

NEWSLETTER

Conscious Discipline Edition



DEAR PARENTS/EDUCATORS/COLLEAGUES,

by Prudence Low (Speech-language Pathologist)

As we are approaching the June (Summer) holidays, we look back at how much our students have thrived with the care of our therapists. We are grateful for the opportunity to be part of our student's lives and are reminded that remediation often necessitates considering the whole being. Other challenges may often accompany specific learning difficulties. These include issues relating to self-esteem and self-regulation. It is imperative therefore to be working alongside schools and parents to address those factors that could be stumbling blocks to remediation.

Our therapists also see it as their responsibility to top up on their understanding when it comes to building intrinsic motivation. A couple of months ago, we held a nice refresher training on Conscious Discipline, one of our go-to -tools that has given us a wealth of knowledge on how to build growth seeking and resilient students. You will be seeing summaries written by our therapists on various topics in this and the next newsletter. We hope you'll find these to be useful information.



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We are proud to be bringing you our holiday programmes in June and July. Please register early to ensure a spot for your child/students.

Finally, we are honoured to be sharing Shawn's journey. Shawn was one of our clients from many years back, and his mom Ayumi recently touched based with us. It is such valuable feedback to have, because stories like these give parents a lot of hope for future ahead.

Wishing everyone a restful summer holiday when it approaches!

Blessings,
Prudence and Team

COMPOSURE

by Diana Mendiola (Educational Therapist)



Conscious Discipline points out that maintaining composure is important for us to be effective guides to the children. Composure is everything to do with our internal state of mind.

We can train composure to our students by allowing them to understand that “No one can make me (us, or our children) angry without my permission”.

Hence, whoever or whatever I have placed in charge of my feelings is in charge of me. For example, if I choose to be angry at the person who did not hold the door lift for me, then I am giving my power away. This also gives way to blame or attack when we feel powerless. It is similar to how kids feel when they lose their composure because they give control to others over how or what they feel.

As parents and educator, it is also our responsibility to help our children feel safe. It is in the language of safety that we let them understand that we adults are here to help, instead of using the language of fear. This example was given - “come hold my hand so that I can keep you safe” in comparison to “get over here before someone grabs you!”. When we speak in the language of safety, our children can practice composure and understanding of what we want them to feel and do.

We are also encouraged to remind our children that they are in a safe place, to keep breathing and that they can weather difficult situations. I love how in Conscious Discipline advocates that we do not always need to shelter children away from the turbulences of life. Instead, we are to model composure, and assure them that “You are safe, keep breathing, you can handle this”.

When children regain composure, they can maintain control when they are upset, angry or frustrated. It is in this state of mind that they can be helpful and not hurtful to themselves and others.



ENCOURAGEMENT

by Claire H. (Bilingual Therapist)



For children, the knowledge that they are noticed and valued goes a long way in building their self-worth and resilience. It is common knowledge that parental

encouragements meted out consistently for good efforts, or desired actions have positive impact upon children. Relationships that have been built on firm foundations of parents playing a guiding and supporting role would ultimately foster a sense of willingness to adopt cooperative behaviour, even amid challenges. Children need to be noticed and validated for positive actions and behaviour. It is powerful to say, “I notice that you tried to speak to Michael in the social group and you were patient with him, that is such a good attempt on your part.”



Conscious Discipline gives us tools to create intrinsic motivation within children. We can notice a child’s helpful acts and help them realize that they can master a challenging task by focusing on the process itself. When a child has gained mastery in a task, this itself is a powerful feeling.

It raises one’s serotonin, which in turn helps the child find fulfilment in their contributions. By praising a child’s helpful behaviour, you can help them see themselves as having something valuable to offer others.

As a therapist, I am constantly finding ways to encourage my clients in language learning. The best way is to help them realize they are mastering the targeted areas in their goals. Encouragements such as “You’ve come so far and getting so much better at it!” can go a long way in therapy. I recognise my clients’ efforts and progress that can build their self-esteem and in time, their sense of self. Intrinsic motivation means that the child is willing to go much further for a longer period of time even when the going gets tough and that far outweighs extrinsic forms of motivation which tends to be transactional and short-lived.



So next time, if you wish your child to take on cleaning his/her room without you having to repeatedly remind them, try spotlighting your children’s helpful behaviour daily at home; “Wow, I see you have done your part of the chores by cleaning your room!, now you have saved me a lot of work and I have time to do other things, I really appreciate that!”.



ASSERTIVENESS

by Darren Low (Educational Therapist)



The skill of assertiveness means setting limits respectfully and creating healthy boundaries for all relationships.

One of the best ways to train assertiveness in children is, surprisingly teaching the child the art of Tattling! Children eight years and younger are genetically programmed to bring their problems to an adult. This can fade off in the student's later years when tattling is seen in a less positive light. However, this need not be so. If we as adults respond constructively to what is being told to us, it could go a long way in building trust and teaching the students that it is safe to go to adults with their problems throughout life (even during the teen years).

Intrusion tattling occurs when one child reports how another child has wronged him. The first step to transform intrusion tattling into an opportunity to teach assertiveness is to ask, "Did you like it?" This phrase raises the child's awareness, harnesses his inner strength and creates the willingness to learn a new skill.

This question opens the door for us to teach the exact skills we would like him to use.

The approach taken by Conscious Discipline is refreshing and it allows teachers and parents to equip the child with skills of assertion instead of staying as a victim. The children learn that there is power in voicing out their discomfort and not suffering in silence. Application wise, I'd certainly be adding this to my "Suggestion toolbox" for teachers and parents when I come across a client who lacks self-esteem and is overly reserved in class. It would be far more useful to train the child who is at risk of being bullied to take on skills of assertiveness and be heard.

TESTIMONIAL FROM SHAWN'S MOM, AYUMI KASAI

"Those heart-breaking moments seem like distant memory...." Ayumi



We started our journey of intervention with Prudence when Shawn was 4 years old after his diagnosis. This has helped Shaun take away the embarrassment he used to feel when talking. He did not have to worry about his friends/peers saying that he "talks funny" or "sounds different" now. Those heart-breaking moments seem like distant memories, and our family is thankful for our experience. Prudence's contribution was much appreciated, for we'd never have made this



progress, certainly not on our own nor through my child's school speech therapy programs.

The earlier foundation provided Shawn with a smooth transition into Special Education through public schools in Upstate New York in the United States. The NY State provides special education through the age of 21 in High School where they focus on independent living and skill along with academic needs. Shawn took regular classes in an integrated program with Arts, Gym, and Photography. Shawn continued to be integrated into mainstream classes subsequently. His growing confidence was gratifying to all of us.

Shawn graduated from Ballston Spa High School in Upstate New York in June 2022. He is currently in the process of starting the Pre-Vocational Program through New York State, where he will work with a Job Coach to learn and be trained at local retailers, libraries, schools etc. He hopes to work in landscaping as he enjoys being outside in nice weather.

As a parent, I am so grateful for all the teachers, therapists, doctors, and nurses through Shawn's journey.

Achievements

- Graduated New York State Skills & Achievement Commencement Credential (non-diploma) in June 2022
- Interned and worked at a local food pantry, library, and art museum in Upstate NY

Current Environment

In the process of starting Pre-vocational Services through New York State that prepare for employment in a competitive work environment as well as the integrated community settings.

Prudence's note on Shawn

by Prudence Low (Speech-language Pathologist)



I remember Shawn as an adorable 4-year-old. We worked on increasing dynamic thinking skills and increasing play and communication skills.

There was very little experience sharing language, and joint attention when I first met Shawn. Shawn's parents were also very receptive of guided participation during parent training. He gradually made quite a bit of progress – in attention, regulation, and referencing.

As therapists, our clients provided many opportunities for us to learn about the best ways of remediation. I remember leaving a video recording running while I went to retrieve a toy from a cabinet. During this time, the reel captured Shawn attempting to extract a box that was stuck inside another box. When he finally had that figured out, his face registered the biggest delight I had ever seen. It brought to my attention how important it is to help the child feel a sense of competence. The opportunities presented, in the form of Guided Participation went a long way in increasing self-esteem, and resilience to keep going at it even when the going gets tough. That resilience itself is precious.



Although I have not seen Shawn for a long time since the family migrated, I am heartened by the positive journey he has been having. The journey continues – and I am reminded that I am only playing a small role amidst the work of many other therapists he has in the US. I thank the parents for their kind words and compliments.

The real credit should really be on the parents themselves, with their sound decision-making, in ensuring he has the best opportunities and in creating an environment where competence develops through real-life immersion. I remember Ayumi's Christmas card one year when Shawn had the opportunity to find internship work at a candy store. Life is about celebrating successes, no matter how small.

We thank Ayumi, Shawn and the family for sharing their journey and allowing us to reminisce on the past. Your recollection of this valuable journey will be helping parents of newly diagnosed children find faith during their uncertain, tough early years when their diagnosis is first received.

With much thanks and love,
Prudence Low (*Speech-language Pathologist*)

SUMMER HOLIDAY PROGRAMMES

by *Total Communication*



Get ready for an exciting and enriching summer at Total Communication! We have a range of engaging and educational programmes lined up to make this holiday season a memorable one for your child. Let their imaginations soar, friendships flourish, and skills blossom with our dynamic offerings.



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Focuses on developing the sensory-cognitive skill of concept imagery, enabling students to create vivid mental representations and seamlessly integrate them with language.



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