NCPMI Developing a Neutralizing Routine

Planning for how to address challenging behavior when it occurs is helpful to ensure your response does not escalate a behavior and limits implicit bias that might impact your decision-making. A neutralizing routine is a brief instructional response that neutralizes the effects of implicit bias on decision making. They help adults respond to the behavior in a productive and supportive manner that is aligned with their values.

Reflections on Adult Responses to Child Behavior

Elements of the Situation

When deciding how to respond to an instance of challenging behavior, pause to consider:

- Are you making a snap decision?
- Is this a high-stakes situation that could result in use of exclusionary practices?
- What influences your response? Time of day? Location of the incident?

Attributions to the Behavior

- Are you attributing something negative or positive about the behavior?

Person's Decision State?

Check in with yourself and check how you are feeling.

- What types of statements are you telling yourself?
  - I'm so tired.
  - I'm so stressed.
  - I'm so frustrated.
- Is how you are feeling impacting your decision of how to respond to the child?

Use a Neutralizing Routine

A neutralizing routine can help you respond to behavior more effectively. Neutralizing routines should include these components:

a. If/then statement

b. Brief action with clear steps

c. Doable in the moment

d. Provides a space between child behavior and the adult response

Sample Neutralizing Routine

When I am feeling stressed and children engaged in behavior that I find challening, I will PAR:

- Pause and reflect
  - Take a deep breath.
  - Think about what happened before the behavior occurred.
- Ask
  - What is this child trying to tell me?
  - Do they want something? Do they need something? What do I know about this child that will help me figure out the reason for the behavior?
- Respond
  - When I respond, the child feels validated, listened to, understood, and safe.
  - I guide the child to use appropriate alternative behavior.

IDEAs that Work
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Pause-Ask-Respond

If you are agitated or stressed by the behavior, then P-A-R

P

Pause and Reflect

- Take a deep breath.
- Think about what happened before the behavior occurred.

A

Ask

- What is this child trying to tell me?
- Do they want something? Do they need something? What do I know about this child that will help me figure out the reason for the behavior?

R

Respond

- When I respond, I ensure the child feels validated, listened to, understood, and safe.
- I guide the child to use an appropriate alternative behavior.

TRY

When I feel stressed by behavior that pushes my buttons, I will...

T Take a deep breath.

R Reflect on my emotions, reflect on the meaning of the child's behavior.

Y I will think: "You got this. You can be calm to support the child to be calm."