

# Building Self Regulation & Independence through Positive Reinforcement



Tuesday, May 5  
St. John's Learning Commons

WELCOME

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## *Catholic Education Week Prayer*

God of grace and love,  
Strengthen and sustain us as we continue to journey as pilgrims of hope.  
Guide us on the path to holiness with the light of your love.  
Inspire us to serve joyfully in the love of Christ through the beautiful examples of the saints.

As we journey together in faith,  
may we experience the peace of Christ through the presence of one another.

We pray that all young people in our Catholic schools may believe,  
and become empowered by, these three important Gospel messages:

“God loves you!”

“Christ saves you!”

“The Holy Spirit lives in you!”

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

**Today's goal:** To provide strategies that can be used at home to help increase a child's independence and ability to self-regulate.

"PARENTS ARE  
TEACHERS,  
AND HOME  
IS A CHILD'S  
FIRST  
AND MOST  
IMPORTANT  
CLASSROOM."

- Hillary Clinton

# Overview

## Behaviour Analyst - Ryan Lane

- Universal Supports at Home
  - What are they?
  - How are they used?
  - Examples
  - First, Then
  - Token Boards

## Social Worker - Miguel Guayasamin

- Screen time
- Building Meaningful Connections

# Universal Supports

- Promote independence
- Prevent challenging behaviours
- Increase learning opportunities
- Assist students to access learning opportunities

***Highly effective, evidence-based teaching strategies***

# Reinforcement

What is Reinforcement?

Why is Reinforcement Important?

Example: A child has a really difficult time getting ready for school in the morning. When they are told to put on their backpack they scream and try to run away to their room. Reinforcement could be used as a tool in this scenario to decrease these challenging behaviours and increase their independence of getting ready for school.

# Examples of Reinforcement

Examples for Children:

- Verbal Praise and encouragement - “Great Job!”
- Access to an item that they enjoy - Bubbles, Toys
- Access to Activity - Playing Soccer, Watching a movie
- High fives, thumbs up, fist bumps, Hugs



# When should I use reinforcement?

- When you your child completes or starts to do something that they usually have trouble with
  - Putting down their tablet when you ask, cleaning up their toys, putting on their backpack to go to school
- When your child has a better response than usual
  - They say “Can I have more time with my toys?” instead of yelling, hitting or throwing. You might reinforce this by praising your child for asking nicely and allowing them to have a couple more minutes with their toys

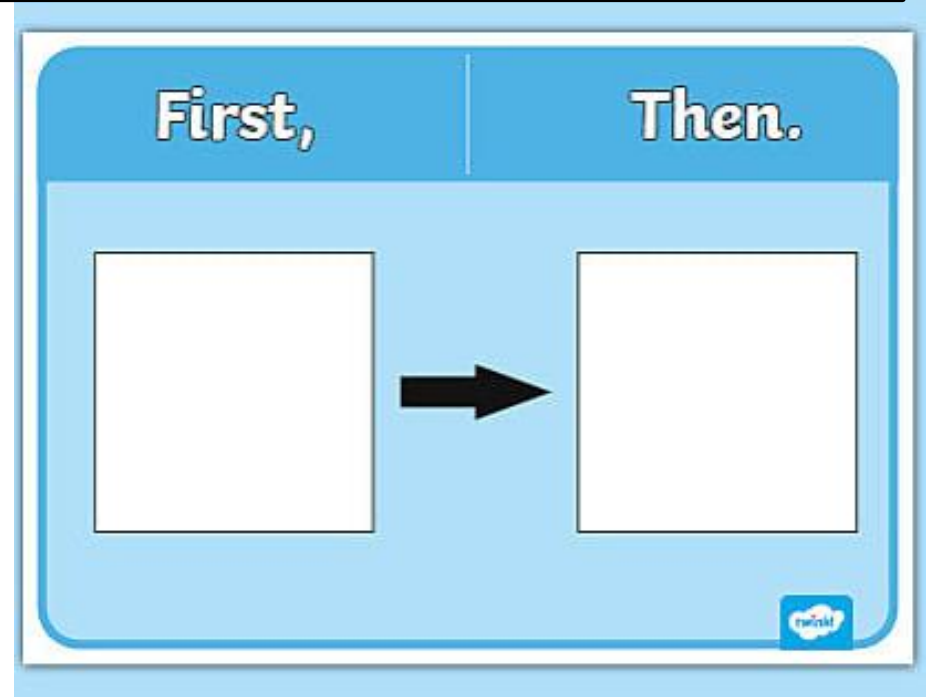
# How to Reinforce Effectively

When you see behaviour you want to **increase**, ensure reinforcement is:

- Immediate
- Specific
- Frequent
- Individualized
- Consistent
- Paired with social praise

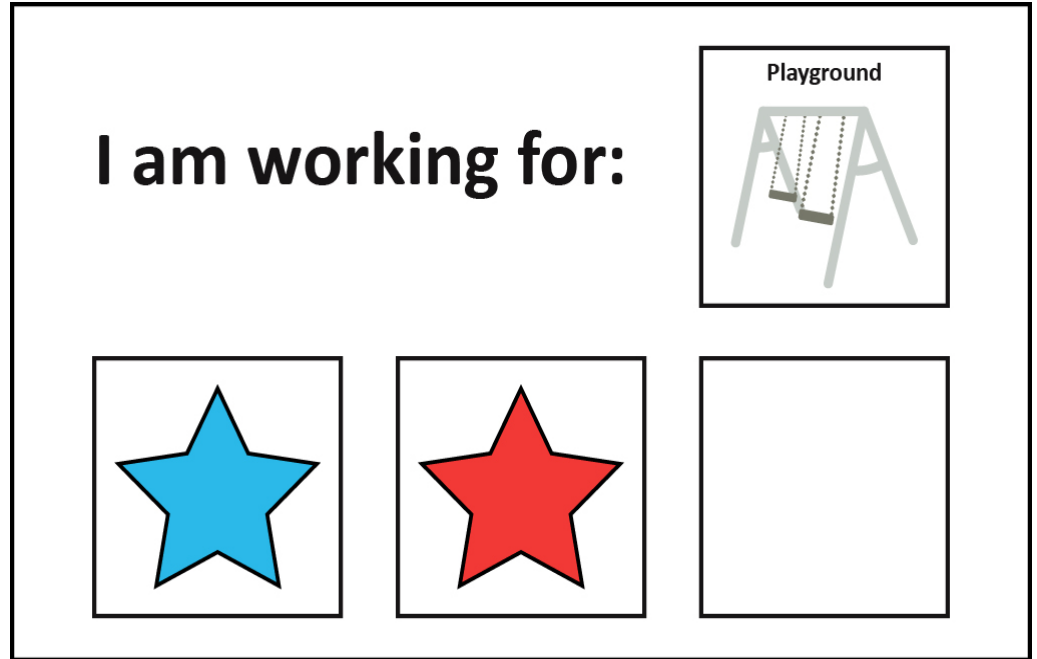
# First, Then Reinforcement

- A way to structure reinforcement and build motivation
- The “First” is a task, instruction, or something that the child might find difficult
- The “Then” is Reinforcement



# Token Board Reinforcement

- Another way to structure reinforcement and build motivation
- Child chooses what they want to work for
- Child earns tokens that they can exchange for reinforcement



# Expectation Setting



- Priming - Setting expectations ahead of time so that the child knows the schedule or “plan” for what is happening and what is expected of them
- Using timers - Using timers to show how much time your child has with something before having to give it up
- Routines - Establishing clear, predictable & consistent day-to-day routines

## After School Routine



**Arrive Home**

Put backpack away



**Snack Time**

Healthy Snack



**Calm Break**

Rest or Relax



**Reading or Writing**

Practice school skills



**Play Time**

Free play or activity



**Dinner**

Eat together



**Get Ready for Bed**

Bath and pyjamas

## Bedtime Routine



**Tidy Toys**

Put toys away



**Bath or Shower**

Wash and relax



**Brush Teeth**

Sparkly smile!



**Pyjamas**

Get comfy!



**Story Time**

One or two books



**Lights out**

Sleep tight



**GOOD NIGHT**

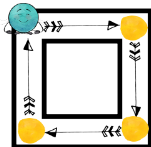
# Other Universal Support Strategies

- Tell them what they can do instead of what not to do
  - “Use your walking feet” vs “Stop running!”
- Incidental teaching
  - Find teaching moments during day-to-day routines and activities to model, coach and provide reinforcement for
- Prioritizing Pairing and Relationship building
  - Intentionally setting aside time to positively engage and join them in their favourite activities

# What if this doesn't work?

- Be consistent!
  - It will take time to establish expectations
  - There may be some push back - keep to your expectations
- It is okay for your child to be upset, they are learning something new!
- Follow through!
  - Without follow through, the supports will not be as successful

## BOX BREATHING



## LAZY 8 BREATHING



## FLOWER BREATHING



## CUPCAKE BREATHING



# Visuals for Home

## MORNING ROUTINE



## GETTING DRESSED



happy



sad



frustrated



angry



tired



sick



hurt

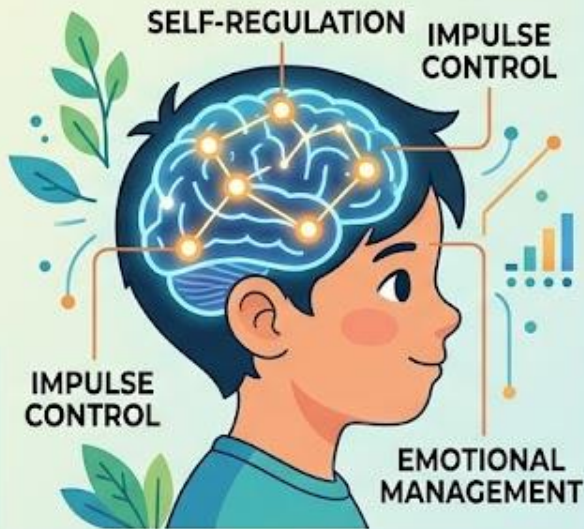


It's too loud

# ELEMENTARY YEARS: BRAIN DEVELOPMENT & SCREEN STIMULATION



## CRITICAL PERIOD FOR BRAIN GROWTH



The elementary years are a time of rapid brain growth, especially in these crucial areas.



## TOO MUCH SCREEN STIMULATION CAN:

- **REDUCE OPPORTUNITIES** for the brain to practice patience, focus, and emotional control.



- **MAKE IT HARDER FOR CHILDREN TO TRANSITION** between tasks.



## SLEEP IS ESSENTIAL FOR BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

**SCREENS—ESPECIALLY BEFORE BEDTIME—CAN:**

- **INTERFERE WITH SLEEP QUALITY.**



- **IMPACT MEMORY, MOOD, AND LEARNING** the next day.



# EXCESSIVE SCREEN USE & EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT



## INCREASED EMOTIONAL CHALLENGES

- Irritability and emotional outbursts
- Anxiety and mood difficulties
- Difficulty managing frustration



Excessive screen use is linked with these issues.



## SCREENS AS A PRIMARY COPING TOOL

- Screens replace vital learning skills
- Children become reliant rather than independent

### INSTEAD OF LEARNING:



- Naming feelings



- Asking for help



- Using movement or calming strategies



## FEWER SOCIAL SKILL OPPORTUNITIES

- Fewer chances to practice critical social interactions.

- Conflict resolution



- Empathy



- Reading social cues



Fewer chances to practice critical social interactions.

# FOSTERING PARENT-CHILD CONNECTION IN A DIGITAL AGE



## MEANINGFUL CONNECTION HAPPENS IN SMALL MOMENTS

Often during: meals, car rides, bedtime routines.

When screens are present, opportunities for:

- Conversation
- Emotional check-ins
- Shared problem-solving **CAN BE REDUCED.**



## SCREEN USE & CHILDHOOD PERCEPTIONS

Children often interpret screen availability as:

- “This is how I get comfort”
- “This is how we spend time together”



Parent-Child Relationships are **PROTECTIVE** for:

- Behavior regulation
- Academic success
- Emotional resilience

**EMPHASIZE  
PROGRESS OVER  
OVER PERFECTION.**



## SUGGESTIONS TO SHARE

### CREATE SCREEN-FREE ZONES OR TIMES

- Meals, bedrooms, before school, before bed

### USE SCREENS INTENTIONALLY, NOT AS DEFAULT ENTERTAINMENT

### ENCOURAGE REPLACEMENT ACTIVITIES:

- Free play
- Board games
- Reading together
- Outdoor movement



### PREPARE FOR TRANSITIONS:

- Give warnings before screen time ends
- Expect emotions and support children through them

### FOCUS ON CONNECTION FIRST:

“I see you’re bored—let’s think together about what we can do”

# SCREEN TIME GUIDELINES

"MEANINGFUL CONNECTION DOESN'T REQUIRE A SCREEN.  
TRUE BRAIN-BUILDING HAPPENS DURING MOMENTS OF SHARED JOY, CULTURE, AND PLAY."



**FOSTERS EMOTIONAL  
REGULATION**



**DEVELOPS  
SOCIAL SKILLS**



**STRENGTHENS  
CULTURAL IDENTITY**



**SPARKS  
IMAGINATION**

# GUIDELINES FOR CHILDREN'S RECREATIONAL SCREEN TIME (AGES 0-12)

ACCORDING TO CANADIAN PAEDIATRIC SOCIETY (CPS) AND CANADIAN 24-HOUR MOVEMENT GUIDELINES

**INFANTS & TODDLERS**  
(UNDER 2 YEARS)

**NO SCREEN TIME**  
**RECOMMENDED**



**Why?**

- RAPID BRAIN DEVELOPMENT
- SOCIAL INTERACTION IS CRUCIAL
- REPLACES PHYSICAL ACTIVITY & SLEEP

**EXCEPTION:**  
LIVE VIDEO CHATTING  
(with adults)  
for connection



**PRESCHOOLERS**  
(2-4 YEARS)

**LESS THAN**  
**1 HOUR**  
**PER DAY**



**Focus on**

- HIGH-QUALITY EDUCATIONAL CONTENT
- SUPERVISED & INTERACTIVE
- CO-VIEWING WITH PARENTS



**SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN**  
(5-12 YEARS)

**MAXIMUM**  
**2 HOURS**  
**RECREATIONAL**  
**PER DAY**



**Key Principles**

- PRIORITIZE:** SLEEP, SCHOOLWORK, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY
- BALANCE WITH:** OUTDOOR PLAY, READING, HOBBIES
- OFF SCHOOL DEVICES** COUNT SEPARATELY

## GENERAL PRINCIPLES FOR ALL AGES



**NO SCREENS BEFORE BED**



**TURN OFF BACKGROUND TV**



**ESTABLISH SCREEN-FREE ZONES**



**BE A ROLE MODEL**



**TRY THE 20-20-20 RULE**

\*Definitions of recreational screen time and exceptions may vary; guidelines generally exclude school-required screen use. Consultation with a healthcare professional is recommended.

Source: Canadian Paediatric Society and affiliated Canadian movement guidelines. This visual is for informational purposes only and does not constitute medical advice.

# THE POWER OF SHARED PLAY

"MEANINGFUL CONNECTION DOESN'T REQUIRE A SCREEN.  
TRUE BRAIN-BUILDING HAPPENS DURING MOMENTS OF SHARED JOY, CULTURE, AND PLAY."



**FOSTERS EMOTIONAL  
REGULATION**



**DEVELOPS  
SOCIAL SKILLS**



**STRENGTHENS  
CULTURAL IDENTITY**



**SPARKS  
IMAGINATION**

# At-Home Activity Ideas for Kids



# Questions




# You're Invited!

Please join us for more conversation!

## Catholic Community Café & Council Meeting

Friday May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2026  
8:45am to 11:00am

**St. John's Staff & Catholic School Advisory Council**  
*invite you to join in our Catholic Education Week 2026 ...*



### Catholic Community Café & Council Meeting

Friday May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2026  
8:45am to 11:00am

**Catholic Community Café: 8:45am – 9:30am**

- ❖ parent/guardian social: coffee, tea & snacks in the Gym




**Catholic School Advisory Council: 9:30am – 11:00am**

- ❖ this will be our final Council meeting of the year
- ❖ this is an open discussion with Administrators where parents can provide feedback on this school year as well as share ideas about topics of interest for next year

**Daily Mass (11:00am – 12:00pm)**

- ❖ all are welcome to join our Junior & Intermediate Students for Mass at St. John's church

*Come for some or come for all. If you are unable to join us but a grandparent or relative is available, they are most welcome to join us instead.*





THANK YOU

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