

Running head: FORCE FIELD INTERVENTION

Force Field Manual

Chloe Ruebeck

University of Utah

8/27/09

High Incidence Grant

Intervention:

The force field intervention is a technique used to help children relax and gain self-control in high stress or anger inducing situations. This technique is based off the turtle relaxation technique created by Marlene Schneider and Arthur Robin in 1973 at SUNY Stony Brook.

The turtle technique was originally created for emotionally disturbed children, to help them manage their aggressive outbursts in general education classrooms. The teacher teaches these children and the whole class the three steps: turtle, relaxation, and problem solving. First, the children are taught how to withdraw into their imaginary shell when they feel threatened or angry, while practicing the technique, the word “turtle” is used as a prompt. Then the students are taught to couple the turtle response with muscle relaxation. Third, problem-solving strategies are taught to help children realize that there are better options besides aggression or tantrums. This three-sequenced technique can be taught through group discussion, story telling, modeling, role-playing, and direct reinforcement (Robin and Schneider, 1973).

The force field intervention is an updated version and can be used in the Superhero Social Skills curriculum. The force field imagery is appropriate for grades k-5 but if a student does not relate to this image a different image may be utilized. The most important thing is how the image is used. Moreover, this technique targets the whole class and aims to change the classroom climate but more specifically this technique benefits emotionally disturbed children, anxiety disordered children and other students that struggle to control their emotions.

Rational and References:

Schneider (1974) evaluated the turtle technique using fifteen emotionally disturbed youth from three special-education classrooms. Dennis, Brian, Tommy and Susan were four children who participated in the study. After learning and implementing the turtle technique, Dennis showed a 61 percent decrease in aggression and tantrums, 70 percent by Brian, 57 percent by Tommy, and 36 percent by Susan. Total classroom problem behaviors decreased by 46 percent in one classroom and 54 percent in another classroom after eight weeks of treatment. In the other classroom the technique was introduced too late for results to be valid.

Moreover, children are experiencing more stress than ever these days with divorce, increasing school pressure and other societal pressures. These children are not coping with them naturally, turning to television and videogames for an escape; therefore, teaching children relaxation techniques to help them better deal with their life stressors is more important than ever (Klein, 2008).

The research shows that self-regulation is a fundamental protective factor in child resiliency (Buckner, Mezzacappa, & Beardslee, 2003). When a child can control their emotions and behaviors, as well as self-soothe, they will attract positive relationships from peers, teachers and parents (Rubin, Coplan, Fox, & Calkins, 1995). Self-regulating children are also at a decreased risk for depression and anxiety (Alvord and Grados, 2005).

Materials Needed:

This intervention is used with the whole classroom but specific children who struggle with emotional outbursts may want to be more closely monitored. For these, children a baseline data chart or graph should be used to record problem behaviors prior to the force field intervention.

The first practice session requires an introduction story. The story demonstrates a situation where using the force field technique would be appropriate and shows its effectiveness.

It is important to teach this technique to the whole class because it enhances peer support for the children who most need the force field intervention. Their classmates can help prompt them by saying “put up your shields” or “force field” when they see them struggling during a situation. Peer support can also increase pro-social interactions, which can help build positive relationships among peers in the classroom.

Note: One of the main advantages of this technique is that it requires very few materials. Unlike most behavioral modification programs, very little external rewards are need because it is a self-regulation technique

Steps to Implementation:

First, the initial story is read to the class and the force field technique is taught to the class. The practice session last about 15 minutes; children are taught how to put up their force field (imaginary), how to pair it with muscle relaxation and when to use it. The force field is putting both hands or arms on top of their head, they can also put their head down if they'd like.

The second session is a group practice session. The students are also taught that they can help other students remember to use their force fields, when they start to loose control of their emotions. If they recognize one of their peers having trouble they are supposed to tell them remember your force field or simply state "force field". Also, during this session have the children role play in front of the class and have the children clap an encourage heir peers.

Implement rewards or reinforcers for students who use the technique or encourage their classmates to use it. Also, encourage the students to use their force fields outside of the classroom, as well. It is important to continuously track and record the target children to see if they are making improvements.

Troubleshooting:

Children might use this technique in threatening situations, for example, they may put up their force field when confronted by a bully. It is important to tell children that they can use force to protect themselves in these types of situations (Schneider, 1974).

Specific Cautions:

Some parents might not approve of the science fiction allegory and have problems with this intervention. If this is the case that student does not have to participate or can simply use the turtle technique instead.

References

- Alvord, M., & Grados, J. (2005, June). Enhancing Resilience in Children: A Proactive Approach. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 36(3), 238-245.
- Buckner, J. C., Mezzacappa, E., & Beardslee, W. R. (2003). Characteristics of resilient youths living in poverty: The role of self-regulatory process. *Development and Psychopathology*, 15, 139–162
- Klein, R. (2008). Ready..., set..., relax!: Relaxation strategies with children and adolescents. *Creative interventions with traumatized children*, 302-320.
- Robin, A.L. & Schneider, M. *The turtle manual*. Technical publication, Point of Woods Laboratory School, State University of New York, Stony Brook, 1973.
- Rubin, K. H., Coplan, R. J., Fox, N. A., & Calkins, S. D. (1995). Emotionality, emotional regulation, and preschoolers' social adaptation. *Development and Psychopathology*, 7, 49–62.
- Schneider, M. Turtle technique in the classroom. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 1974, 7, 22-24.

Appendix

Sample Baseline Chart for Target Behaviors

Name	Monday (date)	Tuesday (date)	Wednesday (date)	Thursday (date)	Friday (date)
Bobby					
Jesse					
Lola					
Totals					