How to Reach our Most Difficult Children: The Gifts of Challenging, Out-of-Control and Aggressive Children
Presented by Jill Molli

Goals
Using Our Power of Attention

1. Create a beautiful happy life for ourselves
2. Understand how attention and emotional regulation are interrelated and develop
3. How to help children focus and build their attention spans

POWER OF ATTENTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The more we focus on that is wrong</th>
<th>The more we see the best in others</th>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>We become</td>
<td>We become</td>
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Conscious Discipline

1. What you focus on, you get more of.
2. When you’re upset, you are always focused on what you don’t want!
3. You are upset because you are resisting what is

Your Assertiveness directs their attention

- Name, Verb, Paint a Picture
  - Joshua, raise your hand and look at me
- Voice of knowing (no doubt)
- More powerful with visuals
How do we help children increase their attention span?

How do we help motivate children to focus their attention despite distractions on goals selected by adults?

**Sustained attention**

**Selective attention**

**ATTENTION IS A WHOLE BRAIN/BODY ACTIVITY**

**Executive State**, Prefrontal Lobes, Problem Solving, Relaxed Alertness

**Emotional State**, Limbic System, Connection, Not going my way

**Survival State**, Brain Stem, Safety, Threat

**Sustained Attention**

**Selective Attention**

Aiming Help: Lending our prefrontal lobes

**CONNECTION HELP**

**CLACKER HELP**
### Bottom-Up Help (Clacker Help)

- **Regulating Distress**
  1. Describe, Notice, Acknowledge (D.N.A.)
  2. Smile Take a deep breath And Relax (S.T.A.R) Program
  3. Organized Movement

### DNA (Describe, Name, Acknowledge) Process

<table>
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<tr>
<th>DNA Process</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Describe</strong></td>
<td>“Your arm went backward like this.” “Describing” means verbally capturing the moment without judgment</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Name</strong></td>
<td>Name the feeling being communicated. “You seem angry.” Name the feeling using your best educated guess.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Acknowledge</strong></td>
<td>End the process by acknowledging the child’s positive intent and desire. “You wanted ___” or “You were hoping ___”</td>
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**You cannot simply memorize the DNA dialogues and be an authentic coach for children. You must first coach yourself before you are ready to coach children.**
I can’t believe I did this again! What is wrong with me?

Survival

Emotional

Thinking

Write your own -

Survival

Emotional

Thinking

S.T.A.R. Program

- S.T.A.R. (3 X—exhale longer)
  - Smile
  - Take a deep breath
  - And
  - Relax
- I’m safe. Keep breathing. I can handle this.
- Wish Well—Become the inner state you hope the child will achieve

How will you teach the S.T.A.R. Program

- Books
- Games
- Songs
**Bottom Up Help (Connection help)**

- Joint Attention
- Face to face social play: I Love You Rituals
- Dramatic play, rough and tumble play

**Joint Attention**

- Joint Attention at 6 months
- Predicts emotional regulation at two years
- Critical foundation for social, cognitive and language development

**4 ingredients for a connection**

1. __________________________________
2. __________________________________
3. __________________________________
4. __________________________________

**Play-based curriculum:**

Play overrides biology

Attention span equals age of child: 2=2 minutes, 3=3 minutes, Adult=20 minutes

*However, children can attend in play for 20 minutes or longer, despite distractions.*

**Selective Attention**

- Prompting call and response: “My job is to keep you...”
- Reminding: “Don’t forget to push in your chair...help a friend.”
- Visuals: Rules, routines, choices
- Preparation: “In three minutes, the time it takes to brush your teeth, we are leaving.”
- Review: “Remember what happened when we were late to lunch?”
- Rehearsal: “Let’s think of some words we can use to encourage our friends.”
- Thinking out loud: “I’ll get the book I am going to read at circle time so that I am prepared.” “I’m going to take a deep breath to calm myself down.”
- Prioritizing: “We will stand up and walk safely to the door.”
- Games: Stop and go activities, red light, green light, Simon says
- Noticing instead of judging. Brain requires constant feedback in form of noticing.