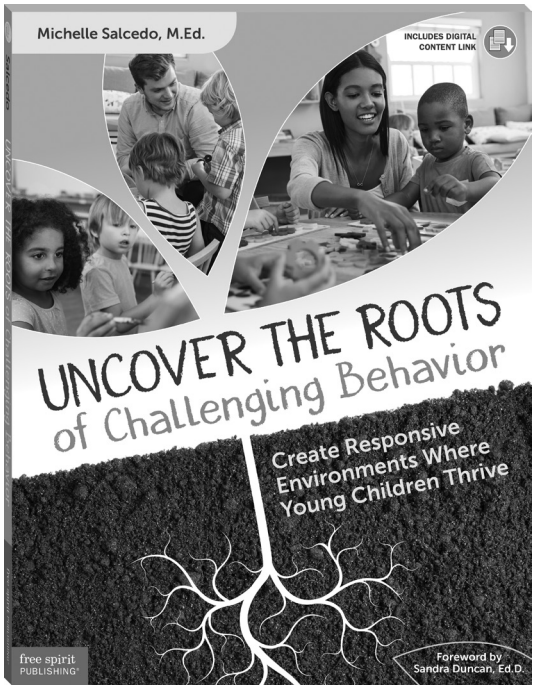


PLC/Book Study Guide for *Uncover the Roots of Challenging Behavior*

Michelle Salcedo, M.Ed.

This study guide is designed as a professional development resource that can be used to facilitate a book study, to guide teacher workshops, or to support a professional learning community (PLC). Facilitator notes are provided for additional support and explanation in planning and facilitating your school's or group's study sessions or workshops. We recommend that the training facilitator read the entire guide and the book before beginning the study.

For each session, participants will be asked to read chapters of the book. They may also be asked to bring materials or create or implement something *prior* to attending a session. Each chapter description includes guiding questions and suggested tasks that can be used as group activities during the session.

Please note that the preparation work is noted at the beginning for each session. Before you dismiss participants from each session, look ahead to the next chapter to review and clarify what must be done before the next meeting. Reach agreements if suggested tasks are going to be adjusted or modified.

free spirit PUBLISHING®

Introduction

To be completed before the first session:

- Read the book's foreword and introduction.
- List children in your classroom who exhibit behaviors that challenge you as a teacher.

Facilitator Note: *Write on index cards the children's names that teachers list and post these cards where teachers can see them during each session. As you go through the chapters of this book, leave time for teachers to discuss specific children and to apply the principles of the book to them. As a community, brainstorm ways to adapt the environment to support these children. Encourage teachers to celebrate victories and share success stories along your path together.*

1. Why do you think so many children are being expelled from early education settings?

2. How does the idea of being like a gardener change how you look at children with challenging behaviors in the classroom?

3. In what ways do you already adapt your classroom environment to meet specific needs of individual children?

4. When have you recognized that children are communicating through their behaviors? What messages were they sending?

5. Look together at the Pyramid Model image on page 3 of the book. Why do you think the layers are arranged the way they are, with environments and relationships on the bottom and interventions at the top? Do you think this is typically how many teachers look at challenging behaviors? Why or why not?

Facilitator Note: *It may be helpful to have a larger visual of the Pyramid Model available as you discuss it.*

6. The author states that when we look at behavior as communication, we realize that our responses to challenging behaviors actually have very little

power to make them go away. Why do you think that is? How does this idea change how you look at challenging behaviors?

7. What does the quote from Alexander den Heijer (page 5 of the book) mean to you? Why do you think the author found such power in that quote?

8. Take some time to think about a child you listed as having challenging behaviors. How might your approach to this child change if you shifted your focus from "fixing" her or him to adapting the environment so that she or he can be successful?

Chapter 1: Classroom Factors: Prepare the Soil for Growth

To be completed before the chapter 1 session:

- Read chapter 1.
- List one or two of the classroom factors that may be contributing to children's challenging behaviors in your classroom.
- Look at the list of teacher-made materials on page 23 of the book. Introduce two of these types of materials into your classroom and observe how children use them.

Facilitator Note: *This is a particularly long chapter with lots of content. You might want to discuss it over two or even three sessions.*

1. What idea in this chapter had the biggest impact on you?

2. What is the difference between *developmentally* appropriate expectations and *individually* appropriate expectations? How might this difference play out in a classroom?

3. What do you think of the "why not" philosophy? How might this philosophy lead to deeper learning and fewer challenging behaviors in the classroom?

4. When is a time of day that children seem to particularly struggle in your classroom? How might inappropriate expectations be contributing to their behaviors?

5. Are there areas in your classroom in which there seem to be more challenging behaviors? How might the design of the space be contributing to these behaviors? How might you change the space?

6. Tell us about the teacher-made materials you introduced into the classroom. How did children interact with the new items?

7. How do you define the idea of *responsiveness*? How might predetermined themes limit a teacher's responsiveness? How might you incorporate children's interests into the classroom?

8. On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being the highest), rate your classroom on how much it looks and feels like Times Square. Name one or two things you can do to lessen sensory stimulation.

9. What physical skills are children developing in the age group you work with? How can you enable that development inside your classroom?

10. How do you feel about the idea of giving children more power in the classroom? Does it make you nervous? Why or why not?

11. How can you build in opportunities for children to have power in your classroom?

12. Share a time when you experienced pure joy in your life. What were the physical and emotional feelings associated with that experience?

13. What impact do you think joy has on children's learning and development?

14. Do you think your classroom is a joyful place for children? What might you do to increase joy and fun?

15. What do you see as the primary differences between a *reactive* and a *proactive* approach to challenging behaviors?

16. Look at the classroom factors you listed that may be contributing to challenging behaviors in your classroom. Make a plan to reduce the impact of one of the factors, and then observe children's behaviors. Plan to discuss the results in the next session.

Chapter 2: Active Learning: Create Ideal Growing Conditions

To be completed before the chapter 2 session:

- Read chapter 2.
- Evaluate two of your classroom activities using the HOMES Active Learning Scale. Bring the results to the session to discuss.

1. Share your experience of adapting one of the classroom factors in your classroom (homework from the previous session). What did you notice about children's behaviors?

2. When was the last time you learned how to do something new? What helped you learn the new skill?

3. John Dewey, educational theorist, once said, "The only way to prepare for social life is to engage in social life. To form habits of social usefulness and serviceableness apart from any direct social need and motive, apart from any existing social situation, is, to the letter, teaching the child to swim by going through motions outside of the water." How does this quote apply to the principle of active learning?

4. Of the five senses, which do you think is most engaged for the children in your classroom? Which is the least? What can you incorporate to engage that sense?

5. How did the activities you evaluated score on the HOMES scale? What did you notice about how children engaged in the activities? How might you revise the activities so they score higher?

6. The author lists some practices (for example, project art, letter of the week, calendar time) that are common in many classrooms. Why do you think teachers incorporate these practices? How does your view of these practices change when viewed through the lens of active learning? Is there anything you might change about your practices based on the information in this chapter?

7. Work with a partner to devise an activity for your classroom that scores a 5 on the HOMES scale. Plan to implement the activity and notice how children react. Be prepared to discuss the results in the next session.

Chapter 3: Building Relationships with Children: Get to Know Your Buds

To be completed before the chapter 3 session:

- Read chapter 3.
- List the names of the children in your classroom. Record how often you have positive one-on-one interactions with each child. Bring the results to the session.

1. Share your experience of facilitating your active learning experience (homework from the previous session). How did children react? What did you notice about children's learning and behaviors?

2. What is the root of your name? How do you feel if/when people mispronounce it? How might children and their families feel when a teacher mispronounces a child's name or only uses terms such as "honey" or "sweetie" in the classroom?

3. How much time do children spend in large groups in your classroom? How about in small groups? How might this balance impact children's learning and behaviors?

4. Look at the record you made of interactions with individual children in your classroom. What did you notice as a result of this activity? What changes might you make to your practices?

5. How do you feel about applying the "party planning" approach to a classroom? What are some things you already do to help children feel welcomed, noticed, and valued? What else might you do?

6. Let's look at the Child's Bill of Rights on page 74 of the book. What do you think about these rights? Is there anything you would add?

7. Rate each of the rights from 1 to 4 (4 being the highest) to reflect how well you feel that you honor it in your practices. Discuss each right as a group and discuss what you do to honor it and what more you could do.

8. What do you think is the difference between *liking* and *adoring* someone? What actions might a teacher use to express adoration to children and families?

9. Make a plan to interact more with the child in your classroom with whom you recorded the fewest positive interactions. Be prepared to discuss your interactions with this child in the next session.

Chapter 4: Teaching Social Skills: Support the Plants in Your Care

To be completed before the chapter 4 session:

- Read chapter 4.
- Notice the social situations in which children in your classroom appear to struggle. Bring this list to the session.

1. What interactions did you have with your target child (homework from the previous session)? What did you learn about that child through your interactions? Did your relationship with that child change as a result?

2. How might a teacher's response to challenging behaviors shift if there is less emphasis on discipline and more on teaching?

3. What social skills are children in your classroom working on at their age? How do you support the development of these skills?

4. What situations appear especially difficult for the children in your classroom? Why do you think these situations are challenging? What might you do to help children learn and meet expectations in these situations?

5. When a teacher looks at a behavior as "mistaken" as opposed to "challenging," how might her view of that behavior change?

6. What are some typical responses to challenging behavior in your setting? How has your view of these practices shifted based on the information in this chapter?

7. List some common challenging behaviors in your classroom. Brainstorm with the group about some natural and logical consequences for these behaviors that might help children learn expectations.

8. How might the conflict resolution approach discussed in this chapter serve children beyond their time in your classroom?

9. Share an example of a recent conflict that arose in your classroom. Discuss with the group how this conflict might have played out differently using the steps in this chapter.

10. What are some words/phrases you use that may lead to unclear expectations in your classroom? How can you restate those expectations to clarify them for children?

11. Make a plan to intentionally teach an expectation to the children or an individual child in your classroom. Come prepared to discuss in the next session.

Chapter 5: The MoNSTeR Response: Manage Unforeseen Events

To be completed before the chapter 5 session:

- Read chapter 5.
- Practice the MoNSTeR approach to challenging behaviors at least once in your classroom. Come prepared to discuss in the session.

Facilitator Note: *Role plays are a valuable tool in learning new skills. Consider having teachers practice the MoNSTeR approach using role plays in your session and reflect on the experience.*

1. Share your assignment from last session.

- What expectation did you intentionally teach and to whom?
- What strategies did you use to teach the expectation?
- What did you notice about how the child(ren) responded to the intervention?

2. How does the MoNSTeR approach feel different from how you usually respond to challenging behaviors?

3. On page 103 of the book, the author writes, *"The function of a teacher's response is to stop the behavior, keep everyone safe, restore calm, and gather information about what might be causing the child to act in this way."* How does this differ or concur with the way you currently respond to challenging behaviors?

4. Share your experience of using the MoNSTeR approach. What felt natural? What was the most challenging aspect?

Chapter 6: Unmet Social and Emotional Needs: Pay Special Attention to Faltering Flowers

To be completed before the chapter 6 session:

- Read chapter 6.
- Reflect on and record one strategy you use to meet each of the eight social and emotional needs (pages 112–113 in the book) in your classroom. Bring your ideas to the session.

Facilitator Note: *Have the eight SEL needs written on separate pieces of paper. You will use these in an activity during the session.*

1. What social and emotional challenges are children in your classroom experiencing? What do you notice about their behaviors when they are facing these challenges?

2. What are your professional "hot buttons"? How do you react when children push these buttons?

3. Discuss each of these eight social and emotional needs as a group. What are some things you can do to meet each of the needs in your classroom?

Facilitator Note: *Depending on the size of your group, you can facilitate the preceding discussion in a variety of ways. You can break the group into pairs or small groups and give each group one of the needs to discuss. The groups then present their ideas to the large group, and the people suggest additional ideas. Or you can facilitate a round-robin discussion: Post the needs around the room and assign two or three people to each need to write ideas to meet it. After a couple minutes, have the groups rotate to the next need and record any additional ideas. Repeat this process until every group has had a chance to see what others have recorded and to add their own ideas.*

4. Which of these social and emotional needs feels most natural for you to meet in the classroom? Which is the most challenging for you? Why do you think this is?

5. Reflect on children who are struggling with challenging behaviors in your classroom. What unmet social and emotional needs might be contributing factors to these behaviors? Come up with a plan to meet this need and implement it before the next session. Come prepared to discuss the results.

Chapter 7: Family Partnerships: Build a Nurturing Community Garden

To be completed before the chapter 7 session:

- Read chapter 7.
- Collect any forms you currently use to communicate with families. List all the other strategies you use to build relationships with families. Bring these to the session.

1. Share your experience of attempting to meet a particular child's social and emotional need (homework from the previous session). How did the child respond? Did you notice any changes in the child's behavior? What did you learn about the child?

2. Think about the process of responding to challenging behaviors in the classroom from a parent's point of view. How do you think they feel?

3. What does it mean to be in partnership with families? How do children benefit when families and teachers work together?

4. Look at the forms and strategies you use to build partnerships with families. What are the strengths? What are the gaps?

5. What are some areas in which you may not be meeting the cultural needs of the families in your program? What strategies can you use to bridge those gaps?

6. What is your general approach to family conferences? What might you incorporate to make them more effective?

7. Make a plan to implement one strategy for building partnerships with families. Be prepared to discuss in the next session.

Chapter 8: A ComprehensiveApproach to Challenging Behaviors: Help All Seedlings Thrive

To be completed before the chapter 8 session:

- Read chapter 8.
- Think of a child who is struggling with challenging behaviors in your classroom. Come prepared to discuss this child in the session.

Facilitator Note: *In this session, you will be working together on one big question, as opposed to discussing many questions. Have participants form pairs or small groups. Ask teachers to work together to follow the steps in this chapter to devise a plan for addressing the challenging behaviors of each child listed.*

1. After the pair/small-group work, discuss as group: How did this process feel? How did it feel different from your usual approach to addressing challenging behaviors?

Conclusion: Appreciate the Beauty of the Harvest

To be completed before the final session:

- Read the book's conclusion.
- Reflect on the practices you have incorporated into your classroom during this study group. Come prepared to share a success story with the group.

1. How has your view of your role as a teacher changed as a result of this book?

2. What ideas from this book have you incorporated into your practices? Have you noticed any differences in children's behaviors?

3. Share something you have done that has had a positive impact in your classroom.

4. If another teacher asked you for the *three* most important points of this book, what would you say?

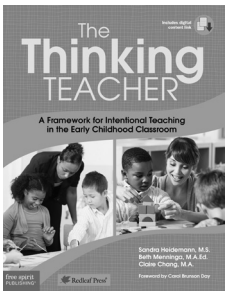
5. If all early care and education settings adopted the principles in this book, how do you think the expulsion rate would change?

About the Author

Michelle Salcedo, M.Ed., is the chief academic officer at the Sunshine House Early Learning Academy, a chain of over 120 childcare centers located across the United States. Her articles on young children appear frequently on the Sunshine House's website and in the popular childcare journal *Exchange*. She has worked in the field of early childhood for over thirty years, starting as a "teacher's helper" in her younger brother's center. She has served as a teacher, director, trainer, and family educator in numerous childcare settings across Michigan, South Carolina, and Spain. She lives in Greenville, South Carolina.

Contact Michelle at **michellesalcedo.com**.

Other Great Resources from Free Spirit



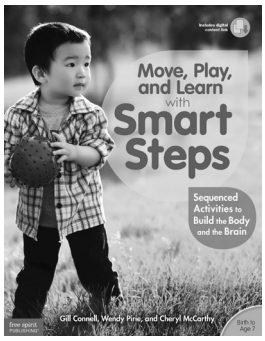
The Thinking Teacher

A Framework for Intentional Teaching in the Early Childhood Classroom

by Sandra Heidemann, M.S., Beth Menninga, M.A.Ed., and Claire Chang, M.A. Presented in partnership with Redleaf Press

For early childhood teachers and providers, instructional coaches, directors, and administrators.
216 pp.; PB; 7¼" x 9¼"; includes digital content

Free downloadable PLC/Book Study Guide **freespirit.com/PLC**

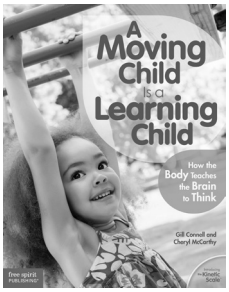


Move, Play, and Learn with Smart Steps

Sequenced Activities to Build the Body and the Brain

by Gill Connell, Wendy Pirie, M.H.Sc., and Cheryl McCarthy

For early childhood teachers, caregivers, program directors, coaches, mentors, professional development trainers, and parents of children ages birth to 7.
216 pp.; PB; full color; 8½" x 11"; includes digital content



A Moving Child Is a Learning Child

How the Body Teaches the Brain to Think (Birth to Age 7)

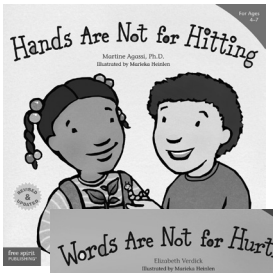
by Gill Connell and Cheryl McCarthy

For teachers, caregivers, special education practitioners, clinicians, and parents of children ages birth to 7.
336 pp.; PB; full color; 7¼" x 9¼"

The Best Behavior® Series

Go to **freespirit.com/series** to see other titles in the series

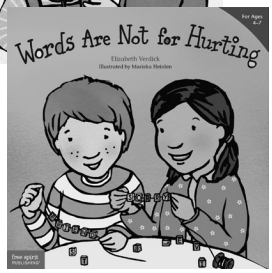
Learning to Get Along®



Hands Are Not for Hitting

by Martine Agassi, Ph.D., illustrated by Marieka Heinlen

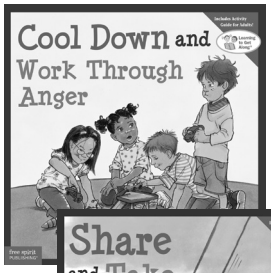
For ages 4–7.
40 pp.; PB; color illust.; 9" x 9"



Words Are Not for Hurting

by Elizabeth Verdick, illustrated by Marieka Heinlen

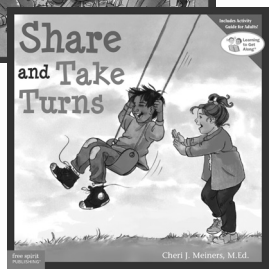
For ages 4–7.
40 pp.; PB; color illust.; 9" x 9"



Cool Down and Work Through Anger

by Cheri J. Meiners, M.Ed.

For ages 4–8.
40 pp.; PB; color illust.; 9" x 9"



Share and Take Turns

by Cheri J. Meiners, M.Ed.

For ages 4–8.
40 pp.; PB; color illust.; 9" x 9"

Interested in purchasing multiple quantities and receiving volume discounts? Contact edsales@freespirit.com or call 1.800.735.7323 and ask for Education Sales.

Many Free Spirit authors are available for speaking engagements, workshops, and keynotes. Contact speakers@freespirit.com or call 1.800.735.7323.

For pricing information, to place an order, or to request a free catalog, contact:

Free Spirit Publishing Inc.
6325 Sandburg Road • Suite 100 • Minneapolis, MN 55427-3674
toll-free 800.735.7323 • local 612.338.2068 • fax 612.337.5050
help4kids@freespirit.com • www.freespirit.com

CLASSROOM FACTOR	CLASSROOM EXAMPLE	OBSERVATION NOTES

CLASSROOM FACTOR	CLASSROOM EXAMPLE	OBSERVATION NOTES