



# Understanding Challenging Behavior and Building Positive Relationships



**K-STATE**  
Research and Extension

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# Objectives

After participating in this workshop, participants will be able to:

- describe challenging behavior.
- describe how challenging behavior serves a function for children.
- describe the importance of building relationships with children, families and colleagues.
- describe the relationship between environmental variables and children's challenging behaviors, and
- identify strategies that can be used to build positive relationships.



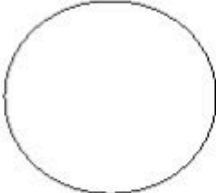
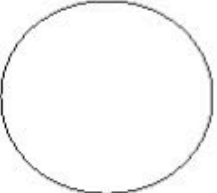
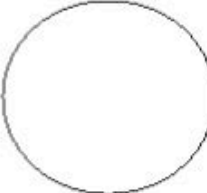
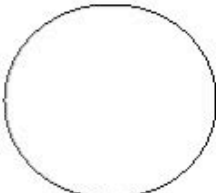
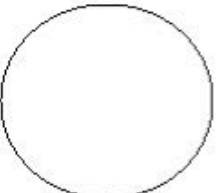
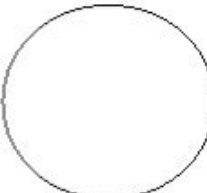
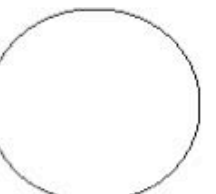
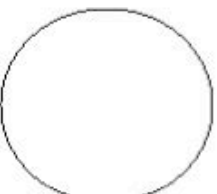
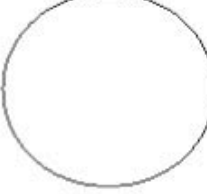
# Examining our Attitudes about Challenging Behavior

- What behaviors push your 'hot button' ?
- How do these behaviors make you feel?
- How does this impact your relationship with a child and his/her family?

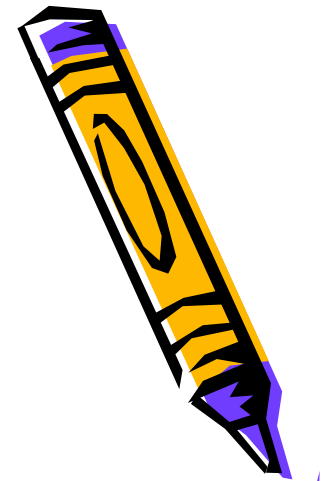


*Understanding Challenging Behavior and Building Positive Relationships*

**Hot Button Activity**

<p>On each circle going across, write down the behaviors that push your buttons.</p>			
<p>On each circle going across, write down your feelings when faced with these behaviors.</p>			
<p>On each circle going across, write down the impact your feelings have on your relationship with the children who exhibit these behaviors.</p>			

Source: The Center for Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign



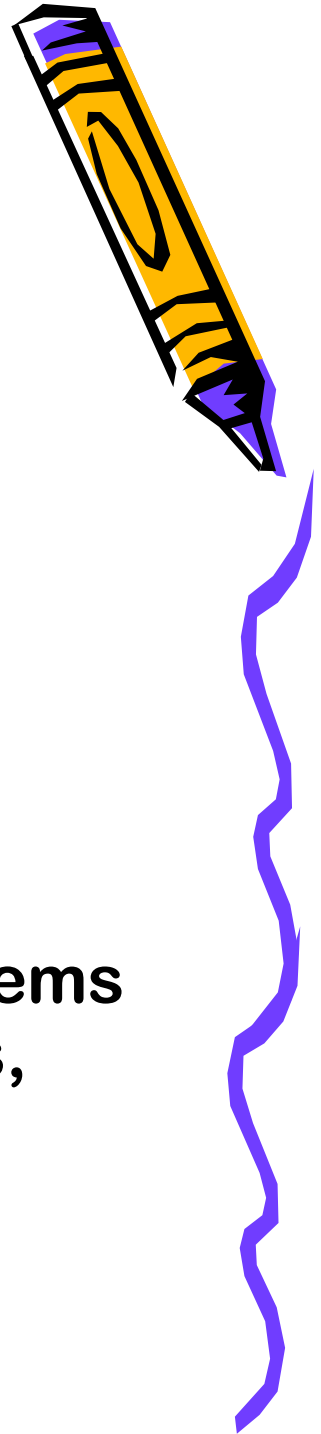
# What is Challenging Behavior?

Any behavior that:

- Interferes with the child's development and success at play.
- Is harmful to the child or others.
- Puts a child at high risk for later social problems or school failure (Klass, Guskin, and Thomas, 1995; Ritchie and Pohl, 1995.)

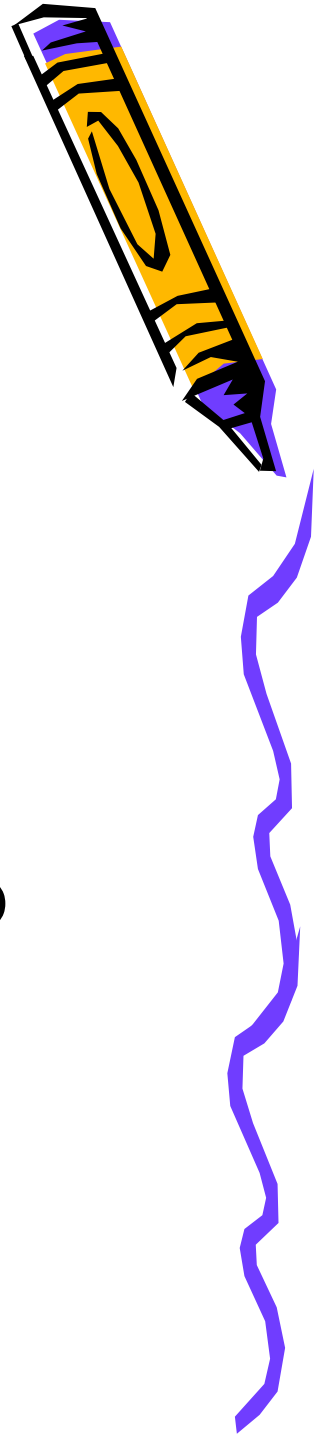


Kaiser, B., & Rasminsky, J. S. (2007). *Challenging behavior in young children, understanding, preventing, and responding effectively*. Pearson Education, Inc.



# Why does challenging behavior occur?

Children often use challenging behavior when they lack more appropriate behaviors or skills to accomplish the same goal or to communicate the message.



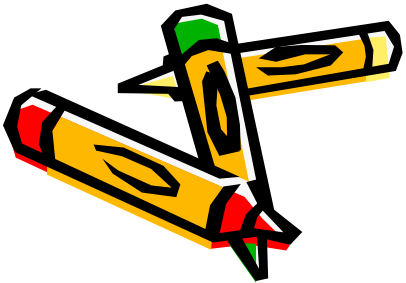
# Basic Assumptions

- Challenging behavior usually has a message – “I’ m bored, I’ m sad, you hurt my feelings, I need some attention.”
- Behavior that persists over time suggests that it is allowing the child to accomplish their goal (explicit or implicit).

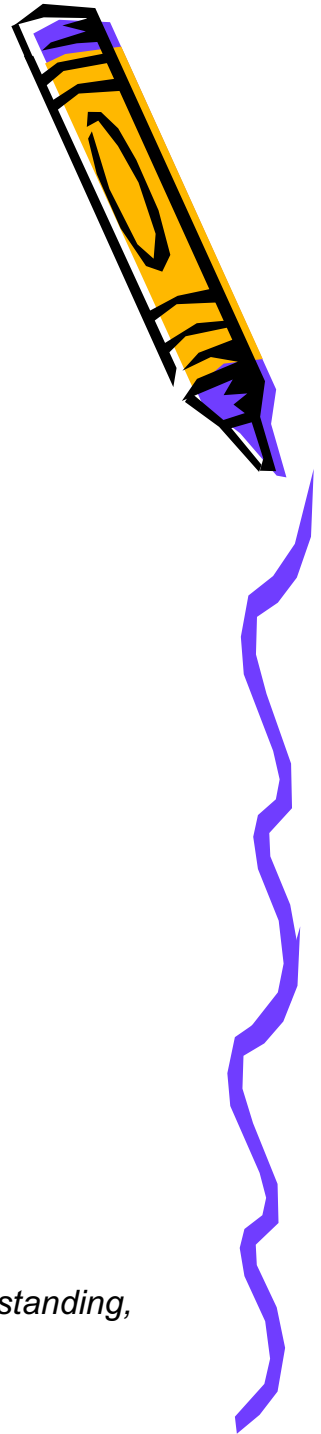


# Two Types of Risk Factors

- Biological
- Environmental



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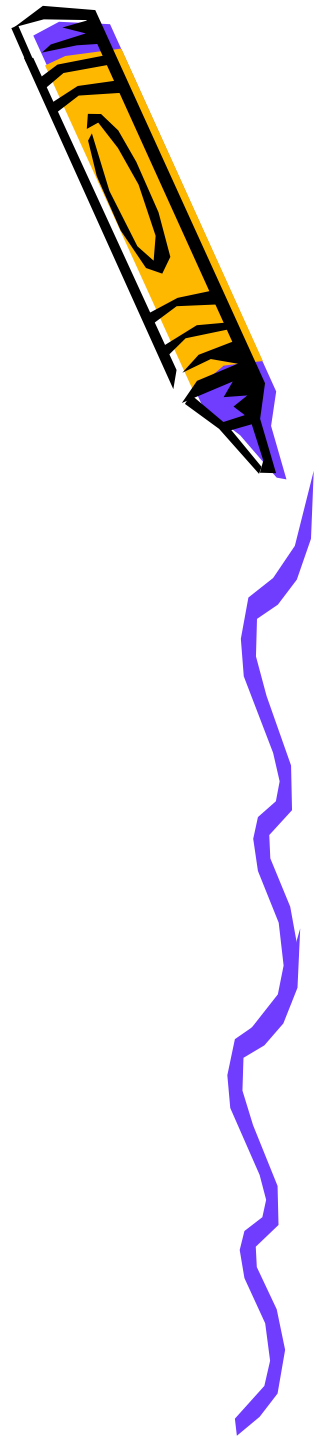


# Biological Risk Factors

- Genes
- Temperament
- ADD/ADHD
- Complications of pregnancy and birth
- Substance abuse during pregnancy
- Malnutrition
- Brain based language and cognitive disorders
- Gender



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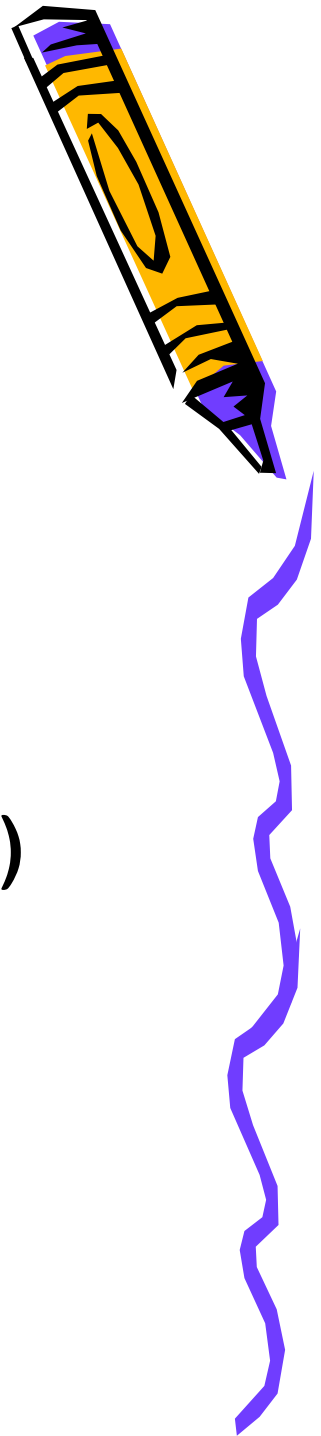


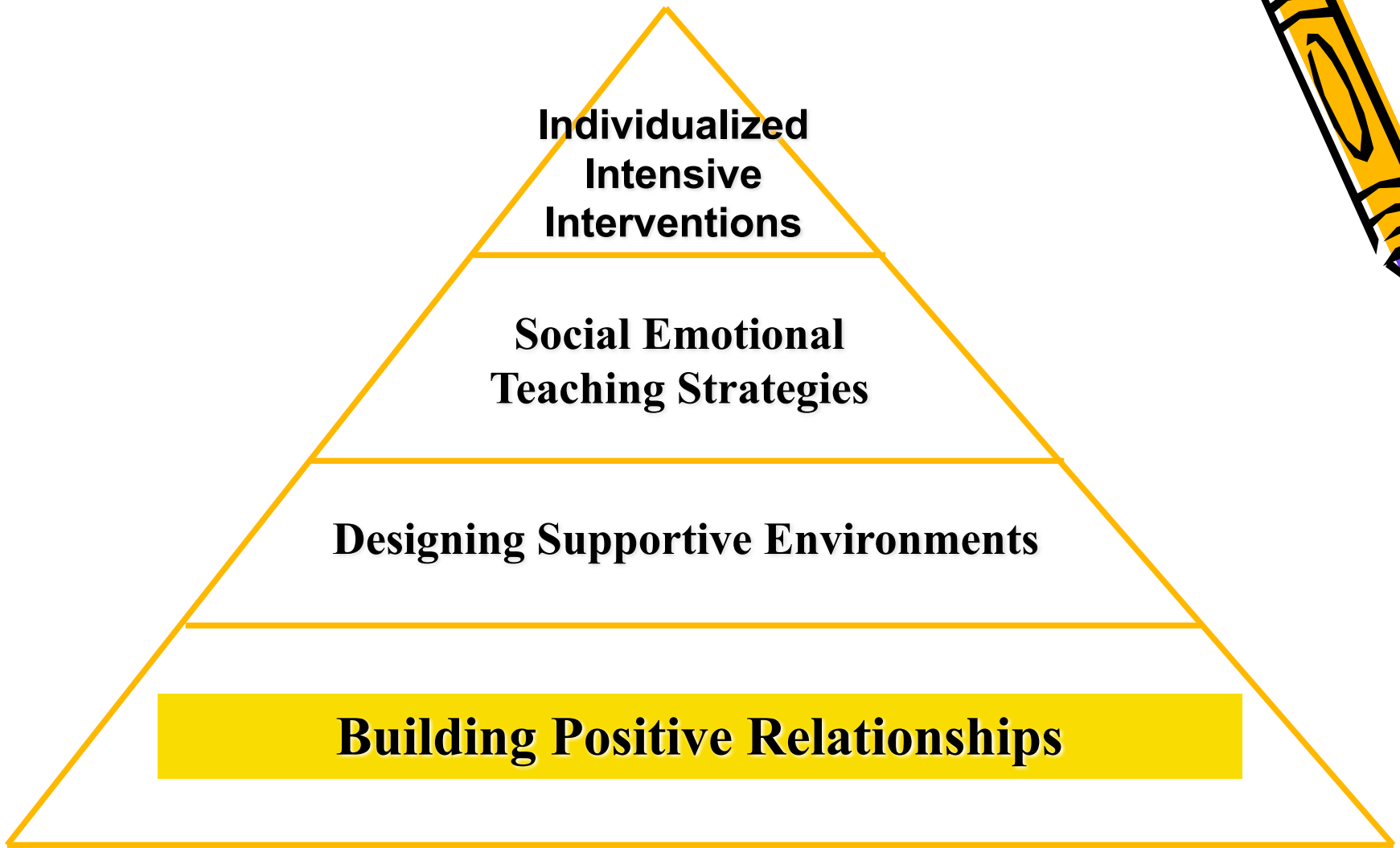
# Environmental Risk Factors

- Family factors and parenting styles
- Poverty
- Exposure to violence (including media)
- Turbulent times (terrorist attacks, hurricanes, earthquakes, etc.)



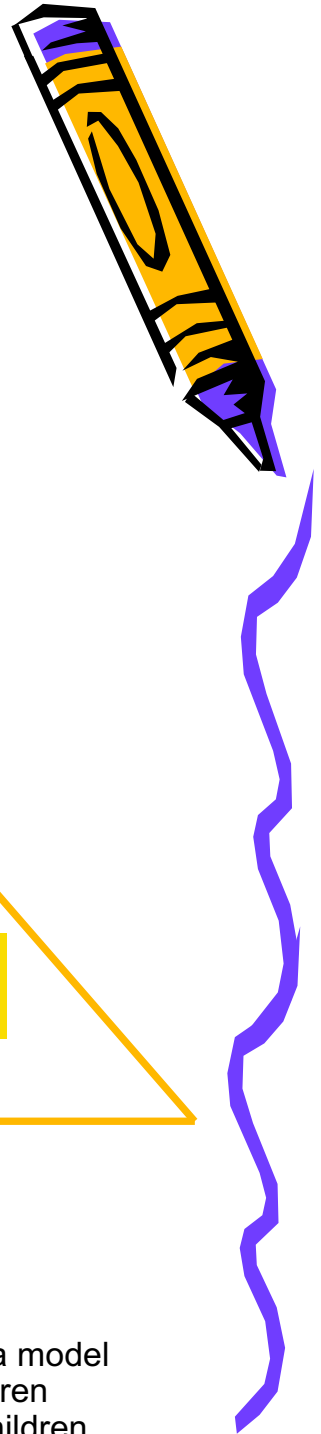
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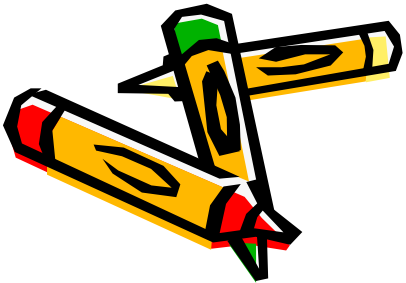
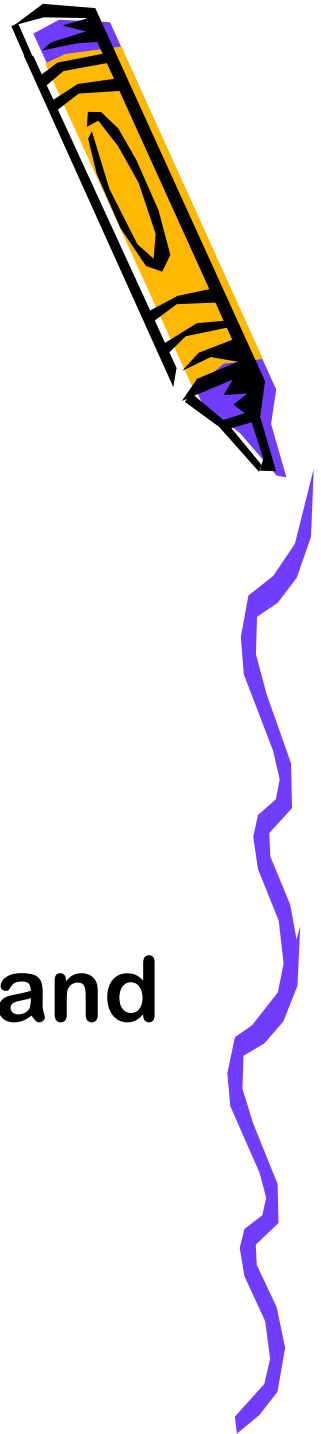
# The Teaching Pyramid

Fox, L., Dunlap, G., Hemmeter, M. L., & Strain, P. S. (2003). The teaching pyramid, a model for supporting social competence and preventing challenging behavior in young children [Electronic version]. *Young Child*, National Association for the Education of Young Children.



# Building Relationships

- Is the foundation of an effective early childhood program.
- Occurs between teachers and children as well as with families and other professionals.



# Building Relationships

- Helps each child feel accepted.
- Assists children in learning to communicate and get along with others (pro-social skills).
- Encourages feelings of empathy and mutual respect among children and adults.
- Creates a supportive environment in which children can learn and practice appropriate and acceptable behaviors as individuals and as a group.



# Why invest time?

1. As adults build positive relationships with children, their potential influence in children's behavior grows significantly.
2. Children develop positive self-concept, confidence, and a sense of safety that help reduce challenging behavior.





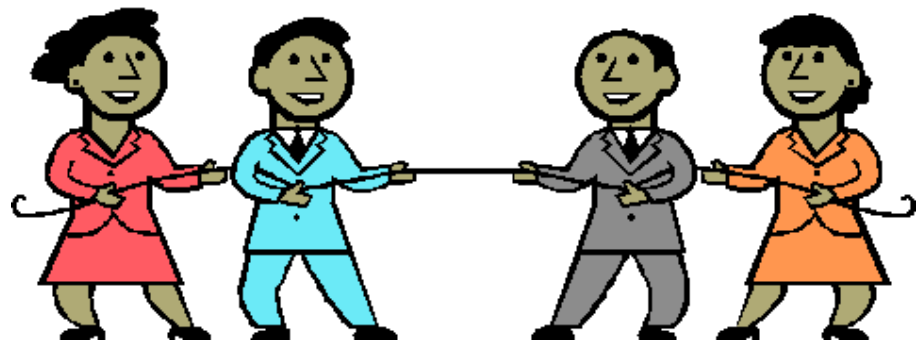
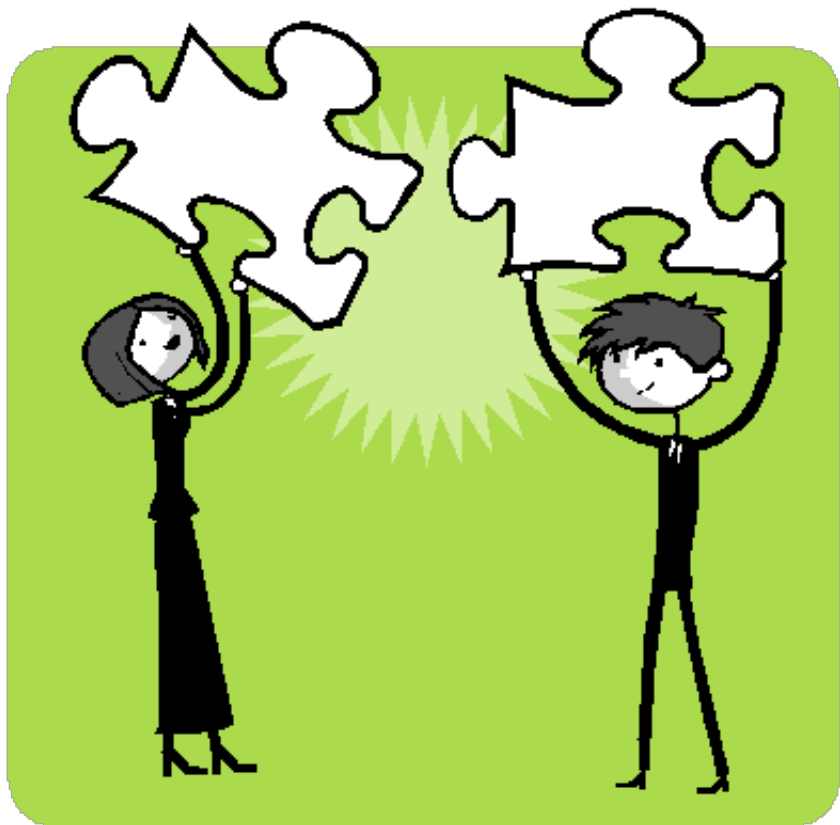
**Connected**



**Disconnected**



# Connected



# Disconnected





# Building Positive Relationships with Children

Empathy

Play

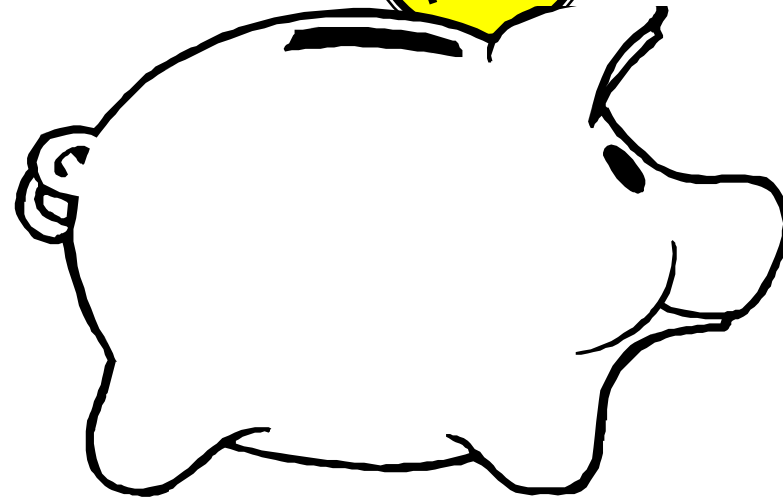
Happy Grams

Notes home

Time & Attention

Home visits

Share



# Activity: Building Relationships

- How do you build positive relationships with:
  - Children?
  - Families?
  - Colleagues?
- Brainstorm a list of things you could do to build or strengthen relationships with children, families, or other colleagues
- Share with the large group
- Identify 2-3 things you are going to do to build stronger relationships with children, families, and colleagues.



# Building Positive Relationships with Children



- Adults gain a thorough understanding of child's preferences, interests, background and culture.
- Adults must also share information about themselves, i.e., information should be reciprocal.



# Ideas for Making “Deposits”

- Greet every child at the door by name.
- Post children’s work around the room.
- Have a “star” of the week who brings in special things from home and gets to share them during circle time.
- Call a child’s parent in front of them to say what a great day she is having or send home positive notes.
- Call a child after a difficult day and say, “I’m sorry we had a tough day today. I know tomorrow is going to be better!”
- Give hugs, high fives and thumbs up accomplishing tasks.



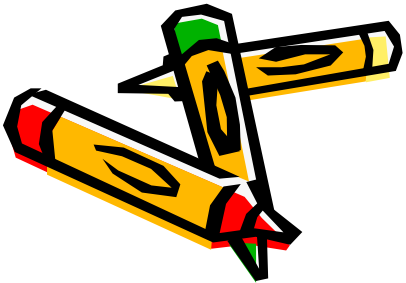
# Building Relationships with Families

- Keep lines of communication open.
- Support and encourage parental involvement.
- Learn from family members about their children, home and family life.
- Share resources with parents.
- Share positive things.
- Conduct meetings with parents in an environment and time convenient for them.
- Assure parents about confidentiality and privacy.



# Building Relationships with Colleagues

- Encourage teamwork
- Provide support
- Build trust
- Be honest and kind
- Respect co-workers' talents and abilities
- Acknowledge accomplishments
- Understand and respect each other's backgrounds
- Develop a shared vision, goals and mission
- Have a sense of humor
- Build cooperation



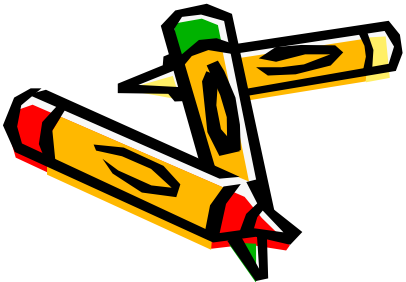
# Summary

- Remember that children often use challenging behavior when they lack more appropriate behaviors or skills to accomplish the same goal or to communicate a message.
- The first and most important thing that we can do is build positive relationships with every child and family (as well as with the other professionals who work with the child and his/her family).
- Focus on prevention and teaching appropriate skills. This means that our focus must be on “teaching children new skills” rather than “trying to get them to stop using challenging behaviors.”



# Action Planning

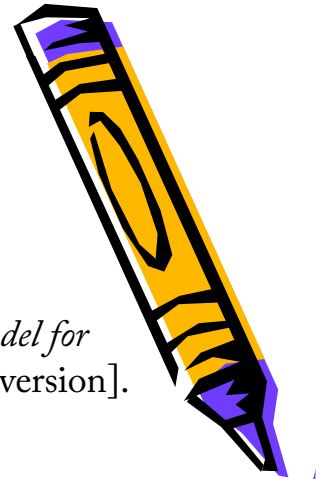
- Fill in the grid with ideas of what you are going to do to improve your relationships with all children or a particular child, family or colleague.
- Consider the resources or supports you might need to make these changes.

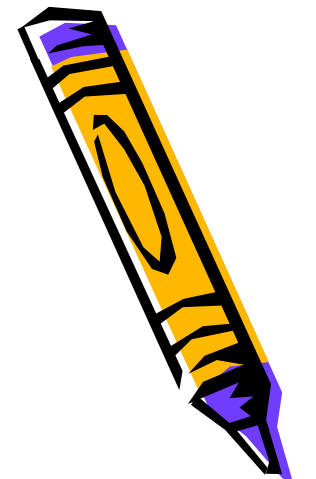




# References

- Fox, L., Dunlap, G., Hemmeter, M. L., & Strain, P. S. (2003). *The teaching pyramid, a model for supporting social competence and preventing challenging behavior in young children* [Electronic version]. Young Child, National Association for the Education of Young Children.
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In each case, credit

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