young adults, one with autism who is an Eagle Scout, completed a post-secondary program at community college, and is now employed. Her daughter is now nearing completion of her degree in anthropology at a major university. Carla homeschooled her children for 12 years and especially loves helping families learn to work with their kids in a way that supports the emotional needs of the child and that will help them become independent adults. She has been a Parent Match Volunteer with Texas Parent to Parent for several years.

Carla has a B.S. in Electrical Engineering and worked in that field for several years. She is now pursuing certification with the Integrative Autism Institute. You may reach her at howdy@carlascruggs.com

April's Bio



April Choulatt is an autism specialist with 25 years of experience in a wide range of therapeutic programs, including behavioral intervention, relationship-based approaches, social skills and communication programs and neurosensory reflex integration programs. She works with clients of all ages to create individualized therapeutic lifestyles that are aligned with their values and Quality of Life goals.

April has experience with individuals with a range of conditions that are resistant to traditional therapy, including Autism Spectrum, ADHD, Oppositional Defiant Disorder, Traumatic Brain Injury, Tourette's, Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder and various mental health challenges such as depression and anxiety. She is founder of Transcend Autism Academy, the first online group coaching program for parents of children with autism. She also provides mentoring and professional training to consultants to work in a holistic, integrative way, through the Integrative Autism Institute. You may reach her at april@transcendautism.com